THE FUTURE OF MISSION COOPERATION

The Living Legacy of the International Missionary Council

Editor: RISTO JUKKO

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World Council of Churches Publications

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CONTENTS

Preface *vii*
Introduction: Reflecting Together on Being Together in the Mission of God
Michael Biehl *xi*

Part I Regional Reports 1

1. Report from Nanjing Union Theological Seminary, China
Wang Jiawei 3

2. Report of the Aizawl Theological College, the United Theological College, and the South Asia Institute of Advanced Christian Studies Conference, India
H. Lalrinthanga, Chongpongmeren Jamir, and Michael Biehl 23

3. Report from St Paul's University Study Centre, Kenya
Paul Mwangi and Esther Mombo 35

4. Pretoria Report of an IMC/CWME Ecumenical Consultation on Race, Racism, and Whiteness in South Africa
Cobus van Wyngaard and Louis van der Riet 49

5. Middle East IMC Study Centre Thematic Report, Lebanon
Wilbert van Saane 61

6. Mapping Cooperation in Mission Today: A Preliminary Report from Latin America and the Caribbean
Karla Ann Koll 87

7. Profetas del Sur: el impacto de Luis Odell y otros en el movimiento ecuménico en Latinoamérica
Sidney Rooy 111

8. Contextual Report of the Central and Eastern European Region
Cristian Sonea, Pavol Bargár, Piotr Kopiec, Doru Marcu, Stefan Zeljković, Leș Adrian, and Iustinian Crețu 137

9. Report of the IMC Study Process from the German Study Group
Anton Knuth and Eckhard Zemmrich 165

Part II Transnational Mission Networks 181

10. Council for World Mission: A Global Transnational Partnership in Mission Serving as a Model of Cooperation between Mission Agencies and Churches
Roderick R. Hewitt 183

11. Cooperation in Mission in the Present Time: A Strategic and Forward-looking Approach of the Community of Churches in Mission
Timothée Bouba Mbima 193

12. Creating a Third Space: A History of the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies amid Evangelical-Ecumenical Tensions
Al Tizon 201

13. Reflections on Transnational Orthodox Networks and their Role in Mission in Kenya: Past, Present, and Future
H. E. Archbishop Makarios of Nairobi and Exarch of all Kenya 219

14. SEDOS: Together as Mission Partners
Peter Baekelmans and Stephen Bevans 223

15. Conclusion: Fresh Inspiration
Kenneth R. Ross 237

Further information 251

PREFACE

This book—like its sister volume, *A Hundred Years of Mission Cooperation: The Impact of the International Missionary Council 1921–2021* (WCC Publications, 2022)—is the fruition of an 18-month study process related to the centennial of the International Missionary Council (IMC), which was established at Lake Mohonk, USA, in the autumn of 1921. The IMC had a unique role in the formation of the ecumenical movement and world mission. In fact, it has been said that until the founding of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in 1948, the IMC represented *de facto* the ecumenical movement. And even after this creation in 1948 of two global ecumenical bodies "in association," the IMC continued its work. It was not until 1961 at the 3rd Assembly of the WCC in New Delhi, India, that it was integrated into the structures of the WCC, becoming the WCC Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME).

The CWME inherited from the IMC the legacy of fostering mission cooperation and unity, organizing world mission conferences (roughly one per decade falling between the WCC assemblies), and putting out the missiological journal of the IMC, the *International Review of Mission(s)*. The CWME has kept these three legacies, knowing its past and looking toward the future. This volume is a concrete proof of that legacy.

The 11th Assembly of the WCC in Karlsruhe, Germany, with its theme "Christ's love moves the world to reconciliation and unity," was originally planned to be held at the end of the summer of 2021, which would have offered the CWME an excellent platform to celebrate world mission and the one hundred years' legacy of the IMC. However, the COVID-19 pandemic changed the plans, and the assembly was postponed to September 2022. The WCC assembly affirmed the pilgrimage of justice, reconciliation, and unity. All these dimensions are included in the mission pilgrimage of world mission.

In the production of this book, a global IMC centenary study process has been conducted in the manner that the IMC, and later the CWME, has followed: by fostering reconciliation, unity, and mission cooperation. Theologians and practitioners of various institutions and mission actors have come together to cooperate and create unity locally, and in some cases regionally, even nationally. Not all the regional study centres or groups were already existing bodies. Denominationally, these study groups have often gone beyond the member churches of the WCC. In the study process, the steering

committee nominated by the CWME to lead the study process was pleased to note how mission creates visible unity and practical cooperation.

This volume is divided into two parts. After the introduction by Michael Biehl, steering committee member, the first part provides nine regional reports produced by the study centres or groups during a second phase of the world-wide IMC study process. The study centres have chosen different approaches and reporting styles, even if the common factor has been to describe the current situation and reflect on the future of mission in their respective regions. The reports paint a vivid picture the joys and challenges facing churches and mission actors in today's world.

The second part of the book contains five studies of transnational mission networks. They also bring into light some theological developments that may not have been well-known in academia. Mission has contributed significantly to a growing movement of the establishment of Christian churches in the world, especially in the 20th century—what scholars call "World Christianity" or "Global Christianity." This could not have come into existence without mission.

The first text of transnational mission networks, Chapter 10, deals with the Council for World Mission, established in 1977. It is the historical successor of the London Missionary Society, originally founded in 1795. The second text, Chapter 11 is about the similar development of the concept of mission in the French-speaking Protestant world, leading the Society of Evangelical Missions of Paris, established in 1822, to become the Evangelical Community of Apostolic Action in 1971, today known as the Community of Churches in Mission (CEVAA). The third text on transnational mission networks, Chapter 12, describes a more recent endeavour, the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies (established in 1983), trying to create a "third space" between ecumenicals and evangelicals. The role of transnational orthodox networks is described in Chapter 13 from a Kenyan and African perspective, and Chapter 14 informs the readers that the Roman Catholic Church has a central office for mission actors, Service of Documentation and Study of Global Mission (SEDOS), based in Rome, with the article describing its role as well as its relation to the CWME/WCC. The concluding chapter by Kenneth Ross, another steering committee member, gives a clear idea of how mission is perceived through the living experience of the churches and mission actors in World Christianity today.

In the pages of the reports and texts describing transnational mission networks, it becomes clear how diverse and multifaceted mission has become in the world through the ten decades of the existence of the ecumenical mission movement in the form of the IMC-CWME. Based on the regional reports

and texts on transnational mission networks, three items could be further explored. The first relates to the fact that for some 30 years now, the majority of Christians have lived in the global South. Their faith is the same as those living in the global North, and yet there are different nuances, in many cases due to the historical burden of colonization with the negative effects it has had. What is the understanding of mission for those Christians in today's world in crisis, and what will it be in the years to come, in light of healing the legacies of colonization? How do they do "mission from the margins"[1] in a decolonizing way? The second item relates to the fact that many of these Christians live in dire conditions that threaten their existence today. Mission theology has talked of options for the poor. What hope can the gospel—the good news of Jesus Christ—give to those who are the poorest, the most vulnerable, and often wounded? And the third theme concerns the mission networks. The IMC originally can be said to have been a transnational mission network, or a "council of councils and mission networks," creating a model that many have followed since 1921. What role can transnational mission networks play in fostering mission cooperation and visible unity? How can they provide models and methods for mission, justice, reconciliation, and unity for the years to come? Transnational mission networks create huge potential for churches and mission actors in their day-to-day work in a world that is facing many new and unexpected challenges today and in the near future.

The steering committee of the IMC centenary study process owes a lot to all those who have participated and contributed to the study process related to the IMC centenary. We are aware that the celebration has been one modest attempt to understand and concretize the prayer of Jesus "that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (John 17:21).

Risto Jukko, Editor
Director, WCC Commission on World Mission and Evangelism
Chair of the steering committee of the IMC centenary study process

Geneva, November 2022

1 See the WCC mission document *Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes* (2012), §§ 36–54, https://www.oikoumene.org/sites/default/files/Document/Together_towards_Life.pdf.

INTRODUCTION: REFLECTING TOGETHER ON BEING TOGETHER IN THE MISSION OF GOD

Michael Biehl

The steering committee of the International Missionary Council–Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (IMC-CWME) centenary study process presents *The Future of Mission Cooperation: The Living Legacy of the International Missionary Council*, the second volume of the study process, with reports from the centres around the globe that engaged globe with the process. In early 2021, to mark the 100th jubilee of the founding of the IMC, the steering committee sent out an invitation to join the process. Its overall aim was to initiate a global online process of reflection and discussion on cooperation in mission over the last hundred years. As explained in the introduction to the first volume of regional reports from the centres, this idea was inspired by the study process toward the jubilee of the World Missionary Conference of Edinburgh of 1910.[1] The study process was intended to be academic and ecumenical, with the participation of researchers and study groups from different theological and ecclesiological backgrounds.

Fourteen academic institutions in all the eight regions of the World Council of Churches (WCC) eventually accepted the invitation and joined the study process, which was conducted mainly online. Centres in regions where the mission societies and councils that formed the IMC had not been present or actively involved were invited to study mission and collaboration in their region. They answered the following questions: "What would the history of the IMC look like when put into the frame of a wider panorama of mission taking place around the globe that was not connected to the IMC? What influence did the IMC-CWME have on the ground in the different regions?"[2] There is a renewed need to look into cooperation in mission and to identify steps to overcome divisions that have been detrimental to witnessing to Christ and to seeking unity.

The proposal was to reflect missiologically on the significance and impact of IMC-CWME, globally and regionally, particularly in light of perspectives

1 Michael Biehl, "Introduction," in *A Hundred Years of Mission Cooperation: The Impact of the International Missionary Council 1921–2021*, ed. Risto Jukko (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2022), 3-–11.

2 Biehl, "Introduction."

from the global South. The steering committee envisioned that this would happen in two phases.

The volume *A Hundred Years of Mission Cooperation: The Impact of the International Missionary Council 1921–2021* collects the reports of the study centres from the first phase. This phase was concluded with a hybrid conference in November 2021 hosted by the steering committee from the Ecumenical Centre in Geneva.[3] In the second phase, several centres made use of the opportunity to finally meet again in presence. Small-scale conferences happened in Northeast India, Lebanon, Kenya, and South Africa, while others continued to meet online. This phase was officially closed at an online conference hosted by the steering committee on 14 June 2022 at the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies. Participants of all centres attended and presented reports on their work in the second phase.

Whereas in the first phase the centres were invited to look back in their regional histories to the founding decades of the IMC, in the second phase, they were invited to focus on current and future issues in mission in cooperation or collaboration. The study centres were also encouraged to identify issues and matters of common concern that would benefit by being dealt with in cooperation. The conviction was that such topics and issues would gain if not just one, but several organisations or churches engaged with them, as these are challenges of mission and evangelism for all.

Second Phase: Reports of the Study Centres

The present volume collects the reports from the study centres around the world on their work in the second phase of this study process, with a few notable exceptions.

The study group in New Zealand contributed to the first phase with a study focusing on Anglican mission and the Māori's engagement. The group linked it to aspects of mission among the Māori in the present context, and therefore it did not present a separate report on the second phase.[4]

The three centres in Latin America and the Caribbean also took different tracks. The Universidad Bíblica Latinoamericana (UBL) in Costa Rica

3 See the description of the hybrid conference in Biehl, "Introduction," 5–7. Three of the recorded sessions are accessible online at https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLI22eVXX9FYkg3BmsSCF2ddhJOd3HnZVs.

4 See their report, Aotearoa New Zealand Study Group/Jay Matenga, "An Assessment of the Influence of the International Missionary Council on the Mission of God among the Indigenous People of Aotearoa New Zealand," in *A Hundred Years*, 91–115.

presents a short version of its empirical research into collaboration in mission in connection with the history of the UBL itself. The Cuban centre at the Seminario Evangélico de Teología (SET) was affected heavily by restriction measures due to COVID-19 as well as being hit by hurricanes. Therefore, it was unable to conduct its work on the second phase of the study process.

The Centro Evangélico de Misiología Andino-Amazónica (CEMAA), Lima, Peru, collected papers with a focus on current issues in theology and in mission in the region and recommended including a paper by Sidney Rooy, "Prophets from the South," on the life and work of the layperson Luis Enrique Odell in the 20th century. Rooy traces how Odell, after the initial neglect of the Latin American context in the IMC, was instrumental in representing mission in the La Plata region in the later period of the IMC.

The North American study group in the first phase did not go back to the founding years of the IMC, but instead started a research project on collaboration and common issues and missions in the last 20 years.[5] As their report clearly delineates, and brought out even more in the regional volume of their papers, they looked into mission and collaboration in mission done in North America, especially in the urban context and in line with the needs of various ethnic religious groups in the US and in Canada. With that research, they bridged the first and second phases of the process, and thus did not submit an additional report in the second phase. What they found can be read in in the first volume of reports from the regions, and it will be fleshed out by the 12 individual papers that will be published in the regional volume in the future.

One of the main events of the study group in China on the Nanjing Union Theological Seminary was a larger conference in October 2021, close to the international conference in November in Geneva. Many papers were read at this conference in Shanghai, and the Chinese group focused on editing these papers and translating some of the main contributions that they wanted to channel into the larger international process. Short summaries of these papers are published in this volume, and the full texts will be published in the planned volume with the contributions from Asia.

The reports of the centres in China, India, Kenya, South Africa, the Middle East, Latin America, and Europe are to be found in the first part of this volume.

5 "Missional Collaborations 2021: A Report from North America," in *A Hundred Years,* 369–412.

Transnational Networks in Mission

One peculiar aspect of looking back 100 years to the founding of the IMC is that 40 years after its foundation the council was transformed into a commission within the WCC. The story of the IMC and of its times thus has to be narrated in two different periods. In the Jubilee volume of the IMC, Raimundo C. Barreto Jr traces the IMC years from the Lake Mohonk meeting to the conference in New Delhi in 1961, and Marina Ngursangzeli Behera continues with its story as a WCC commission until the World Missionary Conference in Arusha in 2018.[6] The rationale behind the integration was that theologically mission was then understood to be the activity of local churches and of their regional collaboration joining in the *missio Dei*. In the period of decolonization and in a world considered to be postcolonial (historically speaking), mission should not be continued to be exercised almost exclusively by bodies and organizations located mainly in the Northern hemisphere of the globe while their so-called mission fields were usually in the global South.[7] The mission theology undergirding the integration emphasized the responsibilities of local churches in the fellowship of the WCC for mission and evangelism in their area. This leaves, as Marina Ngursangzeli Behera observes, the question open: What would be the role of mission bodies and mission organizations and of transregional mission in this ecclesiological set-up?[8]

In the period of the CWME, therefore, we observe multiple and diverse movements in mission and evangelism. The commission undoubtedly highlighted the responsibility of churches in joining God's mission. This was explored and discussed at the series of the world missionary conferences planned and conducted by the commission under the aegis of the WCC, whose history Kenneth R. Ross presents in a volume related to the study

6 Raimundo C. Barreto Jr, "The International Missionary Council: From Lake Mohonk 1921 to New Delhi 1961," in *Together in the Mission of God: Jubilee Reflections on the International Missionary Council*, ed. Risto Jukko (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2022), 31–58; Marina Ngursangzeli Behera, "Cooperation in Mission in Word—and in Practice? The Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches," in *Together in the Mission of God*, 59–82. See also Kenneth R. Ross, "The International Missionary Council between 1910 and 1961," in *A History of the Desire for Christian Unity: Ecumenism in the Churches (19th–21st Century)—Vol. 1: Dawn of Ecumenisms*, ed. Alberto Melloni and Luca Ferracci (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2021), 722–43.

7 See Jooseop Keum, ed., *Together towards Life. Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes–With a Practical Guide* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2013), https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/publications/together-towards-life.

8 Marina Ngursangzeli Behera, "Cooperation in Mission in Word—and in Practice?" in *Together in the Mission of God*, 81–82.

process.[9] Several important documents were developed at these conferences and at meetings of the commission between them. The two most important of these are *Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation* (1982) and *Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes* (2012).[10]

One can argue that the first document answered the question of who the agent in mission is, by encouraging Christians doing mission "in Christ's way" and that the second declared the Spirit as the missionary. The practice of mission and the relationship between the mission of the churches and the activities of mission bodies and organizations continued to find various and sometimes unclear answers. With this question open, other movements can be observed to answer it in this period. Mission bodies that had been part of the IMC followed the emphasis of the integration movement by highlighting the responsibility of local churches for mission. At the same time, they joined in transnational fellowship of churches in mission with mission, some of which have been initiated by their mission work. Their main emphasis was on overcoming the colonial divide between the home-field of mission mainly in the Northern hemisphere and organizations sending missionaries to the so-called mission fields, mainly in the global South, through mutuality and the sharing of resources.

In the wake of the integration of the IMC and the WCC and of the formula, "mission in six continents," of the Mexico City world missionary conference, three larger transnational networks were formed: the United Evangelical Mission, the Communauté Evangélique d'Action Apostolique (CEVAA), and the Council for World Mission (CWM). The agency of the study process was deliberate, with academic theological institutions inspiring their researchers to study in their region the topics proposed by the thematic framework of the study process. The steering committee felt that to paint a more adequate picture of mission movements in the second half of the 20th century, representatives of these three transnational networks should be invited to speak about the impetus for the founding, with the rationale that they are collaboration in fellowship. They also were asked to spell out the experiences of these transnational movements over their years of existence. Timothée Bouba Mbima narrates the story of the CEVAA, and Roderick R. Hewitt of the CWM.

9 Kenneth R. Ross, "One Hundred Years of Mission Cooperation: The Contribution of the International Missionary Council," in *A Hundred Years*, 13–42.

10 See "Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation," in "You are the Light of the World." Statements on Mission by the World Council of Churches, 1980-2005, ed. Jacques Matthey (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2005), 1–38; and Keum, *Together towards Life*.

Not all members of the IMC approved of the integration into the fellowship of the WCC. Some of them and other mission bodies formed the Lausanne Movement in 1974. Its foundation is one marker of the disassociation into what has become to be known as the evangelical-ecumenical divide. The report of the centre based at the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies (OCMS) is included in the second part of this volume. As Al Tizon explains, this institution was founded to offer a third space between the evangelical mission movements on the one hand and mission in the so-called ecumenical world on the other. OCMS is also offering a space in Oxford to bring together representatives, researchers, and practitioners, mainly from the global South, to study the theory, practice, and spirituality of mission.

This explains why in the second part of this volume we transcend the regional approach. Once we started to cross the geographical boundaries, it was natural to look beyond the mainly Protestant fellowship in mission and collaboration. Some centres can proudly claim that Orthodox and Catholic scholars have been involved in their study work. It would, however, render a quite monocoloured picture of collaboration in mission in the last six decades after the integration of the IMC into the WCC if we did not also look into the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox world. We invited two scholars, Peter Baekelmans and Stephen Bevans, to write from the perspective of Service of Documentation and Study on Global Mission (SEDOS), a forum of mission orders in the Roman Catholic world. We also invited H. E. Archbishop Makarios of Nairobi to write about the impact of transnational Orthodox mission reaching out to East Africa.

These papers add important aspects and dimensions of cooperation in mission into the discussion, without which the study of collaboration in mission would be incomplete. We are well aware that there is much more happening in the world of mission, be it the mission of local churches, transnational movements, or mission activities within global church communities beyond the Roman Catholic church, such as the Anglican, the Methodist, the Mennonite, or the Moravian churches.

One of the challenges for mission, and especially mission theology and studies on collaboration in mission, certainly is to have a more adequate mapping of what is happening around the globe. The emphasis of the study process was to inscribe the work and history of the IMC in a more global panorama of mission in the decades of its founding and existence. One of the lasting impacts of the study process is therefore to highlight how much more was happening around the foundational period of the IMC and outside it. The history of mission in World Christianity in the period of the two world wars is not exhausted by telling the story from the vantage point of the

organizations and churches that formed the IMC. Because of the specificity of the mission bodies that joined and founded the IMC, many movements on the ground never came into the position of being bodies that would be accepted in the IMC. Others did not want to join because this council was not the forum they were looking for to achieve their goals.

In this sense, we think that the two volumes of reports on the first and the second phases of the IMC's international study process, as well as the additional papers we present in the second part of this volume and the studies on 100 years of the IMC, together give new food for thought. Some aspects challenge us to rewrite the traditional narrative on mission that has focused on the role of figures instrumental to the IMC and on the organizations that founded the IMC and then became members of the commission within the WCC.

The history of the IMC and how collaboration in mission was organized can, from an organizational standpoint, be seen as a success story—especially the point that this organization was transformed with the growing conviction that mission is about churches joining in God's mission. The reports and studies in this volume highlight how much witnessing to Christ as joining in the *missio Dei* and in the *missio Spiritus* happens around the globe and how diverse the movements on the ground are.

Rev. Dr Michael Biehl is a theological advisor in the units Theology and Ecumenism and Theological Education of the Association of Protestant Churches and Missions in Germany (EMW).

PART I

Regional Reports

CHAPTER 1

Report from Nanjing Union Theological Seminary, China

Wang Jiawei

The centre in the Nanjing Union Theological Seminary (NJUTS) has selected some articles related to the present situation and future vision of the Chinese church in the context of modern society and traditional culture in the country. We focus on "the further contextualization of Christianity in China" (基督教中国化) to describe the developments and achievements of Chinese Christians.

The articles come from the following persons: Rev. Xiaohong Xu, Chairperson, National Committee of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement of the Protestant Church in China; Rev. Wei Wu, President, China Christian Council; Rev. Baoping Kan, Residential Vice-chairman, National Committee of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement of the Protestant Church in China; Rev. Weixiang Shan, Residential Vice-president and General Secretary, China Christian Council; Rev. Xuebin Shen, Residential Vice-president, China Christian Council; Rev. Dr Yilu Chen, Vice-president, China Christian Council; Executive Vice President/Professor, NJUTS; Mr Mengfei Gu, Secretary General, National Committee of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement of the Protestant Church in China; and Prof. Qi Duan, Researcher, the Institute of World Religions, Chinese Academy of Social Science.

"Lessons from History for the Further Contextualization of Christianity in China: Looking at Its Nature of Adapting to Mainstream Culture through the History of Christianity in China," by ***Xiaohong Xu***

The nature of the further contextualization of Christianity in China is to adapt to mainstream culture. This article discusses this issue through the history of Christianity in China.

Christianity's first attempt to enter China was seen during the Tang Dynasty (7th century), the most flourishing age of China's feudal society. During the Tang Dynasty, the long-time split of the country ended, and the integration of multi-ethnic people brought many new elements. Christianity, also referred to as the Nestorian Church or Jing Jiao (景教) at that time, entered China in 635 CE. Missionaries were amazed by the richest country in the world and were very encouraged when they received approval to preach. According to the archives, Jing Jiao seemed to develop quite well in the beginning, and the Nestorian Tablet recorded that church buildings spread across the country. However, this expression was exaggerated. Christianity never blended into the mainstream culture in that time. First, it failed to translate the scriptures into the Chinese that local people could understand, and second, it spread well only among Syrians, Persians, and other northern barbarian tribes in ancient China. The dominant people and culture at that time were Han and Confucianism, but the Nestorian Church in China did not blend in, which led to its ultimate failure.

Generally speaking, Christianity in the Yuan Dynasty (13th century) included Nestorianism (Jing Jiao) and Catholicism brought in by Giovanni da Montecorvino and other missionaries. Jing Jiao lost its impact in central China but was largely accepted by grassland tribes. The main reason for this was that missionaries took the strategy of approaching tribe leaders first. Many famous families were Nestorians, and even some wives and concubines of the imperial family. For political and economic reasons, contacts increased between the Mongols and the Vatican, and Catholicism developed quite successfully. Actually, the Han people's culture was more popular among the aristocracy during the Yuan Dynasty. Christians took the strategy of attaching to authorities but not blending with mainstream culture, and this was the reason Christianity disappeared again on the mainland after Yuan was defeated.

By the end of the Ming Dynasty and early Qing Dynasty (16th–18th centuries), the third entry to China of Christianity was seen through the Jesuits. Missionaries like Matteo Ricci were not only intellectuals but they also greatly respected Chinese traditional cultures. At first, those Jesuits assumed that blending with Buddhist and Taoist culture was the way to approach the large Chinese population. Later, they realized they were in error, as the Chinese confused Christianity with a sect of Buddhism. Ricci later discovered Confucianism was the best way to approach mainstream Chinese culture. With his endeavour, Christianity had great impact on some influential government officials, the most famous being Xu Guangqi. Ricci's idea was not to deny Confucianism but to adapt to it and to make up for it. Eventually, the goal of missionaries was to change it.

Because of the solid foundation laid by missionaries, Christianity was also accepted by the authorities after Qing took over the country. Emperor Kangxi (康熙) even appointed some missionaries to important posts. However, the pope and Emperor Kangxi argued fiercely over whether keeping Chinese rituals would affect the integrity of Catholicism. Because the Vatican tried to interfere with China's internal affairs, Kangxi authorized a ban on Christianity that lasted a hundred years.

Robert Morrison and Protestantism arrived in China in 1802, in the form not only of the gospel but also of arrogance and a powerful culture. Except for a few Protestant missionaries who studied Sinology, many of them despised and neglected Chinese culture. They came to China with the aim to take over this country using the gospel, so that Chinese culture could be fundamentally rebuilt and the country become civilized. Conflicts between Chinese people and Christians became more and more intense. Christianity developed in China based on unequal treaties and other issues that resulted in Chinese people's resentments toward it.

In the 1920s, an "Anti-Christianity Movement" broke out. Under the impact of the New Culture Movement, intellectuals pointed to Christianity as the target to get rid of imperialist influences. This brought in people of all political stances. It also marked the starting point for many Christian intellectuals to reflect deeply on the indigenization of Christianity and for thinking and practice on the further contextualization of Christianity in China.

The Independence Movement was the first attempt to further contextualize Christianity in China. Certain insightful people realized the danger of Christianity being denounced as "a foreign religion" by fellow Chinese. Therefore, many Chinese Christians set a goal to be independent. Gradually, leading Christians started independent churches across the country. In the meantime, various missions changed their strategy, such as no longer using US or UK in naming churches in China. The Church of Christ in China, founded in 1927, was a coalition of 16 denominations. However, very few churches in the union could depend on the offerings of their congregants. The majority of churches still had to receive funds from missions. With the practice of the Independence Movement, Christian intellectuals moved on to discussing indigenization as a theoretical issue. Many Chinese Christian intellectuals joined the movement and wrote numerous articles. Although the fervent discussion greatly inspired later Christian generations, it was very difficult to implement the theory. The mission of building a real Chinese church was still an aspiration.

The Three-Self Patriotic Movement in the 1950s, as the first step of the further contextualization of Christianity in China, cut off the relationship

with imperialism completely. It achieved the independent sovereignty to manage the church in China, but it was yet to really blend into Chinese society in terms of theological thought and church life. The rapid growth of rural churches in the 1980s and 1990s reflected the tendency of Chinese Christianity to integrate into the life of the masses and led to the rise in the Christian population. Unfortunately, such upward development did not take place for authentic Chinese theology. After the mid-1990s, urban churches became vibrant. More well-educated Christians joined churches, but few felt attached. With the development of high technology, many discovered they could form fellowships and organize worships themselves. All the factors mentioned above brought a huge challenge for the further contextualization of Christianity in China.

President Xi Jingping pointed out that adhering to the further contextualization of religions in China is key to guiding religions to adapt to a socialist society. The further contextualization of Christianity in China is different from indigenization or contextualization. It covers those two aspects and has a broader meaning. Fundamentally speaking, it contains three elements: political identification, social adaptation, and cultural integration. By better adapting to Chinese society, Christianity will better blend into advanced Chinese culture. Its key point is core socialist values. Today's world is a multicultural one. People have many choices. Mainstream culture is God's voice in this era, and Christianity can only have a bright future if it successfully captures this culture.

"The Church in China Continues to Work for Contextualization, Indigenization, and Adaptation in Socialist Society," by *Wei Wu*

In 2020, the church in China celebrated the 70th anniversary of its Three-Self Patriotic Movement and the 40th anniversary of the founding of the China Christian Council. The two events, which are closely correlated with two historical changes of the nation, are of great importance to Chinese Christians.

In 1950, Christians in China launched the Three-Self (self-governance, self-support, and self-propagation) Patriotic Movement. With the publication of the "Three-Self Manifesto," Chinese Christians clearly demonstrated that Chinese pastors and believers would support the new socialist China led by the Communist Party of China (CPC), cut off the connection with imperialism, and build a church in China based on the Three-Self principles. This critical decision made by Chinese Christians at the significant moment of

historical change determined the way and direction that Chinese Christianity would move ahead.

Since the third plenary session of the 11th CPC Central Committee, Chinese Christians, together with their fellow Chinese people, rising from the ashes of the "Cultural Revolution," have been experiencing the spring of China's reform and opening up. As China strives to restore order in society, the policies on freedom of religious belief were implemented and church activities were gradually resumed.

In October 1980, Christians in China held their third national assembly, the first national meeting for Chinese Christians since the reform and opening up. There were many issues to be addressed. The assembly recognized the great achievements made by the Three-Self Movement and added that the Three-Self principles should be adhered to and that the church in China should be one that shows good self-governance, good self-support, and good self-propagation. Moreover, it was decided that a national Christian Ministerial Organization—the China Christian Council (CCC)—was to be founded. This assembly marks the founding of CCC and the beginning of the CCC&TSPM (National Committee of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement of Protestant Churches in China) mode of organization of the church in China.

After the "Cultural Revolution," churches across China resumed their services, mainly around 1980. Against the historical background of China's reform and opening up, the economic development and implementation of policies on freedom of religious belief have provided the material basis and policy guarantee for the healthy development of the church in China. These 40 years have seen many gratifying changes and witnessed the church in China resume its activities, develop, and grow into maturity.

The 40 years since the founding of CCC have been the best period in history for the development of the church in China. Great progress has been made in, among other areas, theological education, overseas relations, church ministry and administration, social service, and Bible publication. The most fundamental change, however, is that under the principle of loving the country and loving the Christian faith, the church in China has gradually formed a complete and mature identity of its own.

When tracing back to the history of the introduction of Christianity to China, we can see that in old China, churches were planted with the support of unequal treaties. Based on these, many foreign countries built their churches of different denominational backgrounds in China. At that time, Christianity in China was in chaos, with many denominations but no integrated church. There was not even the concept of a Chinese church, not to mention a self-conscious Chinese church. The launch of the Three-Self

Patriotic Movement and the declaration of the "Three-Self Manifesto," however, demonstrated that Chinese Christians would support the new China led by CPC and cut off the connection with and wipe out the impacts of imperialism. The manifesto expressed the will of Chinese Christians to build a self-governed, self-supported, and self-propagated church. It was also a political manifesto of Chinese Christians who were "rising up" with their fellow Chinese people against imperialist aggression. This manifesto united all Christians, or the majority of Christians, into one, and it became the first expression of Chinese Christians to convey people's will. With the Three-Self Movement and the principle of loving the country and loving the Christian faith, Chinese Christians for the first time had their own correct political stance and hence became a united whole.

The 40 years since the founding of the CCC has witnessed the reaching of the consensus that the church in China should become an indigenized church that follows the Three-Self principles and adjusts to socialist society. Moreover, CCC&TSPM has united churches across China and many Chinese Christians through organizational improvement, sharing ministries, and theoretical discussions, based on which the main body of the church in China and its self-consciousness has been formed. The church in China is thus a united faith community, with a distinct political stance and characteristics, conscious of its own orientation and identity. It took shape against the historical background of a new China led by CPC and it matured through the years of China's reform and opening up. The Christianity that was once used as an instrument for imperialist aggression in China is now a religion of the people who live in the socialist society led by CPC. Today, Chinese society has entered a new era of socialism with Chinese characteristics. The church in China has to fulfil its responsibilities so as to witness the grace of God given to China in this era.

The 70-year history of the church in China shows that the path of grace that the Lord has made ready for China is to follow the Three-Self principles and continue to love the country and love the Christian faith. The church in China will therefore continue to promote the loving of the country and the Christian faith, to work for indigenization and contextualization, and to plant God's church and spread the gospel in China.

We thank the Lord for placing us in this great age and will work hard to live up to the expectations of this age. We pray that the Lord will continue to bless the church in China in this new historical era. It is our sincere hope that the church in China will become a church that follows the teachings of the Bible, abides by laws and regulations, meets the expectations of the Party and the

government, and satisfies the people. In conclusion, the church in China will spread the gospel in the Chinese context and bear witness to Christ's salvation.

"Discussion on the Further Contextualization of Christianity in China," by *Baoping Kan*

The Committee of Three-Self Patriotic Movement of the Protestant Church in China marked its 60th anniversary. Over the past six decades, the church in China has gone through ups and downs. However, it has also forged its own extraordinary character. The original intention of establishing the Three-Self was to realize the goal of running the church by Chinese Christians themselves. This mainly involved the issue of the right to run the church and the realization of the need to get rid of the image of foreign religion through Chinese Christians running their own churches. During these 60 years, the church in China has achieved independence, and the right to run the church is in the hands of Chinese pastoral staff. During these 60 years, the church in China has realized union worship, which is worthy of the pride of the church in China, and realized the unity of the church on a wide scale. The church in China also set up Lianghui (two organizations): namely, the China Christian Council (CCC) and the National Committee of Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM) of the Protestant Church in China. During this time, the church in China has achieved the initial goal of self-administration, self-support, and self-evangelism. However, in the ever-changing and rapidly developing Chinese society, the church still faces arduous tasks and challenges, and there is still a long way to go before the church is well-administered, well-supported, and well-evangelized. As we are celebrating this extraordinary day for the church in China, we need to look back to the past, re-examine the present, sum up experiences, and look forward and plan for the future.

This paper is divided into two parts. In the first part, I will do a simple analysis of several current problems faced by the Three-Self cause of the church in China and put forward my own views. In the second part, I will focus on the further contextualization of Christianity in China. These two concepts are not unrelated but share inherent unity. The concept of Three-Self itself requires us to take the further contextualization of Christianity in China as its ideological basis. Without the further contextualization of Christianity in China, Three-Self would lose its core. However, the concept of "the further contextualization of Christianity in China" can never be equated with the concept of "indigenization." We must accurately define the connotations of

"the further contextualization of Christianity in China"; otherwise, there will be deviations in the direction of our Three-Self efforts. The church in China will also lose its vision.

In the 1950s, Chinese Christian leaders initiated TSPM and established the Three-Self Patriotic Movement Committee. Its major purpose is to solve the problem of the right to run the church. In fact, self-administration, self-support, and self-evangelism are all aimed at solving the problem of the right to run the church. Self-administration is to solve the problem of who runs the church. The goal is to run the church with independence and autonomy. Self-support answers the question of who supports the church. The aim is to rely on the church itself and be independent. Self-evangelism refers to who preaches the gospel. Its goal is to let the Chinese themselves preach the gospel in China. In the 1950s, we emphasized that the right to run the church should be in the hands of Chinese Christians; and what we emphasize today is that the right to run the church should in the hands of Chinese pastors, who love their country and church. If we are not rooted in the cultural, historical, and social traditions of our own society, we cannot build our self-identity.

We all have our own self-identity, which is made up of various identities. Christianity in China can form self-consciousness and establish and improve self-identity only on the basis of identifying with Chinese culture, history, and society. Our current problem is that to a certain extent we deliberately distance ourselves from Chinese culture, history, and even society, believing that this distance enables Christianity to remain Christian. The distance does not make Christianity in China more Christian, but only prevents Christianity from becoming Chinese Christianity and taking root in China.

The thinking of the church in China has been influenced by some unhealthy church thoughts overseas, as well as unhealthy social thoughts. The reconstruction of theological thinking that started in 1998 has played a positive role in guiding the theological thinking of the church in China. However, influenced by the social environment, the ideological understanding of the church in China is still mired in the misunderstanding of non-mainstream thoughts. Today's Chinese society is developing toward the goal of realizing the Chinese dream. Society is returning to the mainstream, and culture is returning to the mainstream. The church in China should take advantage of such trends to progress rapidly, return to the mainstream of Chinese culture and history, establish and improve self-awareness, set up self-identity, and speed up the process of realizing the further contextualization of Christianity in China.

China's historical experience and cultural heritage have determined that China must follow its own path. The TSPM of the Protestant Church in China initiated by the predecessors of the church in China in the 1950s was

the political identification with the new China. The practice of political identification is to adapt Christianity to socialist society. The church in China nowadays needs to reflect deeply on the ideological and spiritual wealth left by our predecessors, so that the church can take root and blossom in China.

Christianity in China must strengthen the construction of subject consciousness and be rooted in Chinese culture and history. It should form and perfect itself in China's social reality and become part of its cultural, historical, and social development. As a member of the ecumenical church family with full self-identity, this is not only inheritance but also development of church traditions. It also enriches the experience of the ecumenical church. If Christianity is to exist and develop stably in China for a long time and practice the teachings of Jesus, it must be integrated into Chinese culture and history, accept the mainstream of Chinese society and politics, and adapt to China's socialist society. It is impossible for a seed to gain new life unless it dies. The old form of expression and way of existence perished, and new life and vitality came into being.

"The Further Contextualization of Christianity in China Is on the Way," by *Weixiang Shan*

Localization or indigenization of religions is the choice of all religions in their historical development. Christianity cannot but adapt to the Chinese soil when growing in China. In fact, although the slogan "the further contextualization of Christianity in China" was put forward in recent years, the exploration efforts at the practical level, especially after the founding of New China, have been made throughout the entire 70-year history of the church in China after the liberation of 1949. Of course, there is still a long way to go before realizing the further contextualization of Christianity in China in the full sense. However, we have every reason to say that we have walked a long way in the "the further contextualization of Christianity in China." Observing and analyzing from multiple levels, it is fully justified to say that Christianity in China today is no longer "foreign," but "Chinese"!

A few documents of the Party and the government pointed out that the religious circle and believers already function as a positive force in building socialism with Chinese characteristics. The vast majority of pastors and church members in our country also lived up to expectations. In history, many outstanding Christians actively participated in the patriotic and national salvation movement when the country and the nation were in danger, and these wrote many touching chapters. In the past 40 years of reform and opening

up, Christians have always walked with the people and consciously practised the core socialist values.

When Christianity entered China, missionaries made some sporadic and superficial attempts at indigenization. It was not until later that some insightful Chinese Christians sought the independence and autonomy of Christianity in China and embarked on the path of the further contextualization of Christianity in China in a real sense. After the founding of New China, the greatest contribution made by the Three-Self Patriotic Movement initiated by Chinese Christians is "having got rid of the image of foreign religion" as well as the influence of Western missionary societies. In 1958, the church in China gradually embarked on the road to union worship, fully abandoning the management mode and structure of previous denominational churches, which is the first of its kind in the history of Christianity. We have created the "Chinese miracle" of church unity and provided practical experience and the "Chinese model" for the ecumenical movement of Christianity. The church in China entered the "post-denominational" era and "union worship," which is the vision of Christians for generations.

In the past 70 years, the two church organizations, namely the Three-Self Patriotic Movement Committee (TSPM) and the later established China Christian Council (CCC), have played an obvious role in the independence and healthy development of the church in China. It can be regarded as a successful exploration of how Christianity developed itself in China after it cut off relationship with foreign churches. As a special social organization, it serves as a bridge and link between church and government.

In terms of church administration, the church in China needs to pay attention to the characteristics and influence of local Chinese culture. The organizational structure and operational mode of CCC&TSPM and churches are obviously influenced by contemporary Chinese political culture. Another distinctive feature of the church in China is that a large number of lay people have taken up important positions in the church. There is almost no other church in any country where lay leaders play as important a role in church development as in China. This is a valuable experience for the church in China, which proves that the church led by lay people can be a true Christian church that grows vigorously and can be an example to the rest of the world.

Church services and activities are more harmonious and closer with the traditional Chinese culture and local social life. Jesus does not want us separate from the society or the world. He does not want us to "abolish" but to "fulfil" certain spiritual and cultural traditions. In the reading and interpretation of the Bible, we need to take the "Chinese-style" thinking into consideration. We also need to adopt Chinese expression more in Christian liturgy, art, and worship.

For hundreds of years, since Christianity was introduced into China, it has greatly influenced Chinese culture and language. Many Christian terms have been integrated into the vocabulary system of the Chinese language, not only applied in social sciences, such as literature, philosophy, psychology, and linguistics, but also becoming an integral part of the development and research of modern Chinese culture and language.

Since 1997, the State Council Information Office has issued the white paper, *Freedom of Religious Belief in China* almost every year, introducing China's respect for and protection of freedom of religious belief to the world. The 1997 white paper pointed out, "In the long course of historical development, religions in China have become part of China's traditional ideology and culture."[1] It is worth noting that after integrating with Chinese culture, religious culture in China has become an essential part of traditional Chinese ideology and culture.

The further contextualization of Christianity in China is on the way. However, as Professor Xiaochao Wang of Tsinghua University puts it, Christianity in China today "has been Chinanized to a certain extent, but it has not yet been deeply Chinanized." Professor Xu Yihua of Fudan University also put forward a similar expression of "two Chinanizations": "In China, the Christian religion needs to undergo two Chinanizations: one is the Chinanization of church sovereignty or administration authority, which was basically completed in the 1950s; the other is the Chinanization of doctrine, theology, and liturgy, which is a more arduous and long process!" In this sense, Christianity still has a long way to go before it becomes an authentic Chinese Christian Church.

"CUV Bible and the Contextualization and Indigenization of Christianity in China," by *Xuebin Shen*

The Chinese Union Version of the Bible (CUV Bible) can be regarded as the most widely spread, influential and successful Bible in Chinese translation. It has irreplaceable authority in the church in China and a profound effect on Chinese literature and language. For a century, this holy classic, loved by Chinese Christians and looked up to as standard by the Chinese church, is still conveying the wisdom of truth to us, inspiring Christianity today the way of adapting to society, and making good witness for Christ in

1 *Freedom of Religious Belief in China, 1997*, State Council Information Office.

China. Through the seven characteristics of CUV Bible, this paper attempts to explain the significance of CUV Bible, giving revelation to the contextualization and indigenization of Christianity in China.

The subjectivity of the CUV Bible means the Bible should be translated by and for Chinese people, in order for the Chinese to understand and accept the expression of Christianity. The Chinese church can be enlightened by the subject consciousness in the translation of the CUV Bible. It is the Chinese church itself that truly practises the contextualization and indigenization of Christianity in China and which can speak on behalf of Christianity. Therefore, Chinese Christianity should have a consciousness of subjectivity, seizing the opportunity in a timely manner, making good use of the existing resource, being prepared for danger in times of safety, and seeking progress while maintaining stability to play the main role of Christianity in China.

The CUV Bible has gained recognition and has been widely accepted in the ten years since its publication. This is where the popularity of CUV Bible lies. The realization of the contextualization and indigenization of Christianity in China must also be popular, with reference not only to the popularity of church members, but also to the practice of the majority of Chinese Christians, expressing belief in a form that can be understood, recognized, affirmed, and appreciated by the public. It is necessary for Christians to have interfaith dialogue and exchange, to understand why they can be deeply rooted in the heart of the public, and to learn from their successful experiences so as to truly realize the integration of Christianity and Chinese society.

The mutual promotion of the CUV Bible and the vernacular movement is an important example of the cultural character of the CUV Bible. The CUV Bible also shaped the common language of the church in China, having a profound impact on Chinese people around the globe and in the Chinese-speaking world. The contextualization and indigenization of Christianity in China also requires Christians to interact and integrate with Chinese culture, conveying the Christian spirit within the Chinese cultural language system and core socialist values, making itself an inseparable part of Chinese culture. At the same time, Christianity with Chinese characteristics will also make unique witness to the cultures of the world. Christianity in China will contribute to the promotion of Chinese culture on the international stage and enhance the cultural confidence and strength of the nation.

The CUV Bible makes reference to the original text of Bible and other translation versions, including the existing Chinese Mandarin translations and English revised versions. The translation principle formulated by the Translation Committee is also based on experience in translating the Bible to Chinese. This implies the continuity of the CUV Bible: that it is not

"something out of nothing." The contextualization and indigenization of Christianity in China has long been practised and CUV Bible itself can be seen as a specific example. In the process of the contextualization and indigenization of Christianity in China, the experience of predecessors shall be inherited and the wisdom of adaption is worth learning. On the basis of inheriting the tradition of ecumenical belief, the church should pay more attention to the historical tradition and valuable experience of the current Chinese churches. Nowadays, the church in China needs to continue to follow the steps of its predecessors, inherit the spirit of the Chinese church, keep the faith unchanged, adhere to the Three-Self Principles, have a sense of patriotism, and adapt to the socialist society.

Although differences and disputes emerged among the various translators of CUV Bible, they eventually coordinated with each other, reached consensus, and facilitated the final version of this excellent work. The importance of unity was emphasized during the translation work. The realization of the contextualization and indigenization of Christianity in China requires the spirit of unity, which is to connect with the Chinese people, share the future and destiny with the Chinese nation, and develop at the same pace as China's socialist society. For the sake of China's "strengthening the country and revitalizing the religion," all Christians in China should be in cooperation and make unremitting efforts.

Every ministry of translation is pragmatic and meticulous. In terms of translation principles, the translation strives to maintain a balance between being "easy for readers to read" and "maintaining the author's uniqueness." The pragmatic spirit has become the main factor for the popularity of CUV Bible. The contextualization and indigenization of Christianity in China is not a slogan or coping device, but the striving for a wider space and more opportunities for its own survival and development. Chinese Christianity needs to be pragmatic, down-to-earth, and adapt to the times and the society.

All the translators of CUV Bible cherished the "fruit" of their work. Despite the large number of translators having different educational backgrounds and language styles, the CUV Bible attained a unified style and coherence. This is beyond imagination and of holiness. The contextualization and indigenization of Christianity in China has sanctity as well. Christianity still has vitality in China, serving as light and salt to witness Christ. History has confirmed that God is always leading and caring for the Chinese church. Chinese Christians are concerned with the teachings and spiritual guidance of the Bible. The church should explore the teachings that are conducive to social harmony and progress. This will bring everyone to realize that the contextualization and indigenization of Christianity in China are God's realistic

revelations to the Chinese church and the wisdom of the Holy Spirit leading the Chinese church to the new era.

The CUV Bible may be called the historical model of the contextualization and indigenization of Christianity in China, whose process is underway. The new era has new content. The seven characteristics above can be inspiration to the Chinese churches nowadays.

"Build a City or Light a Lamp: A Preliminary Study of the Social Roles and Functions of the Church in China," by *Yilu Chen*

"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house." (Matt. 5:14-16; ESV). There have been many different opinions on how to understand "build a city" or "light a lamp" from the perspective of the group image and the role of the church, that is, the relationship between church and society and the role and function of Christianity in society. Some advocate "building a city"—transforming society and making a Christian kingdom. Others advocate "lighting a lamp"—the church doing what is within its reach in society, playing a supporting role, and making its own contribution. The former is a mission-oriented church, and the latter is a service-oriented church.

This article analyzes the historical background of Augustine's theological thinking of "City of God" and "City on Earth" and analyzes why the church in China should "light a lamp" in society and be salt and light, rather than "building a city." Chinese Christians shall learn the spirit of loving each other and serving each other, which is true patriotism for people of faith. Everyone has their own homeland and should love the country where they were born and live. Chinese Christian leader Y. T. Wu pointed out that "the Kingdom of God" should be in the kingdom on earth and play its role there. This is true patriotism for people of faith. Bishop K. H. Ting's theological thinking of "Cosmic Christ" emerged out of the ideological framework of "City of God" and "City on Earth," expanded the understanding of Christ's status and work, and prompted Chinese Christians to see Christ from the perspective of socialist builders. The theological thinking about "the Christ of the universe" has two ends. One is that Christianity dominates, cares, and loves the entire universe; the other is that Christ's sovereignty over the entire universe takes love as its essence. We are Christians, so we should serve and love our neighbour.

There has never been a caesaropapism or a real separation between religion and state throughout the history of China. We look forward to a harmonious relation between state and church; but the reality is that the state takes the dominant position. Therefore, the role of Christianity in China is quite obvious. It may be difficult for us to play the role of "building a city," but opportunities for "lighting the lamp" are everywhere. The church in China should be willing to and brave enough to light a lamp in order to explain the true meaning of "love our country and our religion" and "glorify God and benefit people."

"Post-denominational Period: Heading toward a United Church in China," by *Mengfei Gu*

In the early 19th century, Christianity was introduced into China. Chinese Christians deeply regretted that missionaries also brought in various denominations arising from different historical, social, cultural, political, and economic contexts in the West. Missionaries blindly copied denominations with wholly Westernized forms and ideas in China. In addition, local denominations also emerged in China, resulting in multiple disputes and mutual denigration in their gospel preaching. This undermined the overall image of Christianity in Chinese society and its ability to bear witness to the Chinese people, which was increasingly an obstacle and a hindrance to gospel spreading.

Encouraged by the spirit of the ecumenical movement from 1910 to 1920, especially during the indigenization movement in the 1920s, some intellectuals in Chinese Christian circles began to reflect on denominational issues. In 1922, the National Christian Conference was held in Shanghai with the theme "The Chinese Church." The conference clearly pointed out that the future of the Chinese church lay in "Unity, Indigenization, and Sanctification." In 1950, Chinese Christians launched the Three-Self Patriotic Movement, which aimed to eliminating the "stigma of foreign religion" by achieving self-administration, self-reliance, and self-evangelism, and to promote the independence and autonomy of the church in China.

In the process of participating in the Three-Self Patriotic Movement, Christians from different denominations gradually realized that there was nothing principled about their differences. With many prayers and reflection, they gradually realized that it was time to tear down the high walls of sectarianism that separate Chinese Christians, enhance harmonious relations, and become united. In 1958, Chinese Christians began to practise union worship. In order to meet the growing needs for gospel preaching and church

building, the China Christian Council (CCC) was established in 1980. One of its tenets was to adhere to union worship and to advocate mutual respect despite different opinions, beliefs, and liturgies.

After the establishment of CCC, the original organizational structure of different denominations in China ceased to exist, and the church in China entered a post-denominational period. In order to consolidate the fruitful results of union worship, the CCC and the National Committee of Three-Self Patriotic Movement of the Protestant Churches in China formulated and promulgated a series of books and documents in a timely manner in the 1980s and 1990s, including "The New Hymnal," "Questions and Answers on Christian Essentials," and "Chinese Christian Church Regulations."

In 1998, Bishop K. H. Ting initiated the ministry of Theological Reconstruction, encouraging the clergy to summarize theological thinking of the church in China and conduct theological explorations for the healthy development of the church in China based on real practice and experience. Chinese church leaders believed that the church in China should, as always, strengthen unity efforts based on their own experiences while respecting diversity and differences, and pay more attention to the need to further deepen ecclesiological research based on the current context of China. This means that the church in China should not settle for the current post-denominational era based on mutual respect but should go further and eventually build a fully united church. Or perhaps, at least in the near future, we will deliver some results of ecclesiology, and make breakthroughs in theology, structure, regulations, and other aspects.

Almost 100 years later, building a united church in China is still a vision of Chinese Christians. We are grateful that, with the leading of the Holy Spirit, the church in China has taken a significant step on the road to unity: Chinese Christians have realized union worship, and the church in China has entered a post-denominational era. The church in China is walking on a new and living road. Although it will be a long journey, we will not give up. "But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on towards the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." (Phil. 3:13-24; ESV).

"The Adaptation of Church in Society—Taking the Churches in Shanghai Pudong New District as Examples," by *Qi Duan*

The contextualization and indigenization of Christianity in China began when Christianity was introduced to China. The adaptation of church in society is an important part of it, and includes two aspects. The first is from the social side: that is, how Christianity is adapted to today's society. The second aspect is cultural and concerns the integration with Chinese culture. This research report takes four churches in Shanghai Pudong as examples to demonstrate the churches' process of adaptation in contextualizing and indigenizing Christianity in China.

For historical, social, and cultural reasons, the contextualization and indigenization of Christianity in China does not have a unified model. Although the four churches in questions—namely, the Gospel Church (福音堂), the Hong'en Church (鸿恩堂), the Salvation Church (救恩堂), and the Jiexin Church (洁心堂)—are all located in Pudong, development varies in different regions and the composition of church members is complex. Thus, the churches' conditions are not at the same level.

To analyze the integration of the Christian church into society, it is useful to introduce the evolution of Pudong. In January 1993, the administrative area of Pudong New District was expanded after its official establishment. Since Pudong New District is a state-level new district, its development pattern is quite different from that in Puxi. In recent years, a large number of people from Puxi have moved to Pudong, and a significant proportion of the labor force, including migrant workers, have been absorbed. The flow of population is consistent with the flow of Christians. Many people moved from Puxi to Pudong or other districts and counties. Pudong is now a population input region, with Christianity prospering in recent years.

From the perspective of development, Pudong can be categorized into two types of region. First, it is the national development zone. Most of the commercial buildings and newly built residential communities in these areas are bought or rented by white-collar workers and businesspeople. In this region, the Gospel Church and the Hong'en Church are striving to develop in the direction of integrating with the international metropolis. Gospel Church believers mainly comprise white-collar workers from surrounding large companies and a group of Shanghai residents who have relocated from Puxi. The education level of believers is generally high, but this does not mean that their outlook on life and value is correct. Many white-collar laborers go to the church with various problems and seek help. The crucial issue is how the

church can help them. The pastoral staff and church members believe that vocational education should be the first step. The Gospel Church often organizes lectures, inviting all kinds of people to share their experiences. This is very attractive to Christians, showing that the church can meet the spiritual needs of the church members. When going to church, they can gain energy and bring it into their lives, which is beneficial to individuals, families and the country. The Gospel Church is a good example of the unity of Christianity and society.

Hong'en Church is another church that worships in foreign languages. The establishment of the church can be seen as a sign of China's opening up. The church is located in Jinqiao Town of Pudong, which is also the site of the foreign-related Biyun Community. There are more than 2,000 church members in the whole church, including about 1,200 believers at the Chinese service and 800 believers at the English service, of which more than 100 are children. These two types of believers live in peace, respect each other, and participate in their own services. Although they share the same church, their services are independent, showing that foreigners have full freedom to participate in church activities in China. Improving the quality of believers has become an important issue for the church. To improve the quality of believers, raising the quality of volunteers should be valued. The church has high standards for volunteers, providing training courses. In order to improve the literacy of believers, the church plays active and leading role in organizing various activities for younger generations. Through these activities, the distance between believers with high and low levels of culture has been shortened. In this way, the cohesion of the church is strengthened.

Another type of zone in Pudong New District can be seen in areas such as Chuansha and Nanhui, which are in the process of urbanization. In these, farmers have become urban residents. The Salvation Church in Chuansha and the Jiexin Church in Nanhui belong to the second category of churches, which are still mainly devoted to transforming the mindset of rural believers and making the churches truly urban ones.

The Salvation Church in Chuansha can be regarded as a developing church, mainly for people who come here to rent a house or relocate from Puxi to buy a house. The number of local Christians is quite small. Although church members are not that stable, it has grown rapidly in recent years. In 2007, the meeting point could not hold such a great number of Christians, and with the help of the government, the church rented an old factory building. Currently, more than 2,000 people attend the prayer every week. The church now has its own new meeting point, which can accommodate more than 1,000 people and has better facilities.

The Jiexin Church in Nanhui is another church in Pudong where the composition of believers is changing in parallel with the development of Pudong. Church members were mainly local farmers at first. However, increasing numbers of Christians from outside Pudong are joining. Now the settlers in Nanhui Town comprise three kinds of people, locals, settlers from Puxi, and migrant workers. The Jiexin Church can be regarded as the best church in Nanhui. This has attracted many Christians to gather here and church membership has recently reached more than 4,000. Overall, the education level of believers is not high. Most of the Christians have a rural background, so the church's pastoral and problem-solving mode has adopted a rural model. Besides, it is also clearly realized that with the development of Pudong, more and more people will come to settle here in the future. Facing a new round of urbanization, the Jiexin Church must transform from a rural church model to a big city church model in the future. To this end, the quality of church believers needs to be improved urgently.

In the process of Pudong's transformation from rural society to a fully modernized international metropolis, these churches in Pudong above are all striving and constantly adapting themselves to the rapidly developing society. They are always on the road to combining Christianity and society through practical action—that is, the road of contextualization and indigenization of Christianity in China. The contextualization and indigenization of Christianity in China is by no means a slogan, but an action. The future of the Chinese church lies in connecting with society rather than self-isolation.

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CHAPTER 2

Report of the Aizawl Theological College, the United Theological College, and the South Asia Institute of Advanced Christian Studies Conference, India

H. Lalrinthanga, Chongpongmeren Jamir, and Michael Biehl

The overall goal of the international IMC study process is to identify important topics and tasks for mission and for cooperation in mission in the present and future. Insights were drawn from the retrospective view on cooperation in mission in the decades in which the International Missionary Council (IMC) was founded and functioned. In the second phase of the process, which began after the midterm conference in November 2021 and ended in June 2022, the centres were asked to focus on current burning issues in mission and to study opportunities for cooperation in mission. The steering committee especially encouraged centres in the same region to organize a joint event and share their findings on current and pressing issues in mission and evangelism in their region.

The study groups of the Aizawl Theological College (ATC), the United Theological College (UTC), and the South Asia Institute of Advanced Christian Studies Conference (SAIACS), India agreed to organize such a conference. ATC and the Synod of the Mizoram Presbyterian Church extended an invitation and offered hospitality for this meeting. Representatives of other study centres were invited, and, in addition to those from UTC-SAIACS, a few from study centres in Oxford, Germany, and Romania joined the conference which convened in April 2022 at the ATC.

The Conference

The theme identified for the conference was "Ecumenical mission and relationships in the context of nationalist majoritarian exclusivist movements." This theme was chosen with a view to study Hindutva as a political and

cultural ideology in India, recognizing that reports on comparable ideological formations in other regions would enrich the discussion.

The conference started with short reports on the activities of all the centres represented at the conference in order to take stock and prepare the ground on which to tackle the common topic. These reports are not repeated here. The reports of the represented centres on their activities and studies in first phase of the process can be found in the respective volume. The conference continued with a key lecture and inputs from representatives of the different study centres and concluded with some results to be communicated.

Keynote Address on the Conference Topic

The organizing committee had invited Rev. Dr Roger Gaikwad, former general secretary of the National Council of Churches in India (NCCI) and theological educator, to deliver a keynote address on the chosen topic. His concern was to address the mission of the church in India in the context of the plurality of church traditions in the country and the religiously plural character of the country. He characterized India as the land from which important religions have originated and which is home to several indigenous faiths and tribal religions that have survived the influence of major religions for centuries. The peaceful co-existence of diverse religious groups through the centuries in general has made India a unique country. This is currently threatened by the homogenizing ideology of Hindutva. The pressure to rewrite history according to this ideology is imposing the narrative of one nation, which attempts to wipe out the plurality and multitude that always existed and continue to exist on the continent.

Though India's constitution defines the country as secular and protects freedom of religion or belief, there are concerns among religious minorities and other minority groups. Human rights groups have criticized the government, led by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) since 2014, for not doing enough to protect minorities. Human Rights Watch, in its 2019 report on India, claimed that "the government failed to properly enforce Supreme Court directives to prevent and investigate mob attacks, often led by BJP supporters, on religious minorities and other vulnerable communities."[1]

1 "India: Events of 2019," World Report 2020, Human Rights Watch, https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2020/country-chapters/india#7ebcf0; "Persecution of Christians and Religious Minorities in India," Research Briefing, UK Parliament, 22 February 2022, https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cdp-2022-0042/.

Mission, ecumenism, and nationalism in the south and northeast

What does mission mean and what could ecumenical cooperation look like in such a context? Gaikwad highlighted observations in the reports of the two Indian centres related to the International Missionary Council–Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (IMC-CWME) centenary process, based in Bangalore and Aizawl, which could be a basis for attempting to answer these and related questions. He focused first on the analyses of ecumenical and dialogical approaches to religions in Indian theology in different phases over the last 100 years and their implications for mission. Since there are several Christian traditions in the country, there have been different understandings and expressions of mission that differ widely in the southern and northeastern regions of the country.

Although missionaries in general had a negative view of the religion of the people among whom they worked, relations with people of other faiths constitute a core element in ecumenical theological thinking in India. It can be noted that India provided the background for discussion on interfaith dialogue at the missionary conferences both in Jerusalem in 1928 and in Tambaram in 1938. Indian Christian contributions are rooted in a lived experience of a multireligious context, where relation with people of other faiths is part of their everyday experience. Thus, their contribution to global discussion on interfaith relations is an overflow of local discussion on mission theology and practices.[2] Theological reflections in India tended, however, to focus on the dominant advaitic Hindu thoughts. This has failed to address the voices of those groups, which numerically constitute the majority of Indian Christians.

One of the findings in the Bangalore regional consultation was the location of mission and ecumenical discussion within the specific context of a rise in nationalism in early 20th-century India. This put Indian Christians in a dilemma. While there were both missionaries and native Christians who advocated Christian participation in the movement, there were many who were apprehensive of Christian involvement in a movement dominated by Hindus. The uneasy dilemma of Indian Christians of the time is well captured by the failure of the National Council of Churches to take a definite stand in the political struggle for national freedom.[3]

2 Chongpongmeren Jamir, "Christian Mission and Cooperation in a Multireligious Context: Mapping the Impact of the IMC/CWME Movement in Rethinking Mission Theology and Practice in India," in *A Hundred Years of Mission Cooperation: The Impact of the International Missionary Council 1921-2021*, ed. Risto Jukko (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2022), 159–84, at 170–71.

3 Jamir, "Christian Mission and Cooperation," 168.

While the union movements and conferences brought together the missionaries and mission agencies, the Indian Christians were also searching for an Indian church that developed in the context of nationalism, freedom struggle, and the Indian Christians' search for autonomy. The deep sense of nationalism evoked in the minds of the Indian Christians for the vision of an indigenous Indian Christian community free from the Western denominationalism and mission allegiance.

One of the findings in the Aizawl regional consultation was that the "one field, one mission" policy in Northeast India led to the establishment of strong ties between denominational Christianity and ethnicity, with members of various disparate villages who had hitherto constantly waged war with each other coming together under the idea of a common ethnic identity and forming one community. Christianity and Christian missions fermented what F. S. Downs calls "Tribal Ecumenism." This crystallizing of a shared ethnic identity is achieved through the "gift" of a common language, basically through scripture and hymn translations as well as other, mostly Christian, literature in a standard dialect. These dialects were usually one dialect among many but which the missionaries first exposed to and then learned.

During the period under review, Northeast India slowly underwent political reorganization and a reconfiguration of the federal states. During this period, Mizoram went through a great deal of political unrest in the 1960s. A widely shared sentiment among tribal communities in the northeast was that in the eyes of the central government they were not considered part of the Indian nation. As scheduled backward tribes, they were said to be still in need of developing into a full citizenship. Because of revolutionary and independent movements, some of the states in the northeast were and still are under harsh and violent military special regimes. Church leaders did what they could to facilitate peaceful negotiations between the central government and the revolutionaries for justice. Ecumenical relations between the two big churches in Mizoram, the Presbyterians and Baptists, were still good in general, though there were signs of tensions between the two.

One observes, therefore, a history of ecumenism, mission, and a relation to nationalism with distinct different emphases in the south and the northeast. Christian mission both in Northeast India and South India faced the accusation of proselytization using the leverage of social, medical, and economic upliftment of the people by the dominant Hindu community.

Inter-church relationships and mission and in the context of politico-religious fundamentalism and communalism

From 1992—the demolition of the Babri Masjid—to 2022 there have been around 34 instances (and the count is still on) of communal riots in India. Of these, 25 were Hindu-Muslim conflicts. Especially in 2007 and 2008, waves of attacks on Christian communities like Khandamal and other parts of India have to be noted. All were instigated by Hindutva-related organizations. Ever since Modi became the prime minister, violence against religious, cultural, political, linguistic, and ethnic minorities has become routine in the country. Soon after the BJP government was elected to the centre after the 2014 elections, Dharm Jagran Samiti's (DJS) Uttar Pradesh head, a Hindutva organization, said, "Our target is to make India a Hindu Rashtra by 2021. The Muslims and Christians don't have any right to stay here. So they would either be converted to Hinduism or forced to run away from here." DJS was also at the forefront of the Ghar Wapsi programme, which prodded or forced Muslims to "return" to Hinduism.[4]

A Pew review finds that in 2020, nearly two-thirds of Hindus (64 percent) say it is very important to be Hindu to be truly Indian. A majority of Hindus (59 percent) feel that being able to speak Hindi is very important to being truly Indian. Hindus who link their religion with national identity tend also to link the Hindi language with being authentically Indian.[5]

It has not been forgotten that the narrative of Christian mission in India has been constructed in the language of conquest and colonization. Indian Christians continue to find themselves being labelled as anti-nationals in identity mapping within the India society. Along with other minority communities, Christians are considered as "outsiders" in the communal construction of independent India. Many Hindus accuse Indian churches of using the mission models of Christian monopolizing, eradicating Indian cultural values, propagating Christian theologies and philosophies through theological seminaries and colleges, and using medical mission, charity, and social welfare works for proselytization purposes. Christian ecumenical effort was also observed with suspicion as a tool to create a Western Christian empire. Efforts toward Christian unity have been interpreted by some as an international

4 Ghar Wapsi is a ritual in which those who have left Hinduism for other religions are re-embracing the faith of their ancestors.

5 Manolo Corichi and Jonathan Evans, "For Most of India's Hindus, Religious and National Identities are Closely Linked," Pew Research Center, 20 July 2021, https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/07/20/for-most-of-indias-hindus-religious-and-national-identities-are-closely-linked/.

conspiracy. The challenge for Christian mission in India is to show what authentic Christian faith is about and how it can be practised in India.

Division of the churches and Christian community in the northeast region is mainly historically conditioned as they were Christianized by the various Western missions of diverse denominations and as their loyalty to their parent churches they still remained in their historical heritage. Tribalism is a big problem—the search for smaller identities, like clan identity or ethnic identity, is becoming divisive not only in politics but also in religion that fosters the emergence of ethnic-based churches exclusive of others. Movements for the cooperation of churches and Christian unity in the region have been enhanced largely by a common problem or enemy.

The current trend of politics and faith in India is dominated by the majoritarian-minority discourse advocated by radical Hindu political organizations (like RSS, VHP, DJS and others). Their agenda of a unified homogeneous India leaves no space for tolerance of the minority communities, who are labelled as anti-nationals. In this larger context, the church in India has been grappling with issues of religious freedom, communal harmony, poverty, and social and political exploitation in the context of the plurality of faiths practised by the people in India, while ecumenical discussion elsewhere has been struggling to evolve a theological response to religious plurality.[6]

In formulating such mission policies and strategies, the voice from the margin, especially the indigenous experience, is ignored or neglected. The majority of Christian population are ethnic tribal groups that had been dehumanized by the dominant groups. They are now struggling for selfhood in various ways that are often considered by the dominant group as stoked by Christianity. The interplay between this branding by the dominant groups, their self-understanding, and their dual sense of mission to dominant group—to tell the good news and to free themselves from their dominative clutches—makes Christian mission intricate in the region. The epistemic input of indigenous communities is not perceived as significant to the discussions of truth claims and the enterprise of Christian mission in and from Northeast India.

Other Regions—Similar Problems

The conference participants thanked Roger Gaikwad for his reading of the reports, which highlighted the differences in the experience in the south and the northeast regions and the difficulties that efforts for an ecumenical cooperation

6 Jamir, "Christian Mission and Cooperation," 183.

in mission meet. Before attempting to formulate some possible approaches to tackle these issues, they listened to the reflection for other contexts.

Dr Cristian Sonea, Romanian Orthodox professor of theology, presented a paper with some reflections on the dominant majoritarian narrative on *Russkiy mir*. This ideology clubs various peoples, nations, and ethnic groups, denizens on the region of the former Soviet Union, by claiming that they share the same beliefs/values, a region with a common history and a pan-Russian language. This ideology is promoted to legitimize the attack on the Ukraine, which was raging while the conference participants met. Sonea underlined how groups within the Russian Orthodox church consider the whole region as Orthodox canonical territory. Attempts for independence like the Ukraine are explained by an unlawful and sinful reorientation toward detrimental Western libertarian influences and a concomitant loss of Orthodox orthodoxy. The church therefore requests from the legitimate political power to ensure the integrity and orthodoxy of the territory. In this perspective, it is not the Russian government instrumentalizing religion. It is the church requesting the government to perform its legitimate task in the "symphony" of altar and throne.

He quoted Patriarch Cyril who said,

> The Church is not called Russian because of its ethnicity. This appellation indicates that the Russian Orthodox Church performs a pastoral mission among peoples who accept the Russian spiritual and cultural tradition as the basis of their national identity, or at least as an essential part of it. That is why in this sense we also consider Moldova to be part of this Russian world. At the same time, the Russian Church is the most multinational Orthodox community in the world and seeks to develop its multinational character.[7]

Sonea introduced in his analysis the term "protochronism," a term used in Romania to characterize a tendency to ascribe an idealized past to the country as a whole. It is based on a narrative that is historically unreliable but that offers an ideology to enhance a nationalist majoritarian discourse. In a comparable way, *Russkiy mir* could be considered as such a protochronism basing the national Russian identity—in the above sense—on the baptism of the *Rus* in Kiev.

Dr Michael Biehl, from the German study centre and a member of the IMC centenary steering committee, presented a paper on populist movements in

7 http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/928446.html?fbclid=IwAR1isqn0e1It85FPzU6oWRQf6K4LSUmxStsoahy4-LWQhAcFf2b1JmL5b9Q.

Germany. He observed that populist movements in Europe translate political and economic questions into questions of cultural sovereignty. The populist movements are trying to establish this cultural sovereignty through a selective expropriation of the continent's culture and history, which could be described as a form of repressive secularization. Christian Europe is transformed into a region that is defined by its value as the occident. The religious imprints, especially of the history of the Jewish and of the Islamic communities on the continent are denied. These values of the occident are used to re-establish nations as the subjects of politics, nations defined by a majoritarian culture—language, shared history, descent, religion.

Christian values are stripped of their religious basis and taken as the cultural DNA of a closed group—a nation, an ethnic group—composed of the rightful. The secularization of religious values and the "othering" of the religion of those who allegedly do not belong to Europe, especially Muslims, are blended into the discourse on cultural sovereignty. Such a discourse seeks to establish the identity of distinct nations and ethnicities. The "others" are excluded on the basis of their national character, their culture, and their religion and thus can never become part of the occidental value community. In the repressive secularism religion, culture and nature coalesce and become inseparable.

The programme of these populist movements is exclusion on the basis of principles, not a mission to win others to join a common cause. Mission in such a context also needs to emphasize the Christian faith as a faith and not as a culture of a nation, as well as to form alliances with all fighting for a just and participatory society.

In Way of a Conclusion

Participants in India agreed that in the first phase of the IMC study process they encountered the optimism of the 20th century—that there is an inclusive, relativistic culture among the Hindu majority in India. The dominant fundamentalist Hindu right-wing groups, such as the RSS, today promote an exclusivist policy with the vision of a homogeneous India, where homogeneity is identified with conformity to what is called Hindu culture. It seemed to the conference participants that the comparison with populist movements elsewhere could help to understand this fundamentalist ideology deeper. The concept of repressive secularism may be described as translating religious beliefs and practices into cultural values and the adequate lifestyle, which together define in an essentializing way the "nature" of a group. Therefore, no one can change their affiliation. Accepting the invitation to change one's

religious persuasion is not seen as a fundamental right of an individual, but as a result of an evil and violent attack that damages the nature of a person. The larger group is attacked by such a step and therefore finds itself compelled to lash out. Insisting on the right to have a distinct identity, like the one of an Indian Christian, is tagged as an exclusivist stand.

This seems to be one of the tensions within which Christian mission and ecumenical cooperation currently operate in India. The participants discussed the need to focus on a critical evolution of the way we think of ourselves and the other and on transforming ourselves. Professor Sonea proposed to re-read the concept of metanoia. In the Orthodox tradition, it had been used in intra-Christian relationship. In the Indian context, it could be used to address the idea that engagement and dialogue with people of other faiths is not just an exercise of finding commonality. It is a critical evolution of one's own faith, whereby the identity of the church is essentially a witness through engagement and dialogue.

In the first phase of the study process, questions were asked such as how Indian Christians might address the continuing suspicions various Hindu groups have about Christian mission. It also was asked how minority communities like Christians can contribute meaningfully to nation-building in India.

The Indian participants recognized that in many churches in India, the passion for evangelism is ingrained in the lifeblood of the church, particularly in the churches in Northeast India. We can also say that this is true of evangelical churches as well. While recognizing that churches should witness fully to their deepest conviction, as stated in the World Council of Churches (WCC) guidelines on dialogue with people of other faiths and ideologies, it should be done within the framework of long-term approach by living together with people of various traditions and fate.

They also find encouragement from the fact that Christian mission has contributed to nation-building in various ways, such as in education, social reforms, economic development, and others. However, it was also noted that the situation is more acute now in light of the labelling of Christian social activities as acts of appeasement toward forced conversion. Yet in spite of the challenge, Indian Christians must continue to contribute toward nation-building by fostering Christian presence through involvement in social activities in society.

Third, an idea that comes across very strongly in both phases of the study process is the concept of informal approach to mission, where the focus is on living an authentic Christian life as witness to the truth.

Looking at the history of the IMC, there was already in the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh of 1910 a great emphasis on the

importance of theological formation of missionaries. And this impetus was carried forward by the IMC until the formation of the Theological Education Fund in 1956. The present study process would be incomplete without drawing our attention to theological formation and what we might learn from the study to shape future curricula. Theological formation should not just equip people with the history and ethics of our faith, but also impart knowledge of social problems and the means to engage with them.

Further topics addressed during the conference included the following.

Relation between nation/culture/religion:

- Religion is the medium of our response – how far is this medium helpful in coping with exclusivist movement?
- Protochronism (as a strategy) reminds us of the way Hindutva represents *sanatana dharma* (being the way of life) as the "nature" of everyone and everything.
- We need to tackle elements in identity constructions, those which are unsaid and those which are based on an antagonism to other conflicting identity constructions
- There is a possible link between a belief in being elected (by God) with ethno-nationalism.
- There is a link between a shared identity and shared space.
- How do identity (movements) and faith/religions interact?

A need to decolonize our theologies and churches was identified as a way of critical self-evaluation and of metanoia:

- One question is who is decolonizing from what?
- The challenge for the northeast is to decolonize its mission and theology in a period when a colonizing movement (Hindutva) is targeting Christians.

For mission and interfaith dialogue, we need to overcome exclusivist attitudes by focusing on *metanoia* as transforming of ourselves and on a critical evaluation of one's own faith:

- Mission: conversion or uplifting of humankind?
- Dialogue: hidden conversion strategy? Mutual encounter? Shared life space?
- Ordinary life dialogue (as a model for dialogue and for mission)

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CHAPTER 3

Report from St Paul's University Study Centre, Kenya

Paul Mwangi and Esther Mombo

Old Issues and New Questions

A celebration is more than ticking a date; it is a commemoration of the ideals and achievements of an institution, and it is also an occasion to take stock. Although no participants from Africa were present in 1921 at the founding event of the International Missionary Council (IMC), Africa today is a major stakeholder in global Christianity. St Paul's was one of the centres in the international study process marking the 100th jubilee of this event.

The study process was one of those occasions to look back into the history of collaboration in mission and to envision a future for a common mission. For the participants of the St Paul's group, it offered an opportunity to look back to what happened to bring Christianity in Eastern Africa to the status of today. It was a time to look into the future of Christianity and to the Christianity of the future in Africa. In celebrating 100 years of Christian missions in the world and specifically in Africa, it was about looking afresh at old issues and responding to new questions.

One hundred years ago, Christian mission had been linked with the colonial onslaught on Africa. Before the missionaries arrived, Africa and Africans had their traditional religions which were inextricably linked with their social, political, and even economic life, because Africans have a holistic epistemology and ontology in which religion and the secular were not opposites but complements. Mission work was rooted in the western social, political, and economic world view. The methodology used to establish churches was a fourfold ministry of evangelism, education, health service, and industrial training. This ministry changed the public worldview of the African societies. The researchers of the study centre were able to revisit the old mission issues by asking new questions. Some of the old issues were reflected in the themes that were discussed in the research papers that were presented. As well

as revisiting old issues with new questions, the participants reflected on the future horizons of Christianity in Africa.

In order to take stock and to envision the future, the study centre chose to critically engage the past, present, and future of Christian missions from multidisciplinary perspectives.

The Committee

The study centre was led by Professor Esther Mombo, and the members of its committee were Dr E. Okello Ogera, Dr Paul N. Mwangi, and Dr Wanjiku Kihuha. The committee decided on a theme for the research which was "A century of ecumenical partnerships in mission: Perspectives from Kenya." The committee worked on the list of people to be invited. The invitations were sent to scholars and practitioners of mission from different institutions. The scholars were identified from a multidisciplinary perspective. Most of the invited responded positively and were asked to write abstracts on their chosen theme of research and to attend the concluding conference with drafts of their papers. Three East African countries (Kenya, Uganda, and Burundi) and one West African (Nigeria) were represented bringing out different perspectives on the various themes on missions in the region.

The participants, inclusive of men and women, came from different learning institutions and universities and hailed from different Christian denominations and different traditions—from African Instituted Churches, Salvation Army, Pentecostal, Anglican, Reformed, Evangelical churches and from the Africa Inland Church.

The climax of the different research projects was the conference at Jumia Conference Centre on 4–5 August 2022, where the writers met and presented a total of 13 papers with their findings. The participants also formed a multigenerational dialogue in discussing their research findings to capture the 100 years and what has happened in Africa in the growth and development of Christianity.

The Topics

The papers presented at the conference touched on the following topics:

- mission history across generations
- biographies on the so-far undocumented life of African missionaries

- case studies in the practice of mission today
- leadership and the establishment of the church in Africa
- theory and practice of Christian mission historiography
- innovative ways of teaching mission history in universities and theological colleges
- new trends in mission theology
- innovative and creative budgets for progressive church missions
- significance of social change in the practice of missions
- urbanization and mission history
- challenges and opportunities to the ecumenical movement in the 21st century

The presentations were divided into three overarching themes. The first was on methodology of mission and practical implications in a changing world that has communality as one of the major characteristics. The second theme presentations discussed contemporary issues in mission, peace-building, and transformative leadership, and contextual realities of mission. The third set of articles was about the practice of Christian mission in a growing urbanized context. The papers raised issues of social responsibility, social change, and social action and compassion, and one explored the significance of ministerial formation in keeping the passion and practice of mission. This report provides a short overview of the presented papers.[1]

Methodology of Mission and Practical Implications

"Reflections on Intersections between Mission Theology and Praxis," by E. Okello Ogera

Mission, as a concept, has been integral to Christianity and the development of the church. However, the idea of mission today evokes a wide range of emotions, commitments, and convictions. Some Christians are enthusiastically and sacrificially committed to mission, seeing it as the central calling of the church; others become fearful or even hostile at the thought of mission, seeing it as arrogant or a threat to other cultures and abrogating upon

1 The discussed and revised papers will be published in a book and together with this report map the themes and topics the researchers explored.

itself an air of superiority over other religions. With enhanced globalization characterized by increased travel, the ease of global communication, a growing variety of media options, the spread of international economic networks, and the international flow of immigrants, students, refugees, tourists, and businesspeople, Christians everywhere increasingly encounter people of other ethnic backgrounds, of other religions and other values. They are often their next-door neighbours or colleagues at work.

It is against this background that this paper seeks to evaluate the intersectionality of mission theology and mission practice in the churches in Africa. In this regard, the paper focuses on the theology and praxis of mission by premising its understanding on the basis that the church ought to be concerned with its participation in God's mission to and in the world. This broad understanding encompasses "participation in God's mission for fullness of life"; practising "life in community"; incarnation of the gospel within each culture; witness and dialogue; proclaiming the truth of the gospel; and "witness in unity."[2] As such, since mission is concerned with the church in the world, rather than the church per se, "it has a particular concern with the actual, empirical church rather than the ideal church, with the church militant here on earth rather than the church triumphant, with the visible rather than the invisible church."[3] In other words, a theology of mission espoused by the church should incorporate both doctrinal and practical aspects.

"Heroines of Faith: A Paradigm Shift in Missions Within Nigeria," by Moses Iliya Ogidis

Nigeria is one of the countries that have been facing religious crises for many years now, with the likes of Boko Haram and Islamic Jihadists. Such activities have posed a great challenge to the Christians in the country. However, within Nigeria as a country, less attention seems to be given to a paradigm shift when it comes to missions in recognizing the roles of the heroines (women) that God is using to reach out to others with the love of God. This paper analyzes a new paradigm shift in missions within Nigeria using the story and life lessons from two women: Leah Sharibu, who even in captivity did not deny her Christian faith, and Deborah Samuel Yakubu, whose life, even after her death, reaches out to many people. This paper explores the question: How have these two women contributed to the new paradigm shift in missions within Nigeria? In answering this question, this paper employed

2 David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, 20th Anniversary ed. (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2011).

3 Kirsteen Kim, "Mission Theology of the Church," *International Review of Mission* 99:1 (April 2010): 41.

narratives within African Women Theology and terms this emerging paradigm shift in doing mission within Nigeria and beyond as "indirect mission work." This is to expose readers to the fact that God can use any means in reaching out to people in different dispensations just as in the 1st century when believers were killed because of their faith and persecuted to the point of death. Similar things are happening today, and in this case, the stories of these two women enter the mission history in Nigeria and beyond.

"John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* as a Missiological Methodology in Juxtaposition with African Communality," by Wanjiku Kihuha and Paul N. Mwangi

At the end of the 19th century, European missionaries started coming to Africa for Christian mission. They used different missiological methodologies as tools for their mission, which did not resonate with African reality. One such missiological methodology is John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, which was translated into various African dialects. In this book, Christian is the central actor and also the hero of the pilgrimage. At the beginning of the book, the character is cast in great distress because of his vision that his city is about to be destroyed by God. To escape this destruction, he must leave the city. He persuades his wife and family to go with him. But his efforts are not successful, as Christian leaves his family and community in search of salvation.

This paper analyzes the implications of such missiological narratives on leaving behind the community for the African concept of life. In African context, life is understood in a communal context. To leave one's family in pursuit of salvation does not sit well within African existentialism, where one's life is embedded in the life of others as John Mbiti's notes "I am because we are." The central character in John Bunyan's work evaluated from an African perspective appears as a selfish and individualistic person who does not contribute to the community good. The study will utilize a historical methodology to evaluate to what extent usage of foreign missiological methodologies impacted African society. The findings of this research are instructive to Christian mission to be culturally sensitive and to discern the right missiological methodologies to use in different contexts.

"The Mission of Deliverance Church in Busoga, Uganda, 1962–2021," by Moses S. Isabirye and Zacharia W. Samita

This paper examines the mission of African Pentecostalism in Busoga-Uganda using the Deliverance Church (DC) as a case. It seeks to investigate the history, factors and trends for the birth of the DC in Busoga, Uganda. The paper further discusses the DC's growth and its impact on Uganda's

religiosity. It benefits from empirical research,[4] using a cross-sectional survey of non-experimental design, employing both quantitative and qualitative research methods. The data collection methods included a questionnaire survey, interview guide, focused group discussion schedule, participant observation schedule, and content analysis of sermons and related teachings. Findings indicate that the DC originated from the Church of Uganda. The DC founders had a quest for an authentic African Christianity and felt set apart by Christ to embody and minister his deliverance to the world: hence, the nomenclature "Deliverance Church." The pioneer DC leaders focused on every member being a Spirit-filled minister, active in missions and evangelism.

The paper further examines the motivations that stirred these leaders in founding the DC and how its growth has affected Uganda's religiosity. It argues that the DC's success in mission and ministry finds anchorage in Henry Venn's three selfs—original to the Anglican's CMS mission strategic frame of reference, that is, building a self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating church. The DC's other mission and their committed personnel supported its rapid growth. Herein lie the historical marks of its origins and growth. The DC has grown integrally and rapidly, profoundly shaping Uganda's religiosity in several ways. We review how the DC has integrally discharged its mission. Despite its gallant growth and development, the story of the DC in the details of the church's origins, growth patterns, and impact on Busoga, Uganda, is yet to receive thorough scholarly documentation. This paper contributes to filling this knowledge gap.

Mission, Peacebuilding, and Transformative Leadership and Contextual Realities of Mission

"Pentecostalism and Mission in Kenya: A Case Study of Christ Is the Answer Ministries (CITAM)," by Paul N. Mwangi

In 1921, when the International Missionary Council (IMC) was formed as a council that would bring different missionary organizations together, Africa was a missionary zone and the practice and expression of Christianity had not matured to warrant inclusion in the IMC. Nevertheless, a hundred years later, the centre of gravity for World Christianity has shifted with a magnitude that

4 Moses S. Isabirye, "African Indigenous Pentecostal Christianity in Uganda With Reference to the Deliverance Church in Busoga Region, 1962–2012" (PhD thesis, Kenyatta University, 2002).

has attracted keen attention among scholars in ecclesiology and in missiology. The shift has been occasioned mainly by Pentecostalism.

This research is an addition to many Pentecostal narratives that continue to be told from different parts of the world and specifically from Kenya. The research looks at the factors that have facilitated this shift of the centre of gravity to the global South, taking Christ Is the Answer Ministries (CITAM) as a case study. In 2019, CITAM celebrated 60 years since inception. As a Pentecostal Church and ministry, CITAM demonstrates rapid growth evidenced by over 28 congregations across Kenya's main urban centres, one in another African country, and three congregations outside Africa.

"Exploring Peacebuilding Activities of Local Church Leaders in Burundi following the 2015 Crisis," by Theodore Mbazumutima

The 2015 political crisis in Burundi culminated in an attempted coup d'état in which the governmental party dissidents, the opposition, and the leading Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) were assimilated. The abortion of the coup created a divided society, with most political opposition leaders and CSOs being jailed or forced to take refuge in different countries, while an estimated 1000 people died. Burundi ended up with a powerful government, controlling of every sector of life. This included the control of the religious institutions—by institutionalizing God and religion so much so that it became difficult to differentiate between the sacred and the political. Peacebuilding narratives became a threatening political stand against the government narrative that the country was peaceful.

A recent research project argues that churches in Burundi are working hard to build peace in an extremely challenging historical and political context. The study is based on qualitative data collected between April and June 2021 with religious leaders, civil society organizations, local and international NGOs as well as youth and women groups members of these churches. The role of religious institutions in peacebuilding has been dominated by the victor-vanquished relationship. In this relationship, the victor (state machinery) set up the working framework and the vanquished (churches) had either to engage with actions that can fit into that frame and be safe or to challenge the government and be assimilated into the enemies of the country.

"Luke 4:18-19 through the African Women's Hermeneutic Lens: Lessons for Liberative and Transformative Mission," by Lydia Chemei

Scholars writing on mission from a biblical perspective have rightly argued that the biblical narrative is the story of God's mission in the world. Core to

this mission is Jesus Christ's salvific death, which effected redemption for all creation. Following this fulfilment, the church was mandated to continue participating in God's mission in anticipation of Christ's return by emulating the model he set. This paper opines that Jesus Christ's mission was liberative and transformative because it was guided by a clear agenda—redemption of all creation evident in abundant life. One biblical text that summarizes this agenda is Luke 4:18-19, a passage that is popularly christened the "Nazareth Manifesto." This passage delineates Jesus's mission plan, which is holistic and embedded in the entire biblical narrative. The African Women's hermeneutical framework will be used to reread this passage toward illustrating the liberative and transformative nature of Jesus's mission.

This framework is one of African women's distinctive contribution to mission. It offers a latitude to reimagine mission as holistic salvation amidst the dynamic and ever-changing contexts in which mission is done, with an intentional focus on fostering abundant life for all. The reading posture is equally potent in enhancing life-affirming theologies. The Nazareth Manifesto is examined as a mission text that communicates holistic salvation. This holistic salvation is actualized in four main tasks that are distinctive yet interconnected. It is thus expected that reading the Nazareth Manifesto as a mission text that underscores holistic salvation will offer Christians in Kenya and beyond an approach for doing mission in a liberative and transformative manner, both in theory and praxis.

"African Leadership Initiatives and Innovations in Mission: A Case Study of the African Divine Church," by Kenneth Buluku

The coming of Western missionaries in Africa contributed to the growth of the church on the African continent. However, they offered their leadership with prejudices on the culture and traditions of the African people, which led to the founding of African Instituted Churches (AICs) as a reaction. The founding of AICs was, therefore, a search for harmony between self, others, and God embedded in and sensitive to the culture and traditions of the African people. This led to their spreading like bushfire, as many Africans regarded them as a place to feel at home. They developed forms of worship, theology, and social organization that were contextually relevant to the Africans. AICs express themselves through songs, sermons, prayers, rituals, symbols, and signs that are appealing to the African cosmology and cosmogony.

In spite of the challenges they faced at their inception, the founding of the AICs has since contributed immensely to the growth of the church. The history of the church in Africa therefore cannot be talked of at the exclusion of AICs. The study of missions in Africa could be said to be incomplete without

the study of missions in AICs. Africa is a huge continent, with millions of people living on it. AICs in their thousands are spread throughout the continent expressing themselves in various forms. The contemporary world talks about innovation as the way to go. Through the growth of technology, the African peoples are called upon to unleash their potential for their survival in a fast-changing world. There is need, therefore, to explore how African leadership initiatives and innovations have fuelled the growth of the church in Kenya. This study seeks to explore how African innovations have fuelled the growth of the church in Kenya through the study of the African Divine Church.

Practice of Christian Mission in a Growing Urbanized Context

"Urbanization and Mission History with Special Reference to Burundi," by Thierry Bahizi

This paper deals with urbanization and mission history, considering the case of Burundi. It starts with investigating how Burundians understood God as *Imana* and aligned their whole life thereto, taking *kiranga*, the mediator between them and God, as their close friend to rely on. Burundians were later joined by Western missionaries, the Catholics in the 1800s and Protestants in the 1900s. While mission focus was on church planting in the interior, the aspect of mission changed to focus on urban centres later, especially after the Western missionaries' departure in the 1960s.

The paper revisits world missions that start with the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference of 1910, which was attended by official delegates of missionary societies from around the globe and was concerned with reaching out to non-Christians worldwide. It shows that this kind of mission requires gospel proclamation and is holistic by nature, addressing the physical and spiritual needs of the person. It revisits the development of holistic mission among the evangelicals, following a number of remarkable international evangelical congresses that took place over the years.

The paper also explores the issue of urbanization, as it singles out urban poverty as the main negative consequence. It then skims through the reasons behind urban poverty worldwide but specifically in Burundi and then proposes effective solutions to it. The paper aims at sensitizing the church to be concerned about urban ministry and suggests an efficient model for eradicating poverty and bringing about a transformed community to be enjoyed by all the residents. Embedded in various church documents, such as *Mater et*

magistra, *Gaudium et spes*, *Octogesima adveniens*, *Ad gentes*, *Redemptoris missio*, this model will inspire the various denominations, the faith-based organizations, and whoever strives to serve urban residents.

"Being Witnesses: Evangelism and Social Responsibility in the Changing Socio-Economic Landscape in Kenya," by Fancy Cheronoh

In the Great Commission, Jesus implored his disciples to be his witnesses in word and deed. Furthermore, in his teachings, he asked them to love their neighbours as they love themselves. In the changing socio-economic times particularly in Kenya, one wonders how being witness of Jesus should be practised. How is the Christian message of "Good News" for Kenyans heard during such hard economic times? Jesus had a holistic approach to mission and evangelization that was transformative and servant-oriented. He not only healed the souls of those he preached to but healed the body as well. Drawing from Andrew Walls' five marks of global mission and Lausanne Occasional Paper 21, this paper examines evangelism and social responsibility in the rapidly changing socio-economic landscape in Kenya. It challenges Christian mission work in contemporary society to consider social responsibility—an aspect of mission that seems neglected yet is an important entry point in the proclamation of the good news.

"Virtuality and Social Change: Implications for Future Practice of Mission," by Telesia K. Musili

Virtual religion is a new mission field that has been necessitated by internet technology and fuelled by the COVID-19 pandemic. Adoption and appropriation of virtual modes of communication in evangelism are social changes from the traditional way of doing mission to embracing virtuality in missioning. This paper explores how virtuality as a social change parameter has enabled the contextualization of evangelization within the virtual space. It employed content analysis methodology with specific reference to literature on missions, virtual space, virtual reality, and online religion. The paper argues that virtual space is a new reality that ought to be embraced even in doing missions during disruptive events like the COVID-19 pandemic and in this era of advancing internet technological interfaces. Although much thought is given to the question of the changing mission fields from the past and the present, the focus is mainly on the implications of virtuality and social change for the future practice of mission. The hybrid/blended mode of doing mission is amplified as the futuristic and new mode of evangelizing, where physical and online missioning to new contexts and to different

groups of people is anticipated. The paper further highlights the component of unchallenged inclusion of the youth in church and mission leadership.

"Social Action in Acts of Compassion: An Exegetical Theological Approach to James 1:27 for Successful Mission Work," by Makhanu Elijah

Social action exemplified in acts of compassion by Christians within their given environment is a catalyst for successful mission work. Increasingly, it has been demonstrated that inherent in the acts of compassion lies the exhaustless power that draws people into a loving relationship with Jesus Christ. Therefore, social action and its derivatives practised by Christians in their environment have the capacity to develop into long-lasting experiences with Jesus, especially for the marginalized and weak in society. It also keeps those offering the acts of compassion afloat in the faith. The main objective of this paper is to demonstrate that social action not only is an inescapable route to effective mission work, but also makes relevant a believing community within any given society. The question this paper addresses is why mission work in the Kenyan church not felt as much as it was in yesteryears. How can social action demonstrated in the acts of compassion turn mission work around, thus rendering the Christian Church relevant in society? The paper approaches this subject matter from an exegetical theological perspective of James 1:27, to propose its pertinence in enhancing mission work among the un-churched and especially the marginalized.

"Equipping Men and Women for Christian Ministry: Mission Theology, Methodologies and Praxis," by Paul N. Mwangi

The spread of Christianity in Kenya brought with it the need for leadership training for the young church. The need was accelerated by the clamour for Kenya's political independence in the mid-20 century. This need brought about the establishment of Bible colleges that became the fountainhead of the much-needed clergy who would lead the church after the foreign missionaries had left the mission field. The Bible college movement originated during the time of North America's Third Great Awakening. Early Bible institutes emerged as both products of and catalysts for revival and missionary movements. In Kenya, the development of the economic and educational system affected and continues to affect the entry qualifications for theological institutions.

This paper is based on literature research and the evaluation and analysis of secondary data on ministerial formation in Kenya. It also highlights the establishment of St Paul's University as one of the oldest theological institutions in Kenya. The history demonstrates how Christian mission and theological

education are intertwined. It also points to the role of social change in the dynamics of theological education: hence the motivation to move from Bible colleges to theological colleges and later to universities. The endeavour is to underline the significance of theological formation to mission and vice versa.

Preliminary Conclusions

New questions on old issues of mission are asked. These old issues included "who" and "where and when" questions on culture, boundaries, and ecumenicity, on funding and structures, and on theological education and formation in mission. The study of these issues has not ended. Their social location and context have changed, and hence new questions must be raised. For example, the practice of polygamy rooted in the cultural practice of people is still practised today. What then are the new questions that those studying or doing mission are asking while using culture and gender as categories of analysis?

As well as practices in a changing context, the issues of women and mission take a different trajectory due to the changes of paradigm. The new questions of mission include the gospel's kingdom values with social-political-economic issues. They highlight that the cornerstones of mission are proclamation, evangelism, and socio-ethical imperatives of the gospel. That is why the presentations include work that is around media as the globalizing glue in society. The new questions formulate the envisioning of the mission in the future.

One of the highlights of the conference was an interview with a veteran of mission studies, Professor Jesse Mugambi, via Zoom. He was an embodied link to the past, present, and future. In his response to the celebration of 100 years of collaboration in mission, he effectively links the old issues and the new questions.

Mugambi noted that when the missionaries came to Africa, they treated Africans as objects devoid of religion and culture. As such, the African church was planted on sinking sand that required the first generation of Christians to make sense of the gospel from their own perspectives, mainly unaided by the missionary. The African church has continued to struggle for survival. The ecumenical movement was introduced, but the reality on the ground was competition and not cooperation. The present reality as we celebrate 100 years of IMC is that Pentecostalism and the charismatic churches and movement seem to operate in competition with the African mainstream churches, and not many cooperation efforts are evident.

One of the burning issues is how to educate, form, and train believers today for the mission of the future. The accreditation of theological colleges and universities by the government is an opportunity for the revision of the training of Christian leaders who are grounded in the context of the African reality. These leaders also have aspirations for a united African church that responds to the African issues in an African way. Learning from the African context, intergenerational and integration of genders through the socialization process and theological training and formation would mean that the fourth generation of Christians will practise and express an authentic Christianity in Africa.

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CHAPTER 4

Pretoria Report of an IMC/CWME Ecumenical Consultation on Race, Racism, and Whiteness in South Africa

Cobus van Wyngaard and Louis van der Riet

On 28 April 2022 the study centre invited by the WCC Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) at the Faculty of Theology and Religion, University of Pretoria, held an ecumenical consultation to reflect on questions of race, racism and whiteness within churches in South Africa. This report offers a brief analysis of the themes that arose during the consultation.

The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) continues to loom large in South African discourses on racism and the church. It provides a moment in time when the role of the churches in the construction and maintenance of structures of racism was on display, as well as when its failures in opposing apartheid were acknowledged.[1] The work of the TRC and the language of reconciliation is, however, also persistently under scrutiny—with recent student movements reopening a critical conversation around the afterlife of apartheid and the ongoing legacy of white racism and colonialism with renewed energy.

South Africa also holds a particular place in the ecumenical work around questions of racism. Apartheid loomed large in the World Council of Churches (WCC) Programme to Combat Racism; and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches led to the eventual declaration of the theological justification of apartheid as a heresy at its 1982 meeting in Ottawa. Churches globally are faced with new questions around ongoing racism, whether these relate to migrations or to the ongoing exploitation of certain groups of people. Given this, the way the South African church engages with these questions, almost three decades after the first democratic elections, may provide insights into what should be on our agenda in the coming years. While this is not the first of such conversations,[2] it adds to the intersection between this history of

1 Truth and Reconciliation Commission, *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report*, Volume 4 (1998), 59–92.

2 See C. H. Thesnaar and L. D. Hansen, eds., *Unfinished Business? Faith Communities and Reconciliation in a Post-TRC Context* (Stellenbosch: Sun Media, 2020).

South African church responses to racism after apartheid while conscious of the history of broader ecumenical involvement in this conversation.

This report can in no way claim to present the entire narrative of contemporary church experiences and reflections on racism in South Africa. As will be outlined, it presents but a sliver of church perspectives, and reflects on themes that emerged at a particular moment of engagement as church representatives consciously engaged around questions of racism and whiteness. Our hope is that these themes will allow a point of entry for further engagement and research on how race, racism, and whiteness impact the church on various levels and for critical engagement with the omissions and silences in this ecumenical conversation where formal church representatives have been centred.

Before these themes are presented, the report begins with a description of the consultation and the ensuing analysis underlying this report. It concludes with some brief recommendations for the next phase of ecumenical engagement on race, racism, anti-racism, and whiteness in South Africa.

Churches Engaging on Race, Racism, and Whiteness

On 28 April 2022, representatives from a number of South African and southern African denominations gathered at the University of Pretoria to reflect on questions on race, racism, and whiteness. An invitation was extended to a broad group of church representatives to reflect on racism and whiteness within and from the perspective of their churches. Individuals were invited either to speak in their official representative capacity or merely to share from their own experiences as members of their denomination. To provide participants with an example of such a reflection, a recently published research paper by Van der Riet and Van Wyngaard[3] was included in the invitation, in which the development of responses to racism and apartheid in the Dutch Reformed Church between 1986 and 2019 are explored.

While the invitations were deliberately sent to the entire spectrum of more established as well as newer and more independent churches, participants came largely from the protestant "so-called mainline"[4] churches. These

3 L. R. van der Riet and G. J. van Wyngaard, "The Other Side of Whiteness: The Dutch Reformed Church and the Search for a Theology of Racial Reconciliation in the Afterlife of Apartheid," *Stellenbosch Journal of Theology* 7:1, (2021), 1–25.

4 J. W. De Gruchy, "The Quest for Identity in So-called "Mainline" Churches in South Africa," in *The Quest for Identity in So-called Mainline Churches in South Africa*, ed. E. M. Conradie and J. Klaasen (Stellenbosch: Sun Media, 2014), 15–31.

included the historically "English speaking" churches (Methodist Church of Southern Africa, United Congregational Church of Southern Africa, Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa, Anglican Church of Southern Africa, Baptist Union of Southern Africa) and the historically "Afrikaans-speaking" Reformed churches (Dutch Reformed Church, Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika) as well as the Uniting Reformed Church of Southern Africa (URCSA)[5] and the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM).[6] Notable exceptions were the Roman Catholic Church, African Independent Churches, and newer Pentecostal or Charismatic churches. We have little doubt that on this particular topic, representatives beyond the historic protestant churches that were involved with the South African Council of Churches would provide perspectives that would significantly diversify the themes below. Nonetheless, those present represented the heart of the historic involvement from South Africa at the WCC and the WCC-CWME. We therefore suggest that noting the emerging conversation on questions of whiteness and racism almost three decades after the end of legislated apartheid could inform broader ecumenical conversations in valuable ways.

While those present typically occupied senior positions of leadership in their respective denomination—as bishops, general secretaries, or in some other way directly involved with national or regional leadership—in almost all cases they indicated that their input is in their personal capacity (even in cases where they were indeed formally asked to represent the church at this consultation). The group was also joined by participants from the 29 April 2022 consultation on theological education and a number of academic theologians who have worked on the topic.

The one-day consultation consisted of two parts. In the first half, each church representative was given the opportunity to share their perspective on what is transpiring in their particular denomination on questions of racism or whiteness. During the second half, the facilitators shared preliminary themes that emerged from presentations, and participants were given the opportunity to reflect further on and co-construct the emerging themes. The entire event was audio recorded, and participants were aware that their inputs were being recorded for this particular report.

The conversation was co-facilitated by Drs Hlulani Mdingi, Louis van der Riet, and Professor Cobus van Wyngaard. This report has been drafted from

5 The URCSA was formed during the unification of the historically racially separated "black" (Dutch Reformed Church in Africa) and "coloured" (Dutch Reformed Mission Church) churches that developed from mission work by the Dutch Reformed Church.

6 The AFM is the oldest established Pentecostal church in South Africa, and the only Pentecostal church to participate in this event.

analyses of these recordings by Dr Louis van der Riet and Professor Cobus van Wyngaard.

Analysis and Reporting

Subsequent to the meeting, we analyzed the recordings using a general inductive approach, looking for themes that emerged repeatedly during the presentations and reflection. In line with the purpose of the meeting, this report seeks to be largely descriptive. Our aim is to highlight what we considered to be important themes from the day and to outline how these are being articulated by church leaders in South Africa. The purpose of the analysis is to stimulate further discussion and reflection from church leaders and academic theologians in order to discern the topics that either require further research or may hint towards future faith-based social engagement around issues of racism in South Africa.

By necessity the identified themes will also reflect certain interpretive choices we made. For the sake of this report, we do not claim that these themes saturate what emerged from the day. However, following our own earlier academic and ministerial engagements around issues of racism and whiteness, we sought to highlight in a particular way themes that we believe illustrate the current ecclesial challenges.

A history of apartheid and segregation

It should not come as a surprise to anyone familiar with research on the pervasiveness of racism across many societies, but across the spectrum of churches present during this event, there is a recognition of how South African churches were formed and distorted by the history of apartheid and how this continues to impact into the present.

One of the Afrikaans Reformed churches shared the reality of the very recent history of removing clauses in support of apartheid theology from its church order. This resulted in renewed painful schisms within this white Afrikaans church, as some insist on retaining an explicitly ethnic and racial ecclesial identity. Here, apartheid is recognized as still being alive in very explicit ways.

Similarly, a predominantly Black Reformed church in South Africa indicated how apartheid continues to live in the structuring of the churches – as a *de facto* white and Black church: "Racism in South Africa is still a great challenge in church and society. That's a fact. In society there are no laws to defend or support racism, while in the church it's very visible. The church services in

our societies, that one hour on Sunday, is the most racial hour of our lives." As Eddy Van der Borght[7] argues, the real ecumenical challenge is often not that associated with various doctrinal debates, but rather the socio-cultural divisions of our churches; and race, and the persistent segregation that remains a sign of the afterlife of apartheid,[8] is key to this. Here the South African church is not unique, yet in a stark manner reminds one of the ongoing challenges of unity in the church. The history of colonialism and racism continues to be a key challenge to the unity of the church; and given how this question took shape in global ecumenical responses to apartheid, its persistence in South Africa today should be of concern to the broader ecumenical movement.

Theorizing race

One persistent theme from participants' contributions was the ongoing need for clarifying what is being engaged when matters of race are on the table. Part of this was due to the introduction of the language of whiteness. Multiple participants indicated either confusion or discomfort around the term: "I'm still battling to understand why don't we talk about racism. It's not as if we have dealt with racism, now we can move to something else. There somehow for me that in the choice of talking about whiteness as opposed to racism."

On the other hand, a clarification was offered by one of the white participants on the value of addressing whiteness:

> Why it is helpful to talk about whiteness is that it was never mentioned before; it was simply taken as normal. That is the problem with our white kind of thinking. It never owned up to where it was thinking from. And so it seems to be normal, and neutral; it's like the air you breathe because you don't notice it. But to mention it means you are looking at it critically, so there is the possibility of change.

However, beyond the particular need for clarification of the language of whiteness, broader questions on how race and racism is understood is also visible: "That is where again the issue of definitions comes in so that we are clear about what we are talking about . . . naming the issues in some of the decisions that we make . . . so that when at the local level congregations are acting, they know what it is that are being addressed as a particular point in time." And later another participant commented: "I think there is uncertainty about

7 Eddy A. J. G. Van der Borght, *Sunday Morning: The Most Segregated Hour: On Racial Reconciliation as Unfinished Business for Theology in South Africa and Beyond*. Inaugural Lecture (Vrije Universiteit, 2009).

8 J. M. Modiri, *The Jurisprudence of Steve Biko: A Study in Race Law and Power in the "Afterlife" of Colonial-Apartheid* (PhD thesis, Pretoria: University of Pretoria, 2017), 22.

understanding the issue which our theology needs to confront . . . we are not in agreement on what the problem is, how can we begin to bring our theology . . . part of responsible doing of theology is analysis of the problem, the issue, the context, and I don't think we are there."

The language of racism itself is, however, part of the struggle. How do we name the problem at hand? What do we understand under the category of "racism"? More than one church indicated a preference for broader categories as opposed to the specific references to questions of racism of whiteness. Two churches indicated that the broader issue of discrimination is what is at stake and another indicated that it describes the issue as cohesion.

The point here is not to presume that any single definition or description will in itself resolve the problem, but rather that the difficulty around naming issues around racism—as well as the difficulty around how we would describe the response to racism—reveals part of the work required by the ecumenical church. Here, the church is also embedded within the broader discourse; as an earlier attempt at theorizing race from within the South African context indicated, our trouble with race is in part visible in the fact that we define racism in significantly different ways.[9]

Continuing to probe the depths of the theological crisis that is the result of how Christian faith and theology has been intertwined with the history of race and colonialism is then vital. But it is also important to develop a shared language across churches of different traditions—particularly where membership and leadership reflect different racial demographics.

Race and class

The intersection between race and class has been a longstanding point of contention in analyses of the South African situation. Debates around the primacy of race and class run across disciplines and were of significance in South African theological work emerging from the struggle against apartheid. Albert Nolan, in his *God in South Africa*, would for example argue for race as being employed in the service of capitalist production.[10] Many overviews of the development of Black theology note the movements between race and class analysis as vital.[11] The persistence of racialized inequalities has been of growing concern in South Africa in recent decades, with Sizwe Mpofu-Walsh

9 K. Durrheim, X. Mtose and L. Brown, *Race Trouble: Race, Identity and Inequality in Post-Apartheid South Africa* (Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2011).

10 A. Nolan, *God in South Africa* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1988), 72.

11 For example, A Kee., *The Rise and Demise of Black Theology* (London: Ashgate Publishing, 2006), 79–85; G. West, "Liberation Hermeneutics after Liberation in South Africa" in *Studies in World Christianity and Interreligious Relations* 48 (2014), 341–81, at 349–53.

in a recent work arguing that "apartheid did not die; it was privatised."[12] The reality of immense racialized poverty and inequality is also key in churches reflecting on racism after apartheid.

One representative, who reminded of his position as a non-South African responsible for a regional denomination with a predominantly South African membership, stated quite explicitly that racism is in fact a purely economic matter:

> While those of us in the interior of Africa, and who have obtained independence from colonial rule earlier than South Africa, have always known that political independence without economic wealth was not enough. It only became clear after the coming of freedom in South Africa that racism is most fundamentally about the protection of privileges and advances of certain population groups against the rest, such that racism in South Africa is much more about ownership and control of capital which in this case is in the hands of the white minority, even though this minority does not have political power and may never gain such political power in the foreseeable future.

One element of further work by churches, as one sector of the South African society as a whole, will have to be deepening the analysis of and proposals for an alternative to the current economic situation, which seems unable to break with the structures of historic injustice. However, given the globalized nature of economic structures, this immediately calls us back to global ecumenical work on the economy.

White flight

One of the most important themes from this engagement revolved around white flight. White flight is a phenomenon extensively described in work on, for example, the city of Atlanta in the United States but applied to a variety of other contexts in past decades. It refers to patterns where white people residing in demographically changing neighbourhoods leave the neighbourhood *en masse* once a certain threshold of remaining white people are reached—they are described as "fleeing." In South Africa, similar patterns have been described with the language of semigration—where white South Africans, rather than emigrate, moved into gated communities or toward areas of the country perceived to still be predominantly white.[13]

12 S. Mpofu-Walsh, *The New Apartheid. Apartheid Did Not Die; It Was Privatised* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2021).

13 R. Ballard. "Assimilation, Emigration, Semigration, and Integration: White Peoples' Strategies for Finding a Comfort Zone in Post-apartheid South Africa," in *Under Construction: "Race" and Identity in South Africa Today*, ed. N. Distiller and M. Steyn (Johannesburg: Heinemann House, 2004), 51–66.

Church leaders involved with this conversation would strive toward a "multi-racial" ideal in some form or the other; however, from multiple perspectives, patterns are described of white members fleeing majority Black congregations. One representative described a denomination that has lost practically all its white members and then states as the reason as being "because whites cannot be in any place where they are not in control. So they virtually fled." A representative of another denomination described in detail a pattern where historically white congregations moved through a process of conscious integration—naming various programmes of formation that was part of this transition—but in spite of the work done, at some point the white members left. He specifically named the calling of Black ministers into these congregations as a trigger for the leaving of white members.

Sub-theme of White Flight: White Disengagement from Integrated Theological Education

A sub-theme to white members fleeing majority Black congregations are white theological students disengaging from spaces of theological education with a majority Black demographic. Examples around theological education that involve forms of communal residency were raised in particular ways. The concern raised is that where theological formation occurs in spaces where there is only a small number of white students, these white students withdraw from such spaces, preferring distance education.

Concerns about the construction of Christian whiteness into future generations should be raised around this phenomenon. Theological education and ministerial formation is key to the future formation of the church. If white theological candidates fail to develop the skills to fully participate in spaces of theological education where there is neither a white majority nor the control or tutelage of white church leaders, then this raises significant concerns about the future of the church.

Sub-theme: Living as a White Minority

While this was seldom expressed directly, the implication of the history of white flight was captured by the one representative when asking, "Is there going to be a possibility of white people in South Africa to live with the fact that they are a minority?" This particular question is perhaps at the heart of the challenge of whiteness in the church in South Africa. It captures urgent

work that will have to be done in terms of spiritual formation at individual and congregational level.

As one Black representative made clear, this is by no means a simple matter. It will inevitably also call forth a challenge to white Christians:

> I suppose this is an element of kenosis that we should accept on both sides. Is it possible that white people can be willing to work with blacks and among blacks with the possibility that black people might not really like them, and be willing that even if they don't like me my Christian duty . . . the price that one has to pay.

On the other hand, a white theologian who has been in longstanding communion with a congregation, where their family has often been the only white members, speaks of the transformative potential of exactly such communion:

> What my wife and I often tell one another, when we are the only white people around . . . we say to ourselves, we take nothing for granted. We shouldn't be favoured because we are white, we're just human, together. And that has been the gift of the Black congregation for me, is just learning to be. Not guilty about my whiteness, but always aware of my whiteness, and working against it to deracialise my way of being and my way of seeing and acting and speaking and listening and hearing.

Perhaps here we get to the heart of what questions around whiteness, Christianity, and the formation of an imagination that would undermine the reconstruction of race in South Africa should lead to. Do we have a faith that can sustain white people living and worshiping in majority Black communities without the guarantee of white comfort? And what would the formation be that would ensure such communion, as well as the conditions for a formation that would include the gift of being formed toward being "just human, together"?

The role of the youth

In recent years, young South Africans have played a critical role in raising questions on persistent racism and the ongoing effect of a history of colonialism and apartheid.[14] This has been particularly visible in student movements around #Rhodesmustfall and #Feesmustfall as well as debates around decolonizing education.

The role of young people in churches' current work on racism also emerged from presentations. After admitting that the issues of racism haven't really

14 N. Bowers Du Toit, *Faith, Race, and Inequality among Young Adults in South Africa: Contested and Contesting Discourses for a Better Future* (Stellenbosch: African Sun Media, 2022).

been on the agenda since 1994, one representative described charges of racism at church schools as the issue that brought the matter back onto the church's agenda. Another church noted that the perspective of young people will significantly change how the church will have to engage with issues around past and present racism and disunity:

> We see the way forward as defining the challenges, firstly, of cohesion, and frankly discussing them—for many years it was a problem for us to openly talk about the challenges . . . we want to consult our members; especially, we find, the younger generation, as they may have different expectation than older ones on what cohesion, or unity, looks like going forward.

Here, churches are again reflective of the society in which they are part of, given the general pattern of younger South Africans insisting that questions around racism will have to be engaged, since it continues to impact on their lives.

The Next Phase of Ecumenical Engagement on Race, Racism, and Whiteness

While the next steps in South African church engagement on race, racism, and whiteness remain an ongoing conversation, there is a strong consensus from representatives who participated that this remains a key priority and that ongoing ecumenical engagement around the topic is vital. Some of the vital priorities for an ecumenical engagement on this topic that emerged in preliminary form is noted below, with the hope that this can initiate a process that opens up further avenues for exploration and action.

Dialogue spaces

Despite the fact that the realities of inequality, division, and racialized systematic injustices continue to surface in public (religious) discourse, there have not been sustained, ecumenical dialogue spaces to engage on the theme of race, racism, and whiteness in democratic South Africa. The most significant attempt has been a re-enactment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Faith Communities hearings held on 8 and 9 October 2014. This consultation was held to revisit the commitments and recommendations made by faith communities in the TRC hearings of 1997. In the spirit of 20 years of democracy, the faith communities were invited to discuss their role in South Africa today, aiming to find ways "to again put the process of reconciliation back on the main agenda of all faith communities in the

country."[15] During the recent consultation, a participant raised the question of whether value can be drawn, again, from the spaces created for dialogue, based on the legacy of the TRC:

> Desmond Tutu dreamt that after the TRC, thousands of little TRC's would take place, where people would be brought together to talk. I think for me to understand racism, and to really get into the skin of fellow South Africans and try and understand the suffering and the pain and the anger, we really need a platform to share and to talk. Where people feel they are safe to talk.

This also raised the question: "What is it that we can identify as a proper theological or biblical framework in creating a space for these stories of dialogue to emerge and where people can feel safe, venturing on sensitive issues around sharing their own painful experiences?"

The consultation itself followed such a methodology of constructing meaning together through sharing from personal narratives, aimed at discerning a way forward collectively. It was also suggested that if a process of dialogue and truth-telling is produced, it must be able to be replicated in local congregations.

Congregational practices

Given the ongoing challenges of division and conflict globally, including interreligious, ethnic, and nationalistic conflicts, South Africa remains a context in which relevant knowledge is produced. The value of such local, indigenous, and contextual knowledge was emphasized during the consultation. The suggestion was made that the next phase of ecumenical engagement on race, racism, and whiteness should include the study of the lived reality and experiences in local congregations where attempts are being made, with varying degrees of success, to address issues of racism.

International ecumenism

The consultation did not produce a clear resolution or suggestion regarding the role that the CWME, the WCC, or other ecumenical bodies or gatherings can play in impacting local contexts. There have been interventions in the past, such as the Cottesloe Consultation (1960), that have served as discerning moments that catalyzed action related to issues of racialized injustice. Ecumenical gatherings have also produced statements to articulate theological visions that have served churches and society at large. One participant suggested the theme of theological anthropology as a possible focus for

15 Thesnaar and Hansen, *Unfinished Business?*, 38.

a future gathering, or even a joint project, that could explore what it means to be human, African, and Christian, given the reality of racialized identities.

Conclusion

Given the racialized context of colonialization and apartheid during the 20th century, and its ensuing afterlife, race has been a central topic for churches and theology in the South African context. However, the linguistic landscape in analyses of race and racism, including "solutions" for addressing racism and the afterlife of racialized division and injustice in South Africa, has always had multiple coordinates. This includes reconciliation, restitution, repair, redress, reconstruction, intergroup contact, social cohesion, community building, church unity, reconstruction, multiculturalism, and others. This indicates a multiplicity of assessments of the racialized context of South Africa, which were also displayed in a frequent return during the consultation to questions of conceptual clarity regarding what it means to be racist and definitions of racism and whiteness. That further work is required to develop greater consensus on a theological analysis of the problem was again on display in these conversations.

At most, this report is a confirmation that the South African church has not yet placed questions of racism in the past. It remains a concern for both church and society. Given the racialized history of denominational developments, where denominations were historically segregated either through the formation of racial denominational bodies or internally, this matter will simultaneously have to be on the agendas of denominational and ecumenical bodies. In different ways, we were made aware of how white Christians continue practices or ecclesial resegregation, either through movements between congregations within denominational bodies or through movements across denominational bodies, to places where it is perceived that there is a greater level of white control. This, combined with broader themes that emerged from this conversation, provides a potential agenda for further theological reflection and ecclesial formation. The outcomes of these might also be of relevance to other contexts where questions around whiteness remain an important factor in undermining the unity of the Christian church.

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CHAPTER 5

Middle East IMC Study Centre Thematic Report, Lebanon

Wilbert van Saane

The Middle East is known for its hospitality. This is reflected in formal and polite manners of greeting and conversation, in the design of traditional houses, and in lavish meals that are offered to guests. At the same time, the culture is characterized by privacy, modesty, and strong family solidarity. Guests may initially feel overwhelmed by the hospitality extended to them, but they may later discover that many dynamics and secrets were hidden from them when they were first welcomed. Relationships are multilayered, and trust must be earned over a long period of time. These cultural realities are important when studying the subject of cooperation in mission. As our Middle East study centre discovered, hospitality is an important ecclesiological category, but this does not mean that cooperation in mission is always easy and smooth.

As Christian mission does not take place in a vacuum, this second report of our study centre takes present-day challenges to the churches as its starting point. We signal some global issues that also threaten the societies and ecosystems of the Middle East, such as climate change, economic inequality, political conflict, rights violations, and forced migration. These challenges may cause distinctive communities to behave in more isolationist ways, as they prioritize the safety and prosperity of their own members. They may lead to a more competitive and less cooperative spirit. As the booklet for the 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) observes: "The multilateral spaces and collective decision-making processes at the global level are rapidly shrinking and are sometimes forgotten as we face profound crises."[1] The churches may be tempted to go along with these new forms of isolationism, concentrating on their own members and neglecting ecumenical cooperation and mission. As we argue, however, these global challenges can

1 "Christ's Love Moves the World to Reconciliation and Unity: A Reflection on the Theme of the 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Karlsruhe 2022," WCC Website, 2, https://www.oikoumene.org/sites/default/files/2021-01/ENG_WCC2022Assembly_Booklet_TEXT.pdf.

be overcome only when churches and other parties join forces. Ecumenical cooperation is needed more than ever.

The lion's share of our report is dedicated to a reflection on four specific areas of Christian mission in which the churches of the Middle East engage: creation care, education, ministry with migrants and refugees, and interfaith dialogue.[2] In these expressions of mission, the churches respond to the challenges that were signalled. Our report describes some of the collaborative work that the churches are already doing in these areas, but it also reflects on new opportunities for cooperation. It also points out some pitfalls and threats to the churches as they engage in these forms of mission.

Based on these reflections on expressions of Christian mission, we finally offer some proposals for an ecumenical missiology in the Middle East. This is an important task on the way to a more faithful, contextual, and unified Christian presence in the region.[3] More specifically, we identify four key aspects of the churches' life that shape their involvement in mission and indeed their identity: *diakonia*, hospitality, monasticism, and martyrdom. We believe that it is at these points that the unique experience of the Middle Eastern churches may contribute to the global ecumenical conversations on mission and missiology.

The Middle East study centre for the International Mission Council (IMC) Centenary was convened by the Near East School of Theology, in coordination with the Middle East Council of Churches. As in the first phase, efforts were made to include scholars from different ecclesiastical backgrounds. In the second phase of this project, the study centre included the following individuals: Rev. Dr Antoine Al Ahmar (representing the Middle East Council of Churches), Dr Ziad Fahed (Catholic), Dr Elias Halabi (Eastern Orthodox), Ven. Garen Yosoulkanian (Oriental Orthodox), Dr Nicolas Abou Mrad (Eastern Orthodox), Ven. Dr John Holdsworth (Protestant), Dr Caleb Hutcherson (Protestant), Mr Brent Hammoud (Protestant), Rev. Dr Rima

2 By identifying these four areas of mission, our report goes well beyond the emerging ecumenical missionary paradigm that South African missiologist David Bosch mapped. While Bosch included interfaith dialogue as one of the elements, he did not consider the other three areas as main missiological categories. See David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991). While education has always been a primary concern of Christian mission, creation care and ministry with uprooted people have become increasingly widely acknowledged as elements of mission. See, e.g., Andrew Walls and Cathy Ross, eds., *Mission in the 21st Century: Exploring the Five Marks of Global Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2008), which includes education, creation care, and migration as major issues.

3 Gabriel Hachem, "Ecclesiology," in *Christianity in North Africa and West Asia*, Kenneth R. Ross, Mariz Tadros, and Todd M. Johnson, eds. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), 415–16.

Nasrallah (Protestant), and Rev. Dr Wilbert van Saane (Protestant). In this phase, the members of the study centre were asked to share their expertise in specific fields, such as migration, education, interfaith dialogue, creation care, and diakonia. Throughout the study process, the mission of the churches of the Middle East was foremost in our minds and prayers.

The study centre met for a full-day consultation at the Armenian Apostolic Catholicosate of Cilicia in Antelias, Lebanon, on 9 May 2022. The group was kindly received by His Holiness Catholicos Aram I and the meeting was hosted by Archdeacon Garen Yosoulkanian. All group members had prepared papers on various aspects of Christian mission in the Middle East. The discussion focused on their implications for cooperation. Much material that was presented in the papers was included in this report, which was drafted and edited by Wilbert van Saane in consultation with the other group members.

In comparison with the first report of our Middle East study centre, which mapped the history of cooperation in mission in the Middle East (1921–2021), this second report addresses cooperation in mission in the present time. Just as it was the mandate of the IMC, the WCC Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, which initiated this global study process, views fostering cooperation in mission as one of its main tasks. In our view, cooperation is especially urgent in light of three clusters of pressing problems in the Middle East: climate change, environmental degradation, and poverty; conflict, war, terrorism, and rights violations; and migration, voluntary and forced. It is to these that we now turn in a brief context analysis.

Context Analysis

Reports on climate change and its effects on life in the Middle East[4] point out that the temperature is rising faster than elsewhere, with a 2 degree Celsius rise expected by 2030 and a 4 degree rise by 2050. Water scarcity is a concern throughout the region, with resources depleting more quickly than they can be replenished. Combined, these two factors are causing increasing desertification, which in turn leads to growing food insecurity, economic inequality, and the likelihood of conflict. One observer concluded that the region is becoming "literally uninhabitable," especially for the poor who do

4 See e.g., Frederic Wehrey and Ninar Fawal, "Cascading Climate Effects in the Middle East and North Africa: Adapting through Inclusive Governance," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 24 February 2022, https://carnegieendowment.org/2022/02/24/cascading-climate-effects-in-middle-east-and-north-africa-adapting-through-inclusive-governance-pub-86510.

not have regular access to water, air conditioning, and electricity.[5] Some worrying illustrations are the Iraqi city of Basra, which has been flagged as one of the hottest points on earth, and the Jazeera region in northeast Syria, where drought has led to the death of livestock and the loss of agricultural lands.

Water, land, flora, and fauna are not only natural but also cultural capital.[6] They do not merely guarantee that we can live, but also shape how we live. Countering the ecological crisis means, therefore, not merely a matter of protecting the natural resources, which ranks low on the agenda of governments anyway. Rather, it means retrieving traditional cultural behaviours and patterns in which humans had a much more direct, respectful, and spiritual relationship with water, land, flora, and fauna. It is evident that the religions of the region have a major role to play in this cultural change; we spell out the implications for the churches and their mission below.

Climate change, water scarcity, and desertification have contributed to the rise of conflict, terrorism, and war.[7] In fact, there appears to be a two-way relationship between climate change and extremism. On the one hand, climate change and its consequences create a conducive environment for extremism. On the other hand, extremism aggravates climate change, as it results in conflict, destruction, and war, and pushes climate justice off the agendas of governments. During the first decades of the 21st century, various conflicts have indeed undermined climate action and obstructed the development of more sustainable agricultural and industrial practices, especially in Iraq, Syria, Palestine/Israel, Lebanon, and Yemen.

As we have already noted, hospitality and exclusion exist side by side in Middle Eastern societies. Exclusion is experienced not only by groups coming from outside the region, but also by some of the oldest Indigenous communities in the region. Among the Christian population of the region, the Copts, Armenians, Greeks, and Syriacs/Assyrians have especially suffered violations of rights and violent attacks in the 20th and 21st centuries. More recently, limitations on freedom of religion are imposed by governments and non-governmental actors throughout the region, affecting virtually all religious groups in contexts where they do not form a majority. As one scholar

5 Anchal Vohra, "The Middle East Is Becoming Literally Uninhabitable," *Foreign Policy*, 24 August 2021. https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/08/24/the-middle-east-is-becoming-literally-uninhabitable/.

6 See Gail Host-Warhaft, "Losing Paradise: The Water Crisis in the Mediterranean," in *Losing Paradise: The Water Crisis in the Mediterranean*, Gail Holst-Warhaft and Tammo Steenhuis, eds. (London and New York: Routledge, 2016, first published 2010), 41–42.

7 See Jamal Saghir, *Climate Change and Conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa* (Beirut: Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy at the American University of Beirut, 2019).

notes, "The future of religious freedom in the region is contingent upon the protections afforded to religious minorities and the accommodation of an interfaith dialogue aimed at promoting tolerance and guaranteeing religious pluralism."[8] For this very reason, joint Christian action for interfaith dialogue is crucial, as we argue in more detail below.

Climate change, economic inequality, war, terrorism, and rights violations are all factors that cause migration. Forced displacement is an especially pressing problem in the region, driven by factors such as colonial experiences, civil war, and other conflict situations.[9] Examples of forced migration in the 20th and 21st centuries abound and we only mention the Armenians, Greeks, and Syriacs/Assyrians who fled Ottoman-Turkish violence, European Jews who fled to Palestine, Palestinians who were displaced in 1948 and 1967, Kurds who were targeted by the Iraqi government in the 1980s, Iraqis who fled in various stages in the 1990s and 2000s, Syrians and Yemenis who were displaced as a result of war, and several ethno-religious groups who were displaced by the violence exerted by ISIS and other radical groups. In addition to loss of home and livelihood, displaced communities have faced social issues related to not-belonging and legal issues which in some cases even included statelessness.

Migration also has a different, much more positive face in the Middle East. Expanding economies, especially in the Gulf region, have attracted millions of labour migrants from different parts of the world, resulting in societies in which multicultural and multireligious populations of migrants far outnumber the traditional populations, especially in the smaller Gulf states. While migration to these economic centres is voluntary, migrant communities nevertheless face a number of challenges such as their transience, legal and contractual insecurities, and separation from their families who are relying on their remittances.

The churches have been deeply affected by migration, sometimes experiencing forced displacement themselves, while at other times finding themselves in the role of host community, called upon to provide humanitarian aid or reaching out to migrants through chaplaincies. As we consider the mission of the church in the context of migration in the Middle East, the biblical notions of *diakonia* and hospitality are, therefore, natural guides, as the third section of our report shows.

8 Ewelina Ochab, "Religious Freedom," in *Christianity in North Africa and West Asia*, 381.

9 Sari Hanafi, "Forced Migration in the Middle East and North Africa," in *The Oxford Handbook of Refugee and Forced Migration Studies*, Elenia Fiddian Qasmiyeh, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 585–86.

This report is divided into two main parts. The first part includes expressions of mission in the Middle East, such as creation care, education, interfaith dialogue, and ministry with migrants and displaced people. The second part considers missionary ecclesiologies in the Middle East, in particular toward *diakonia* and hospitality, as well as monasticism and martyrdom. A short conclusion will summarize the report.

Expressions of Christian Mission in the Middle East

In this section we discuss four expressions of Christian mission in the Middle East: creation care, education, interfaith dialogue, and ministry with migrants and displaced people. Our first, historical report discusses various definitions and interpretations of Christian mission in the Middle East. It makes clear that the churches agree that mission includes elements of *martyria* (witness) and *diakonia* (service) as faithful reflections of the *kerygma* (proclamation). It also brings out some of the differences in the understanding of mission. Here in our second report, we highlight these four fields, which the churches of the region view as important or even urgent expressions of mission at the present time. For each of these topics, we describe some of the already existing missionary initiatives and we identify further opportunities for the churches. We also point out some promises and pitfalls as Christian churches engage in these four fields of labour.

Creation care

Recent ecumenical statements on mission have called the churches "to embrace forms of mission which express our reconciled relationship with all created life"[10] and, as *The Arusha Call to Discipleship* (2018) says, "to care for God's creation, and to be in solidarity with nations severely affected by climate change in the face of a ruthless human-centred exploitation of the environment for consumerism and greed."[11] Some of these nations are found in the Middle East and their corporate and political leaders are unable or unwilling to take remedial action. During the second half of the 20th century most Middle Eastern societies went through a fast process of urbanization, and many countries neglected the agricultural sector and the management

10 *Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes*, Jooseop Keum, ed. (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2013), 9. Hereafter, we refer to this document with the acronym TTL and the paragraph number.

11 "The Arusha Call to Discipleship," in *Call to Discipleship: Mission in the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace. World Council of Churches Commission on World Mission and Evangelism Documents 2018-2021*, Risto Jukko, ed. (Geneva: WCC Publications 2021), 13.

of natural habitats.[12] As a result, societies that were previously able to supply their populations with food were no longer able to do so and began to rely on imports. The gap between rich and poor quickly widened and the number of urban poor with no assets increased. Today, the wealth of many nations and corporations in the region depends on the extraction and export of fossil fuels. With oil demand expected to increase in the coming decades, it is difficult to see how this will change in the short term. Even though economic diversification is on the agenda, especially in the Gulf countries and Saudi Arabia, most nations in the region continue to be driven by short-term preoccupations, ignoring the environmental consequences of their policies. Change must, therefore, come from grassroots communities, including the churches.

The churches in the Middle East share in the crisis, which "has less to do with the natural environment and more to do with spirituality and icons."[13] They too are caught in unsustainable patterns of production and consumption that damage rather than repair the natural environment. The churches, if they are to be agents of change, are called to an ecological act of repentance, a "new conversion (*metanoia*) in our mission which invites a new humility in regard to the mission of God's Spirit" (TTL, 22). This ecological conversion involves a process of rethinking of the doctrines of creation, fall and sin, and salvation, taking into account human ecological trespassing and the covenant that was not only made with humans but with the entirety of creation.

Rich resources for a theological and liturgical reorientation are present in the Eastern and Oriental theological traditions, which emphasize the sacramentality of creation, the incarnation, and the salvation of the cosmos. Creation is understood not as "not as a free-standing substance with which to fabricate commodities to satisfy our desires but as an endless love poem being ever written by the Logos through Whom all things are made and meant for us to read and reread, to head and to treasure."[14] These traditions also offer a wealth of rituals in which praise and thanksgiving involve the non-human creation, as when water, oil, wheat, or flowers are brought into the church or salt is blessed and water is sprinkled in homes. These theological and liturgical

12 Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples* (London: Faber & Faber, 1991), 436–39.

13 John Chryssavgis, "A New Heaven and a New Earth: Orthodox Theology and an Ecological World View," *The Ecumenical Review* 62:2 (July 2010), 214. This issue is entirely devoted to creation care and climate justice.

14 John Chryssavgis and Bruce V. Foltz, "Introduction," in *Toward an Ecology of Transfiguration: Orthodox Christian Perspectives on Environment, Nature, and Creation*, John Chryssavgis and Bruce V. Foltz, eds. (New York: Fordman University Press, 2013), 3.

notions may be given practical expression in a radical ecological ethic as formulated in documents like the papal encyclical letter *Laudato si'*.[15]

Scientists and activists emphasize that a faith-based approach to ecological change is crucial in the Middle East because of the moral authority of religious institutions and figures, and that it is preferable to work in broad, interfaith coalitions.[16] Some progress has been made by environmental organizations in cooperation with churches; faith-based organizations for creation care, such as A Rocha, are especially well-positioned in this respect. There is also a role for ecumenical bodies. In order to honour God's creation and to promote change from within the churches, the Middle East Council of Churches began coordinating work for the annual observance of the Season of Creation (September 1–October 4) in the Middle East in 2021.

Education

As our first report demonstrates, education has been an especially important element in Christian mission in the Middle East, and this continues to hold true. The first reason for the churches to involve themselves in education is the widespread need. Most countries have young and fast growing populations. In war-torn and crisis-hit countries, many children are deprived of schooling and made to work at a young age. Rates of child marriage are high and, in some countries, on the increase.

Christian schools are also a crucial instrument for Christian education. Through their schools, churches teach the Bible, catechism, and Christian ethics. The churches have reached an ecumenical agreement to reduce the role of the schools in the teaching of catechism and the giving of first communion and they have restored these functions to their proper place in the parishes. Nevertheless, the Christian schools continue to nourish their learners in the faith and gather them for common prayer. In many Christian schools, Christian education and worship are offered in ways that are sensitive to the learners from other religious traditions enrolled in the schools.

Historically, in the context of the late Ottoman Empire, Maronites and Orthodox founded "national" schools since the 17th century, where the Arabic language, the sciences, and religion were taught. Western Roman Catholic and Protestant missions resulted in the founding of a plethora of Christian

15 Pope Francis, *Encyclical Letter Laudato Si' of the Holy Father Francis on Care for Our Common Home* (Vatican Press, 21015), https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html.

16 *The Symbolism of Water in Religion: Proceedings of an interreligious conference on water and religion held at Haigazian University on March 2, 2018*, Wilbert van Saane, ed. (Beirut: Haigazian University Press, 2019), 107–14.

"missionary" schools throughout the region, especially in the 19th century. Eastern and Oriental Orthodox increased their involvement in education in the 20th century. The impact of all these schools on the modernization of Middle Eastern cultures has been widely acknowledged.[17] The missionary schools were an important point of contact with Europe and North America for the Christian minorities and boosted their cultural, political, and economic opportunities.[18]

Today religion is also taught in many public schools throughout the Middle East. In some cases, standardized curricula are followed, while in other cases either Islamic or Christian content is emphasized depending on the community that is served. In predominantly Christian areas of Lebanon, for instance, Christian clergy have a role in religious education in public schools. Conversations on curricula for religious education in public schools are ongoing and are a special concern for the churches, especially in countries where Islam is the sole focus of religious instruction.

Private schools, however, remain the main instrument of the educational mission of the churches. Throughout the region hundreds of thousands attend Christian private schools. Some of these schools serve children with special needs and disabilities, for whom the public schooling system often does not cater. With debt-ridden and already stretched governments less able to maintain high standards in public education, the role of private schools is increasing in many parts of the Middle East. Recent reports have indicated the growing influence of private schools in post-conflict Syria and Iraq.[19] While some institutions prosper, it is not a success story for all. Many private faith-based schools that cater to students from lower-income households are struggling, especially in countries with high inflation rates and increasing poverty, where the whole educational sector is in danger.

As the churches seek to preserve their educational mission, they face the twofold challenge of how to prevent commercialization of their schools in a time of economic downturn and how to maintain a Christlike educational mission in pluralistic settings. In other words, how can they keep education available to all, especially the most needy, rather than serving only the elites?

17 Jerôme Chahine, "Christians and the Arab Renaissance," in *Christianity: A History in the Middle East*, Habib Badr, Suad Abou el Rouss Slim, and Joseph Abou Nohra, eds. (Beirut: Middle East Council of Churches, 2005), 799–800.

18 Catherine Le Thomas, "Education and Minority Empowerment in the Middle East," in *Religious Minorities in the Middle East: Domination, Self-Empowerment, Accommodation*, Anh Nga Longva and Anne Sofie Roald, eds. (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2012), 268.

19 Khaled al-Khateb, "Expensive Private Schools Become Many Syrian Students' Only Option," *Al-Monitor*, 15 November 2021, https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2021/11/expensive-private-schools-become-many-syrian-students-only-option.

And how can they maintain their distinctively Christian identities, while hosting students from various faith backgrounds and, in some cases, facing the pressure of Islamization of curriculums?[20] As they struggle with these questions, the schools are discovering that Christ-centred education means more than simply providing a religion class among the many courses. It means fostering institutions with a Christian ethos that reflect Christian values, reach out to students and parents in Christlike ways, and leave no one behind.

In the pluralistic societies of the Middle East, the principle of solidarity is of special importance in the ethos of the Christian schools. Solidarity is one of the fundamental principles of Catholic social teaching, according to which it promotes the rights and development of all peoples. It comprises responsible citizenship, interconnectedness, and responsiveness to pressing humanitarian and ecological crises. Solidarity reaches beyond the boundaries of schools and denominations and urges Christians not to compete but work together in a hospitable mission of education for the benefit of new generations to whom the nations in the region offer little hope. Solidarity binds people together even amid differences, and this brings us to our third expression of mission.

Interfaith dialogue

The 21st century has seen new developments in interfaith dialogue, mostly initiated and hosted by Muslim scholars and politicians. Two well-known documents illustrate this. In 2007 a group of Muslim scholars issued an open letter entitled "A Common Word Between Us and You," in which they proposed that love of God and love of neighbour are the chief common ground between Christianity and Islam. The letter prompted widespread reflection, responses, and dialogue meetings.[21] During a meeting in Abu Dhabi in 2019, the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Ahmed el-Tayeb, and Pope Francis signed a "Document on Human Fraternity," which advocated the protection of life, especially vulnerable life, and declared "the adoption of a culture of dialogue as the path; mutual cooperation as the code of conduct; reciprocal understanding as the method and standard."[22]

20 Fadel Sidarouss SJ, "Catholic Schools in Egypt: An Educational Mission in Difficult Conditions," *International Studies in Catholic Education* 3:1 (February 2011), 3–10.

21 Miroslav Volf, Ghazi bin Muhammad, and Melissa Yarrington, eds., *A Common Word: Muslims and Christians on Loving God and Neighbor* (Grand Rapids and Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans, 2010).

22 "Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together," *Vatican News*, 4 February 2019, https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2019-02/pope-francis-uae-declaration-with-al-azhar-grand-imam.html.

Interfaith dialogue in general and Christian-Muslim dialogue in particular has a long history in the Middle East. In the 20th century, it received a new impulse through the ecumenical movement, which inherited an interest in interfaith relations from the missionary movement, with several groundbreaking meetings taking place in the Middle East, such as the meetings of Broummana (1966) and Ajaltoun (1972). The WCC and, after it was founded in 1974, the Middle East Council of Churches enabled churches to work together in various interfaith initiatives. Educational institutions throughout the region have, of course, also been instrumental in interfaith dialogue, as they have brought together students from different religious backgrounds. Some universities have established specialized institutions for interfaith or Christian-Muslim relations and offer degrees in these disciplines.

While some have viewed interfaith dialogue and Christian mission as mutually exclusive, today most Christian churches concur with Pope Francis's view that "[i]nterreligious dialogue is a necessary condition for peace in the world, and so it is a duty for Christians as well as other religious communities."[23] In the Middle East, peaceful coexistence appears to have been Christians' main motivation for dialogue with Muslims. This has sometimes led to an overemphasis on the agreements and commonalities for the sake of a shared life and has prevented the participants of the dialogue to "fully perceive how the others understand and interpret that life."[24]

Both Christian mission and *da'wa*, which may be translated as "call" or "invitation" and may be viewed as the Islamic counterpart of mission, can be part of interfaith dialogue in an atmosphere of respect and acceptance, as both concepts denote God's calling and sending and both imply important notions such as care for the vulnerable, religious freedom, and a prophetic stance in society.[25] These insights were, as far as we could trace, first demonstrated and affirmed at a Christian-Muslim conference at Chambésy in 1976 and have since been reaffirmed in various ecumenical statements, including the document *Christian Witness in a Multireligious World* (2011).[26]

23 Pope Francis, *Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium of the Holy Father Francis on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World* (London: Catholic Truth Society, 2013), 118.

24 Najib George Awad, "Inter-religious Relations," in *Christianity in North Africa and West Asia*, 385.

25 David A. Kerr, "Islamic Da'wa and Christian Mission: Towards a Comparative Analysis," *International Review of Mission* 89:353 (April 2000), 150–71.

26 "Christian Witness in a Multireligious World: Recommendations for Conduct," World Council of Churches, Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, and World Evangelical Alliance, 28 June 2011, https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/christian-witness-in-a-multi-religious-world.

Again, we see the interconnectedness of our four expressions of mission. Creation care, education for peace and citizenship, and responding to displacement and migration are themes that Muslims and Christians face together and, therefore, they will figure high on the agenda of interfaith dialogues. Stephen Bevans and Roger Schroeder have argued that prophetic interfaith dialogues may contribute to reconciliation, justice, peace, and the integrity of creation.[27]

In the past, Lebanon has been viewed as a unique laboratory for interfaith encounter, because of the coexistence of many different religious communities in a relatively small territory. Pope John Paul II famously stated that "Lebanon is more than a country, it is a message." However, other countries in the Middle East also host a diversity of ethnic and religious groups, and important interfaith initiatives have emerged from Jordan, Egypt, and the Gulf countries.[28] Migration and displacement have created new realities throughout the region and interfaith dialogue needs to be conducted across the region on many levels. The churches are also called to collaboratively respond to migration with other forms of ministry, to which we now turn.

Ministry with migrants and displaced people

Migration is a reality that shapes the mission of all ecclesial families in the Middle East. In a general sense, migration raises new diaconal and missiological questions for the churches, related to *diakonia*, identity, and belonging, and the relation of the churches to nation states. In a more specific sense, migratory movements of Christians have changed the face of Christianity in the region. When we look at the flows of Christian communities, we distinguish different patterns: migration of Christians out of the Middle East to other parts of the world; migration of Christians to the region; and migration of Christians within the region. Here we focus on migration within and to the region. The migration of Christians out of the Middle East is beyond the scope of this report, even though we are aware of missiological ramifications such as the changing dynamics between the Christian communities in the region and their diasporas (e.g., with respect to remittances and religious tourism). We further distinguish between forced migration or displacement

27 Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2004), 369–95.

28 Some of the UAE's interfaith initiatives have been described as "state branding" and have been criticized for ignoring the plight of the Palestinian people. David H. Warren, "Interfaith Dialogue in the United Arab Emirates: Where International Relations Meets State-Branding," Georgetown University Berkley Center for Peace & World Affairs (12 July 2021), https://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/posts/interfaith-dialogue-in-the-united-arab-emirates-where-international-relations-meets-state-branding.

on the one hand and voluntary migration, often related to labour, on the other. We acknowledge that for many it is hard to make a sharp distinction between these two, as they migrate because of climate factors or economic necessity. For the purposes of our missiological discussion it is, nevertheless, helpful to look at forced and voluntary migration somewhat separately.

As our context analysis notes, during the 20th and 21st centuries, many groups in the Middle East were forced to leave their homes and find refuge elsewhere. To mention only some, Armenians, Syriacs/Assyrians, Greeks, Palestinians, Iraqi and Syrian nationals of various backgrounds, and Yemenis. Other groups came to the Middle East as a result of persecutions, wars, and other factors, such as European Jews who fled the Holocaust and Sudanese who found refuge in Egypt. In addition, the region has also witnessed the forced sedentarization of nomadic populations.[29]

Forced displacement disrupts the sense of place, purpose, and belonging of those who are displaced. It is one of the most pervasive forms of cruelty exacted on humans. It corrupts dimensions of personhood and human rights. In some ways, the rise of modern nation states in the Middle East has aggravated the predicament of forcibly displaced people, as moving across borders has rendered them legally vulnerable or even stateless, unable to rely on their country or nationality for protection.[30] Churches and other faith communities are well-positioned to assist displaced people, as they are transnational by principle and, in some cases, by polity. However, churches may be caught up in the systems, institutions, and rhetoric of nation states to such an extent that they mimic their discourse of inclusion and exclusion. If churches and Christian agencies are to contribute to the welfare of displaced people rather than amplify their displacement, they need to scrutinize the underlying assumptions of the nation-state paradigm in light of their understanding of the gospel and their ecclesiologies.

The churches' involvement with forcibly displaced people has often focused on relief, development, and education. Modern humanitarianism has one of its roots in the care extended to displaced people by churches and missionary societies in the Middle East during the first quarter of the 20th century.[31] Churches, mission agencies, secular organizations, and governments have

29 Hanafi, "Forced Migration," 585–86.

30 Rupen Das and Brent Hamoud, *Strangers in the Kingdom: Ministering to Refugees, Migrants, and the Stateless* (Carlisle: Langham Global Library, 2017), 20.

31 Keith David Watenpaugh, *Bread from Stones: The Middle East and the Making of Modern Humanitarianism* (Oakland: California University Press, 215), 18.

often cooperated in their work for forcibly displaced people.[32] In the 21st century, churches who previously avoided humanitarian work as a distraction from what they viewed as their primary mission, evangelism, have again taken up diaconal work among displaced communities, and have cooperated across denominational boundaries.[33]

Ministry with forcibly displaced people generates a number of dilemmas related to power inequality. Theologically, these dilemmas are related to the theme of hospitality. Churches who care for displaced groups face the question to what extent these groups may be integrated. Is it, for instance, preferable to include them in the existing liturgical gatherings or is it preferable to organize separate masses, divine liturgies or services for them? What are the implications of these models for the empowerment and well-being of displaced people? Another dilemma is whether church-based aid should be extended to all, irrespective of national, ethnic, and religious belonging, or whether those who are "in the family" of the church should be prioritized. Here the power imbalance between distributor and beneficiary may become dangerous,[34] for the latter option may inadvertently send the message that aid is conditional upon conversion and church membership. Conditionality of aid is tantamount to unethical evangelism and proselytization, which misrepresents the liberating gospel of Jesus Christ and disregards religious freedom. Churches need to tread very cautiously here and avoid the suggestion that aid is in any way conditional. This is especially sensitive in a culture that is characterized by patron-client relationships, in which reciprocity is highly valued and in which the dignity of the client is intrinsically related to the ability to reciprocate.

Like forced displacement, voluntary migration is changing the demographics of Christianity in the Middle East. Hundreds of thousands of Christians have migrated within and to the region, mostly in search of work. The Arabian peninsula and especially the Gulf countries are a salient case. While Christians view themselves as guests within these traditionally Islamic nations, they nevertheless constitute a large demographic, numbering over 3.5 million in Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and

32 Inger Marie Okkenhaug and Karène Summerer Sanchez, "Introduction," in *Christian Missions and Humanitarianism in the Middle East, 1850-1950*, Leiden Studies in Islam and Society 11, Inger Marie Okkenhaug and Karène Summerer Sanchez, eds. (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 6–8.

33 Elie Haddad, "Cultivating Missional Ecclesiology for the Local Baptist Church in Lebanon" (PhD thesis, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, 2021), 280–82, https://research.vu.nl/ws/portalfiles/portal/128325572/E++Haddad+-+thesis.pdf.

34 Kathryn Kraft, "Faith and Impartiality in Humanitarian Response: Lessons from Lebanese Evangelical Churches Providing Food Aid," *International Review of the Red Cross* 97:897-898 (June 2015), 22–23.

Yemen combined in 2015.[35] Many of these Christians come from Asian and African countries. Other nations in the region, such as Jordan and Lebanon, have also attracted large numbers of Christian migrants from countries such as the Philippines and Ethiopia. This has created a new and unique mission situation. Because of their migration background and because of laws and regulations, Christian communities in the Gulf region are characterized by transience and economic insecurity. Their contracts may be terminated at a short notice, requiring them to leave. In social and economic terms, many of them may be labelled as marginalized. This is no reason to disqualify them from our missiological reflections. On the contrary, "mission from the margins invites the church to re-imagine [its] mission" (TTL, 37).

In a chaplaincy model such as we find in the Gulf region, the churches typically care for their own communities. They try to create a home away from home for their members by orienting newcomers, proclaiming the gospel in designated sanctuaries, and nurturing adults and children in the faith. Missiologically speaking, this chaplaincy model offers opportunities to be present in places where other forms of Christian ministry cannot reach, but it also has its limitations. As guests in Middle Eastern countries, these migrant Christian communities have only a limited leverage to challenge unjust structures and harmful consumption patterns in society.

Over the years, migrant Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant communities of various stripes have expanded and institutionalized and are becoming a permanent feature in the plural societies of the Middle East. As they are becoming more "at home," they are increasingly adopting an ecclesiology of hospitality. Throughout the Gulf region, Anglican churches offer their premises to other Christian communities for worship, in places like Qatar hosting around 15,000 Christians in their worship centre on worship days. Anglicans also engage in compassion and advocacy ministries in labour camps and among seafarers.[36]

The long-term presence of Christian communities with a migration background raises the problem of their status as resident aliens and their belonging to the land. In the Middle East, land, family, ethnicity, and religion belong closely together. The Christian communities of the Middle East often claim a special bond with the land that was sanctified by Christ's presence and on which they have lived for centuries, but through migration many of them

35 Figures according to the World Christian Database, quoted in Hrayr Jebejian, "Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Yemen," in *Christianity in North Africa and West Asia*, 178–81.

36 Angela Murray, *The Anglican Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf: The Unfolding Story* (London: Gilgamesh Publishing, 2020), 342–54.

no longer live on this land. In some cases, migrant Christian communities are taking their places. The question is whether migrant Christian communities can share in this special bond with the land and, if so, under what circumstances. According to the Old Testament the gift of land comes with responsibilities to God, the family, and the neighbour.[37] One can argue that migrants and displaced people, in as far as they honour these responsibilities, may equally be called "people of the land." Christian mission implies an investment in or even a sacrifice for "the land," for example through ecological and diaconal work or the construction of Christian sanctuaries on the land. As migrant Christians engage in such work, their connection with the land inevitably deepens. As political powers come and go, they inherit the land along with the meek who remain in it (Matt. 5:5).[38]

Toward Missionary Ecclesiologies in the Middle East

From this exploration of contemporary expressions of Christian mission "elements" (to use David Bosch's term) emerge for missiologies or missionary ecclesiologies in the Middle East. We observe especially that the mission of the churches in the context of today's Middle East is shaped by diakonia and hospitality. We have seen the importance of *diakonia* and hospitality as driving forces in the missionary expressions of the churches. This has been noticed in other contexts as well.[39] In this section, we take a closer look at *diakonia* and hospitality as constitutive ecclesiological elements of Christian mission in the Middle East.

We do not suggest that there is one possible missiological and ecclesiological model, even though we believe in the unity of the church in Christ. Rather, we acknowledge that the churches of the Middle East represent a diversity of ecclesiological models,[40] and we argue that, while ecclesiology should be a subject of continuing ecumenical dialogue, the diversity in visions and praxises of the church need not obstruct cooperation in mission; it may

37 Christopher Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2011), 261–62.

38 Mitri Raheb, *Faith in the Face of Empire: The Bible through Palestinian Eyes* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2014), 96–100.

39 "Theological Perspectives on Diakonia in the 21st Century," WCC website, 6 June 2012, https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/theological-perspectives-on-diakonia-in-21st-century.

40 Gabriel Hachem, "Les défis ecclésiologiques et œcuméniques au Moyen-Orient," *Le Proche-Orient Chrétien* 68 :1-2 (July 2018), 79–80.

even strengthen cooperation among the churches if they complement each other in diaconal and hospitable ways.

In addition to the notions of diakonia and hospitality, we introduce two further elements that are key components of mission in the Middle East today: monasticism and martyrdom. These two elements afford us the opportunity to reflect on the commitment required of people in mission in the Middle East.

Diakonia and hospitality

The close connection of *diakonia* and hospitality is evident when we consider the eucharistic origin of *diakonia*. From an Orthodox perspective, *diakonia* is understood in terms of "liturgy after the liturgy."[41] It is viewed as an extension of the eucharist and an expression of the unity of the church as the body of Christ. This liturgical diakonia is based on the self-emptying and saving love of Christ and, following the ministry of Christ, it is service to the whole person, the community and creation, as a sign and foretaste of the kingdom of God.[42] There is, therefore, no separation between the vertical and the horizontal, the distribution of the daily bread and the gift of the Word. The divine hospitality that Christians experience in the eucharist is extended to the world, and especially to the most vulnerable.[43] In this eucharistic hospitality, human dignity and freedom are respected or, better, find their true fulfilment. It is important to bear the eucharistic nature of *diakonia* in mind as a counterbalance to overly professionalized and programmatic approaches in *diakonia* that divorce it from liturgy and theology. While Christian relief, health care, development, and creation care all require a degree of professionalism and, therefore, diaconal institutions and organizations, *diakonia* remains a eucharistic work in which local parishes, clergy, and laity should all be involved. The close connection between liturgy and *diakonia* guards against secularization of the ministry on the one hand and an aloofness of the church on the other.[44]

41 Ion Bria, *The Liturgy after the Liturgy: Mission and Witness from an Orthodox Perspective* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1996).

42 Alexandros P. Papaderos, "Liturgical Diaconia," in *An Orthodox Approach to Diaconia: Consultation on Church and Service, Orthodox Academy of Crete, November 20-25, 1978* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1980), 17–46.

43 Alexi Chehadeh, "Diakonia in the Greek (Rum) Orthodox Tradition: The Context of Syria and GOPA-DERD," in *International Handbook on Ecumenical Diakonia*, ed. Dietrich Werner and others (Oxford: Regnum, 2021), 179–85.

44 Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics IV/2: The Doctrine of Reconciliation*, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1958), 697–98.

The liturgical, eucharist nature of mission and *diakonia* solicits cooperation. As Christians all share in one bread, the body of Christ, how could they not cooperate as this bread is shared out in the liturgy after the liturgy? The Book of Acts describes a situation that may inform diaconal praxis in the Middle East.[45] The Hellenistic widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of the food. Ethnicity, migration, language, and socio-economic status were the causes of inequality and poverty. In a kind of new exodus and a journey through the desert, this situation was rectified, especially when the tables of the Gentiles and Jewish followers of Christ were no longer kept separated and divine hospitality was expressed in table fellowship and cooperation irrespective of ethnicity, language, and religious background.

Hospitality and home are important themes in the *diakonia* of the churches. We have already considered four expressions of mission: creation care, education, interfaith dialogue, and ministry with migrants and displaced people. We may add other missionary-diaconal expressions in which hospitality plays a key role, such as ministry with elderly, ministry with persons living with a disability, and prison ministry. In all these cases, the churches extend eucharistic hospitality.

These forms of *diakonia* are threatened when they do not sufficiently preserve human dignity and freedom, and thereby fail to advocate transformation. This occurs when marginalized groups are treated as mere objects and recipients and their role as agents and their rights are not recognized. In the context of the Middle East, exclusion and stigmatization have been a problem for people living with a disability, even though scholars have identified changes in recent decades.[46] As a result, enrollment in schools and employment rates of people with a disability are much lower than those of able-bodied people. Diaconal initiatives that stop at a compassionate response and fail to challenge the status quo inside and outside the churches may perpetuate stigma and exclusion mechanisms, "subtly serving the interests of the oppressive and exploitative powers by covering up their complicity."[47] Similarly, churches across the region are active in care for the elderly, but are only beginning the process of ecumenical and interreligious cooperation in advocacy for the

45 Nicolas Abou Mrad, "Diaconal Perspectives between the Book of Acts and Orthodox Liturgy," in *The Diaconal Church*, Stephanie Dietrich, Knud Jørgensen, Kari Karsrud Korslien, and Kjell Nordstokke, eds. (Oxford: Regnum, 2021), 65–82.

46 Mourad Ali Eissa Saad and Beata Borowska-Beszta, "Disability in the Arab World: A Comparative Analysis within Culture," *International Journal of Psycho-Educational Sciences* 8:2 (August 2019), 30–47.

47 "Theological Perspectives on Diakonia in the 21st Century," 18.

rights of elderly, which are often poorly formulated and low on the priority lists of governments.[48]

Another risk for *diakonia* is a narrow hospitality that is extended to like-minded people only. We have signalled this risk in the context of the ministry with forcibly displaced people, but it is equally present in other forms of *diakonia*. When churches and Christian organizations only minister to members of a certain denomination, *diakonia* can easily morph into a sectarian tool that economically and politically empowers one community only, while disregarding others. Not only does this belie the unconditional nature of divine hospitality—"while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God" (Rom. 5:10)—it also fuels sectarianism and may contribute to conflict.

When properly understood and lived, *diakonia* is a form of hospitality that reflects the divine hospitality that is experienced in the eucharist. It is a collaborative expression of gratitude, a eucharistic spirituality that transforms people, systems, and cultures. As such, it is a primary form of mission. It is compassionate but may also imply political and social action. It resists systemic evil and discrimination and proposes alternative ways to relate to one another and nature.[49] It safeguards human dignity and freedom and avoids being co-opted into sectarian and political systems.

Monasticism and martyrdom

It is hard to imagine Middle Eastern Christianity without monasticism, especially in Egypt, Syria, and Lebanon. Both in its contemplative and active forms, monasticism has had an important role in Christian mission and it continues to do so. Eastern Orthodox monasticism in the region has a predominantly hesychastic character. Monks and nuns practise quiet contemplation of God and prayer for the world. The lives of contemplative monks and nuns have been an example and inspiration to many. Many Catholic monastic orders, by contrast, have chosen a path of active engagement and mission in the world. Some of the active orders have a mission *ad intra*, supporting their faith communities. Others intentionally serve people outside their faith communities in a mission *ad extra*.

Over the centuries, a large number of Western Catholic orders have come from Europe to the Middle East, with the specific aim of doing missionary work, investing much effort in education. Western contemplative orders like the

48 Radwa S. Elsaman and Mohamad A. Arafa, "The Rights of the Elderly in the Arab Middle East: Islamic Theory Versus Arabic Practice," *Marquette Elder's Advisor* 14:1 (Fall 2014), 1–54.

49 "Theological Perspectives on Diakonia in the 21st Century," 22.

Benedictines have had a much smaller presence in the Middle East.[50] The orders that belong to the Oriental Orthodox and Catholic traditions often steer a middle course between contemplation and action, worship and work. At times, a tension may be felt between the two vocations.[51] Whatever their tradition and focus, monasteries are hospitable havens where the faithful may find quiet to pray, nourishment for their souls, wisdom, and renewal in faith. Pilgrimages to the monasteries are, therefore, an important part of Middle Eastern spirituality.

Monastic orders with a missionary focus are involved in the administration of schools, vocational training, universities, nursing homes, hospitals, clinics and dispensaries, social work, media, and other ministries. Many traditionally European orders now include religious from Asian and African countries who work across the Middle East, but the orders that emerged from the region continue to receive predominantly Middle Eastern vocations. The active monastic orders often do not see a contradiction between their contemplative call and their mission, as the following statement on the web page of the Antonine Sisters, a Maronite monastic order, demonstrates.

> Who we are is intimately linked to our mission. As consecrated women and witnesses of Jesus Christ, we live among the people of God in our convents and institutions as the leaven in the dough and bear our contemplation vocation between two poles: the Word and the Eucharist. Enlightened by the Holy Spirit we want to reflect a sign of hope in today's world and make a substantial contribution to the Church's mission by: praying, listening to the Word, communion active in the liturgy; education, proclamation of the Word, and help parish ministry; hospitality, manual art and Sacred Art, witness of life; service of love, compassion, and charity; ecumenical, interreligious and intercultural dialogue.[52]

When we consider monasticism in light of the four expressions of mission, we observe that monastic orders have pioneering and leading roles in all. Monasteries have preserved many of their lands intact, thereby protecting old forests, water sources, and biodiversity.[53] They have also put their

50 Jean-Pierre Valognes, *Vie et mort des Chrétiens d'Orient: Des origines à nos jours* (Paris: Fayard, 2008), 517.

51 John Watson, "The Desert Fathers Today: Contemporary Coptic Monasticism," in *Eastern Christianity: Studies in Modern History, Religion and Politics*, Anthony O'Mahony, ed. (London: Melisende, 2004), 112–39.

52 "Who we are/our mission," Antonine Order of Saint Isaïe, http://www.antonines.org/en.

53 Josep-Maria Mallarach, Josep Corcó Juviñá, and Thymio Papayannis, "Christian Monastic Communities Living in Harmony with the Environment: An Overview of Positive Trends and Best Practices," *Studia Monastica* 56:2 (January 2014), 353–92.

lands at the disposal of the people for agricultural purposes, thus enabling local, sustainable food production. Through their regular fasts and simplicity, monks and nuns have also set an example for believers in asceticism and light living. As has been noted, the monastic orders have been important actors in the field of education in general and religious education in particular. Some monastic communities have intentionally fostered interreligious encounters and dialogue. A well-known example is the community Al-Khalil, which was founded by the Jesuit Paolo Dall'Oglio, who turned the ancient monastery of Mar Musa al-Habashi in Syria into a centre for ecumenical and interfaith encounters. Lastly, monastic orders have also engaged in care and advocacy for migrants and refugees. Out of many examples, we cite the work of the Comboni missionaries among Sudanese communities in Egypt and the work of Jesuits among migrants in Lebanon.

Even though Protestant semi-monastic communities have taken part in missions in the Middle East, most notably the deaconesses of Kaiserswerth,[54] monasticism is not a common feature of Protestantism and Protestant mission. Protestant mission has instead been characterized by voluntary societies of lay people and clergy who have sent individual missionaries to the Middle East. They have worked in similar fields as the monastic orders, such as education, health care, social and diaconal work, and Christian literature. Like monks and nuns, their biographies have inspired many, including Middle Eastern Christians,[55] and they have left—sometimes unintentional—legacies in the Protestant churches and societies of the Middle East.[56] And like monks and nuns, these missionaries have been called "athletes for Christ."

During the second half of the 20th century, mainstream Protestant churches drastically reduced the number of missionaries in the Middle East, but Evangelical and Pentecostal churches filled that gap, with many missionaries from non-Western nations now serving throughout the Middle East, often as so-called "tentmakers."[57] Much like their 19th-century forebears,

54 Julia Hauser, *German Religious Women in Late Ottoman Beirut* (Leiden and Bostom: Brill, 2015). Uwe Kaminsky, "German 'Home Mission' Abroad: The *Orientarbeit* of the Deaconess Institution Kaiserswerth in the Ottoman Empire," in *New Faith in Ancient Lands: Western Missions in the Middle East in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries*, Heleen Murre-van den Berg, ed. (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 191–209.

55 Heleen Murre-van den Berg, "A 'Good and Blessed Father': Yonan of Ada on Justin Perkins, Urmia (Iran), 1870," in *Protestant Missions and Local Encounters in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2011), 187–206.

56 *American Missionaries and the Middle East: Foundational Encounters*, Mehmet Ali Dogan and Heather J. Sharkey, eds. (Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, 2011).

57 See e.g., Edward L. Smither, *Brazilian Evangelical Missions in the Arab World: History, Culture, Practice, and Theology* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2012), 202–206.

these new Evangelical and Pentecostal missionaries have often come with negative attitudes toward Orthodox and Catholic Christians. Ecumenical conversations that promote mutual understanding and cooperation between these missionaries and the various Christians traditions of the Middle East are yet to be conducted.

The monastic life of dedication and asceticism is a path to conforming the human will with God's will and as such a witness (*martyria*) to Christ whose divine and human wills were perfectly united. In the theology of the churches of the Middle East, asceticism is viewed as a training or preparation for martyrdom, which may be required of believers. It is sometimes called "white witness," whereas martyrdom is called "red witness." Thus, there is a close link between monasticism and martyrdom and many monks and nuns have indeed given their lives for their faith in recent times, such as the seven Trappist monks of the Tibhirine monastery in Algeria in 1996[58] and Frans van der Lugt, the Jesuit monk who was killed in Homs, Syria, in 2014.[59] The Trappist monks and Fr Frans were equally committed to interfaith dialogue and peace between the religions and remained in their posts in the face of mortal threats. They are recent representatives of a long line of martyred Middle Eastern monks, who are remembered and honoured by the churches. In June 2022, two of them, Léonard Melki and Thomas Saleh, who courageously resisted the oppression of the Ottoman Empire during World War I and cared for persecuted people, were beatified.[60]

A commitment to mission may thus lead to martyrdom. Not only monks and nuns, but also other clergy and lay faithful in the Middle East have been brought to death on account of their steadfast faith. In recent decades, many have died in terrorist attacks in Iraq, Syria, and Egypt. In Lebanon, Protestant missionaries have been assassinated. The Coptic Church has suffered especially much and in response it has developed a theology of suffering and martyrdom, which views suffering as unity with Christ and the path to glory. Martyrdom is viewed as the ultimate form of sanctification. This theology relays insights from the desert monks and nuns of the early church. As the

58 Joachim Negel, "Martyrium als Zeugnis: Zur Frage nach der theologischen und politischen Valenz religiöser Zeugenschaft, dargelegt am Beispiel der Trappistenmönche von Tibhirine/Algerien," in *Martyrdom in the Modern Middle East*, Sasha Deghani and Silvia Horsch, eds. (Würzburg: Ergon Verlag, 2014), 73–89.

59 Michael Vanzandt Collins, "Toward Witnessing the Other: Syria, Islam and Frans van der Lugt," *Religions* 11:174 (April 2020), 1–22.

60 Fady Noun, "Persécuté puis tué sous l'Empire ottoman, deux Capucins originaires de Baabdate déclarés bienheureux," *L'Orient-Le Jour*, 6 June 2022, https://www.lorientlejour.com/article/1301812/persecutes-puis-tues-sous-lempire-ottoman-deux-capucins-originaires-de-baabdate-declares-bienheureux.html.

following quotation demonstrates, martyrdom is viewed as a closeness to Christ in his suffering.

> One of the saints says that he saw in a vision a group of martyrs more dazzling than the angels who appeared with them. Around the necks of those who had been beheaded he saw garlands of red flowers in the place where the sword had struck, and these shone and sparkled more brilliantly than any other light in the vision.[61]

The churches view martyrdom not only as a form of unity with Christ, but also as a sign of God's love, as martyrdom witnesses to the supreme act of love: the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. As it depicts the love of Christ, martyrdom leads to mission; it has a parenetic function.[62] The suffering and death of devoted martyrs, including monks and missionaries, inspire Christians to emulate their love and nonviolence, and to continue their work. The tombs of martyrs are honoured and visited by many Christians in the Middle East. Their biographies are disseminated, not only in print but also through social media. Modern martyrs are even portrayed in icons.[63] In these ways, martyrdom strengthens the churches in their faith and resolve and is, as Tertullian famously wrote, a seed.

When viewed in the light of the resurrection, the veneration of the martyrs is not a morbid practice, but promotes life. It does not hold the churches captive in an attitude of resignation and acquiescence in violence and persecution, but rather celebrates the life-giving work of the martyrs, which points to the life-giving work of Christ, and insists on religious freedom and respect for human rights.[64] Similarly, martyrdom does not constitute an obstacle for interfaith dialogue, but rather demonstrates its necessity.

As the churches follow in the example of loving witness of their martyrs, they are driven to unity and reconciliation. "If one member suffers, all suffer together with it" (1 Cor. 12:26). Martyrs bind the churches together because of their sacrificial witness to the love of Christ. In this sense, Pope

61 Matthew the Poor [Matta el-Meskeen], *The Communion of Love* (Crestwood: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984), 139.

62 Antoine Al Ahmar, "Le martyre dans l'enseignement de l'Église," in *Bulletin de la Faculté Pontificale de Théologie de l'USEK* 2014: 49–68.

63 Yosra El Gendi and Marco Pinfari, "Icons of Contention: The Iconography of Martyrdom and the Construction of Identity in Post-revolutionary Egypt," *Media, War and Conflict* 13:1 (2020), 50–69.

64 Ishak Ibrahim, "Coptic Martyrdom: Religious Identity at a Time of Persecution," *The Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy*, 17 October 2018. https://timep.org/commentary/analysis/coptic-martyrdom-religious-identity-at-a-time-of-persecution.

Francis has repeatedly spoken about "the ecumenism of blood," meaning that Christians are not killed for belonging to a denomination but rather for being a Christian. The ecumenism of blood also transcends ethnic and cultural boundaries. This is illustrated by the martyrdom of Matthew Ayariga, the Ghanaian construction worker who chose to die alongside his Coptic colleagues rather than renounce his faith. With them, he was beheaded by ISIS fighters on a beach in Libya in 2015. His remains are buried with theirs in a Coptic Church. There is Christian hospitality even in martyrdom.

Conclusion

The WCC's affirmation on mission *Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes* (62 and 63) calls the churches not to adopt a spirit that is shaped by "the highly competitive environment of the free market economy," but instead to practise "common witness in a spirit of partnership and cooperation." Our report applies this call to the situation of the Middle East, where the churches are responding to tremendous challenges, such as climate change and poverty; war and terrorism; voluntary and forced migration. These challenges cannot be met by any one church or organization in isolation; they need to be addressed in collaborative action of churches committed to the gospel of grace and liberation.

The churches of the Middle East have inherited a tradition of diaconal commitment, hospitality, monastic energy, and martyrdom. These may be viewed as gifts that strengthen the churches in their mission in the Middle East today and help them cooperate. They may also be brought into global ecumenical conversations on mission and may enrich churches from other parts of the world. Churches and organizations from other parts of the world who wish to work in the Middle East need to understand this unique heritage and not bypass it, so that they may partake in the hospitable mission and diakonia of the churches of the region. Missionaries may help foster hospitality and cooperation in mission as they flow from country to country and from church to church, at times taking on the role of guests while at other times serving as hosts.[65]

The future of the churches of the Middle East is uncertain. Complex political, ecological, economic, religious, cultural, and social factors will shape it. In some countries, especially in the Gulf region, the churches are growing and expanding their missionary activity. In other countries, the numbers of

65 Tobias Brandner, "Hosts and Guests: Hospitality as an Emerging Paradigm in Mission," *International Review of Mission* 102:1 (April 2013), 94–102.

Christians have dwindled due to war, terrorism, economic downturn, and the resulting emigration. Across the region, the future of the churches and their mission is closely bound to the future of Islamic communities. Beyond intra-Christian cooperation, there remains, therefore, a responsibility for Christians to work as "genuine partners" alongside and "together with Muslims for a better quality of human life on all levels."[66] Thus, whatever the future, the circles of hospitality in mission and diakonia that the churches draw need to be ever-widening and include not only their own members, but also members of other denominations and religions, people who have lived in the lands of the Middle East for a long time, as well as newcomers.

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66 George F. Sabra, "Christian Mission in the Wake of the Arab Spring," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 38:3 (July 2014), 115–18.

CHAPTER 6

Mapping Cooperation in Mission Today: A Preliminary Report from Latin America and the Caribbean

Karla Ann Koll

In 1921, Protestant mission leaders from boards and societies established the International Missionary Council (IMC) to promote cooperation in mission by coordinating policies and actions. In the ensuing century, both the world and the churches have changed drastically. Today, cooperation in mission continues between Christians in different contexts who build relationships across social and cultural differences in a world where exclusionary forces continue to deny many groups access to life with dignity and justice. Current discussions of decolonization are questioning again the relationship between Christian mission and the asymmetric power dynamics operating in the world today.

The anniversary of the IMC provided the Latin American Biblical University in Costa Rica with an opportunity to examine what cooperation in mission looks like and feels like to participants in these mission relationships from contexts in Latin America and the Caribbean. This article presents the results of our study and offers some missiological considerations to encourage greater mutuality in cooperation for mission in the future. The relationships built to carry out the work of proclaiming God's love for the world are themselves an integral part of mission.

The Research Process

Within the second phase of the IMC Centenary study, the Center for Social and Theological Research of the Latin American Biblical University carried out an exploratory study to discover some of the contours of cooperation in mission in our region today. How do Christians in Latin America and the Caribbean organize for engagement in mission? What are the forms of cooperation in mission? What kinds of missional activities attract support from churches and agencies outside Latin America and the Caribbean?

Where are the churches and agencies headquartered that cooperate in mission with institutions and organizations in the region? Most importantly, we wanted to know how leaders in the region experience these relationships of cooperation in mission and what recommendations they have for improving these relationships in the future. With these questions in mind, the research team developed a brief questionnaire.

The Latin American Biblical University (UBL), which was founded by an interdenominational evangelical faith mission in 1921, is an ecumenical institution that draws students and faculty members from a variety of Christian traditions. Students from historic Protestant churches and evangelical churches remain the majority of our students and graduates. The first step in the research process was to develop a list of contacts with Christian churches, institutions and organizations engaged in mission throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. We began by reaching out to current students and to graduates. We also made contacts through the different networks to which the UBL belongs, such as the recently reorganized Latin American Council of Churches Network (*Red CLAI*). We are also part of two associations of theological schools, the Latin American Association of Institutions for Theological Education (ALIET) and the Community of Ecumenical Theological Education in Latin America (CETELA), each of which shared lists of contacts.

Initially, the research team contacted representatives of 162 institutions or organizations to inquire about the relationships they have for cooperation in mission. The team used electronic mail, social media applications and telephone calls to make the initial contact. From these initial contacts, 44 organizations responded to the survey. Of these, 37 institutions from 15 different countries in Latin America and the Caribbean submitted completed surveys. Survey results came from seven countries in the Southern Cone, five countries in Mesoamerica, and two countries in the Caribbean. The countries with the most participation were Chile and Peru, with five institutions in each country submitting surveys. The remaining two institutions are regional networks of churches. All of the institutions surveyed are based in Latin America or the Caribbean. Unless otherwise noted, all of the data cited in this article comes from the study.[1]

1 A copy of the technical report of the research project is available in Spanish from the Center for Social and Theological Research of the Latin American Biblical University, investigacion@ubl.ac.cr.

Participating Institutions

The self-selected institutions that participated in the study represent a variety of organizational forms. Nine of the respondents represented church bodies. Ten of the organizations identified themselves as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or as movements within civil society. Eight institutions for theological education participated in the survey. Another eight organizations identified themselves as faith-based organizations. The remaining two respondents represent networks of churches throughout Latin America and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean, one ecumenical and the other a denominational family of Presbyterian, Reformed and Waldensian churches. These institutions provide an interesting window into how Christians in the region organize for mission and how these organizational structures have developed over the last century.

The church bodies that completed the survey all belong to expressions of historic Protestantism in Latin America and the Caribbean. The Protestant mission boards and societies who initially undertook mission efforts in the region often was the purpose of mission as expanding the reach of a particular form of Christianity. They usually began their work by founding churches. Two surveys came from national Episcopal churches in Honduras and Guatemala and two additional surveys were submitted by dioceses of the Anglican Church in Peru and Argentina. Lutheran churches in Colombia and Bolivia submitted surveys. A survey came from each of the following churches: Disciples of Christ (Puerto Rico) and Presbyterian (Venezuela). The final survey of this group came from the Dominican Evangelical Church, a church founded through a joint effort of Methodist, Presbyterian, and Moravian mission boards.[2] In the survey, the oldest institution was a church, the Episcopal Church of Honduras, which was established in 1861. Six other churches surveyed listed founding dates between 1891 and 1938. One church was 54 years old at the time of the survey. The newest church body in the survey, established in 2015, was an Anglican diocese.

The founding of institutions for theological education by mission boards and societies often followed the establishment of churches. Latin Americans needed training for engaging in mission and leading the churches. The oldest theological school in the survey was the Dr Gonzalo Baez Camargo Seminary of the Methodist Church of Mexico, founded in 1917. The second oldest institution, with nearly a century of providing theological education, was the Latin American Biblical University based in Costa Rica. All of the other

2 A brief history of the Dominican Evangelical Church can be found at https://www.canacom.org/copy-of-member-churches.

institutions reported founding dates between 1964 and 1998. Three of the institutions for theological education are affiliated with churches; two are Methodist and one is Baptist. Three of the institutions identified as ecumenical and one as interdenominational. The remaining institution reported having no religious affiliation.

After several decades of existence, Protestant churches in Latin America began to come together in continent-wide organizations. The older of the two regional networks in the survey is the Alliance of Presbyterian and Reformed Churches of Latin America (AIPRAL), which was founded in 1966. The *Red CLAI*, the other regional network in the study, held its founding assembly in Huampaní, Peru, in 1982 to promote unity among the churches and encourage its members in mission. The establishment of CLAI built upon earlier efforts of cooperation in mission among churches in the region. While many of the earlier efforts were initiated by mission boards and societies from outside the region, CLAI was born with Latin American leadership.[3]

NGOs have proliferated in Latin America and around the world in recent decades. NGOs provide a wide variety of services to many sectors of the population and play an important role in civil society. The term NGO applies to many different organizations forms. When local churches or denominations have felt a need to create programmes or carry out activities in the public sphere that do not fit within typical church structures, they have often established NGOs. People from different churches sometimes come together to form an NGO to carry out a particular missional task. These organizations usually have an independent governing board that is not under control of a church body.[4] The NGOs that responded to the survey were founded between 1975 and 2009. In contrast to the other categories of institutions included in the survey, eight of the ten NGOs indicated that they have no religious affiliation. The youngest NGO, located in Mexico, identifies as Presbyterian. An NGO from Bolivia was the only institution in the survey that listed its religious affiliation as Roman Catholic.

Faith-based organizations are a subset of NGOs. The term "faith-based organization" or "religious NGO" has been used increasingly in recent decades. These organizations explicitly claim one or more spiritual traditions as the basis of their identity and values as they carry out their activity in

3 For a history of efforts in mission cooperation in Latin America and the founding of CLAI, see Dafne Sabanes Plou, *Caminos de unidad: itinerario del diálogo ecuménico en América Latina 1916-1991* (Quito: CLAI, 1994).

4 H. Fernando Bullon has explored the role of Christian NGOs in the region in *Misión, economía y desarrollo humano: Desafíos latinoamericanos avanzando el siglo 21* (Grand Rapids: Libros Desafío, 2016), 249–62.

the public sphere.[5] The oldest of the faith-based organizations in the survey, located in Peru, was founded in 1967. The other faith-based organizations started between 1973 and 1986, with the exception of an institution started in Honduras in 2019 that works with people from a variety of religious traditions. Two of the organizations identified themselves as ecumenical and two others used the term interdenominational to describe their religious orientation. Another organization listed its religious affiliation as Christian. Three of these institutions reported no religious affiliation even though they identified themselves as faith-based.

The research team sent the survey to people in leadership positions in the different organizations and institutions. Sixty-five percent of the respondents were men and 35 percent were women. However, the survey detected a difference in leadership by type of institutions. In terms of the churches, eight out of nine respondents were men. Women responded for only two of the eight institutions of theological education. Likewise, for the eight faith-based institutions, only two of the respondents were women. The respondents for both of the regional networks of churches were men. Only in the case of NGOs did women represent the majority of institutions, with women providing answers to six surveys compared to four from men. This discrepancy and differentiation point to directions for further research on gender and mission in the Latin American and Caribbean context.

The surveys reveal that the participating institutions are involved in a wide variety of mission activities. The churches, in addition to providing worship services and caring for their congregations, are engaged in evangelism and Christian formation. Other areas of mission involvement mentioned by churches include legal and spiritual accompaniment for victims of gender-based violence, food assistance, health care, human rights, and peace processes. The two networks of churches focus on training, advocacy, and promoting cooperation among member churches.

For the institutions of theological education, their primary focus is providing formal programmes leading to degrees in theology and Bible. Some of the institutions also provide informal pastoral training. In addition, several of the institutions work in areas such as climate justice, food security, risk reduction, migration, and violence prevention.

The majority of the faith-based organizations are involved in different educational activities. These include biblical and theological education with

5 For an analysis of religious NGOs and their impact on a local, national, and international level see Julia Berger, "Religious Non-governmental Organizations: An Exploratory Analysis," *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 14:1 (2003), 15–39.

a focus on theology from an Indigenous perspective, popular education, education for violence prevention and training in areas such as sexual and reproductive health in addition to natural medicine. Some offer training in human development or intercultural educational experiences. Several organizations provide humanitarian aid by accompanying victims of gender-based violence as well as young people and women in specific situations of risk. Another area of work in some organizations focuses on care for the environment through practices like the protection of water sources, agroecology, and small-scale cattle raising.

As a group, the NGOs surveyed reported the widest variety of work areas. In the area of accompaniment, organizations are providing legal aid and other services to victims of sexual violence as well as to migrants and those seeking refugee status. In terms of human rights, some organizations are working in the defense and promotion of the rights of Indigenous peoples, as well as providing accompaniment for human rights defenders. Some have projects designed to empower women. Organizations are promoting intercultural and inclusive educational processes around topics such as advocacy in the public square, human rights, the prevention of gender-based violence, governability, and citizenship. Along with educational work, some organizations are engaging in research. Some groups focus on generating a sustainable economy by working on food sovereignty and production using an agroecology model. In terms of work that is specifically religious in nature, there are organizations promoting popular Bible reading and interreligious dialogue.

Across all categories, the institutions surveyed are working with sectors of the population who suffer different forms of exclusion. Seventy-four percent of respondents are serving groups experiencing impoverishment and marginalization, with 47 percent working with people who are unemployed. Poverty also leads to limited access to education and to healthcare, the focus of 68 percent and 47 percent of respondents, respectively. Groups that received specific mention from institutions in the survey include people with disabilities (39%), people who have been forcibly displaced (33%), migrants (42%), victims of domestic violence (44%), communities affected by disasters caused by natural phenomena (28%), groups affected by armed conflict (17%), and people deprived of freedom (20%). Of the respondents, 33 percent reported working with persons that are suffering exclusion due to their sexual orientation. In the context of the pandemic caused by Covid, 28 percent of respondents reported serving populations affected by the public health emergency.

Cooperation in Mission

Once the participating institutions identified themselves and indicated both the types of missional activities they carry out and the sectors of the population they serve, the survey asked them for information about the relationships they have with churches and agencies that cooperate with them in mission. Where are the agencies and churches who cooperate in mission in the region based? What types of institutions are cooperating in mission in the region? What kinds of missional activities attract support from cooperating churches and agencies? The survey asked as well about the forms of cooperation that institutions in the region receive for their work in mission. The research team also wanted to know about the stability of mission relationships.

Of the institutions surveyed, 59 percent have relationships of cooperation in mission with institutions located in the United States. Six institutions, 16 percent of those who responded, report having relationships of cooperation only with institutions from the United States: two churches, two institutions of theological education located in Mexico, an NGO in Chile and one of the continent-wide networks. Seven of the nine churches surveyed receive support from churches or organizations in the United States, the two exceptions being the Anglican dioceses in Peru and northern Argentina. All of the institutions providing theological education in the study have relations of cooperation in mission with churches and organizations in the United States. The ongoing strong ties to churches in the United States is not surprising, given that many of the historic Protestant churches in Latin America and the Caribbean were established by mission boards from the United States.

Following the United States, 46 percent of the organizations that participated in this study have relationships with institutions in Germany. In terms of the churches surveyed, the Lutheran churches in Bolivia and Colombia receive cooperation from Germany, as well as one of the networks of churches. Half of the theological schools, four institutions located in Chile, Costa Rica, Brazil and Nicaragua, also have mission relationships with institutions in Germany. NGOs in Chile, Peru and Bolivia report cooperation from Germany, as well as faith-based organizations in Chile, Peru, Guatemala and Venezuela.

Agencies and churches in Switzerland cooperate in mission with 41 percent of the institutions surveyed. Three theological schools (Chile, Peru and Costa Rica) and one church (Colombia) report receiving support from Switzerland, as well as one of the regional networks of churches. Swiss agencies and/or churches support NGOs in Peru, Bolivia and Costa Rica. Faith-based

organizations in Peru, Chile and Guatemala also indicated they receive cooperation in mission from Switzerland.

Support comes from churches and/or agencies in Canada for 22 percent of the institutions in the survey. Episcopal churches in Guatemala and Honduras in addition to a Lutheran church in Colombia enjoy cooperation in mission from Canada. Theological schools located in Costa Rica, Peru and the Dominican Republic have ties to Canadian organizations. An NGO in Costa Rica and a faith-based organization in Guatemala report receiving cooperation from Canada.

Churches and agencies from a wide variety of other European countries also cooperate in mission in Latin America and the Caribbean. Two faith-based organizations in Guatemala, an NGO in Costa Rica and a church in Argentina indicated that they receive cooperation in mission from the Netherlands. The Episcopal churches in Guatemala and Argentina enjoy cooperation from England, as does an institution for theological education located in Costa Rica. Swedish churches and/or agencies support an NGO and a Lutheran church in Colombia, as well as a faith-based organization in Guatemala. From France comes cooperation for a theological school in Nicaragua and a faith-based organization in Haiti. Agencies and/or churches in Italy cooperate with one of the regional networks of churches and with a Haitian faith-based organization. An NGO in Bolivia reports receiving support from Denmark and Spain. A church in Colombia and an NGO in Bolivia indicate they receive cooperation in mission from churches and/or agencies in Finland. A Norwegian institution works in mission with an NGO in Colombia and an institution from Liechtenstein supports an NGO in Bolivia. The Church of Scotland cooperates with a theological school in Brazil.

Not all of the cooperation in mission reported in the survey came from outside the region. Non-governmental organizations in Bolivia, Mexico, and Chile indicated they receive support from within their countries. In Peru, a faith-based organization is supported by churches in that country. The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Puerto Rico has ties of cooperation in mission throughout Latin America.

Two international sources of cooperation in mission appeared in the surveys, one a denominational family and the other an intergovernmental agency. The World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) cooperates with the Alliance of Presbyterian and Reformed Churches in Latin America (AIPRAL). A faith-based organization in Honduras that works on interreligious dialogue receives support from the United Nations Population Fund (UNPFA). While faith-based NGOs have received increasing visibility with the United Nations system at an international level in recent decades, the

support of this faith-based organization in Honduras is an example of how local organizations are being incorporated as important partners in the work toward the sustainable development goals of the 2030 Agenda.

The organizations from outside the region that cooperate in mission with Latin American and Caribbean institutions have a variety of organizational forms. The surveys revealed that churches are involved in supporting all of the types of institutions surveyed. Eight out of nine of the churches, all of the theological schools, all of the faith-based organizations and both of the regional networks receive cooperation from churches in Europe and/or North America. NGOs provide support from outside the region to five NGOs, four churches and one faith-based organization. Four churches, one theological school, four NGOs, two faith-based organizations, and one of the regional networks reported receiving support from foundations. Government agencies or institutions that handle government funds cooperate with two of the churches, one faith-based organization and four NGOs.

The research team sought to discover what kinds of missional activities attract support from cooperation in mission. The first set of questions in this category asked about support for areas related to church life such as pastoral ministry and evangelism. Two-thirds of the churches surveyed report receiving support for pastoral ministry. Two theological schools, two faith-based organizations and an NGO also claimed support from cooperation in mission for their work in this area. In terms of evangelism, two-thirds of the participating churches, two theological schools, one faith-based organization, one NGO and one of the networks of churches enjoy support from cooperating agencies and/or churches.

Organizations that cooperate in mission in the region provide support for a variety of educational activities including primary and secondary education, theological education and pastoral training, popular or community-based education, and education for peace. While theological schools and churches as well as one of the networks of churches report receiving cooperation in mission for theological education and pastoral training, several faith-based organizations and NGOs also indicate that they receive support for activities in these areas. Cooperation in mission also aided with the production of different types of educational materials for all types of institutions included in the survey.

The institutions involved in this study carry out projects and engage in ongoing work addressing many critical issues in the region that affect vulnerable sectors of the population. Institutions that cooperate in mission support many of these efforts in a convergence of missional concerns. These concerns vary somewhat depending on the type of institution surveyed. On the top of

the list is gender justice and gender equity, for which 62 percent of respondents work with the support of cooperating churches and agencies. While a majority of the theological schools, NGOs and faith-based organizations as well as both networks of churches are working on gender justice, only two of the nine churches report receiving cooperation in this area. Environmental justice is another area where all types of institutions except the churches indicate active cooperation. Fifty-one percent of respondents across all categories report working in cooperation in the area of social justice. Other areas of work supported by cooperation in mission include human rights (49%), political advocacy (30%), food sovereignty and food aid (30%), conflict resolution (24%), response to disasters caused by natural phenomena (22%), accompaniment for migrations and refugees (22%), access to healthcare (16%), and education for literacy (11%). Two churches, one theological school, one NGO and one faith-based organization reported that they had not received any cooperation in mission for any of these concerns.

A form of cooperation in mission involves churches and agencies placing people for varying lengths of time to serve with their counterparts in Latin America and the Caribbean. The surveys reveal a variety of practices in this regard. The two networks of churches, two of the NGOs, two of the faith-based organizations and three of the theological schools report that they were not receiving cooperation in this form at the time of the survey. A faith-based organization in Haiti mentioned that conditions in the country to do not allow them to receive foreign personnel at this time. For personnel sent by a cooperating church or agency and who serve for a long period of time with a church or organization, there is a difference of nomenclature. Churches tend to refer to these individuals as missionaries or mission co-workers, while it is common for agencies, especially from Europe, to use the term ecumenical collaborators. All categories of institutions in the survey, except for the networks of churches, indicated they have received personnel who collaborate with them long term. Churches, theological schools, and faith-based organizations report receiving long-term volunteers as well. Short-term volunteers work with institutions of all categories except the networks of churches. The churches surveyed reported the most of this form of cooperation, with two-thirds of the churches indicating that they receive short-term volunteers. In the survey churches, some theological schools and faith-based organizations also received short-term mission workers.[6] Some of the churches and faith-based organizations hosted work groups, which generally come to carry

6 The term "short-term" is used in a variety of ways by different organizations. Short-term can cover a period from one week to two years. The survey instrument did not offer any definition.

out a specific task such as a construction projects. One theological school, one church and two faith-based organizations indicated they receive visiting groups who come to the region for the purpose of study. These short-term experiences might focus on learning about the local context or exploring a particular issue. Churches, faith-based organizations and NGOs report they have worked with advisors or specialists for specific tasks. Only one faith-based organization reported working with a mission worker at a distance.

Slightly over half (57%) of the institutions surveyed reported receiving material aid. Churches received the widest variety of material aid, including food, educational materials, technological equipment, construction materials, medical supplies, and clothing. No other type of institution received clothing. One faith-based organization accepts medical supplies and one NGO receives construction material. For theological schools, the only form of material aid reported was educational materials. The two networks of churches indicated that they do not receive material aid.

All of the institutions surveyed with one exception receive economic support through cooperation in mission. A majority of institutions (68%) receive funds to cover administrative costs. This includes institutions in all categories in the study. Again, institutions in all categories, 57 percent of the total surveyed, receive aid for scholarships. Likewise, 57 percent of participating institutions receive funds to help cover salaries and honoraria. Institutions report receiving funds for specific purposes such as teaching materials (43%), specific projects (27%), travel costs (24%), infrastructure (22%), vehicles (11%), and training events (5%).

The research team also wanted to understand how stable the relationships of cooperation in mission have been over time. Just over half of the institutions surveyed (51%) said they have been supported through cooperation in mission for 24 or more years. Nine percent have received support for 20 to 23 years and 11 percent affirm that they have enjoyed cooperation in mission for between 16 and 19 years. Other institutions report receiving support for 12 to 15 years (8%), for 8 to 11 years (5%), for 4 to 7 years (5%) and from 0 to 3 years (11%). On one hand, these figures show a certain amount of stability. At the same time, the survey shows the development of new relationships of cooperation in recent years. Thirty-two percent of the institutions surveyed report that they have entered into a new relationship of cooperation in mission within the last five years. Three-quarters of the institutions surveyed report receiving support from more than one cooperating agency or church, with some institutions in relationship with more than five counterparts.

Mission Relationships

Cooperation in mission occurs when Christians from different contexts and social locations participate in God's mission together. The relationships that are constructed in this process are not incidental to mission. Instead, they form an integral part of mission. The study team wanted to know how leaders of institutions in Latin America and the Caribbean experience their relationships with the churches and agencies from other latitudes that cooperate with them in mission. The first set of questions in this section of the survey asked institutions to rate their relationships on five different topics. Respondents also had an opportunity to describe areas of the relationships they experience as problematic or challenging. Finally, the participants were invited to offer their suggestions for improving the relationships of cooperation in mission.

The participating institutions were asked to rate the concern shown by the cooperating churches and agencies in the needs their projects and ministries seek to address in their contexts. Across all categories of institutions surveyed, 46 percent of respondents consider that their counterparts show a high degree of concern and 27 percent rated the concern as very high. However, there was some variation by type of organization. Overall, the theological schools gave the highest rating on this point, with 50 percent rating the concern showed by counterparts as high and 37 percent as very high. The lowest ratings were assigned by churches, with 40 percent indicating a high level of concern and 20 percent reporting the concern showed as very high. Both networks of churches indicate a high level of concern showed by their counterparts. One faith-based organization rated this concern as low and one church responded with very low.

The question on which the institutions surveyed rated the cooperating churches and agencies the highest was on the respect shown for their internal policies, with 89 percent of respondents answering high (41%) or very high (48%). Only eight percent or three institutions, including two theological schools, indicated a medium level of respect. The only institution that registered a very low level of respect from the cooperating agencies was a church.

In their evaluation of the communication strategies used by the cooperating churches and agencies, only 14 percent of respondents rated them very high, with 41 percent indicating a high rating and 41 percent labeling the strategies as medium. Again, the theological schools tended to rate the strategies slightly higher overall than the other categories of institutions. A church was the only institution to rate the communicate strategies as very low.

In terms of the process for soliciting and receiving support, 46 percent of responding institutions gave a rating of high, with another 24 percent

indicating a rating of very high. Another 22 percent felt these processes were only medium. One church rated the process as low and another as very low. In this question, an NGO also felt the processes merited a very low rating.

Of the questions asked in this section of the survey, respondents perceived the availability of evaluation tools that are easy to use as the most problematic. Only 59 percent of the institutions rated the usability of the evaluation tools as high (40%) and very high (19%). Three institutions (8%) saw the evaluations tools as poor, and another three respondents (8%) rated them as very poor. On this question as well, the churches tended to rate their relationships to cooperating churches and agencies lower than other categories of institutions included in the survey.

The vast majority of institutions surveyed (92%) report that the cooperating agencies and churches to whom they relate have fomented relationships and joint work among the institutions they support in the region. In general, this has been a positive experience for the institutions involved, though 24 percent rated the experience as neither positive nor negative. The survey did not provide any insight into the nature of the joint work encouraged by the cooperating agencies. One respondent noted that these efforts at cooperation within the region go through cycles, with moments of positive impact and moments when they make little difference. These efforts can provide important spaces for coordination between different types of organizations such as churches, NGOs, and faith-based organizations. Dialogue and consensus building are vital. Given that these processes are fomented by the cooperating agencies, they run the risk of becoming another form of imposition.

Despite the overall positive rating given to the relationships institutions in the region have with churches and agencies from other latitudes that cooperate with them in mission, respondents identified several issues that remain challenges for these mission relationships. On the one hand, these responses indicate that the relationships have not achieved the level of mutuality desired by the leaders of institutions in Latin America and the Caribbean. Almost all of the concerns named point to the ongoing power imbalance in the relationships. On the other hand, the willingness to participate in the survey indicates a desire to see these relationships strengthened to carry out the work of mission.

Several institutions expressed the opinion that cooperating agencies and churches do not take their local contexts seriously. One respondent from Chile expressed frustration over the criteria cooperating agencies use to determine where to provide support. Macroeconomic indicators for a particular country do not reveal the needs that exist in vulnerable communities. Another respondent mentioned the complexity of local situations marked by ethnic differences. A respondent remarked that the rigorous standards for

financial reports do not take into consideration the complex situation in a country like Venezuela, where receiving donations from abroad has become very difficult. Several respondents pointed to changes in their context as a result of the pandemic that have generated more needs and left vulnerable groups even more disempowered.

The priorities for funding are established by the cooperating agency, not the institution located in Latin America or the Caribbean. The cooperating agencies focus on their own objectives rather than the objectives of the institution with whom they are working. In some cases, if the cooperating agency eliminates programmes, the funds are reassigned without consultation. When cooperating agencies change their focus, counterparts in Latin America may find themselves pressured into carrying out projects that do not fit the original purpose of their organization.

The processes used by cooperating agencies also came under criticism. Respondents mentioned several specific items to show that these processes are determined by the context of the cooperating agency and not that of the local institution. For instance, forms for requesting aid and for evaluation of projects are usually in English, not the local language. The calendars the agencies use for requests and reports respond to the cultural situation of the agency, not the rhythms and timetables of the institutions on the ground in the region. Projects have to be presented in ways that respond to the cultural logic of the donating agency rather than modes of operating in Latin America or the Caribbean.

Many of the responses point to frustration with the project model used by many of the cooperating churches and agencies. One respondent went as far as to say that "*proyectismo*," with its use of technical criteria, serves to quell initiatives by the local institutions.

Another respondent mentioned the difficulty of getting cooperating agencies to realize the importance of assigning resources for salaries for those who carry out projects. Funding cycles for projects tend to be short, usually in the range of two or three years. However, processes of social transformation are slow and require more time. Several respondents pointed to the lack of provision for the continuation of projects started with the support of cooperating agencies as a serious shortcoming of this model.

In keeping with the survey results cited above, the mechanisms used for evaluating the impact of the work done by the institutions in Latin America remain a challenge. Which indicators are applied and how are they measured? Who chooses the criteria? What is the balance between quantitative and qualitative results? One respondent mentioned the particular situation of theological education with its long processes that do not produce

immediate results. The increasing demands for reporting made by the cooperating churches and agencies, each with their own form of reporting, creates an additional burden on the small staff teams of the Latin American and Caribbean institutions.

One respondent mentioned dependency as an ongoing challenge. This is significant, given that over half the institutions depend on cooperating churches and agencies for at least part of their administrative costs. Almost as many institutions in the survey rely on cooperation in mission for some or all of their salaries. Another respondent pointed out that dependency is not only a problem at the institutional level, but also appears at the level of those who receive benefits from particular programmes. Some beneficiaries refuse to provide reports of how resources are used.

All of these criticisms point to the unequal distribution of power within these mission relationships. One respondent went as far as saying they feel they are treated as inferiors by the cooperating church or agency, as if they are simple beneficiaries. Another mentioned that although the agencies and churches that cooperating in mission usually address the institutions in the region as counterparts, when adjustments have to be made, the cooperating agency makes decisions unilaterally. When one institution experienced a crisis, the cooperating agencies cut funding. What happened to accompaniment? In the end, the churches and agencies from outside the region have the power to decide to continue cooperating in mission or to end their cooperation.

The survey also explored possible ways to improve relationships for cooperation in mission. The survey team put forth a number of suggestions, all of which were rated as important, highly important, or very highly important by the almost all of the respondents. Institutions expressed a desire for more accompaniment in the process of formulating and carrying out the ministry or project that receives support from a cooperating agency or church. Several of the suggestions focused on the process of reporting. Respondents want the training needed to be able to meet the level of rigor and complexity demanded in the required reports. Institutions in Latin America and the Caribbean also want to receive feedback on the reports that they present to the cooperating churches and agencies. The suggestion that elicited the strongest response asked that institutions in Latin America and the Caribbean be involved in developing the instruments used to monitor and evaluate projects and ministries.

Participants in the survey offered numerous suggestions for improving the relationships for cooperation in mission. Some stressed the intercultural nature of these relationships and the need for specific strategies and training for all involved to overcome cultural barriers and improve communication.

This has to do not only with institution-to-institution relationships, but also with interpersonal relationships.

Many of the suggestions contain a plea for the cooperating agencies and churches to take the local contexts of the Latin American and Caribbean institutions more seriously. This would require staying up to date on rapidly changing circumstances and political situations. Each institution has its own particular context and limitations, as well as possibilities. Therefore, not all institutions can be treated the same way. Cooperating churches and agencies can gain a greater understanding of the situations on the ground by sending people to spend more time accompanying the ministries and projects they support.

One respondent noted that the knowledge of the context of the respective institutions involved in a relationship needs to go both ways. It would be helpful to the Latin American and Caribbean institutions to understand more about the context of each of the cooperating church or agency. Cooperating churches and agencies should share about possibilities and constraints present in their social and ecclesial contexts. This would create a space for discussing together how institutions in different contexts can gain a greater comprehension of the world in which we are working in mission together. Exchange visits to promote solidarity should move in both directions.

The joint work encouraged by cooperating churches and agencies among institutions in the region and beyond offers a space for working to improve relationships. All joint work should be based on dialogue. One respondent suggested that participating institutions use these spaces to share their organizational models and the way they measure their results. To expand on this idea, these spaces might be used for training on project development as well as monitoring and evaluation.

Even amid the rapid changes in the region and the world, the institutions surveyed expressed their desire to see a more long-term vision incorporated into their relationships of cooperation in mission. Though there is no word in Spanish for partnership, one respondent invoked the concept to plea for long-term relationships based on mutuality. One respondent suggested working together on strategic planning. Another would like to see cooperation in mission agreements for longer periods of time. Is it possible to establish agreements between institutions that last beyond particular funding cycles for the cooperating agencies or the life of particular projects? What strategies, including forms of ongoing support, can be adopted jointly to ensure the continuity of projects started with funding from cooperating agencies and churches? One of the churches in the survey asked for planning and support to continue work started by missionaries.

Above all, institutions in Latin America and the Caribbean want to be involved in the decision-making processes for cooperation in mission. This longing emerged over and over again in the responses to the survey. One respondent noted that there are often consultations or dialogues promoted by the cooperating agencies, but the Latin American and Caribbean institutions continue to be excluded at the moment decisions are made. The final section of this article will return to the power dynamics of cooperation in mission.

Limitations of the Study

This study set out to explore some of the contours of cooperation in mission today in Latin America and the Caribbean. The self-selected institutions involved in this study represent a small slice of Christianity in the region. The majority of them came from sectors that can be identified as direct or indirect descendants of churches and institutions with historic connections to the work of the mission boards and societies who joined together in the IMC. In this sense, the study allows us to provide a partial answer to the question of how cooperation in mission has evolved for this segment of the region's Christian community over the last century.

A fuller study of cooperation in mission in the region today would need to take into account other sectors of the Christian community. From the first Roman Catholic missionaries who accompanied the Iberian conquistadors in the 16th century, the Roman Catholic presence in the Caribbean and in Latin America has been part of transnational networks that have facilitated the flow of personnel, resources and ideas. It would be very interesting to explore what cooperation in mission looks like today in Roman Catholic circles. Classical Pentecostal churches have their own international mission structures. Neo-Pentecostal churches also form active transnational networks.

Much cooperation in mission today is decentralized. As short-term mission trips have become a popular model of mission engagement by local congregations of the global North, especially in the United States, many local congregations in Latin America and the Caribbean have been able to develop relationships with congregations in other countries. These relationships often cross denominational boundaries; for instance, a Presbyterian church in New Jersey has a relationship with an independent Pentecostal church in Costa Rica. In addition to the presence of short-term volunteers, with a pause due to the pandemic, these relationships often include the provision of various types of economic and material aid. These relationships are not mediated by denominational structures either in the global North or in Latin America

and the Caribbean. Given the vast number of local Protestant or evangelical congregations throughout the region, the research team decided to leave congregation-to-congregation forms of cooperation in mission out of the survey. This would be an important topic for further research.

No international NGOs or faith-based organizations were included in this study. International agencies like World Vision and Catholic Relief Services mobilize a vast flow of resources into the region for mission and generate connections between Christians in the global North and churches in Latin America and the Caribbean. These large institutions are also important actors on the international stage. A more complete study of cooperation in mission would need to take such institutions into account.

The survey did not ask the participating institutions how they cooperate in mission with agencies and churches in other latitudes. This gap in the survey questions, and in the answers of participating institutions to open-ended questions, reveals that the operational understanding of cooperation in mission is still mainly unidirectional. Material resources, including personnel, flow from the countries of the global North to churches and institutions in Latin America and the Caribbean. Does the language of cooperation imply more mutuality and multidirectional collaboration than actually exists?

The survey also did not ask if and how the participating institutions cooperate in mission with other institutions within Latin America and the Caribbean. Only the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Puerto Rico indicated that they are cooperating in mission with churches elsewhere in Latin America. It should be noted, however, that both regional networks of churches in the study list fomenting cooperation in mission among member churches as an important part of their work. It would be interesting to know more about this cooperation among churches in the region. The study also did not detect any relationships for cooperation in mission between institutions in Latin America and other regions of the global South.

Concern for the sustainability of these institutions engaging in missional work runs throughout the survey. Several institutions mentioned that the needs they see always outstrip the resources they have available to them. The survey team did not ask the institutions involved if and how they are working toward financial self-sufficiency and if they receive accompaniment from the agencies and churches that cooperate with them in mission as they seek strategies to become more self-sufficient. Some institutions in the study did report receiving cooperation in mission from within their own national contexts, but the survey did not probe the forms of this cooperation. Future studies on cooperation in mission might explore strategies for generating resources in different ways for missional activities in the region.

Missiological Considerations

The information gathered in this brief study of cooperation in mission in Latin America and the Caribbean today raises several missiological concerns that warrant further reflection. Many of these concerns focus on the nature of mission relationships in a world marked by asymmetric power dynamics. Questions also emerged about the relationship between the churches of the region and current forms of cooperation in mission. Education, which appears in the study as a key aspect of mission in the region, requires some critical analysis. As institutions of theological education prepare leaders for the churches and organizations of the region, it is vital to ask what skills they need to develop for cooperation in mission. This section ends with some suggestions for building mutuality into mission relationships.

The institutions surveyed in Latin America and the Caribbean enjoy relationships of cooperation in mission with a variety of churches and agencies in the global North. The majority of the institutions have mission relationships with churches and agencies in the United States. Geographical proximity and the strong influence of the United States in the region since the mid-nineteenth century explain many of these historical connections. One surprise for the survey team was the discovery that Christians from a variety of European countries, through their churches and agencies, collaborate in mission in the region. Some of these connections follow lines of denominational affinity. For instance, Lutheran churches in Germany support Lutheran churches in Bolivia and Colombia. Episcopal churches in Peru and Argentina receive support from England. However, many of these relationships represent relatively new connections.

Even with this existing diversity, several of the institutions surveyed expressed a desire to have more churches and/or agencies collaborate with them in mission. They expressed this desire for more relationships despite the burden of complying with the reporting requirements of each cooperating agency. Though several institutions in the study mentioned dependency as an issue, none of the institutions expressed a desire to see the relationships of cooperation in mission come to an end. Perhaps part of the response to dependency is not independence; rather, the diversification of dependency can lead to the creation of wider webs of cooperation in mission in a world that is increasingly interdependent.

Financial dependency is only one aspect of the power dynamics at work in these mission relationships. Respondents mentioned different ways in which they feel excluded from decision-making and not treated as equal partners by cooperating churches and agencies. These comments and the experiences

behind them show that these mission relationships are marked by what Anibal Quijano has called coloniality. The social relationships of power imposed by the processes of colonization beginning in the 16th century did not end when the nations of Latin America gained political independence from the colonial powers. Coloniality lives on in political and economic structures, institutional arrangements, and day-to-day interactions.[7] There is no vantage point from outside of coloniality from which to work for decolonization.

Coloniality not only operates in relationships between Latin Americans and those from outside the region. Coloniality structures the relationships within Latin American and Caribbean societies as well. The survey shows that the participating institutions are working with vulnerable groups that are subjected to various kinds of exclusion. In the WCC mission statement *Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes*, the ecumenical movement affirmed that mission today moves from the margins, from those groups whose very lives are threatened by exclusionary forces.[8] One question that emerges from this study is whether the groups that historically have not had access to social power are participating in decisions about missional projects and activities carried out by the participating institutions. If the leaders of the Latin American and Caribbean institutions feel they are not sufficiently involved in the decision-making processes with the agencies and churches who are cooperating with them in mission, how much more excluded are the groups being served from the decisions about what missional activities are carried out and how?

Given the small sample size of the survey, it is impossible to make generalizations about the churches of the region and their relationships of cooperation in mission. However, it is disconcerting to note that the churches that participated in the study rated their mission relationships much lower than other types of organizations in the study. There may be several reasons for this. NGOs and faith-based organizations choose their leadership based in part on a person's ability to generate and maintain connections with outside organizations that can help further their institution's work. Churches may use criteria more related to internal church affairs for the selection of their leadership. Many of the churches and agencies from other latitudes that are cooperating in mission in the region today do not have historic relationships with churches here. Many of them have sought to relate to other types of institutions in the region who share their missional concerns. As noted above

7 Anibal Quijano, "Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism and Latin America," *Nepantla: Views from the South* 1:3 (2000), 533–80, Project MUSE.

8 *Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes*, Jooseop Keum, ed. (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2013), 15.

from the survey, the churches were less likely to be engaged around issues of gender justice and environmental justice than other types of institutions. It could be that churches in the region do not share some of the missional concerns of the churches and agencies who are cooperating in mission.

The observations above raise questions about the relationship between church and mission in Latin America and the Caribbean today. One of the arguments given for the integration of the IMC in the World Council of Churches in 1961 was the affirmation that church and mission belong together, especially in the work for unity of the church. *Together towards Life*, in keeping with much current mission theology, defines local congregations as "frontiers and primary agents of mission."[9] The survey shows that much of the work in mission is being carried out in the region by NGOs and faith-based organizations. These parachurch organizations are definitely part of the one church of Jesus Christ, but they are not churches. Many cooperating churches and agencies from the global North have developed relationships with these other institutions. How much of the cooperation in mission from outside the region bypasses or misses the churches? What relationships exist between the work of institutions like NGOs and the faith-based organizations and the congregations who gather to worship Jesus Christ? How can these institutions in the region, as well as the cooperating churches and agencies, encourage the participation of the churches in mission? The project model of cooperation in mission seems particularly ill-suited to the life of the churches. One respondent suggested that cooperating agencies and churches can provide spaces to assist the NGOs and churches in coordinating their work. How else might cooperation in mission encourage local congregations in their participation in mission?

In the survey, education stands out as an important aspect of mission for both the institutions of the region and the cooperating churches and agencies from other latitudes. For example, 57 percent of the institutions report receiving support for scholarships. This includes support not only for theological education, but for other forms of formal and informal education as well. Education has been central to the mission activities and identity of the Protestant movement in Latin America since James Thomson, a colporteur of the British and Foreign Bible Society, introduced the Lancasterian teaching method, using the Bible as the textbook, in various Latin American countries in the first half of the nineteenth century. Given this focus on education, more research is needed on the relationship between the education offered and the processes of social transformation toward more just and equitable societies.

9 *Together towards Life*, 27.

It would also be important to analyze the epistemological frameworks of the various educational projects to determine if they are part of decolonizing efforts to lift up forms of knowledge that have been excluded, such as those of Indigenous peoples. The Swiss agency Mission 21 is encouraging the institutions for theological education with which they are cooperating to engage in a study of the impact of theological education. As reflected in the survey, more collaborative work needs to be done to define the ways the social impacts of long educational processes are measured.

As we look to the future of cooperation in mission, one important question is if and how theological schools are preparing Latin American and Caribbean church leaders for engaging in mission relationships. Many of the graduates will find themselves working for NGOs or faith-based organizations. A large number of the students who come into the classes of UBL arrive with the idea that mission is what people and groups from outside come to do in the region. They tend to see themselves and their churches of the objects of mission, not the subjects. Through the mission course, they come to understand themselves as called into mission. Together with all followers of Jesus Christ, they are sent into the world to proclaim God's love for the world in word and deed as they work for the coming of God's reign and the renewal of God's creation. Along with theological discernment, mission leaders will need practical skills to analyze their contexts, not only in terms of the needs of vulnerable groups, but also with a focus on the resources and gifts these groups offer for mission. In addition to knowledge of how to formulate and carry out projects, they will also need specific skills in cross-cultural communication. They will also need a moral commitment to dismantle coloniality from the inside.

Ethicist Rebecca Todd Peters has suggested that relationships between groups who are located in different contexts with unequal access to social power need to be information by what she has called a "moral intuition of mutuality." To reach across social and economic differences, this mutuality is based on respect for each other's worldviews and experience.[10] Mutuality requires a careful naming of the inequities at work at all levels in a relationship. As *Together towards Life* affirms, "Mission from the margins calls for an understanding of the complexities of power dynamics, global systems and structures, and local contextual realities." Mutuality then moves participants in these mission relationships to develop shared strategies to address the power imbalances and work to dismantle coloniality.

10 Rebecca Todd Peters, *Solidarity Ethics: Transformation in a Globalized World* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014), 40–42.

Conclusion

The study presented above shows a sector of Latin American and Caribbean Christianity that is actively engaged in mission for and with vulnerable sectors of the populations. Mission relationships with cooperating agencies and churches in the global North support these missional activities in various ways. Despite a language of mutuality and partnership, responses gathered in the study process show that these mission relationships continue to be marked by coloniality. At the same time, these mission relationships offer a space for the difficult work of decolonization. As part of the church in mission called to be a sign and instrument of God's inbreaking reign, our mission relationships should embody the justice we seek in the world.

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CHAPTER 7

Profetas del Sur: el impacto de Luis Odell y otros en el movimiento ecuménico en Latinoamérica

Sidney Rooy

Resumen

Las iglesias latinoamericanas que ingresaron al IMC (International Missionary Council) lo hicieron en su mayoría en las décadas de 1930 y 1940. Sin embargo, su número era limitado. El Movimiento de Laicos también tuvo lugar durante este período, lo que abrió la puerta a la participación de los laicos en posiciones de liderazgo de la iglesia. Este documento explora el papel de un destacado laico, Luis Enrique Odell de Argentina, como promotor y participante vital en el naciente movimiento ecuménico y en el CMI (Consejo Misionero Internacional). Odell participó en la organización del Movimiento Juvenil Mundial dirigido por Willem Visser 't Hooft en Amsterdam en 1939. Durante más de 40 años, Luis Odell participó, organizó y se desempeñó como líder en organizaciones juveniles latinoamericanas. Estas actividades lo convirtieron en un instrumento clave en la incorporación del Consejo Misionero Internacional (CMI) al Consejo Mundial de Iglesias (CMI). Su presencia y papel en la asamblea de Ghana del IMC en 1957-58, y en su Comité Administrativo y Comité Conjunto con el WCC, se presentan en este estudio. El estudio concluye con una sección que muestra cómo, a través de este proceso, Luis Odell fue fundamental en la integración posterior a Nueva Delhi del IMC y el CMI para el Movimiento Iglesia y Sociedad en América Latina. Esto culminó con su servicio como presidente representante de América Latina en la reunión mundial de Iglesia y Sociedad en Ginebra en 1965. La contribución de los delegados latinos en esa reunión le valió el homenaje que le brindó una agencia de noticias francesa y Harvey Cox: "Ahora los profetas vienen de América Latina."

Abstract

The Latin American churches which entered the International Missionary Council did so for the most part in the 1930's and the 1940's. However, their number was limited. Also, during this period occurred the Layman's Movement which opened the door to lay participation in church leadership positions. This paper follows the role of one outstanding layman, Luis Enrique Odell from Argentina, as a promoter and vital participant in the nascent Ecumenical Movement and in the IMC. Odell participated in the organization of the World Youth Movement led by Willem Visser 't Hooft in Amsterdam in 1939. For over forty years, Luis Odell participated in, organized and served as a leader in Latin American youth organizations. These activities made him a key instrument in the incorporation of the IMC into the World Council of Churches. His presence and role in the Ghana Assembly of the IMC in 1967, and in its Administrative Committee and the Joint Committee with the WCC, are presented in this study. The study concludes with a brief section showing how through this process, Luis Odell became instrumental in the post New Delhi integration of the IMC and the WCC for the Church and Society Movement in Latin America (ISAL). This culminated in his serving as representative President from Latin America in the worldwide Church and Society meeting in Geneva in 1965. The contribution of the Latin delegates at that meeting earned the tribute given by a French news agency and from Harvey Cox: "Now the prophets are coming from Latin America."

La vida del Consejo Misionero Internacional (CMI) forma una parte significativa del gran cambio que transforma el mundo moderno. Todos los hilos de la historia del siglo XX oscilan de lo individual a lo social, de la distancia al acercamiento, de lo particular a lo universal, de lo nacional a lo global, de lo filosófico a lo técnico. Las iglesias, las religiones, los cristianos, se ven todos abocados a optar por ajustarse a los grandes cambios, resistirse al cambio o retirarse de los conflictos y acuerdos que ocurren a su alrededor. Así comenzó la vida del Consejo Misionero Internacional. Las misiones repartidas por el mundo sintieron los vínculos de sus intereses compartidos e impulsaron a las sociedades misioneras a convocar el encuentro de Edimburgo en 1910. De allí nace el Consejo Misionero Internacional.

Es importante constatar que este esfuerzo coincide con un movimiento mundial de cambio, quizás más lento al comienzo del siglo, pero que aumenta en intensidad con el paso de las décadas. Las guerras mundiales regionalizaron e impulsaron a la vez la conectividad globalizante de las organizaciones religiosas, políticas y sociales. De resultas de ello, los centros religiosos, con su

integración en las estructuras sociales y políticas, perdieron progresivamente gran parte de su capacidad determinante en los sectores llamados seculares, y dos procesos ganaron espacio en la vida religiosa: el clero perdió su centralidad como factor dominante en la iglesia, y los laicos pasaron a ejercer ministerios tanto eclesiales como vocacionales en el mundo. Surgió así, especialmente en la iglesia occidental, el movimiento laico.

Este aspecto es notable en la zona del Río de la Plata que abarca Argentina, Paraguay y Uruguay, donde, entre otros, el laico Luis Enrique Odell jugó un rol importante tanto en lo eclesiástico como en lo social y político. Su vida y su ministerio son una ventana a la realidad religiosa del siglo XX. A través suyo, podemos enfocarnos en una aportación significativa al ministerio de las iglesias en el Río de la Plata y el continente, y en sus respuestas a las demandas sociales y políticas de su tiempo.

Luis E. Odell nació en 1912, de abuelos de Cuba y Colombia, y de padres de origen cubano y anglo-argentino. Sus padres vivieron algunos años en los Estados Unidos, pero fueron enviados a Buenos Aires por la compañía Ford y se instalaron allí. A los trece años, después de terminar la escuela primaria, Luis entró como trabajador de oficina en la compañía Frigorífico Armour en Buenos Aires y luego fue trasladado a Rosario, donde ingresó en la comunidad metodista dirigida por el pastor Julio Sabanes. Sobre su estadía allí, su esposa, Elena Hall de Odell, recuerda el testimonio de Luis: "Siempre ha dicho que ese año en Rosario, y el haber podido relacionarse con esta iglesia, fue para él de una importancia transcendental, dado que le abrió un panorama de vida completamente distinto y le hizo comprender el valor insustituible de aceptar vivir de acuerdo con lo que Cristo enseñó, sirviendo a sus semejantes y luchando por la unidad de un mundo mejor donde hubiera justicia social para todos."[1] Este testimonio resume la vida de Luis Odell: su compromiso como discípulo de Cristo al servicio de todos, luchando por la unidad y buscando la justicia social para todas las personas.

Durante su juventud, desde la gran reunión de Edimburgo en 1910, las raíces ecuménicas mundiales crecieron. Si bien en ese primer encuentro América Latina fue excluida por ser un continente ya cristianizado, gracias al Comité de Cooperación de América Latina, fue incluida por el Congreso de Panamá (1916), así como por los congresos regionales de Montevideo (1925) y La Habana (1929).

La primera actividad ecuménica de Luis comenzó con la Asociación Cristiana de Jóvenes en Buenos Aires y en Rosario. Al terminar su servicio

1 Elena Hall de Odell, "Biografía de Luis Odell, 2002" (autopublicación, manuscrito de la familia), pág. 3.

militar, volvió a Buenos Aires y prosiguió su trabajo con Armour hasta 1945. Ya en este período participó plenamente en actividades locales, continentales y a nivel mundial de las organizaciones juveniles, desempeñándose como presidente, secretario general, tesorero o consejero. En el año 1938, Luis fue elegido presidente de la FALJE (Federación Argentina de Ligas Juveniles Evangélicas). Este fue lo que podríamos llamar el comienzo de su carrera como líder de jóvenes cristianos, que le llevaría, con el tiempo, a ser un destacado dirigente del movimiento ecuménico latinoamericano y mundial.

Siendo presidente de la FALJE, participó como delegado del Río de la Plata en la primera reunión juvenil a nivel mundial en Ámsterdam (1939). Allí, Luis conoció a líderes eclesiales mundiales y estableció una amistad de por vida con Willem Visser 't Hooft, quien después fue durante casi veinte años secretario general del Consejo Mundial de Iglesias desde su fundación en 1948.

En las décadas de los treinta y cuarenta, se ampliaron los lazos juveniles locales y continentales. Al mismo tiempo, en parte inspirándose en el Consejo Misionero Internacional, se establecieron federaciones y consejos nacionales de iglesias en muchos países latinoamericanos – tales como Brasil, México, Chile, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Perú, Colombia, Costa Rica y Guatemala[2] – y también en el Río de la Plata.

En la conferencia mundial del CMI en Willingen, Alemania (1952), cuatro consejos nacionales de América Latina ya eran miembros: el de Brasil, el de México, el de Puerto Rico y el de Río de la Plata (Argentina, Paraguay y Uruguay), y el de Cuba fue aceptado como nuevo miembro. Otros consejos latinoamericanos representados en Willingen pero sin voto fueron los de Colombia, Chile y El Salvador. Cabe destacar que John Mackay, que había sido misionero en Perú y era en este período presidente del Seminario de Princeton, fue presidente de esta conferencia. Gonzalo Báez-Camargo de México fue uno de los vicepresidentes y Josefina Losada de Argentina formó parte de la comisión de candidaturas. Hubo trece delegados registrados de América Latina, incluyendo al profesor Gonzalo Báez-Camargo y al obispo Sante U. Barbieri como miembros del comité rector que coordinó las reuniones. Los otros representantes de América Latina fueron: el Rev. R. Anders y el Rev. G. A. Tornquist de Brasil, H. Marcano de Puerto Rico, el Rev. G. A. Velasco de México, el Rev. H. Reyes de Chile, el Rev. R. Fernández de Cuba, el Dr. L. A. Quiroga de Colombia, el Rev. A. Ruiz de El Salvador, y

2 Luis E. Odell, "The Ecumenical Concern in Latin America" (autopublicación de 17 páginas), pág. 5.

el Rev. José Míguez de Argentina y W. R. Schlisler de Brasil como representantes juveniles.[3] En esta misma reunión, la Comisión de Cooperación en Latinoamérica (CCLA), que era miembro del CMI desde la Conferencia de Jerusalén de 1928, renunció a su membresía en reconocimiento de que los consejos nacionales representaban ahora a sus propias regiones.[4]

Aunque Luis no participó en la reunión del CMI en Willingen, fue una persona clave en la Confederación de las Iglesias Evangélicas del Río de la Plata, ejerciendo durante años el cargo de secretario general. En 1945, tras treinta años en el Frigorífico Armour, Odell fue nombrado director general de la editorial La Aurora. Como gerente fue miembro de la Comisión Rioplatense de Literatura Cristiana, promovió la flamante "Semana de Literatura Cristiana", y encaró la publicación de las revistas *El Predicador Evangélico y Cuadernos Teológicos*. Durante este capítulo de su vida en Buenos Aires, fue miembro de la junta directiva de la Iglesia Metodista Central. También participó en las reuniones juveniles rioplatenses y en los encuentros continentales en Perú, Cuba y Uruguay.

En 1941, dos años después de representar a los jóvenes del Río de la Plata en Ámsterdam, Luis fue uno de los organizadores de la Unión Latinoamericana de Juventudes Evangélicas (ULAJE) en Lima, Perú, de la cual fue el primer secretario general. Sobre este acontecimiento, Luis Odell escribe lo siguiente en un documento sobre los comienzos del movimiento ecuménico en América Latina:

> En esta década, la creación del primer movimiento realmente continental, tarea que tuvo el honor de cumplir la juventud evangélica, merece sin duda un capítulo aparte. Toda la historia del movimiento ecuménico moderno revela que la juventud ha constituido la fuerza promotora del mismo, proporcionando a través de sus organismos oportunidades de formación de sujetos que luego fueron los líderes del movimiento. En América Latina esto ha sido una realidad, a tal punto que uno de los dirigentes y gestores del movimiento calificó acertadamente a la juventud evangélica como "la tropa de choque" del ecumenismo. Ya en 1936, tomó forma la idea de celebrar un Congreso Latinoamericano de Juventudes y se constituyó una secretaría provisional que cumplió con la difícil tarea de convocar y realizar el primer congreso en la ciudad de Lima, Perú, en julio de 1941. La trascendencia previa y posterior que tuvo este congreso escapa a la posibilidad de ofrecer una descripción justa en este trabajo. Sólo diremos que bajo el lema del congreso "Con Cristo un mundo nuevo",

3 Consejo Misionero Internacional, *Actas de Willingen* (1952), págs. 4–9, 23–25 (versión inglesa: International Missionary Council. *Minutes of the Enlarged Meeting and the Committee of the International Missionary Council*. Willingen, Germany, 5 July 1952 to 21 July 1952. Printed in England.)

4 Ibid., págs. 27–28.

> la juventud del continente vivió una experiencia renovadora que abrió para ella nuevos caminos de acción y servicio por un período prolongado, encendiendo asimismo una llama que aún hoy se mantiene viva. El congreso, aparte del trabajo de estudio sobre temas de gran actualidad y trascendencia, adoptó la importante resolución de crear la Unión Latinoamericana de Juventudes Evangélicas (ULAJE), la cual se fijó como metas fundamentales "promover la cooperación entre la juventud evangélica y orientar a sus líderes a una mayor acción, ser un órgano de expresión de la juventud evangélica, y constituir un instrumento de servicio de la juventud y de la Iglesia Evangélica en América Latina."[5]

En 1945, Odell publicó, en calidad de secretario general y tesorero, un informe sobre la VII Asamblea de la Confederación de las Iglesias Evangélicas celebrada en Buenos Aires. También, asistió a la Conferencia de la Unión Latinoamericana de Juventudes Evangélicas en Cuba (1946) como consejero. Sus numerosos contactos y su presencia ecuménica lo hacían una persona muy integrada en los asuntos de las iglesias de los diversos países del continente.

Luis aceptó en 1952 el nombramiento como director general del Instituto Crandon en Montevideo, una escuela primaria y secundaria cristiana con muchos internados donde trabajó veintisiete años. Su esposa Elena comentó que este empleo fue para ellos "su pan y mantequilla." En paralelo, fuera de su tiempo de trabajo en el Instituto Crandon, Luis llevó a cabo muchas tareas ecuménicas.[6]

Entretanto, ya habían comenzado los tiempos de inestabilidad social y, sobre todo, política en la región. Con la toma de poder por parte de Perón en Argentina y sus medidas que dificultaban la comunicación entre los dos países, Luis impulsó en 1956 la organización de las iglesias del Uruguay en su propia federación (FIEU) para poder hacer frente a sus problemas nacionales. Por su parte, en Argentina se creó en 1958 la Federación Argentina de Iglesias Evangélicas (FAIE). Sin embargo, los delegados al Consejo Misionero Internacional siguieron como delegados de la Confederación de las Iglesias Evangélicas del Río de la Plata, representando a los tres países: Argentina, Paraguay y Uruguay.

En América Latina, las conferencias más significativas de esta época fueron la Primera Conferencia Evangélica Latinoamericana (CELA I) en 1949 en Buenos Aires[7] y la Segunda Conferencia Evangélica Latinoamericana (CELA

5 Consejo Misionero Internacional, *The Ecumenical Concern*, pág. 5.

6 Elena Hall de Odell, "Datos Biográficos de Luis Enrique Odell – Sonny", recopilación y transcripción por Elena Hall de Odell, pág. 9.

7 Ver CELA I. *Documentos de la Primera Conferencia Evangélica Latinoamericana. El cristianismo evangélico en la América Latina*. Buenos Aires: La Aurora, 1949.

II) en 1961 en Lima, Perú.[8] Con referencia a la primera, en la biografía de Odell, leemos que hubo "una intensa participación suya en su organización."[9] La crónica de la segunda dice: "El Sr. Luis E. Odell, del Uruguay, fue el eficiente administrador, a cuyo cuidado estuvieron los mil y un detalles materiales de la asamblea."[10]

Con este trasfondo de promotor y participante ecuménico en América Latina, Odell asistió como delegado de la Confederación de Iglesias Evangélicas del Río de la Plata a la Conferencia Mundial del CMI en Ghana en diciembre de 1957 y enero de 1958. Su participación fue significativa. Fue miembro del comité rector durante la conferencia, uno de los líderes del grupo de estudio sobre "Colaboración en la obediencia" y fue nombrado miembro de la Comisión Administrativa. Esta última comisión tuvo la responsabilidad de dar dirección y tomar las decisiones necesarias entre las conferencias mundiales del CMI.

Luis Odell presentó un memorándum latinoamericano a esta consulta en Ghana en nombre de los cuatro consejos nacionales presentes (Cuba, México, Puerto Rico y Río de la Plata). Los otros dos consejos miembros del CMI, Brasil y Jamaica, no enviaron delegados. En el memorándum, Odell hace lo siguiente:

1. Expresa gratitud por el rol significativo del CMI y sus líderes en la organización y realización de su conferencia en el Caribe en 1957, la cual redundó en beneficio de esta región.
2. Agradece la consideración para el establecimiento de una secretaría regional con la sugerencia de que tal decisión sea el resultado de una decisión de los consejos e iglesias de la región.
3. Anuncia los planes para una consulta en el futuro próximo de todos los países de América Latina y pide la colaboración del CMI en su realización.
4. Solicita ayuda para establecer una secretaría que sirva de enlace con el CMI y también con otras agencias como la Comisión Mundial de Educación Cristiana y el Comité de Cooperación

8 Ver CELA II. *Documentos de la Segunda Conferencia Evangélica Latinoamericana. Lima, 1961. Cristo, la esperanza para América Latina*. Buenos Aires: Argen-Press, 1962.

9 "El archivo del Dr. José A. Piquinela de la Iglesia Metodista en el Uruguay", en *El Ecumenismo con Mayúscula, Luis Odell 1912–2000*, ed. José Piquinela (Iglesia Metodista de Uruguay, 2014), pág. 12, a partir de apuntes biográficos de Elena Hall de Odell, 2014.

10 Confederación de las Iglesias Evangélicas del Río de la Plata, "Crónica de la Conferencia" en *Cristo, la esperanza para América Latina* (Buenos Aires, 1962), pág. 18.

de América Latina, en la que preferentemente se desempeñe alguien con experiencia en esta región.

5. Le recuerda al CMI el potencial de la obra del Reino de Dios en América Latina y pide la inclusión de la región en sus estudios futuros.
6. Dada la importancia fundamental del liderazgo en la misión de la iglesia, expresa el deseo de estar incluido en los planes del CMI para fortalecer la educación teológica.[11]

El comité rector de la conferencia responde con una moción de agradecimiento, prometiendo su colaboración para la consulta latinoamericana y su apoyo en los otros proyectos solicitados.

Varios otros asuntos de América Latina fueron considerados en los programas del CMI durante este tiempo. Concretamente, había dos proyectos en marcha: el Fondo de Educación Teológica para promover la educación y la preparación del liderazgo en las iglesias, y el Programa para el Hogar y la Vida Cristiana bajo la dirección de doctor Mace y su esposa, un programa centrado principalmente en el Caribe. También se consideró el legado de la Señora Carnahan relativo a textos, materiales religiosos y conferencias para uso de las iglesias.

En la conferencia del CMI en Ghana, el tema, con profundas implicaciones para el futuro, fue la posible integración del Consejo Misionero Internacional y el Consejo Mundial de Iglesias. Durante muchos años hubo un Comité Conjunto para facilitar los temas y proyectos comunes, y, en los años cincuenta, su relación futura. El obispo metodista Santo Uberto Barbieri del Río de la Plata fue miembro de este comité.

Sobre el tema de la integración, la preocupación principal para las iglesias misioneras fue la posible división en el seno de los consejos nacionales, ya que algunas iglesias eran miembros del Consejo Mundial de Iglesias y otras no. El temor de las divisiones venía principalmente de los países de África y América Latina. En Asia, la aprobación fue casi unánime, pues la colaboración mutua del pasado lo hacía deseable. En América Latina, hubo diversidad de opiniones al respecto. Brasil, sin delegado en esta conferencia de Ghana, ya había expresado su desacuerdo.

11 Consejo Misionero Internacional, *Actas de la Asamblea del Consejo Misionero, Ghana* (del 28 de diciembre de 1957 al 8 de enero de 1958), págs. 25–26 (versión inglesa: International Missionary Council. *Minutes of the Ghana Assembly of the International Missionary Council*. 28th December, 1957 to 8th January 1958.)

El veterano Gonzalo Báez-Camargo comunicó que el consejo nacional de México no había enviado su decisión, pero él mismo expresó su desacuerdo con la integración, por lo menos en el futuro próximo. En la reunión, dijo:

> Vengo a ustedes no como el representante de un consejo o región, aunque personalmente vengo de México y América Latina. Lo que digo no lleva el peso de una encuesta o exploración exhaustiva o consideración de las opiniones de los consejos e iglesias de América Latina. Pero he tenido un vínculo de mucho tiempo con el CMI y el Consejo Mundial de Iglesias.
>
> No ha habido consulta suficiente en mi parte del mundo sobre este plan para ver cuál es la situación allí, o para obtener las opiniones de los consejos sobre el efecto de la integración o la no integración. Me parece que la única colaboración efectiva y unidad posible es la que se basa en el compañerismo, la cooperación y la unidad local y regional, y que existen tipos de unidad y cooperación que paradójicamente militan contra su propósito. Si la unidad no viene como desarrollo natural—y esto toma tiempo—esto puede destruir de raíz o detener considerablemente el avance de la cooperación. Reconozco que estamos confrontados con una situación en el mundo hoy día en que ciertas áreas ya están preparadas para esto. Hay muchos aquí presentes a favor de seguir adelante—las voces de Asia y especialmente la India. Pero estas relaciones no han sido las mismas que en otras áreas y este es el caso en América Latina. No creo que América Latina esté preparada para abordar la integración, aunque un área en América Latina esté a favor. Sé que esta Asamblea va a aprobar la integración. No podemos cambiar esta tendencia de esta Asamblea. Mi única razón de hablar esta mañana es que quiero dejar constancia por mi parte de que no estoy a favor de la integración ahora por el efecto que tendrá en América Latina, sino de posponerla o aplazarla. No sé por cuánto tiempo, algunos contactos y negociaciones comienzan a abrirse entre los organismos que colaboran y en algunos de los grupos que todavía no colaboran.[12]

Por su parte, el doctor Alfonso Rodríguez habló como representante oficial del Consejo de Iglesias de Cuba para comunicar que este organismo todavía no había tomado una decisión oficial. Sin embargo, expresó su propia opinión sobre el tema:

> Hablo como representante oficial del Consejo de Iglesias de Cuba. Este Consejo no toma ninguna acción en cuanto a esta cuestión de la integración. Sin embargo, con sinceridad y con toda exhaustividad daré mi voto a favor de la integración, aun cuando me doy cuenta de que nosotros en Cuba—como en muchos países

12 CMI, *Actas de Ghana*, Apéndice VII, pág. 135.

> latinoamericanos—tendremos que pagar un muy alto precio por esta integración del Consejo Misionero Internacional y del Consejo Mundial de Iglesias. Es un hecho que nuestra situación en Latinoamérica es completamente distinta de la de la India. La colaboración entre las iglesias nacionales solo empieza en la mayoría de nuestros países. Lamentablemente el lema en muchas de nuestras denominaciones es: "¿Por qué hacer juntos lo que podemos hacer solos?". Hay una gran necesidad en nuestros países de refuerzo y fortalecimiento. No creo que este plan destruya la integración a sus raíces. Pero tal vez tengamos que pagar un precio y yo estoy dispuesto a pagar ese precio. Como ha dicho el canónigo [Max] Warren, ya se ha ido demasiado lejos; no será saludable para el CMI ni para el Consejo Mundial de Iglesias rechazar el plan de integración a esta hora. Creo sinceramente que, en cualquier cuestión de la iglesia de nuestro Señor Jesucristo, hay una cruz; alguien tendrá que sufrir. Que sufran los consejos locales y nacionales, pero no el CMI y el Consejo Mundial de Iglesias.[13]

Sobre la propuesta de la integración, Luis Odell expresó la decisión afirmativa de las iglesias del Cono Sur:

> De parte de la Confederación de las Iglesias del Río de la Plata, que es la organización regional que cubre tres países, Argentina, Uruguay y Paraguay, deseo afirmar que hemos estudiado con cuidado esta cuestión de la integración y, como resultado de ese estudio, hemos llegado a la conclusión de que la integración es deseable y, además, una conclusión lógica de las relaciones, los eventos y las conferencias que se han realizado durante los últimos veinte años. Pero opinamos que más se lograría si, durante los próximos tres años, antes de tener lugar la integración, se emprendiera un plan comprensivo de promoción y relaciones públicas. Muchas de las críticas se basan en malentendidos. Si podemos dedicarle energías y tiempo y dinero a promover esta idea en los próximos años, mucho se lograría para vencer objeciones.
>
> Creemos que tendríamos que aceptar con sinceridad el hecho de que, en la práctica, la integración no conllevará cambios drásticos a lo largo de las relaciones presentes. Con respecto a nosotros, las iglesias no relacionadas de ninguna manera con el CMI han entendido el hecho importante de que estar afiliado el consejo nacional de iglesias local con la Comisión de Evangelización no les afectaba de ninguna manera como iglesia. Recientemente en el Uruguay, un miembro de comité perteneciente a una de estas iglesias fundamentalistas dijo: "Bueno, hermanos, ustedes saben que a mí me interesa mucho colaborar a nivel local y estoy dispuesto a acompañarlos a cualquier lado en eso. No me interesa esta cuestión de la integración mundial, pero si a ustedes les interesa no me opongo, pero no cuenten con mi apoyo de corazón."

13 Ibid., pág. 137.

> Esa es una actitud cristiana razonable. Creo que hemos exagerado un poco esta mañana cuando dijimos que esto significaría una cosa tremenda que desestabilizaría todas las relaciones ecuménicas. No se debe afectar el nivel nacional local. Pero se afectará en los peores casos al nivel internacional, por ejemplo, lo que menciona la Confederación Brasileña en su declaración, que llegarían a ser un "consejo huérfano." Eso es un hecho, pero no creo que tengamos que decir que si tiene lugar la integración destruirá el movimiento ecuménico a nivel local y nacional. Por todas estas razones nuestra confederación está dispuesta a votar a favor de la integración, con la fuerte convicción de que en la providencia de Dios estos planes nos ofrecen la oportunidad de dar un gran paso hacia adelante en la tarea en que todos estamos comprometidos a unir las fuerzas, para dar un mejor testimonio de Cristo, para que "el mundo sepa."[14]

En la resolución final la Consulta de Ghana se afirmó "aceptar en principio la integración de los dos Consejos, con deseos de que se den pasos adicionales para lograr este objetivo."[15] La resolución propuesta fue aprobada por 58 votos a favor y 7 en contra.[16] Visto que Odell, junto con el reverendo Gustavo Velasco de México, había sido nombrado miembro de la Comisión Administrativa que contaba con treinta miembros representativos, participó en el proceso de la decisión y los pasos a seguir para efectuar la integración.

Sobre la participación de Odell en Ghana, su colega en Crandon Julio de Santa Ana, dice:

> Por su consagración a la causa ecuménica fue invitado a la reunión del CMI que tuvo lugar en Accra, Ghana, en 1958. Al volver de esa reunión, Odell hizo un detallado informe de las decisiones que se tomaron y que fueron muy relevantes para el movimiento ecuménico, y del Consejo Mundial de Iglesias. Odell supo estar presente en posiciones de liderazgo cuando se tomaron decisiones importantes en el movimiento ecuménico a nivel mundial. Sobre cada página del libro están las palabras: "Soñador activo de la Unidad, forjador paciente de la Justicia Social – Luis Odell."[17]

En los años 1958 y 1961, hubo una intensa actividad en preparación para la integración del CMI y el Consejo Mundial de Iglesias en Nueva Delhi.

14 Ibid., págs. 138–39.

15 Ibid., "Resoluciones", págs. 85–86.

16 Ibid., pág. 86.

17 Julio de Santa Ana, "Semblanza desde el Recuerdo de Julio de Santa Ana", en *El Ecumenismo con Mayúscula, Luis Odell, 1912–2000*, ed. José Piquinela (Iglesia Metodista de Uruguay, 2014), págs. 23–25.

Odell participó como miembro del Comité Conjunto de las dos instituciones y como miembro de la Comisión Administrativa del CMI.

Entre la Conferencia del CMI en Ghana (1957) y la Conferencia de Nueva Delhi (1961) se realizaron tres reuniones del Comité Conjunto: una en Nyborg, Dinamarca; una en Spittal, Austria; y una en Saint Andrews, Escocia. Las reuniones del Comité Conjunto entraron en esta fase final tratando de responder a las inquietudes de los consejos nacionales de cada región. En la reunión de Nyborg (1958), los primeros resultados de los consejos nacionales revelaron que, de los 38 consejos miembros, 23 eran favorables a la integración y 14 todavía no habían tomado una decisión. Por su parte, el Congo ya había resuelto dejar el CMI. Juan Mackay y Luis Odell pensaron que la actitud de algunos consejos podría ser modificada mediante una aclaración de la propuesta de integración y del Consejo Mundial de Iglesias sobre la cual había muchos malentendidos en algunas regiones.[18]

En su informe sobre América Latina, Odell habló sobre su viaje a muchos de los países y sus conversaciones con los líderes de las iglesias y los consejos acerca de las diferentes actitudes con respecto a las propuestas de integración. Luego, en el debate, se trataron varios temas:

1. Las tensiones políticas no se consideraron significativas para el campo religioso. Algunos pensaron que en algunas áreas quizás sería mejor distribuir materiales desde Ginebra que desde Nueva York. La CCLA podría ser una fuente de distribución más aceptable que las oficinas del Consejo Mundial de Iglesias. Sobre este punto opinaron que sería bueno consultar con la CCLA.
2. Odell pidió boletines y otros materiales sobre la labor del Consejo Mundial de Iglesias en español y en portugués. Se observó que el obispo de Buenos Aires, Sante Barbieri, ya había trabajado en esto, y se decidió crear un grupo para atender este asunto.
3. Odell informó sobre la organización de una segunda consulta de todas las iglesias de América Latina, pensando celebrarla en Río de Janeiro en julio de 1960. En esta reunión se

18 Comité Conjunto del Consejo Mundial de Iglesias y el Consejo Misionero Internacional, *Actas del Comité Conjunto del Consejo Mundial de Iglesias y el Consejo Misionero Internacional* (Nyborg, Dinamarca: del 14 de agosto de 1958 al 17 de agosto de 1958), pág. 4 (versión inglesa: Joint Committee of the World Council of Churches and the International Missionary Council. *Minutes of the Joint Committee of the World Council of Churches and the International Missionary Council*. Nyborg, Denmark, 14 August 1958 to 17 August 1958.)

podría considerar la posibilidad de una secretaría regional.[19] Posteriormente, el lugar propuesto para la conferencia fue cambiado a Lima, Perú.

En el curso de las discusiones sobre la integración, Odell informó de que había encontrado un creciente espíritu de amistad y cooperación entre los líderes pentecostales. El doctor du Plessis del movimiento pentecostal mundial le había pedido llevar a la reunión un mensaje indicando que "estaba tratando de crear un ambiente mejor entre el protestantismo y el pentecostalismo porque comprendo que Dios quiere que los de su pueblo se reconozcan uno al otro y que sean uno en espíritu." Este mensaje fue recibido con aprecio.[20]

En la reunión del Comité Conjunto en Spittal, Austria en 1959, el informe de Odell detalló el progreso hecho en la región del Río de la Plata: se había formado un grupo llamado "Amigos del Consejo Mundial de Iglesias" en Buenos Aires, y se habían realizado notables progresos en varias áreas de producción de boletines y materiales de estudio en español. Además, los preparativos para la Segunda Conferencia Evangélica Latinoamericana estaban en marcha. Sería auspiciada por el Concilio Nacional Evangélico del Perú. El objetivo era realizar la conferencia en Lima, en julio de 1961, invitando a todos los grupos evangélicos que trabajaban en cada región del país.[21]

La última reunión del Comité Conjunto se realizó en Saint Andrews, Escocia en 1960. La presencia del Comité Ejecutivo en Buenos Aires en enero de ese año y otros encuentros y consultas a lo largo del año sirvieron para promover la causa ecuménica. Igualmente, la visita del secretario Dr. Goodall fue apreciada en muchos lugares, especialmente en los círculos "evangélicos." En su informe, Odell consideraba que tales visitas podían ser una de las contribuciones más importantes en la cuestión de relaciones eclesiales. También informó sobre el servicio para refugiados de la División del Consejo Mundial de Iglesias de Ayuda Intereclesiástica. Se habían realizado progresos apreciables en la publicación y distribución de materiales del Consejo Mundial de Iglesias en español. Se informó acerca de la organización del Centro Emanuel Valdense como un centro ecuménico disponible para uso de las iglesias de la región. Finalmente, Odell compartió los últimos planes para la Segunda

19 Ibid., pág. 22.

20 Ibid., pág. 3.

21 Comité Conjunto del Consejo Mundial de Iglesias y el Consejo Misionero Internacional, *Actas del Comité Conjunto del Consejo Mundial de Iglesias y el Consejo Misionero Internacional* (Spittal, Austria: del 13 al 15 de agosto de 1958), pág. 18 (versión inglesa: Joint Committee of the World Council of Churches and the International Missionary Council. *Minutes of the Joint Committee of the World Council of Churches and the International Missionary Council*. Spittal, Austria, 13 August 1959 to 15 August 1959).

Conferencia Evangélica Latinoamericana, cuya celebración en Lima, Perú iba a tener gran importancia para el futuro de las iglesias latinoamericanas.[22]

Además de en las tres reuniones del Comité Conjunto mencionadas arriba, Odell participó en las dos reuniones de la Comisión Administrativa que tuvieron lugar entre las conferencias de Ghana y Nueva Delhi. La primera se realizó en La Brevière, Francia, en julio de 1959. Antes de esta reunión, el secretario general del CMI, George W. Carpenter, comentó en una carta a R. K. Orchard que Luis Odell había propuesto que se enviaran informes periódicos a los consejos miembros. También escribió que a Odell se le había pedido escribir un informe sobre los planes de la conferencia de iglesias que se preveía organizar en Huampaní en 1961, un informe que Odell envió ya en abril. En él, es interesante observar que, de los siete miembros del comité ejecutivo para esa reunión, cuatro eran laicos, dos profesores y uno pastor.

Entre los delegados latinoamericanos a la reunión en La Brevière, Gustavo A. Velasco de México y Odell estuvieron en el grupo dos que estudiaba las estructuras, especialmente sobre el desarrollo regional. Además, Odell fue presidente del subcomité cuatro que examinaba los asuntos relacionados con las conferencias regionales y la formación para los distintos ministerios de las iglesias. En estos trabajos, no es de extrañar que Odell, siendo laico, se preocupara por el lugar de los laicos. A la luz de esta preocupación, algunos propusieron reuniones con más frecuencia, algunas a nivel regional, para abordar esta cuestión.

Cuando en La Brevière se consideró el informe del Comité Conjunto de Spittal que proponía ciertos cambios en el plan de integración, una recomendación fue que se organizaran reuniones más frecuentes porque "se ofrecería una participación a los laicos en el movimiento ecuménico y una conexión más viva con él, así como también se proporcionarían oportunidades para una representación más amplia de una membresía comprometida."[23] Se comentó que esta dimensión ya existía en el Consejo Mundial de Iglesias en el Departamento del Laicado. Asimismo, se aludió a la Conferencia de

22 Comité Conjunto del Consejo Mundial de Iglesias y el Consejo Misionero Internacional, *Actas del Comité Conjunto del Consejo Mundial de Iglesias y el Consejo Misionero Internacional* (Saint Andrews, Escocia: del 9 al 11 de agosto de 1960), págs. 23–24 (versión inglesa: Joint Committee of the World Council of Churches and the International Missionary Council. *Minutes of the Joint Committee of the World Council of Churches and the International Missionary Council*. St. Andrews, Scotland, 9 August 1960 to 11 August 1960).

23 Comité Conjunto Consejo Mundial de Iglesias y Consejo Misionero Mundial, *Actas del Comité Conjunto del Consejo Mundial de Iglesias y el Consejo Misionero Internacional* (La Brevière, Francia: julio de 1959), págs. 15–16 (versión inglesa: World Council of Churches and the International Missionary Council. *Minutes of the Joint Committee of the World Council of Churches and the International Missionary Council*. La Breviere, France, July 1959).

Willingen (1952), donde se hicieron recomendaciones para que hubiera misioneros no profesionales.[24]

Por otra parte, se informó de que, de los 38 consejos nacionales, 22 habían comunicado su voto a favor de la integración, 12 todavía no habían informado y 4 habían sido negativos. De ellos, 14 hicieron recomendaciones de cambio al plan de integración, algunas de los cuales fueron incorporadas, y se fijó un calendario para su evaluación y eventual aceptación. En los tres temas que siguieron, Odell entró en la discusión. Dijo que el Programa sobre la Vida del Hogar y la Familia del CMI tendría valor para la región de América Latina, que América Latina participaría en la propuesta de un Fondo Internacional para la Misión, y que el Fondo para la Educación Teológica tendría mucho valor. Hacia el final de la conferencia se declaró que las responsabilidades con respecto a América Latina deberían tener cierta prioridad y, por ello, se recomendó que la oficina en Nueva York atendiera este desafío.[25]

La última reunión de la Comisión Administrativa antes de Nueva Delhi tuvo lugar en Saint Andrews, Escocia, del 12 al 15 de agosto de 1960. En esta reunión, hubo una celebración en la que se recordó el jubileo del gran encuentro misionero de Edimburgo en 1910. Se ofició un culto en la Catedral de San Gil con la asistencia de la reina Isabel. La propuesta y los arreglos para la posible integración del CMI en el Consejo Mundial de Iglesias ocuparon un lugar central en el programa de la reunión. Hubo mucho debate sobre el cambio propuesto en la base confesional del Consejo Mundial de Iglesias, haciéndose una clara referencia a la Trinidad. El secretario general del Consejo Mundial de Iglesias, Willem Visser 't Hooft, aclaró que no se trataba de un cambio fundamental en el texto, sino más bien una aclaración modesta. Entre los once participantes designados que contribuyeron al debate, Luis Odell fue el primero en ser mencionado.

Los asuntos de América Latina fueron considerados en el programa de la subcomisión A. Se conversó sobre una consultación pedida por los representantes de Jamaica para "estudiar los problemas, posibilidades y programas de las iglesias de Jamaica y de su consejo de iglesias."[26] Sobre Cuba, "después de escuchar al doctor Alfonso Rodríguez hablar sobre los trastornos causados por la revolución cubana reciente y las responsabilidades de las iglesias en la nueva situación", hubo mucha discusión sobre el camino a seguir. La Comisión Administrativa adoptó la siguiente resolución:

24 Ibid., pág. 33.

25 Ibid., págs. 31–33.

26 Comité Conjunto, *Actas* (Saint Andrews, Escocia), pág.11 (versión inglesa).

> Tomando nota de la necesidad de acción efectiva en la región del Caribe, tanto con respecto a la consultación propuesta en Jamaica y en Cuba como para seguir adelante con la obra proyectada por la consultación en el Caribe en 1957, la Comisión Administrativa *resuelve* que, en el hacer de la asignación administrativa de las tareas, una prioridad alta sea dada a estos temas, preferentemente asignando todos a la misma persona.[27]

La asignación de Odell a la subcomisión B fue una bisagra de gran importancia para América Latina. El punto 15 del acta era una propuesta para establecer un Programa de Desarrollo Cristiano. El Dr. Egbert de Vries, presidente del Comité de Trabajo del Departamento de Iglesia y Sociedad del Consejo Mundial de Iglesias, informó sobre una conferencia en Tesalónica organizada por su departamento sobre el tema de los rápidos cambios sociales, especialmente en el tercer mundo. La reunión había incluido representantes de África, Asia y América Latina. A resultas de la discusión de su informe sobre dicha reunión, se destacó la importancia de organizar una conferencia de estudio sobre las implicaciones concretas de los rápidos cambios sociales que tendría lugar en el tercer mundo. Tal análisis debía incluir especialistas en ciencias sociales y económicas, tanto de las iglesias como de un contexto más amplio.

El Dr. de Vries explicó que el programa sería auspiciado por la agencia central y se encomendaría su implementación a una iniciativa local. Su propósito no sería responder a las necesidades de las áreas subdesarrolladas, sino capacitar a personas para participar en los programas generales que serían propuestos por las agencias gubernamentales como un servicio a la nación.

La resolución adoptada reza así:

> La Comisión Administrativa concordó en que la propuesta debe analizarse con mayor detenimiento y pidió que los miembros de la subcomisión B fueran un grupo de consulta para la dirección del CMI para la formulación de un plan futuro, […] y autorizó a los directores a nombrar delegados del CMI para participar en la consulta de 1961 y hacer las recomendaciones apropiadas para el desarrollo futuro.[28]

Como se observa más adelante, todo este proceso sería la base para la reunión posterior en Huampaní, Perú (julio de 1961), que estableció las bases del movimiento Iglesia y Sociedad en América Latina. Luis Odell llegó a ser el enlace principal entre el Departamento de Iglesia y Sociedad del Consejo

27 Ibid., págs. 11–12.

28 Ibid.

Mundial de Iglesias y el apoyo de este departamento a la realización del primer encuentro de Iglesia y Sociedad en América Latina (ISAL). En Nueva Delhi, aunque personalmente ausente, Luis Odell fue nombrado miembro de la Comisión de Iglesia y Sociedad del Consejo Mundial de Iglesias. Como administrador y después secretario ejecutivo de ISAL, fue la persona clave en la organización de varias conferencias en América Latina sobre iglesia y sociedad entre 1961 y 1966. Luego fue designado para ser uno de los cinco presidentes del gran encuentro auspiciado por el Consejo Mundial de Iglesias sobre iglesia y sociedad y los rápidos cambios sociales en Ginebra en 1966. Sobre esta conferencia el sociólogo Harvey Cox diría que "ahora los profetas vienen del Sur."[29] Una persona clave merecedora de tal elogio fue Luis Odell. Sobre su servicio como presidente en este encuentro mundial, su esposa, Elena de Odell, escribió:

> De ahí que fuera importante el convocarle a integrar la Comisión Interna del Consejo Mundial de Iglesias, titulada "Iglesia y Sociedad." En julio de 1966 tuvo lugar en Ginebra, la Conferencia Mundial de Iglesias, en la cual—comentaba Luis en familia—había desempeñado el cargo honorífico más importante de su actuación ecuménica, al ser uno de los cinco presidentes de dicha Conferencia, cada uno de los cuales representaba el continente del cual provenía. En esta importante reunión, los latinos, prácticamente todos relacionados con ISAL—Iglesia y Sociedad en América Latina—hicieron un aporte destacado, lo que motivó que Harvey Cox declarara que "ahora los profetas vienen de América Latina."[30]

Durante el año 1961, Luis Odell dedicó mucho tiempo y energía a la organización de dos consultas claves en América Latina: la CELA II en Lima y la conferencia de Iglesia y Sociedad en Huampaní, Perú.

La conferencia en 1961 de la CELA II (Conferencia Evangélica Latinoamericana) seguía los pasos de la CELA I en Buenos Aires (1949). La primera respondía básicamente a la pregunta "¿Quiénes somos las iglesias evangélicas en América Latina?". Su lema fue: "El Cristianismo Protestante en América Latina." La segunda respondía a la pregunta "¿Cuál es nuestro mensaje en este contexto?" y la respuesta era "Jesucristo." Su lema fue: "Cristo, la Esperanza para América Latina." Más adelante, la CELA III en 1969 en Buenos Aires tuvo como lema "Deudores al Mundo," respondiendo a la pregunta "¿Cuál es nuestra tarea en este contexto?". En esta última conferencia se

29 Citado en *Le Monde de Paris*. Ver Dafne Plou, *Caminos de Unidad, Itinerario del Diálogo Ecuménico en América Latina 1916-1991* (Quito, 1994), 98.

30 Elena Hall de Odell, "Biografía."

consideraron seis áreas de preocupación, pero no se pudo llegar a un acuerdo significativo sobre dos temas: la juventud y la dimensión social de la misión.[31]

Ya por varias décadas, el movimiento ecuménico en América Latina fue avanzando entre las ligas juveniles, mientras que las misiones norteamericanas pasaron por un período de cuestionamiento y polarización en torno al movimiento ecuménico. Durante la década de los sesenta, la militancia de ISAL sobre la responsabilidad social de la iglesia fue rechazada por una gran parte de las iglesias latinoamericanas en cuanto llamado y parte integral de su misión.

Luis Odell fue una persona clave no solo en el movimiento ecuménico juvenil en América Latina, sino también en la organización de la CELA II y en la reunión fundadora de ISAL en julio de 1961. Siguiendo los pasos definidos en la Comisión Administrativa del CMI en Saint Andrews (1960) y articulados allí por el Dr. Egbert de Vries, las conferencias propuestas serían auspiciadas por el Consejo Mundial de Iglesias e implementadas a nivel local. También se decidió que el proyecto incluyera a asesores sociales y económicos de la región y que su propósito sería capacitar y no suplir las necesidades financieras de los países. América Latina llegó a ser un lugar de celebración de reuniones regionales, sin duda, en gran parte, por el vínculo personal y la instrumentación de Odell.

Su dedicación a estas reuniones y las siguientes por todo el continente en 1961 fue ciertamente un motivo de peso por el que Odell decidió no asistir a la reunión de Nueva Delhi y, por consiguiente, no participar en este último paso hacia la integración del CMI en el Consejo Mundial de Iglesias como División de Misión Mundial y Evangelización. Su buen amigo Wilfrido Artus, pastor de la Iglesia Valdense en Uruguay, representó en Nueva Delhi a la Federación de las Iglesias Evangélicas del Río de la Plata, junto con otros delegados. Odell envió por medio de Emilio Castro un informe detallado sobre la reunión de Iglesia y Sociedad (ISAL) en Huampaní, Perú para Paul Abrecht.[32]

Es importante señalar que los delegados de América Latina mantuvieron dos reuniones durante las sesiones en Nueva Delhi. En la primera reunión, Paul Abrecht, en representación del Consejo Mundial de Iglesias, presentó un documento con sugerencias y preguntas sobre los posibles pasos a seguir

31 Plou, *Caminos de Unidad*, 80–81.

32 Esta es mi conclusión personal. En su biografía personal sobre su esposo, escrita 41 años después, Elena Hall de Odell dice que Luis envió un documento sobre la integración del CMI en el Consejo Mundial de Iglesias y que este documento fue presentado, debatido y aprobado en la reunión de Nueva Delhi. El acta de la reunión no indica tal procedimiento. Más bien los documentos allí aprobados fueron preparados anteriormente. Visto que la reunión de la organización de ISAL en Lima fue planeada y en parte financiada por la Departamento de Iglesia y Sociedad del Consejo Mundial de Iglesias, el informe referido por Elena Hall fue sin duda solicitado anteriormente por Paul Abrecht y prometido por Luis Odell.

en sus relaciones con las iglesias de América Latina. Los temas mencionados incluyeron el vínculo ya existente con el movimiento juvenil ULAJE, la defensa de los refugiados, el estudio sobre la iglesia y la sociedad y el rol del laicado en la misión. Abrecht también dijo que existiría la posibilidad de promover relaciones con otros departamentos del Consejo Mundial como Fe y Orden, Ayuda Intereclesiástica, Iglesia y Sociedad y el Instituto Ecuménico de Bossey.

Hay notas tomadas por Theo A. Tschuy de la División de Ayuda Interclesiástica de las reuniones en las que unas veinte personas de América Latina expresaron su parecer sobre algunos de estos temas. Además de Abrecht, Newbigin y Tschuy, se contó con la participación de José Míguez Bonino, Emilio Castro, Mauricio López, A. Rodríguez, Sante Barbieri, y delegados de Brasil, México, Puerto Rico, Cuba y otros países.[33] También se puso de manifiesto el carácter conservador de la mayor parte de las iglesias evangélicas en América Latina y la necesidad de hacer llegar más información sobre el Consejo Mundial de Iglesias, especialmente en español. José Míguez Bonino afirmó la importancia de establecer puentes de entendimiento con todas las iglesias, tanto conservadoras como progresistas.

Reflexiones finales

¿Cómo es posible resumir el aporte que una persona como Luis Odell ofreció a la historia de la iglesia en América Latina? Tal contribución es más frecuente entre los pastores, maestros y dirigentes. Pero este destacado laico vivió su fe con una dedicación total que abrió caminos de discipulado profético para la iglesia de su tiempo. Siguiendo sus pasos estamos abriendo las puertas para servir al Señor de la historia. A través de sus ojos vemos los grandes desafíos que la iglesia está llamada a encarar en el mundo de Dios.

Odell nació en un hogar argentino, rico en experiencias culturales de distintos colores con los aromas del Caribe y América del Sur. Con solo trece años de vida comenzó sus treinta años como trabajador de oficina sujeto a las reglas internacionales de una compañía frigorífica norteamericana. Aceptó con una piedad wesleyana el llamado a ser discípulo de Jesús durante toda su vida. Encontró una amplitud de visión en su primera experiencia ecuménica a través de la Asociación Cristiana de Jóvenes, que en la zona metropolitana de Buenos

33 Consejo Mundial de Iglesias, "Reunión con participantes sudamericanos: memorándum y notas," Archivos del CMI, *Vida y Acción*, 24.2.12 (en inglés: World Council of Churches. "Meeting South American Participants: memo and notes." WCC archives, *Life and Work*, 24.2.12).

Aires incluía tanto a católicos como protestantes. Pronto llegó a posiciones de liderazgo en las asociaciones de jóvenes evangélicos, tanto locales como regionales. Por esa vía, a los 27 años, entró en círculos mundiales en Ámsterdam.

A los 43 años fue nombrado editor de la Aurora, una editorial ecuménica latinoamericana ubicada en Buenos Aires. Tuvo un rol decisivo en la organización de la Confederación de las Iglesias Evangélicas del Río de la Plata (Argentina, Paraguay y Uruguay) y en 1956 de la Federación de Iglesias Evangélicas del Uruguay. Algún periodista le nombró ya en esta época y con razón el "Sr. Ecuménico de América Latina." Como hemos visto, Odell jugó un papel clave en las conferencias latinoamericanas de las iglesias evangélicas (Buenos Aires, 1949 y Lima, 1961).

Quisiera destacar algo relativo al alcance de su contribución a la iglesia de Cristo. Sin dudarlo, creo que lo más fundamental en toda su vida fue su compromiso con la iglesia. Esto por supuesto como confesión de fe, pero no en sentido doctrinal primario, sino como miembro de una comunidad concreta, en cierto tiempo y en cierto espacio. Para Odell, la iglesia está presente en la historia aquí y ahora, en las vidas de mujeres y hombres comprometidos como discípulos del Señor. Su llamado es a estar presentes en las vidas de todo ser humano, los pobres y los ricos, los perseguidos y los jóvenes. En la variedad de desafíos que confrontaba, nunca vacilaba en su compromiso con la iglesia local, donde hallaba inspiración y se encontraba con su Señor y los suyos. En nombre de esta comunidad, buscó durante todo su ministerio la unidad de la iglesia, cuya misión es poner por obra el proyecto de Dios en la historia.

Su dedicación a la unidad de las iglesias creó el vínculo con el CMI. Odell fue administrador de la Confederación de Iglesias Evangélicas del Río de la Plata, en cuya calidad promovía sus actividades junto con las de las conferencias latinoamericanas continentales. En la década de los sesenta, este fue un eslabón decisivo en el proceso de integración del CMI en el Consejo Mundial de Iglesias. Parece que Gonzalo Báez-Camargo de México fue más realista en ver que el resultado sería la bifurcación de las iglesias evangélicas. Pero Odell centró su esperanza en las posibilidades que veía en su área de experiencia. Además, consiguió la participación de algunas iglesias pentecostales en la integración.

Fueron tres los desafíos que Odell tuvo que enfrentar. En primer lugar, se topó con la realidad socioeconómica tan acuciante en América Latina. Como afirmamos arriba, su encuentro con Egbert DeVries en la reunión administrativa del CMI de San Andrés en 1960 le abrió los ojos a los rápidos cambios sociales y sus causas. Por supuesto, ya en sus múltiples encuentros con los movimientos juveniles, sus experiencias laborales y su amplio conocimiento del continente, despertó su conciencia sobre la necesidad de buscar una respuesta cristiana y humana a este desafío. La propuesta de ayuda de

la organización y el apoyo financiero y profesional le abrieron caminos para confrontar la cuestión. Como laico tenía fe en que el Dios que crea oportunidades le daría, en su momento, la sabiduría necesaria para responder. Así, aceptó la puerta abierta por DeVries y el Comité Socioeconómico del Consejo Mundial de Iglesias.

Pero aquí se encontró con su segundo desafío. En paralelo, Odell impulsó y organizó dos conferencias, la Segunda Conferencia Evangélica Latinoamericana (CELA II) y la Conferencia de Iglesia y Sociedad Latinoamericana (ISAL, esta con cuatro laicos y tres pastores en su comisión de organización), entre las cuales había una coherencia. Las tres sesiones plenarias de la CELA II subrayaron y presentaron la teología presente en ISAL. El primer ponente Tomás Liggett presentó "La situación actual de la obra evangélica en la América Latina" como los 200 millones de personas "que están en el umbral de un nuevo día revolucionario. A este número se agregarán 6 millones cada año […] Las formas de vida de esta masa de hombres divididos en 20 naciones separadas cambiarán radicalmente y vendrá un nuevo día […] Nuestro peligro no está en ser pocos—sino en no ser creadores. Creadores de un nuevo testimonio íntimamente relevante a esta situación social."[34]

El segundo ponente fue José Míguez, quien resumió el contenido de la fe en Jesucristo. Primeramente, presentó los tres temas tradicionales de la fe en Jesucristo para las iglesias de América Latina: Jesucristo sacrificio por nosotros, Jesucristo nuestro maestro, Jesucristo el Juez y Rey que viene en gloria. Pero, dice Míguez, frecuentemente olvidamos dos aspectos de la plenitud de Cristo: la encarnación y su consecuencia en la vida de la iglesia, por una parte, y la soberanía presente y actual de Jesucristo sobre el universo entero, por otra. Según Míguez, cuando confesamos "el Verbo se hizo carne, […] estamos diciendo que Dios ha asumido nada menos que la plenitud de nuestra humanidad, con sus sufrimientos físicos y morales, con su limitación, incluso con la tentación, aunque sin pecado. Dios ha penetrado en la misma entraña de nuestra humanidad. ¿No nos ha faltado en nuestra obra evangélica un sentido de identificación con el hombre latinoamericano que corresponda al mensaje de la encarnación, un sentido de solidaridad con los perdidos, con los pecadores, con los desorientados?".[35]

Por otra parte, la Escritura da testimonio abundante del señorío presente de Jesucristo y por lo tanto de la inserción de los cristianos y la iglesia en la historia como partícipes en ella. Es una cristología equivocada que regala derechos de soberanía sobre el mundo a Satanás, lo que no le corresponde.

34 CELA II, pág. 66.

35 Ibid., pág. 73.

¿No ha resultado, pregunta Míguez, una moral doble como si en el mundo le debemos a Satanás una obediencia y que solo en la iglesia Jesucristo es el Señor y tenemos que preocuparnos de su voluntad? Por lo tanto, muchos concluyen equivocadamente que el cristiano debe preocuparse por asuntos espirituales y debe dejar lo político, lo social, lo económico a los no cristianos en el mundo. Sigue Míguez: "No se trata de remplazar una cristología por otra; se trata de recuperar la totalidad del Jesucristo del Nuevo Testamento."[36]

La tercera ponencia de la CELA II, "Nuestra tarea inconclusa," fue presentada por Emilio Castro. Su llamado a todas las iglesias allí presentes fue un desafío a tomar en serio el gran mandato misionero de "enseñarles todas las cosas." La tarea de llamar a la gente a la conversión conlleva una transformación de toda la vida. La misión integral significa proclamar y poner por obra la prometida plenitud de vida ofrecida en Jesucristo.

Ahí es precisamente donde Odell encontró su tercer desafío. Las iglesias evangélicas en América Latina vivían un divorcio entre lo espiritual y lo mundanal. Una razón histórica fue su crítica válida a la identificación del proyecto imperial español con la extensión del Reino de Dios. Los evangélicos, como defensa contra esta usurpación por el Estado de derecho divino, optaron por separarse de los asuntos económicos y políticos, por aislarse de la vida al margen de la iglesia y aglutinarse en sus comunidades espirituales. Esta práctica fue reforzada por la fuerte evangelización de grupos fundamentalistas, que llegó a su punto culminante al comienzo del siglo XX. Ello fue debido a tres razones: la gran controversia modernista-fundamentalista en Estados Unidos, el retorno de muchos misioneros por el cierre de horizontes en Oriente y la creciente capacidad económica del país norteño. Fueron estas iglesias, con su teología individualista, espiritualista y futurista, las que crecieron rápidamente y dominaron la teología a mediados del siglo XX.

Junto con un grupo de jóvenes teólogos, Luis Odell supo canalizar una nueva visión de la misión que veía el mundo entero bajo el señorío de Jesucristo. Esta visión llegó a un conjunto de profesionales laicos con quienes analizaron la situación socio-política desde una teología comprometida con una misión puesta bajo el señorío de Jesucristo. ISAL es un testimonio de este esfuerzo. No pretendo presentar los avances de este movimiento. Solo quisiera subrayar que Odell fue el motor de ISAL y su director desde 1961 hasta 1967. Una razón por la que Odell dejó su rol de liderazgo fue sin lugar a dudas porque ISAL fue muy cuestionada y severamente perseguida por la militarización de los países rioplatenses. Pero el principal motivo fue que en la reunión en Montevideo en 1967 la organización dejó de tener sus cimientos

36 Ibid., pág. 75.

en las iglesias (en cuyo seno había nacido), iniciándose un período de radicalización. Un índice claro de este alejamiento de las iglesias fue la carta crítica enviada por ISAL a la CELA III, que se reunió en 1969 en Buenos Aires. Pero ya un año antes había comenzado una división sobre la actitud hacia ISAL en una reunión en Uruguay.

Además, en el año 1970, cuando participé por primera vez en las reuniones del cuerpo docente del ISEDET, José Míguez informó sobre una reunión de ISAL en que Rodolfo Obermuller y él habían presentado estudios bíblicos. Dijo que sus presentaciones fueron dadas el primer día y después no fueron mencionadas. Dado que Odell, Míguez, Castro y el grupo de fundadores fueron siempre hombres fieles a sus iglesias, no es de extrañar que tuviera lugar esta división. Durante la época militar, Odell siempre luchó junto con su iglesia, defendiendo a los acusados, encontrando caminos de escape para los indefensos, cuidando a los niños de los encarcelados o desaparecidos. Fue el primer laico en ocupar el cargo de presidente del Consejo de la Iglesia Metodista de Montevideo de 1972 al 1976.

Cabe mencionar que fue en este mismo período cuando tuvo lugar la conocida Conferencia de Lausana (1974) auspiciada por Billy Graham. En esta reunión dos de los principales oradores fueron René Padilla y Samuel Escobar. Los dos captaron la atención general por su protesta contra el fundamentalismo norteamericano que creó un gran divorcio entre la iglesia y el mundo, la espiritualidad y la responsabilidad social, el individualismo y el bien común. Ellos, en cambio, insistieron en una misión integral bajo la soberanía universal de Jesucristo y el significado de la encarnación para la vida de la iglesia en su compromiso con el mundo.

Hicieron hincapié en los mismos puntos que José Míguez puso de relieve en su conferencia de la CELA II (1961). Ya en 1966, como se ha observado más arriba, durante la conferencia de Ginebra sobre la iglesia y los grandes cambios sociales, cuando Odell fue uno de los cinco presidentes, representando a América Latina, los delegados latinoamericanos habían sido designados como "los profetas del Sur" por una revista francesa y por Harvey Cox, el autor de la famosa *The Secular City*. Ahora, en una llamativa analogía, Padilla y Escobar fueron designados, en un titular de gran tamaño, como "los profetas de Lausana" por la revista Time en Estados Unidos. A raíz de ello, durante muchos años, Padilla fue una persona non grata y no invitada a reuniones de conservadores en Estados Unidos, siendo a veces clasificado como socialista y comunista por personas más extremas.

Junto con otros, Padilla y Escobar fundaron en 1970 la Fraternidad Teológica Latinoamericana (FTL), precisamente en reacción al I Congreso Latinoamericano de Evangelización (CLADE I, 1969), auspiciado por la

Asociación Billy Graham, y su dualismo espiritualista. La FTL promovió una teología y praxis de encuentro con el mundo y un compromiso con la soberanía de Cristo. Sin embargo, se opuso a una radicalización de los medios para alcanzar la justicia. Sus programas de cambios sociales y una educación en la línea de Pablo Freire suscitaron las críticas de los movimientos e iglesias conservadores por un lado y, por otro, de ISAL, que tras 1967 se había radicalizado. La FTL rehusó identificarse con los dos extremos: la acción radicalizada o la huelga social. En sus encuentros, sus publicaciones y las posiciones de militancia tomadas por sus miembros en la acción social y la política encontramos abundantes evidencias de ello.

Dos ejemplos ilustrativos. José Míguez Bonino estuvo siempre acompañando a la FTL en su peregrinación de cincuenta años, tanto como ponente, artífice del diálogo o mediador pacífico, estimulando la reflexión crítica, también mediante sus publicaciones. En 1995, en el aniversario de plata celebrado en Santiago, se me ocurrió preguntarle a José por qué no era miembro de la Fraternidad, y me respondió con su sonrisa típica que no era necesario, visto que casi siempre era igualmente invitado. En esta misma reunión, por recomendación de la mesa ejecutiva, fue admitido por unanimidad como miembro honorario de la FTL.[37]

En su reunión cuadrienal de 1992, el encuentro magno con más de mil participantes, incluyendo a trescientos indígenas de toda América Latina, la FTL auspició el primer diálogo entre el Consejo Latinoamericano de Iglesias (CLAI) y la Confraternidad Evangélica Latina (CONELA). En términos de testimonio común, esta fue la reunión ecuménica por excelencia en la historia del protestantismo latinoamericano debido a su gran representatividad teológica, social y étnica.

Hasta aquí hemos llegado. Gracias a los inicios impulsados por el CMI, por su promoción de los consejos nacionales y por los cuarenta años de acompañamiento, comenzó la peregrinación ecuménica de las iglesias evangélicas en América Latina. Gracias a laicos como Luis Enrique Odell y pastores como José Míguez Bonino, el camino del ecumenismo ha progresado y alcanzado nuevas posibilidades y desafíos creativos. Una labor de gran importancia para toda la zona del sur fue realizada por el Comité Sociopolítico del Consejo Mundial de Iglesias cuando el Consejo Misionero Internacional se incorporó como División de Misión Mundial y Evangelización. El programa de ISAL, auspiciado por el Consejo Mundial de Iglesias, despertó en las iglesias del sur la visión de la misión integral, una visión que ha sido inspirada y animada

37 José Míguez Bonino. *Rostros del protestantismo latinoamericano*. Buenos Aires: Nueva Creación, 1995.

hasta el presente por visionarios como René Padilla y Samuel Escobar. Este trabajo está dedicado a todos ellos, y muchos otros, por ser verdaderos "profetas del Sur" y para que su ejemplo nos siga alentando a todos a ser proféticos en nuestro discipulado del Señor Jesucristo.

Una nota de agradecimiento

Quisiera recordar a algunas personas que han sido generosas con su tiempo y su interés en este proyecto, en esta parte de la historia dedicada al Consejo Misionero Internacional con motivo de su centenario. En primer lugar, quiero expresar mi agradecimiento personal al hijo de Luis Odell, Henry, por facilitarme trabajos biográficos fundamentales sobre su padre. Asimismo, quiero dar las gracias a Joan Doan, auxiliar principal de archivos de la Biblioteca de la Divinidad de Yale, y a Anne Emmanuelle Tankam Tene, archivista del Consejo Mundial de Iglesias, por su diligencia en la búsqueda de manuscritos y publicaciones esenciales para el estudio. También estoy agradecido a muchas otras personas por su empeño en encontrar otras fuentes: Paul Fields, Rubén Amestoy, Gerardo Oberman, Daniel Bruno, Carlos Varela, Néstor Míguez, Carlos Sintado y otros. Dianne Rooy Zandstra y Gretchen Abernathy me han ayudado con el formato y otras cuestiones técnicas. Gracias.

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CHAPTER 8

Contextual Report of the Central and Eastern European Region

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"Central and Eastern Europe" is a geopolitical name for a geographic area, somewhat ambiguously delimited, that includes several countries, including Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, and Slovenia. Geographically speaking, this territory has played a critical historical role due to its position as a link between the Western European and Asian worlds. Due to the large number of people who had to pass through it to move from one socio-economic area to another, this part of Europe has experienced different cultures and religions, acquiring a multifaith and multi-ethnic character. Many people who entered this region settled here permanently, such as the Bulgarians and Hungarians. In contrast, others remained temporarily, bringing about profound changes in the ontological structure of the natives. From a confessional point of view, Central and Eastern Europe have been under the influence of two major religions: Christianity and Islam. Thanks to its incorporation into the Roman Empire from the 3rd and 4th centuries onward, Christianity systematically penetrated the lands of the peoples settled here by various means.

In contrast, others, such as the Bulgarians and Serbs, received the Christian faith through the efforts of Byzantine missionaries. Over time, the confessional and religious picture in these areas diversified, with political and economic influence shifting from the Byzantine to the Ottoman Empire and disagreements within Christianity. After the two world wars and the establishment of the communist regime, especially the Russian socialist regime, migration intensified and many ethnic minorities in these areas, such as Jews, Germans, or Armenians, suffered. This situation led to a process of nationalization which, in most Central and Eastern European countries, was politically driven. After the fall of communism and the establishment of a democratic system of government in the former Soviet bloc countries,

the number of ethnic minorities fell sharply, with some disappearing altogether because of freedom of movement.[1] The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the change of socialist regimes led to a reconfiguration of the geographical map of Central and Eastern Europe. Not only have whole nations disappeared, and others emerged or re-emerged, but migration to and from these regions has also increased significantly.[2] Some studies mention that the political, economic, and social transformations in the late Soviet period and numerous ethnic conflicts created migration flows immediately after the 1990s, estimated at around 25 million people.[3]

The phenomenon of migration has always existed, but the 20th century has contributed significantly to its intensification thanks to the development of technology and engineering science. The intensification of the movement of people worldwide directly influences the religious landscape of the territories where migrants settle by bringing an entirely new religion to a country or taking over the existing religion in that area.[4] Such a process creates what can be called a *religious diaspora*.[5] Although they have a long history, religious diasporas have been particularly intense in recent decades and in light of current migration trends. This trend looks set to continue into the 21st century.[6]

Todd Johnson and Gina Bellofatto say that growing religious diversity is underlying the reality of a changing religious landscape. According to the two researchers, religious diversity includes two levels: intra-religious and inter-religious. The former encompasses the diversity within a particular world religion, for example, Roman Catholicism, Orthodoxy and Protestantism within Christianity. The second level describes the diversity of distinct religions within a given population.[7]

Given the expected growth in the number of religious diasporas worldwide, it is essential to consider how missionary action should be rethought.

1 Vasilios Makrides, "Southeast Europe," in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021).

2 Ulrike Ziemer and Sean Roberts, *East European Diasporas, Migration and Cosmopolitanism* (United Kingdom: 2012), 96, https://doi.org/10.1080/09739572.2015.1029715.

3 Andrey V. Korobkov, "Post-Soviet Migration: New Trends at the Beginning of the Twenty-First Century," in *Migration, Homeland and Belonging in Eurasia* (Washington DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2008), 69.

4 Todd M. Johnson and Gina A. Bellofatto, "Migration, Religious Diasporas, and Religious Diversity: A Global Survey," in *Mission Studies* 29:1 (January 2012), 3–4, https://doi.org/10.1163/157338312X637993.

5 Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas* (London: Routledge, 2008), 26, doi:10.4324/9780203928943.

6 Johnson and Bellofatto, "Migration, Religious Diasporas," 3–4.

7 Johnson and Bellofatto, "Migration, Religious Diasporas," 15.

Viewed from a Christian perspective, the data presented above illustrates the need for a new perspective on the global missionary movement: "Reaching a Buddhist with the Gospel is no longer necessarily a life-threatening journey across the ocean to an unknown land. Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims are now neighbours, collaborators and friends of Christians around the world. Increasing religious diversity through migration means that Christians in the West are increasingly likely to have friends and even family members of other religions."[8] That is why Todd Johnson and Gina Bellofatto believe that a deeper awareness of world religions is the first step for a Christian mission. Living with compassion for your neighbour is difficult if you know little about their traditions and beliefs.[9]

Considering these realities, we will explore ecumenical collaboration for the sake of mission in the 21st century in this region. In this sense, we will consider ecumenical relations, theological education, migration and diaspora, and present challenges, and will try to identify the vision of the future. We will do this by focusing on four countries from the region as critical studies: the Czech Republic, Poland, Romania, and Serbia.

Czech Republic

The Czech Republic is commonly referred to as one of the most atheistic countries in the world. Research has revealed, however, that this claim falls short of reality. The 2021 EU-wide census, for example, shows that only 555 people identify as atheists out of around 10.5 million. Though it is realistic to expect that there is a substantial proportion of "practical atheists," as some 48 percent of the Czech population said to be "without a religious faith," it is significant to note that only a very tiny fraction of people felt the need to declare their atheism explicitly. Rather than atheism, therefore, the contemporary religious landscape of the Czech Republic is characterized by indifference and a "lukewarm" approach to organized religion. In this regard, it is very telling that the same census indicates that the single most populous religious group, amounting to around 9 percent of the population, consists of those people who self-identify as believers without any religious affiliation (alternatively, sociology of religion also speaks of irreligious spirituality concerning this category). With an increase of some 250,000 people since 2001, religiously non-affiliated persons (or "nones") are followed by

8 Johnson and Bellofatto, "Migration, Religious Diasporas," 21.

9 Johnson and Bellofatto, "Migration, Religious Diasporas," 21.

the adherents to the Roman Catholic Church with a membership of just under 750,000 people. Significantly, the other Christian churches registered in the Czech Republic, including mainline Protestant, Orthodox, evangelical, and Pentecostal/charismatic, are much less numerous in their membership, with the second largest denomination, the (mainline) Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren, counting less than 33,000 members.

This situation establishes a fascinating context for ecumenical relations. First, even though the Roman Catholic Church is the most substantial denomination in the country, both numerically and traditionally, it does not constitute a majority church in the Czech context. Power dynamics are not substantially tilted in favour of any single religious player or Christianity. Perhaps somewhat counterintuitively, such a constellation makes excellent or good and constructive ecumenical relations. With all churches and faith communities sharing a minority status in Czech society, none of them can afford to live and minister without others (although, admittedly, some individual organizations and circles think and try to prove otherwise). There are numerous examples of ecumenical fellowship and cooperation at the interpersonal, congregational, and national levels. While encounters and joint action between high-ranking church representatives remain influential, there is a willingness to go beyond this plane to engage in everyday common witness and various projects, such as chaplaincy.

Furthermore, despite (or perhaps one should rather say because of?) their minority status, churches across the ecumenical spectrum enjoy a high degree of respectability in society due to their engagement in education, social and humanitarian services, and counselling (pastoral care—or chaplaincy). Long-term and experienced providers of these services and ministries, churches are esteemed and appreciated even by people who are non-churchgoers and identify as non-believers. Even though many of these initiatives are pursued on denominational grounds, there are instances of projects that over-cross denominational boundaries.

Theological education

The churches in the Czech Republic, by and large, realize the need for good-quality theological education. Formal (i.e., institutionally organized and provided) theological education saw its numerical heyday in the early 1990s with enrolments of those who had been prevented from studying theology during the communist era. Since then, the number of students at theological schools has been dropping—or, more recently, keeping steady at relatively modest numbers. In the Czech Republic, five theological faculties

are established as part of university settings—in addition to three Roman Catholic faculties. There is also a Protestant and a Hussite theological faculty.

Furthermore, there is an institutionally independent evangelical theological seminary and a handful of Bible and theology schools run by some free Evangelical or Pentecostal/charismatic churches. While mainline churches require their clergy to hold a master's degree in theology, some (free church) evangelicals and Pentecostals/charismatics do not insist on such a requirement. It can be asserted that the institutions of theological education in the Czech Republic generally acknowledge the need to go beyond the "traditional menu" (i.e., study programmes designed for adepts for the ministry), diversifying their offer both in terms of content and format. As such, a student at a theological faculty can pursue a degree not only in theology but also in social and pastoral work, psychotherapy, history of art, philosophy, religious studies, etc. There are programmes at all levels—bachelor, master, and doctoral—that can be done full-time or part-time. In addition, theological faculties and schools often offer courses for the public. Also, studying theology in English at a Czech university is now possible. This option seeks to advance broader ecumenical and international exchange further. Finally, it should be noted that the favourable situation in ecumenical relations is reflected through the fact that there are both teaching staff and students from various churches at the faculties that are nominally affiliated with one denomination (Catholic, Protestant, Hussite).

Diaspora

Though significant Czech diasporic communities had been formed due to mass migration in the 19th and 20th centuries, emigration does not seem to be a significant challenge today (though, admittedly, there continues to be a flow of people on an individual basis). Conversely, some diasporic communities are living in the Czech Republic today, notably Ukrainian, Slovak, Russian, Vietnamese, and Roma (Gypsy). Because some of these have trained clergy to their spiritual needs (mainly Russian, predominantly Slovak), the track record of the Czech churches ministering to different ethnicities is somewhat ambivalent. It can be argued that the Czech churches (like the Czech population in general) have modest experiences with otherness. This has proven to be a stumbling block in the discussions on refugees from Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan some years ago (and, to a certain extent, also concerning Ukraine) as some Christians let themselves be manipulated into the populist rhetoric of so-called "Christian values." On the other hand, there have been a host of examples of constructive Christian (both denominational

and ecumenical) cooperation in addressing the theme of migration and helping refugees/migrants.

Challenges and vision for the future

Still, the challenge of misuse of religion (or, more precisely, religious rhetoric and symbolism) for nationalist-populist agenda remains real and significant. Faith and nation are often inseparable in the theological imagination of not only ordinary churchgoers but, not uncommonly, clergy and academic theologians. This not only causes internal tensions within various churches but also gives a distorted image of the Christian faith and witness.

Secularization represents a somewhat different challenge. As described above, the Czech churches have long been used to living and witnessing to the gospel in a context that is highly secularized, both in terms of low church affiliation, diversity, and heterodoxy of belief (both outside and within the church), and separation of church and state (although there have recently been some instances of new rapprochement as our brief mention on religion and nationalism indicates). The churches will need to further develop a modus vivendi for such a context to be both faithful and creative in their witness to the gospel. Developing intelligible public theologies/missiologies and providing categorical pastoral care (chaplaincy) in hospital, prison, university, and military settings stand out as examples of Christian missions in the Czech Republic. Furthermore, the churches cannot shy away from reaching out to those who were marginalized by most of society (such as Roma, people with disabilities, refugees, older adults, and people with debts). Finally, it seems a significant challenge for Christians to learn how to respectfully bring the good news to the people who will likely never become members of institutional churches.

Poland

Ecumenical relations

One must outline a broader socio-cultural and religious context when approaching ecumenism in today's Poland since Polish society is undergoing a profound transformation in many fields. The changes also affect the Christian life and, thereby, ecumenical relationships. Indeed, Poland is no longer a mono-Catholic country; instead, it is a country of an intense worldview debate with a vocal contribution of the Catholic Church. When considering the tenets of sociologists on the changes in the contemporary world, there are at least three crucial processes to be mentioned. First, it is a growing religious

indifference within society, mainly in the youngest generations. Second, it is the Catholic integralist, which has the Protestant and Orthodox counterexamples. Third, it is an erosion of the church's authority in society, brought about by both the church's links with the governing party, moral scandals within the church and a negative image of the church within the mainstream mass media. All of them set a background for the ecumenical relationships in Poland. Thus, ecumenism in Poland is apathetic, likewise everywhere in Europe. The ecumenical events attract only a few partakers, mainly those who remember the ecumenical enthusiasm of the 1980s and 1990s. Even the term "ecumenism" is often misunderstood when linked with interreligious dialogue or merely a secular attitude of tolerance. Moreover, the ecumenical idea seems to be in decline among younger Catholics, who usually do not see the point of the interconfessional dialogue and who instead seek a solid confessional identity. A glimpse of social media discussions reveals that theologians who long for the pre-Vatican II church and employ an integralist language speak to many devoted Catholics (however, it also refers to the Protestants and Orthodox communities, respectively). Nevertheless, despite these rather disappointing observations, Polish ecumenism still has something to propose, both for Polish and universal Christianity. For better systematization, one might distinguish two dimensions: the ecumenism of the official relationships of the churches and grassroots ecumenism, often performed as evident cooperation of Christians.

Achievements

The history of official interconfessional relationships traces back to the 1920s; however, only after World War II did ecumenical orientation become more prevalent. Nevertheless, there were many crucial moments in the development of Polish ecumenism. Indeed, one must mention the inception of the Polish Ecumenical Council in 1946, a body gathering main non-Catholic Churches in Poland, the first ecumenical initiatives of the Roman Catholic Church in the early 1960s, and the establishment of the joint commission for the relationships between the Roman Catholic Church and the Polish Ecumenical Council in 1974.

The commission has many ecumenical achievements. Over the last two decades, it issued four important ecumenical documents, which later were discussed in the Churches and Polish society. First, it was the declaration on the recognition of baptism entitled "Sacrament of Baptism—A Sign of Unity," signed on 23 January 2000 by the churches gathered in the Polish Ecumenical Council and the Roman Catholic Church. Therefore, Polish ecumenism produced such an agreement earlier than most other European

countries. Second, the report on interconfessional marriages, "Christian Marriage of Persons of Different Confessions," tackled one of the most controversial issues in interdenominational relationships. It is worth mentioning that the commission followed the solutions conceived in the bilateral ecumenical dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Waldensian Church in Italy. Both sides approved the declaration in 2011, and it is still waiting for official recognition by the Holy See. Third, the joint agreement on the ecological issues entitled "Appeal of Polish Churches for the Protection of Creation" was signed on 16th January 2013 and reflected the ecumenical paradigm "Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation." Finally, it was the joint document "Appeal of Churches in Poland for the Preservation of Sunday," in which the Churches countered a deprivation of Sunday of its festive dimension due to economic reasons.

The promulgation of the ecumenical translation of the Bible, eventually signed in 2018, became a further sign of the official inter-church cooperation. Either the works of the Polish Christian Forum and the country chapter of the Global Christian Forum, since 2016, have contributed to the development of interconfessional friendship. Moreover, the Churches collaborate in diaconal actions, such as Christmas Eve's Help to Children. Also, common prayer meetings and worship during official state and religious events are taken for granted in interchurch life. There are ecumenical chapels in the hospitals, airports, prisons and other public buildings in the country, ecumenical pilgrimage and celebrations, for instance, during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. All these ecumenical facts, though not numerous, make ecumenism familiar and "well-established" in the church and society's life.

Challenges

Regardless of the more universal tendencies that heavily affect Christianity and, thereby, ecumenism on the world level—such as secularization, anthropological crisis, egoistic consumerism, precarious economy and work, conflicts around the green revolution, voices about a decline of the Western civilization, and challenges of migration—there are also factors more specific to today's Poland. Therefore, even though some of them were alluded to above, it is worth listing them in a more systematic way.

First, like other European countries, Poland is immersed in a profound worldview conflict that, in turn, polarizes Polish politics. The churches and ecumenism are at the very centre of it since they (especially the Roman Catholic Church) take a clear position regarding crucial ethical issues. Moreover, the clash of values, linked with the political fight, imprints on the ecumenical relationships, as the common opinion often places the churches

on opposite sides of the conflict. Even though it is a rather deceiving media image, it may impede interchurch relationships.

Second, there are new challenges brought about by migration. For the first time in modern history, Poland is both an immigration and emigration country. Of course, both cases change the social structure and bring in new cultural patterns and new ways of thinking; both also impact the churches in Poland, and, thereby, both raise interconfessional and pastoral problems. It is about, for instance, the Polish Catholics who return to Poland after many years of economic migration in one of the Western European countries and who attended a Protestant church there. It is also about mixed marriages when one spouse is of different confession or religion or is an unbeliever. All these situations require churches' pastoral cooperation.

On the other hand, there is a growing number of Ukrainian and Belarusian communities of economic emigrants and war refugees. Ukrainian and Russian languages are heard in the daily life of Polish cities. The migration from the Eastern neighbourhood countries has two faces: partly, it is the swinging migration of those who come to Poland for several months only; partly, it is a huge number of those who decide for permanent settlement. Since some of them are Orthodox and Greek Catholics, the churches face specific pastoral problems, such as an increasing number of interconfessional marriages, a growing need for the religious education of children, or, last but not least, the need for places of worship for the Orthodox communities in the regions where there is no Orthodox church. The last point offers an opportunity for ecumenical cooperation, and in many Polish cities, the Catholic dioceses appoint Catholic churches or chapels where Orthodox communities may celebrate the liturgy.

Nevertheless, the Russian invasion of Ukraine has brought about new challenges. First, Poland has become the main country of arrival for millions of Ukrainians fleeing the war. Some of them have already returned to Ukraine; however, many have remained in Poland. It also intensifies previous interconfessional problems and causes new ones. On the one hand, churches (also in ecumenical cooperation) are involved in the aid for war refugees, organizing material support and psychological and pastoral assistance; on the other, ecumenical tensions arise due to a strong critique raised by the Polish Orthodox Church against pastoral activities of the Orthodox Church in Ukraine done in Poland.

Third, likewise, in other countries, there is a growing number of Pentecostal communities in Poland; however, the pace of growth is not as quick as for instance in South American countries. Yet it reflects in the intense Catholic debate on the so-called pentecostalization of Polish Christianity. The critical

voices, raised mainly from the traditionalist circles, point out the dynamism of the charismatic movement within the Catholic Church. At times they link pentecostalization with the protestantization of Catholicism; however, the latter is variously comprehended. On the one hand, both terms are equated; on the other, the protestantization is being linked with the liberal tendencies in the church and deemed as one of the most serious threats to Catholic integrity. Moreover, the traditionists in Poland, who are often close to the political anti-systemic political parties, discredit the significance of the ecumenical healing of historical memory. For instance, the commemoration of the 500 years of Reformation offered them many pretexts to draw the picture of Martin Luther according to the patterns from the deepest confessional wars. Obviously, even though taken by rather narrow circles, such actions may overshadow Poland's ecumenical relationships.

Nevertheless, the approval of women's ordination in the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Poland (Lutherans) causes another conflict in Polish ecumenism. It is reflected in the reactions of some churches belonging to the Polish Ecumenical Council.

Hallmarks

The ecumenism in Poland, especially in the Catholic Church, draws from the legacy and authority of John Paul II, even though Polish Orthodox Church ambiguously appraise the role he played in interchurch relationships. The authority of the pope and his very clear ecumenical orientation still is a driving force for many ecumenical initiatives, mainly on the Catholic side.

Moreover, the ecumenical activities are rather a matter of a theological elite. The reception of the ecumenical agreements and ecumenical pastoral guidelines is relatively poor, even among the clergy. On the other hand, the interdenominational relationships of the ones involved in ecumenism are very promising and friendly and seem to be a good starting point for future cooperation.

Romania

Ecumenical relations

The multiconfessional situation in Romania is marked by the presence of 18 religious denominations recognized by the Romanian state: Orthodox churches (the Romanian Orthodox Church, the Serbian Orthodox Bishopric from Timisoara, the Old Rite Russian Orthodox Church of Romania¬– the Lipovians), Catholic churches (the Roman-Catholic, Romanian Church United with Rome–Greek-Catholic), Eastern Orthodox churches

(Archdiocese of the Armenian Church), Protestant churches (Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Romania, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Romania, Reformed Church in Romania, Unitarian Church in Transylvania), evangelical neo-Protestant churches (Baptist Christian Cultus–Union of Baptist Christian Churches from Romania, Seventh-day Adventist Church, Pentecostal Christian Cultus–Apostolic Church of God, Christian Church according to the Gospel from Romania–Union of Christian Churches according to the Gospel, from Romania, Romanian Evangelical Church), the Federation of Jewish Communities from Romania, the Muslim Cult, the Jehovah's Witnesses Religious Organization. All this is legally recognized by Law no. 489/2006 regarding the regime of cults and religious freedom.[10] Certainly, the ecumenical dialogue in the Romanian area is not a very visible one.[11] Moreover, one can argue that in the international ecumenical space the collaboration is much stronger due to the presence in ecumenical fellowships, such as the World Council of Churches (WCC)[12] and Conference of the European Churches.[13]

However, we recall the moment of the organization of the Referendum on the definition of marriage.[14] The initiative belonged to the Coalition for the Family, but the Consultative Group of Religious Denominations came together to support this effort. The Consultative Council of Cults in Romania is an ethical, autonomous, apolitical, non-governmental organization without legal personality and non-profit, made up of the 13 recognized cults. Beyond the fact that the Referendum did not pass, there remains the collaboration of religious cults, including the Orthodox Church.

10 See: *Statul şi cultele religioase* (Bucureşti: Litera, 2014).

11 See: Rev. Dr. Adrian Boldişor, "Aspecte ale educaţiei religioase în România. Asemănări şi deosebiri cu modele europene," in *Paradigma creştină a unei Europe unite. Educaţia religioasă – valori, exigenţe, finalităţi*, ed. Lucian Dindirică (Craiova: Mitropolia Olteniei, 2017), 116–13.

12 Reformed Church in Romania, Romanian Orthodox Church, Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Romania, Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Romania.

13 Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Romania, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Romania, Reformed Church in Romania Kiralyhagomellek (District), Romanian Orthodox Church, Transylvanian Reformed Church.

14 See: "Consiliul Consultativ al Cultelor din România susţine referendumul pentru definirea căsătoriei ca uniune între un bărbat şi o femeie,"Lumina, 3 October 2018, https://ziarullumina.ro/actualitate-religioasa/stiri/consiliul-consultativ-al-cultelor-din-romania-sustine-referendumul-pentru-definirea-casatoriei-ca-uniune-intre-un-barbat-si-o-femeie-137661.html

The history of ecumenical dialogue in Romania must be analyzed, considering the communist period[15] but especially the period after the exit from communism in December 1989.[16] We do not go into the details of the communist period when, under internal political control, the Romanian Orthodox Church became a full member of the ecumenical dialogue, especially promoted by the WCC.[17] We have been interested in the post-December period until now. In this period of more than 30 years, the Orthodox Church in Romania, the majority in terms of the number of declared Christians, won a place of honour in the inter-Orthodox and inter-ecumenical dialogues. We must not forget some names of those who were actively involved in promoting ecumenical relations, starting with Rev. Ion Bria,[18] Rev. Dumitru Stăniloae,[19] Rev. Viorel Ioniță,[20] Metropolitan Nifon of Târgoviște,[21] and Rev. Ioan Sauca, who led over a decade the Ecumenical Institute of Bossey and currently acting General Secretary of WCC.[22] Also, here we should remember that the current Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church, His Beatitude Daniel Ciobotea, studied in the West and taught as a lecturer at the same Ecumenical Institute in Bossey.[23]

15 See: Kaisamari Hintikka, *The Romanian Orthodox Church and the World Council of Church, 1961–1977*, Schriften der Luther-Agricola-Gesellschaft 48 (Helsinki: Luther-Agricola-Society, 2000); Lucian N. Leustean, ed., *Eastern Christianity and the Cold War, 1945–91* (London, New York: Routledge, 2010).

16 Lavinia Stan and Lucian Turcescu, *Religion and Politics in Post-Communist Romania* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2007). See also: Rev. Dr Cristian Sonea, "Between Hope and Disappointment: A Short Evaluation of the Romanian Orthodox Church Involvement in Ecumenism in the Post-Communist Era," *Reshaping Ecumenism in Time of Transformation. Central and Eastern European Perspectives*, ed. Roberts Svatoň (Leiden: Brill Publishers, 2021), 34–54.

17 "Intrarea Bisericii Ortodoxe Române în Consiliul Ecumenic al Bisericilor," in *Ortodoxia* 1-2 (1962), 250–55.

18 See: Doru Marcu, *A Critical Analysis of the Theological Positions and Ecumenical Activity of Ion Bria (1929-2002)* (Craiova: Mitropolia Olteniei, 2022).

19 Radu Bordeianu, *Dumitru Staniloae: An Ecumenical Ecclesiology* (London, New York: T&T Clark, 2011).

20 Viorel Ioniță, ed., *Orthodox Theology in the 20th Century and Early 21st Century: A Romanian Orthodox Perspective* (Bucharest: Basilica, 2014).

21 See: "Metropolitan Nifon, New WCC Vice Moderator: "Pray and Act Concretely to Alleviate the Sufferings in the world," WCC Website, 20 June 2022, https://www.oikoumene.org/news/metropolitan-nifon-new-wcc-vice-moderator-pray-and-act-concretely-to-alleviate-the-sufferings-in-the-world.

22 "Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca confirmed interim WCC general secretary," WCC Website, 3 June 2022, https://www.oikoumene.org/news/rev-prof-dr-ioan-sauca-confirmed-interim-wcc-general-secretary.

23 Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, "Minutes of the Thirty-Ninth

Another important ecumenical collaboration for Romania remains the existence of the Ecumenical Research Center in Sibiu.[24] Within this centre, Romanian theologians belonging to different Christian traditions meet and work together on different research projects. Unfortunately, the current situation at the centre is uncertain that we hope will be resolved as soon as possible.

Currently, the Romanian Orthodox Church is actively involved in ecumenical relations but always maintains a balance regarding the internal situation within the inter-Orthodox communion. Unfortunately, this communion is provoked by the decisions of the Holy and Great Synod, but especially by the tension between Moscow and Constantinople following the granting of autocephaly to the Orthodox Church in Ukraine by the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Moreover, the armed conflict in Ukraine also has consequences for inter-Orthodox and implicitly inter-ecumenical relations.[25]

The documents approved at the Holy and Great Synod of Crete in June 2016, especially *Relations of the Orthodox Church with the Rest of the Christian World* and *The Mission of the Orthodox Church in Today's World*,[26] but also the one approved by the Ecumenical Patriarchate in March 2020, *For the Life of the World: Towards a Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church*,[27] represent the new chapter of the Orthodox Church in ecumenical and interreligious dialogue.

Theological education

Theological education in Romania has been facing constant transformations over the past few years. From the traditional Orthodox seminaries to religious education in public schools and theological higher education, all these forms of instruction are marked by a certain tension between the church's need to prepare theologians for its own clerical organizations and the more general purpose of raising awareness for the social role played by the

Meeting, Hanover, Federal Republic of Germany, 10-20 August 1988" (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1989),155.

24 See http://ecum.ro/.

25 See: Evangelos Sotiropoulos, ed., *The Ecumenical Patriarchate and Ukraine Autocephaly: Historical, Canonical, and Pastoral Perspectives*, Order of Saint Andrew the Apostle, Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, 2019; Radu Bordeianu, "The Autocephaly of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine: Its Impact outside of Ukraine," in Canadian Slavonic Papers, 3-4(2020), 452-62; Cyril Hovorun, "The Case of Ukrainian Autocephaly," in *Religion During the Russian-Ukrainian Conflict,* Elizabeth A. Clark and Dmytro Vovk, eds. (London, New York: Routledge, 2020), 180–91.

26 See the official documents here: https://www.holycouncil.org/official-documents.

27 See the document here: https://www.goarch.org/social-ethos.

church in society, by educating young people from various domains, other than those related to the ecclesiastical space.[28]

As a form of religious formation, Romania has several types of education: confessional religious education in public schools and theological formation in universities. Confessional religious education is a form of instruction based on moral and religious principles, preached by a confession. Theological formation represents an essential work through which the experience of the church gets transmitted from one generation to another. Ecumenical education is part of this theological formation and is understood as a learning process to abandon confessional competition, mistrust, and misunderstanding, to give the common witness in the world and to achieve the visible unity of the church.

In the case of the Romanian Orthodox Church, this theological or religious education is carried out in two directions: in the pre-university educational system[29] and in the theological education of young seminarians and students through theological seminaries[30] and faculties.[31] Analyzing critically, as far as theological faculties are concerned, their high number lowered the level of training. Undoubtedly, shortly the Romanian Orthodox Church will need a new theological reform, especially regarding the accreditation of these theological institutions.[32] Obviously, this restructuring must take into account the administrative structure of the dioceses in such a way that for each metropolitan area, there should be only a faculty for the training of future priests and theologians.[33] On the other hand, access to various European scholarships offered the possibility for many theological students to have training in Western universities. Some of them returned to Romania and were involved in the existing educational structures, which brought freshness to the Romanian theological system.

28 See: Rev. Dr Cristian Sonea, https://misjologia.uksw.edu.pl/sites/default/files/10_Sonea_Summary percent20Warsaw percent202017.pdf

29 https://patriarhia.ro/religia-in-scoala-178/.

30 Within the Romanian Patriarchate, there are 27 theological seminaries and 9 Orthodox theological high schools with different specializations. See the list here: https://patriarhia.ro/images/Educational2020/Lista_Seminariilor_si_Liceelor_Teologice_Ortodoxe_din_Patriarhia_Romana.pdf.

31 In present, within the Romanian Patriarchate, 14 faculties of Orthodox Theology function. See the list here: https://patriarhia.ro/lista-unitatilor-de-invatamant-teologic-universitar-541.html.

32 See: Cristian Sonea, "The Missionary Formation in the Eastern Orthodox Theological Education in Present Day Romania," in *Transformation* 3 (2018), 146–55.

33 See https://patriarhia.ro/organizarea-administrativa-763.html.

Migration and diaspora

The phenomenon of migration and the formation of the Romanian diaspora is not a new one, but the current high level far exceeds the figures known in the past. Currently, according to recognized statistics, around 5 million Romanians are temporarily or permanently settled in different areas of Europe and beyond.[34] Considering this massive migration, the Romanian Patriarchate decided to establish some Romanian parishes in the diaspora to offer moral and spiritual support to these Romanians who belonged to the Romanian Orthodox Church.[35] It is considered that the Romanian Orthodox diaspora is one of the most important now, obviously at the expense of the social, cultural, economic and spiritual stability of Romania.[36] At the same time, the organization of Romanian parishes in the diaspora became a model of a Christian witness. Numerous cases of conversions are known due to the encounter with the tradition and liturgical life of Eastern orthodox Christianity. Currently, it is accepted that the Orthodox Romanians from the diaspora are much more present in the life and work of the church. With certainty, in the coming years, we will observe the same effervescence of those who live outside Romania's borders.[37]

Labour migration as a phenomenon can be looked at from at least four different perspectives. We must first consider the emigrant, the one who leaves his country, city or village, placing a mark on his or her family but also on society in general. The cities and villages are depopulated, and Romania becomes subject to a constant demographic decline. In such circumstances, especially in a rural area, the mission of the church consists simply in aiding the elderly or in performing funerals.

A second perspective is the one regarding the immigrant, the person who enters a country for a longer or indefinite period. Such a person entering a new world is forced to go through a stage of adaptation which is often very painful. Pastoral work involving immigrants is difficult but may prove to be a chance for the church. Orthodox priests from the diaspora say that

34 See: https://www.recensamantromania.ro/; https://www.recensamantromania.ro/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/istoria-recensamintelor.pdf.

35 See https://patriarhia.ro/organizarea-administrativa-763.html.

36 See: Răzvan Brudiu and Alexandru Ciucurescu, "The Orthodox Diaspora: Analysis, Nuance and Redefinitions," in *Icoana Credinţe*i 15 (2022), 24–33.

37 See: Maria Hämmerli, "Orthodox Diaspora? A Sociological and Theological Problematization of a Stock Phrase," in *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 2-3 (2010), 97–115. Also, the situation of the Orthodox diaspora, in general, was analyzed at the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church in 2016. See the official document here: https://www.holycouncil.org/diaspora.

they manage to build very active Christian communities. A lot of Romanians who, while at home, were not religious once abroad discovered the life of the church. Romanian Orthodox churches in the diaspora are also meeting points or places where one can find information about jobs, for example. All this is not very common in Romania, but in the diaspora, all contributes to attracting many believers to participate in the services. Also, in such a church, one may find believers coming from various social backgrounds and from different regions of Romania. Therefore, the priest is forced to adapt and be creative about the local traditions.

A third perspective is that of the active migrant, those who change their jobs and homes regularly. For a priest, this is probably the most problematic situation. How can one work with someone who remains part of a community for only a short period of time? With someone the priest practically does not know. In such a case, we can only rely on each believer's conscience. They can search for the closest Orthodox church around, or, sometimes, they may never get into contact with the local church or the priest.

The final aspect regarding migration is that of mixed marriages and converts to the Orthodox Church. As expected, Romanians living abroad entered marriages with people of different nationalities and religious confessions. In such circumstances, they must learn to live with people who have different beliefs. An ecumenical education in such cases is vital.

Also, the number of converts to the Orthodox Church grew considerably in the last century compared with the previous ones. Converts represent the subjects of very delicate missionary work, and our priests, as well as the rest of the believers, are not always prepared for it. The phenomenon is present in many Orthodox churches, not only Romanian, but if we ask ourselves why not all the converts remain in the church, the answer may be that we are not fully prepared to receive them and to offer them appropriate help and attention.

Challenges

As for the current challenges that should attract our attention, we mention the secularization of the spiritual life of Romanians. Secularization can be seen in Romania after the fall of communism, but as a broad social phenomenon, it was identified before the 1990s, particularly in Western Europe and the United States. It has also been noted that "secularization at the societal level is not necessarily linked to secularization at the level of individual conscience. Certain religious institutions have lost their power and influence in many societies. Still, old and new religious beliefs and practices have nevertheless continued in the lives of individuals, sometimes taking new institutional

forms and sometimes leading to great bursts of religious fervour."[38] Although the "secularization theory" appears as such in several works from the 1950s and 1960s, the critical idea of the theory can be traced back to the Enlightenment period. This idea is simple: modernization necessarily leads to a decline of religion, both in society and in the minds of individuals. And it is precisely this critical idea that has been proven wrong. Certainly, modernization has had some secularizing effects, more so in some places than others. But it has also provoked counter-secularization solid movements."[39] For Peter Berger, "the assumption that we live in a secularised world is false. Today's world . . . is as furiously religious as ever, and in some places more so than ever. This means that a whole body of literature by historians and social scientists, loosely called secularization theory, is essentially wrong."[40] Beyond the fact that secularization has not penetrated, as Berger argues, at the deep level of society, there are other causes of de-secularization identified by José Casanova, Timothy A. Byrnes, and Peter J. Katzenstein in "the large influx of non-secularised populations into Europe through immigration,"[41] as well as "supply-side" theories. According to these theories, when post-socialist Romanian Orthodoxy challenged secular worldviews and secular life, this generated a competitive religious market and thus created a religious revival.

Romania seems to confirm both theories in that we are witnessing a religious return of Romanians starting from an individual/personal level, which proves that not all social strata have been influenced by the communist secularist policy. Still, we can also observe the phenomenon of choosing faith as a reaction to communist ideology, an ideology understood as a secular religion. As a general observation, we note that in Romania, we are simultaneously witnessing a process of secularization, challenged by religious leaders and supported by secularist organizations, and also a process of de-secularization facilitated by the still unaltered preservation of faith in Christian individuals/persons and communities. But this process is also facilitated by a horizontal legitimization of the presence of the church in society, which can very easily slide toward secularization of church life itself.

38 Peter L. Berger, "The Desecularization of the World: A Global Overview," in *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics*, ed. Peter L. Berger (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1999), 2–3.

39 Berger, "The Desecularization of the World."

40 Berger, "The Desecularization of the World."

41 Julia Mourão Permoser, "Religion in European Migration Studies," *SSRC The Immanent Frame*, data accesării 12 martie 2022, http://tif.ssrc.org/2014/02/18/religion-in-european-migration-studies/.

What we can observe in the Orthodox media in Romania are the discourses that point to the dangers of secularization, the challenges that it brings, and the church's attempts to react to it. At times, crises in Christian communities have the effect of clearing things up: just like the litmus solution used to determine the acidic or basic character of various substances, crises can also clarify the attitude of the church towards one issue or another. Regarding secularization, we can notice both an attitude of rejection and a realistic evaluation of the situation. The obviously conflicting attitudes reveal an Orthodox nostalgia for a pre-modern model of society in which society was oriented towards God and faith occupied a central place. It is a longing feeling for an idealized past, especially the Byzantine imperial era and its legacy in the Balkans, as well as in Romania.

The problem of nationalism was also exacerbated in other Orthodox cultural spaces.[42] From our perspective, the Orthodox Romanians do not suffer from nationalism, contrary to other positions.[43] Maybe at most, some political leaders but also religious ones, use the theme of nationalism to refuse certain changes or to get different positions. Unfortunately, those who use the theme of nationalism are, at the same time, those who change the value of ecumenical dialogue.

Even so, nationalism is a danger in Romania if it is not critically analyzed. According to Violeta Barbu, who offers an overview of David Martin's analysis in the context of an Eastern European model of secularization, Romanian religiosity can be explained by the fact that the church proved to be, even during communist times, "the one vehicle to continuing Romanian identity."[44] Martin catalogues Romania with all its cultural and historical particularities within a pattern typical for several other East European countries (Greece, Poland, Romania, Serbia), which is *ethnic religion*.[45] That perceives "the Church as a vehicle of identity and a continuing holistic cultural tradition,"

42 Pantelis Kalaitzidis, "Holy Lands and Sacred Nations," in *Concilium* 1 (2015), 115–23; Pantelis Kalaitzidis, "Church and Nation in Eschatological Perspective," in *The Wheel* 18 (2019), 52–61.

43 Lavinia Stan and Lucian Turcescu, "Political, National Symbols and the Romanian Orthodox Cathedral," in *Europe-Asia Studies* 7 (2006), 1119–39. See also: Daniel P. Payne, "Nationalism and the Local Church: The Source of Ecclesiastical Conflict in the Orthodox Commonwealth," in *Nationalities Papers* 5 (2007), 831–52.

44 Violeta Barbu, "Contradictory Sign of What Is Missing: A Narrative of Romanian Post-Communist Religiosity," in *Faith and Secularisation: A Romanian Narrative. Romanian Philosophical Studies, IX Christian Philosophical Studies, VII*, ed. Wilhelm Dancă (Washington, DC: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2014), 35–39.

45 David Martin, *On Secularisation: Towards a Revised General Theory* (Ashgate Publishing, 2005), 81.

different from the one in which "the Church is conceived as a distinct institutional entity, teaching specific doctrines."[46] Evaluated from the standpoint of Charles Taylor's understanding of the relation between religion and state, in Romania the church protects the nation and is almost synonymous with it.[47] From the perspective of Gracie Davie, we could say that the Romanian pattern of religiosity appears as a regional variant of the "vicarious religion." "This indicates the willingness of the population to delegate the religious sphere to the professional ministries of the state churches," with Europeans glad that "churches perform, vicariously, a number of tasks on behalf of the population as a whole."[48]

Olivier Clément noted that in Eastern Europe, Christians are witnessing the collapse of the culture their faith had inspired, seeing the art of living together brutally destroyed by money, individualism, and often gross hedonism. Nearly a century or half a century of the communist regime has transformed the church into a liturgical ghetto, in which believers are "liturgized" rather than evangelized. Orthodoxy thus becomes a sign of prideful religious belonging rather than a compassionate personal belief. Hence the identity reactions and the exaltation of what remains when everything collapses: the blood or so-called "ethnic" community, sealed with a certain "religious" folklore. Anaesthetized by tyranny, the real wounds begin to bleed again. *"This religious nationalism is the orthodox form of secularisation."*[49]

Clément's thesis is confirmed by Gelu Sabău, who observes that religious nationalism in the case of Romania is *"simultaneously a paradoxical form of adaptation/resistance to modernity."*[50] It is a form of adaptation because the establishment of the national state needed the powerful instrument of nationalism and a form of resistance because, in this process of creating a modern national state, religious nationalism also hinders the advent of democratic values and the actions of several typically modern institutions. Furthermore, because Romanian religious nationalism equates national with religious

46 Barbu, "Contradictory Sign of What Is Missing," 35–39.

47 Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*, Reprint edition (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Belknap Press: An Imprint of Harvard University Press, 2018), 455.

48 Grace Davie, "Is Europe an Exceptional Case?," *International Review of Mission* 95:378-379 (2006), 247–58, doi:10.1111/j.1758-6631.2006.tb00562.x.

49 Olivier Clément, "Creştinătate, secularizare şi Europa," in *Gândirea socială a Bisericii: fundamente, documente, analize, perspective*, ed. Ioan I. Ică jr. şi Germano Marani, Civitas christiana (Sibiu: Deisis, 2002), 511.

50 Gelu Sabău, "Is Nationalism a Form of Secularisation for Orthodoxy?," in *Faith and Secularisation: A Romanian Narrative. Romanian Philosophical Studies, IX Christian Philosophical Studies, VII*, ed. Wilhelm Dancă (Washington, DC: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2014), 104.

identity, it can be seen as a form of secularization because religious discourse can easily morph into an ideological discourse, thus pulling theological thinking down into the secular realm. The church thus runs the risk of self-secularization because even as it claims to fight against secularization, some of its social actions have political grounds rather than theological bases.[51]

The vision of the future

Projecting a future of missionary challenges in the Romanian Orthodox Church is not a simple one.[52] Certainly, some of the challenges mentioned above will increase, and others will decrease. In any case, the religious situation in Romania will not be independent of political and economic changes. At the same time, the institutional position of the Romanian Orthodox Church remains quite important for the social life of Romanians. We need a theological and administrative educational reform to provide a safe space for the development of religious life. Clearly, the Orthodox Church must continue the reorganization that started immediately after the fall of communism. Today's opportunities and challenges far exceed the situation in the communist era. It remains to respond authentically to future situations and problems if we remain in the continuity of the Orthodox experience.

Serbia

Serbia is officially a secular state, yet religion plays a significant role in terms of informing the cultural values and national identity of many Serbians. Indeed, throughout Serbian history, there has been a close association between ethnic identity and religious affiliation. For example, Serbs (the largest group in Serbia) mostly identify with Eastern Orthodox. Regarding the total population, 84.6 percent identify as Eastern Orthodox, while 5 percent identify as Catholic, 3.1 percent identify as Muslim, and 1.0 percent identify as Protestant. Of the remaining population, 0.8 percent identify with some other religion, 1.1 percent identify as atheists, and 1.5 percent do not declare their religious affiliation.

Although Serbia does not have an official religion, Eastern Orthodox Christianity plays a large and influential role in society. In Serbia, Eastern Orthodox is often referred to as Serbian Orthodox, and the national identity is often linked to the Serbian Orthodox Church. Established in 1219, the

51 Sabău, "Is Nationalism a Form of Secularisation," 104–105.

52 Mihai Himcinschi and Răzvan Brudiu, eds., *Biserica Ortodoxă și provocările viitorului* (Alba Iulia, Cluj-Napoca: Reîntregirea, Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2020).

Serbian Orthodox Church is often understood as the institution that links contemporary Serbia with its long historical past. Since the breakup of former Yugoslavia, the church has again seen a strong revival. Since much of Serbian identity is linked to religious history, e.g. an attack on a church building is often interpreted as an attack on an individual Serbian or the collective. While the Serbian Orthodox Church is important to many Serbians, there are many people who have alternative spiritual beliefs. Thus, beliefs stemming from the Serbian Orthodox Church need to be considered on an individual basis. Many older Serbians see the church as an important part of their religious, social, and cultural life. Regardless of spiritual beliefs, visits to one's local church during major events such as Christmas and Easter are common.

When it comes to ecumenical relations, ecumenism is often characterized as something negative in society. The reason can be found in the events of the past century. Very conflictual relations with Catholics during the entire Serbian history have led to the fact that hostility is still quietly present today, although efforts are being made to reconcile and build bridges. Some of the leading Serbian Orthodox theologians of the 20th century, such as Justin Popovich and Nikolaj Velimirovich, often had a negative attitude toward ecumenism in the later years of their work, often associating it with the sociopolitical situation in Europe. Serbia is among the few Orthodox countries, if we can say so, which have been largely opposed to the pope's visit. Also, relations with the Roman Catholic Church by the official Orthodox Church are often viewed through the prism of the involvement of the Roman Catholic Church in neighbouring Croatia in the dark events during World War II, when Croatia was a puppet state of the Third Reich, especially because of the role of Aloysius Stepinac (1898–1960), the Archbishop of Zagreb and a Croatian cardinal, whose canonization the Serbian Orthodox Church strongly opposes today. For this reason, the Vatican established a mixed Orthodox-Catholic commission to investigate this case involving the prelate of Zagreb in the Nazi regime. However, the commission's work was stopped due to the pandemic and was rather fruitless work. On a less official level, relations between Catholics and Orthodox are friendly, although the lower clergy also do not have much cooperation.

For the countries from Southeast Europe, like Serbia, one of the significant objectives of ecumenism would be "the need to purify memory . . . especially in the Balkan area."[53] Thus, in the area of former Yugoslavia, many theologians

53 Bogdan Dolec, "Ecumenical Dialogue in a New Europe: Steps towards a Purification of Historical Memories in the Balkans," in *Mission in Central and Eastern Europe: Realities, Perspectives, Trends*, Volume 34, ed. Corneliu Constantineanu et al. (Regnum Edinburgh Centenary Series, 2016), 594–95.

representing the theological faculties in Ljubljana (Slovenia), Zagreb (Croatia) and Belgrade (Serbia) organized a series of ecumenical symposia (1972–90). This series of ecumenical meetings were resumed on a larger scale in 2014 with the interreligious and ecumenical conference in Maribor (Slovenia).

The Serbian Orthodox Church has begun to show more gestures of ecumenical goodwill since the election of the new Patriarch, Porfirije, in 2021. Also, the still vivid memory of the war in Yugoslavia largely prevents people from freely entering closer relations or mixing with members of other nations and religions. In this context, Catholics and Orthodox (but also Protestants, although a minority, but a present minority) in Serbia, the neighbouring countries of what we call the Yugosphere, still have a long way to go, which requires joint efforts in unravelling the past, personal identity, and opening to others. It should also be noted that the Serbian Orthodox Church is a member of the WCC, that in 2018 it hosted the assembly of the European Conference of Churches and is very active in the international ecumenical movement.

In Serbia, there is currently one Faculty of Orthodox Theology of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Belgrade, with about 1,500 students. The condition for all students is that they have a recommendation from an Orthodox bishop for admission to studies. Because of this, there are no students of other denominations on the faculty, and other churches educate their students abroad. Thus, Catholics and minorities study in neighbouring Croatia and Hungary. It can be mentioned that there is also an Adventist Theological Faculty in Belgrade, with a very small number of students and in considerable isolation since it does not belong to the university, unlike the Orthodox Faculty. Theological education is also available to all people through primary and secondary schools in the form of religious classes taught by religious teachers appointed by the churches. Religious education in Serbia is an optional subject along with civic education, while, for example, in neighbouring Bosnia and Herzegovina, it is a compulsory subject.

Like most Balkan countries, Serbia is facing a rapid emigration of its population. This process is somewhat slowed down by the fact that Serbia is not part of the EU, nor are neighbouring countries Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Montenegro, and Albania. On the other hand, Croatia is experiencing greater emigration due to EU membership. And yet, the Serbian diaspora is numerous. According to statistics, between 300,000 and half a million Serbs live in Austria alone. The situation is similar in America and Australia. And yet, here we are talking about people who left the country.

On the other hand, the number of people who came to the country is small. This also applies to migrants from the Middle East because they do not stay in the country. Nevertheless, we can say that, especially in the northern

parts of Serbia, national diversity provides a good example of good coexistence. Here we have different religions and nations (Serbs, Romanians, Hungarians, Czechs, Slovaks, etc.) who settled on this territory during the past and today proudly emphasize their religious and national identity with great respect for others.

When we talk about today's challenges for the churches in Serbia, it is difficult not to mention the historical events of the past decades. Those relations are still heavily burdened by these events. Since the Serbian Orthodox Church is the main Christian community, the biggest challenge for minority churches is to survive and not dissolve in society. Mixed marriages or lack of interest of their members are often why these minority churches lose believers and thus disappear. On the other hand, the Serbian Orthodox Church often suffers from pressure from the state due to social and political circumstances. During the period of communism, the church lost its freedom, but today it has regained it, and it is often not clearly defined what this freedom includes, what questions the church should or must answer, and where the limits of its freedom today are. Likewise, all churches face their members' nominal membership, which is often far from actual attendance at religious services and active participation in religious life.

That is why it is often heard that the re-evangelization of the members, the deepening of their theological education and, thus, a stronger attachment to their churches on a practical level is needed. This is a very complex challenge since, especially for young people, their church is often far from their interests, digitalization, gaining momentum, and contemporary ideas in society.

Finally, regarding the future vision, it is difficult to talk about rapid changes, especially since the institutional churches are very slow in this field. The public discourse of the Serbian Orthodox Church always remains close to the state and its historical discourse. For this reason, since Serbia is getting closer to the EU, there are increasingly loud calls for the church to show more liberal attitudes toward those who feel discriminated against in society, such as the LGBT population. Minority churches continue to follow instructions from their headquarters located outside the country's borders, but their primary goal remains to preserve the national Serbian identity of their communities. The future vision seems challenging and hazy, especially in the modern world, because it is becoming increasingly obvious that it is very challenging for the church to bear witness to the gospel in the right way and always be consistent.

Common Challenges in the Central and European Region

Apart from the specific challenges identified in the above key studies, there are some common challenges in the region. We will mention here the Roma issue and the war in Ukraine.

Despite political persecution, there is one minority, among many others, who has refused to yield to pressure and has remained in the Balkan area, the Roma communities. On the other hand, there are new immigrants in Southeastern Europe. People who used to have a hard time getting here nowadays are considered diasporas: Asian people, Chinese, Japanese, Thais, and Koreans. They all bring a change to Southeast European countries' cultural and religious landscape and represent missionary challenges rarely seen before.

For example, according to the latest censuses, Romania is the country in Southeast Europe where the Roma community has the largest number of members, about 700,000 people. It is the second largest minority group after the Hungarians. Unofficially, however, the number is thought to be almost three times as high. Religiously, the Roma do not have a uniformly accepted religion. As a rule, they take on the religion of the community they live in, but this adherence is often formal, and they do not become part of that denomination. Although Romania is officially a majority Orthodox country, with more than 80 percent of the population declaring themselves Orthodox, in recent years, more and more Roma are declaring that they belong to the Pentecostal Church. Many are leaving the Romanian Orthodox Church to become part of the Pentecostal Church.[54] In addition, on a social level, research has shown that the Romanian population hardly accepts Roma.[55] A 2020 IRES poll shows that 70 percent of Romanians do not trust Roma, and attitudes toward them are similar to those toward immigrants rather than a national, ethnic minority.[56]

The same is true in Bulgaria, where the Roma community numbers around 350,000 members (5 percent of the country's population), the third largest ethnic group after Bulgarians and Turks. However, there are major conflicts

54 Kiss Dénes, "The Roma of Herculian and the role of the Pentecostal Religion in Their Community," in *Incluziune şi excluziune. Studii de caz asupra comunităţii de romi din Romînia*, Kiss Tamáó and László-Fleck Gábor, eds., 2009, 19-23.

55 Daniela Albu, "Perception on the Roma Minority in the Romanian Society: From Serfdom to Emancipation," *Drepturile Omului / Human Rights*, 2021, 17, https://heinonline.org/HOL/Page?handle=hein.journals/drtom2021&id=204&div=&collection=.

56 "Poll IRES: 7 out of 10 Romanians Do Not Trust in Roma," Societate, 5 July 2020, https://romania.europalibera.org/a/sondaj-ires-7-din-10-rom percentC3 percentA2ni-nu-au-percentC3 percentAEncredere- percentC3 percentAEn-romi/30707320.html.

with their social inclusion. In 2017, the Bulgarian Deputy Prime Minister himself addressed insulting words to Roma in an official speech. Since the 1950s, Bulgaria has been in the process of incorporating Roma people into mainstream ethnic communities. Thus, more than 130,000 people were forced to change their nationality from Roma to Turkish through a state administrative procedure. This way, a process of Islamization of the Gypsies in this territory began. However, the identity of Roma converts to Islam can be unstable and dependent on different ethnic-social positions. The dominance of religious identity creates stability and self-confidence for some of them. However, for the rest of the target population, there remains a problem of association of the Roma community with the spread of Islamic teachings whose adherents do not identify with this ethnic group. Between 2003 and 2010, there were cases of Roma converting from Islam to Protestantism. But since, according to Slavkova, the identity of "Gypsy" was attributed only to evangelised Turkish Roma, the phenomenon of re-Islamization emerged: children or young people who had changed their religious affiliation to evangelical Christianity converted back to Islam. However, this should be viewed with some caution, as there is a clear discrepancy between what is declared and the non-religious, everyday ethno-cultural practices.[57]

In 2016, Michael O'Flaherty noted in the "Second Survey on Minorities and Discrimination in the European Union, Roma" that around 80 percent of Roma surveyed live below the country's risk-of-poverty threshold, one in three Roma lives in a home without running water, one in three Roma children live in a household where a member has gone to bed hungry at least once in the last month, and 50 percent of Roma aged 6 to 24 do not attend school. This report highlights a disturbing reality: the largest ethnic minority in the European Union continues to face intolerable discrimination and unequal access to essential services.[58]

Looking at the situation of the Roma as a whole, they are one of the groups most at risk of social and labour market exclusion. According to Adrian-Nicolae Dan, the rate of exclusion among the Roma is substantially higher than for the majority population. This is primarily due to the low level of education and lack of professional qualifications. However, prejudice and discrimination play an important role in the social and economic exclusion of Roma. At the same time, the Roma are employed mainly in the informal or household sector, not contributing and therefore not benefiting from social

57 Yelis Erolova, "Cases of Contemporary Re-Islamization among Roma in Bulgaria," *Romani Studies* 31:2 (2021), 211–30, https://muse.jhu.edu/article/841006.

58 See: "Second survey on minorities and discrimination in the Union European. Roma - results selected" (Agency Pentru Rights Fundamental for Union European, 2016).

security. For many Roma families, social benefits and childcare allowances are the main sources of income. Public policies to include Roma in the labour market have not proved effective so far, nor have measures in other areas, as the sectoral nature of interventions does not cover the complexity of the problems of Roma communities facing multiple vulnerabilities.[59]

All these realities are a great challenge for the citizens of Central and Eastern Europe, but also an opportunity for Christian communities to show their love and initiate missionary programmes to promote human dignity.

Another big challenge in Eastern Europe that affects the whole world is the war in Ukraine. Besides the geopolitical stakes, the conflict is deepening existing rifts between Orthodox in Russia and Ukraine and throughout the Eastern world. The war has made the relations between Orthodox in Ukraine and Russia more tense. Before the war, there were three Orthodox churches in Ukraine: the Ukrainian Orthodox Church—the Kyiv Patriarchate, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church under the Moscow Patriarchate, and the Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Ukraine in communion with the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. Because of its recognition of the autocephaly of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, the Patriarchate of Moscow unilaterally broke communion with the Ecumenical Patriarchate. The Russian Orthodox Church unilaterally interrupted eucharistic communion with Bartholomew on 15 October 2018, before the signing of *the Tomos* of recognition of autocephaly on 5 January 2019. After the Church of Greece and the Patriarchate of Alexandria recognized the Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Ukraine, the Russian Orthodox Church unilaterally broke communion with these two churches as well.

About three months after the start of the war in Ukraine on 27 May 2022, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, hitherto affiliated to Moscow, announced that it would break away from Russia after the latter invaded Ukraine, declaring its "full independence" from the Russian spiritual authorities. It disagrees with the position of the Patriarch of Moscow and All of Russia on the war in Ukraine. The Synod also stated that it opts for the unification of all Ukrainian Orthodox Christians in a secure ecclesial structure and is ready to hold discussions on this matter with the Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Ukraine, in communion with the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople.

59 Adrian-Nicolae Dan, "Economia socială și comunitățile de romi – provocări și oportunități," in *Programul Națiunilor Unite pentru Dezvoltare*, ed. Cătălin Șerban, https://www.academia.edu/54952009/Economia_social percentC4 percent83_ percentC5 percent9Fi_comunit percentC4 percent83 percentC5 percentA3ile_de_romi_provoc percentC4 percent83ri_ percentC5 percent9Fi_oportunit percentC4 percent83 percentC5 percentA3i.

This situation, in addition to the Ukrainian refugee crisis and the grief caused by the deaths of thousands of soldiers and civilians, creates a difficult situation within the Orthodox community globally. How can a Christian community be credible in the world if there is no real internal communion? Unfortunately, this is the situation currently at the Pan-Orthodox level.

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CHAPTER 9

Report of the IMC Study Process from the German Study Group

Anton Knuth and Eckhard Zemmrich

The German study group, consisting of members of the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Missionswissenschaft* and the *Missionsakademie an der Universität Hamburg*, identified two major subject areas of missiological relevance that deserve particularly close attention in the context of Germany. Yet they should also be seen in a wider ecumenical context when reflecting on the future of Christian communication beyond the limits of their own respective cultural and religious environments: mission in a secular context, and the intercultural opening of theological education.

Mission in a Secular Context

Introduction into the historical context

In the 20th century, as a result of the modern missionary movement, the acceptance of Christianity became visible in large parts of Africa and Oceania and specific circles of Asia at a time that coincided with a considerable decline in the acceptance of the churches in Europe. As Europe is very much shaped by the philosophy of the Enlightenment, this led some to the conclusion that mission and enlightenment are excluding contradictions. But, actually, there are many connections between the pietism of the missionary movement and the Enlightenment. They have been called similar twins, as both emphasize experience rather than dogmas as the decisive source of knowledge and pursue a practical orientation of the Christian faith. Therefore, our study group emphasized that there is no simple contradiction of the Enlightenment and pietism, secularization, and mission.

Pietism and the Enlightenment were united in their emphasis on ethics and rejection of the old Protestant orthodoxy. The most important German systematic theologian of the 19th century, Friedrich Schleiermacher,

tried, not without success, to reconcile faith and reason, Christianity and Enlightenment approaches as a member of the Moravian Church.

The affirmation of the laity and the democratic element in the church made the formation of free societies and associations possible in the first place, which were not oriented on confessional line, but ecumenically. Most missionaries of the 18th and 19th centuries assumed at the same time a connection between Christianization and civilization, which was evident in education, technology, the development of agriculture and work, social issues, and the way of life. In many cases, missionaries were resolute opponents of the slave trade or blackbirding, as well as the burning of widows, cannibalism, war-like religious power politics, or alcohol consumption. But still they saw themselves as opponents of secularism or at least wanted to demonstrate the potential of their church for their home context by the success on the "mission fields." Christianity of the Enlightenment was about de-dogmatization, de-confessionalization and a practical orientation of faith, motifs that were taken up by the modern missionary movement but were reshaped by the local actors through their Indigenous spirituality. Many missionaries acted as agents of secularization with their introduction of Western science-based medicine, the rejection of magic, and the offensive disempowerment of traditional religious rituals. This led to a cultural arrogance which can also be identified as problem of an exclusivist secularism.

At the latest since the World Missionary Conference in Jerusalem in 1928, the missionary movement has been preoccupied with the secularization of modern society. "None of the mnemonic words around which the conference gathered its thoughts on the heights of the Mount of Olives . . . caught on so quickly and so universally as the word 'secularism,'" noted Martin Schlunk, the leader of the German delegation, who explained the term was introduced to describe the "de-Christianization of modern humanity." Rufus Matthew Jones had lectured in Jerusalem on "Secular Civilization and the Christian Task" and linked it up with the freethought groups. Martin Schlunk was convinced that a missionary church could also strengthen the popular church in a secular environment. He wanted to ensure a new conquest of culture through the mission. Otto Dibelius, in his book, *The Century of the Church* (1926), interpreted the separation of church and state as a mandate for conscious ecclesiolatry and called for the introduction of the office of bishop. In fact, the regional churches reacted to the challenge of the loss of social significance with a re-confessionalization.

A strong impetus for this confrontation with a non-religious or, as in the case of communism, even anti-church movements came from the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia in 1917. But after World War I, there were

also movements that lobbied to leave the church in Germany in a context where the old alliance between throne and altar had been ended. Although before World War I, nominally more than 97 percent of the population of the German Reich still belonged to the two major Western Christian church traditions; the process of alienation of both the workers and the educated middle classes had already progressed considerably. The state church system that existed until 1918 concealed the considerable loss of importance and impact of the Protestant churches that was taking place underground, which was particularly noticeable in industrialized areas and cities and which was reflected in an increasing "disentanglement from church-state structures."[1] The still high numbers of church affiliation among the population could not hide the fact that the alienation of large parts of the population from the church was already well advanced due to an increasing turn to this worldly aspect of life. The rejected church was perceived as "moral Protestantism," "with strict marriage, family and sexual norms, a lofty rigorism of truthfulness and duty, a timidity and aversion to all expression of emotion."[2] The critique of religion of a Hume, Lessing, Kant, Comte, Feuerbach, Marx, Schopenhauer's Nietzsche, or Freud had not failed to exert their influence on theology. The major cultural shift taking place was from a sacral society of Christendom to a church in a pluralistic marketplace.

The crisis in society after the World War I was linked to the perception of a theological crisis, for which some thought they could compensate by success in mission. So, the Leipzig Lutheran missionary Bruno Gutmann wanted to show, for example, through the connection between ethnos and ecclesia among the Chagga in today's Tanzania, that in Germany, too, ethnicity had to be more strongly appreciated. As Karolin Wetjen shows, missionary scholarship intersected with discourses of modernity as arguments in favour of a reconfiguration of church and society in Imperial Germany and the Weimar Republic. Using the theology of Bruno Gutmann as an example, she argues that the mission field acted as a "mission laboratory" in which alternative conceptions of societal order and proposed ideas for a reconfiguration of modern Christian ways of life were invented and tested. Missionary networks, for the most part, deeply influenced negotiations of Christianity both in the "laboratory" of the mission fields and in the way they unfolded in Europe. What had been tried in the laboratory of the mission field was to be applied in the

1 Kurt Nowak, *Geschichte des Christentums in Deutschland: Religion, Politik und Gesellschaft vom Ende der Aufklärung bis zur Mitte des 20. Jahrhunderts* (C. H. Beck, 1995), 185.

2 Thomas Nipperdey, *Religion im Umbruch: Deutschland 1870–1918* (C. H. Beck, 1988), 77.

German Protestant Church at home, a church that considered itself deeply endangered by processes of secularization.[3]

Beginning in the early 20th century, working-class Germans as well as members of the urban middle class had mostly stopped attending church services on a Sunday on a regular basis or were even officially leaving the church. Concomitantly, religious plurality emerged, which, combined with the growth of cities, was too much for traditional patterns in pastoral care. German Protestant believers—especially in rural areas—thought that they were observing a decline in the importance of religion in society and feared for the future of the Protestant Church.

However, the process of social differentiation did not stop at the churches in the colonies either. In many cases after independence, schools were transferred to state ownership, and in secular traditions, such as in India, the constitution itself was set up with a secular frame that was welcomed by the Christians, who were in a minority position.

After World War II, the religiously neutral state was affirmed. The liberation from church-state paternalism was now affirmed and considered necessary and valuable. Friedrich Gogarten could identify a desacralized worldliness in the Christian faith in creation with its anti-gnostic thrust and in Luther's theological anthropology. According to him, secularization is "the necessary and legitimate consequence of the Christian faith."[4] Secularization in the 1960s became clear as a consequence of the fast revolution of knowledge (the emergence of the mathematical sciences), a revolution of production and economy (industrialization and capitalist money economy), and a revolution of rule through the disentanglement of salvation and rule (democracy and separation of powers). The loss of many social functions of the church results from the differentiation of society in several autonomous subsystems (sciences, art, law, education etc.). So, the mission of the church cannot cover all sections of society but is pulling different actors and networks together with other people of God for the sake of the city (Jer. 29).

Some elements of a theology of mission in a secular context

Mission today can only be thought of in the form of freedom and mutual respect. There is not one Christian mission, but a plurality of different mission approaches. Christianity in itself is polyphonic. The price for religious

3 Karolin Wetjen, "Bruno Gutmann, Chagga rituals and Christianity, 1890-1930," in *Global Protestant Missions: Politics, Reform, and Communication, 1730s–1930s*, Jenna M. Gibbs, ed. (Taylor and Francis Group, 2019).

4 Friedrich Gogarten, *Verhängnis und Hoffnung der Neuzeit. Die Säkularisierung als theologisches Problem* (Stuttgart: Friedrich Vorwerk Verlag, 1958), 139 (our translation).

freedom is the inconclusiveness and ambiguity of Christian mission. Still, the Bible with its emphasis on social ethics and the option for the poor gives the frame for different mission approaches. As recent research shows, the process of secularization is not reversed, even though we see in some contexts the resurgences of religion. Today, mission is connected to personal experience rather than theoretical concepts. It is about giving witness, because religion is most credible from a personal point of view (subjectivity of religion).

Still, there is the fundamentalist temptation to make exclusivist claims and to offer a clear solution to the complex problems of today's world. The search for clarity is understandable in the face of challenge. But mission is not self-explanatory; it is about giving testimony to the gospel and inviting the other. Its vagueness is the other price of the *libertas Christiana*.

Mission is about crossing the borders of one's own cultural milieu, engaging with the agenda of the world, and entering into intercultural learning, being inspired by the worldwide fire of faith. It wants to bring the philanthropic God to the people but reduces itself often to an ethnocentric club. Could it not be that *missio Dei* is *missio humanitas* at the same time if Christianization means humanization, as M. M. Thomas has put it?

In contrast to an anti-intellectual or exclusive other-worldly understanding of mission, we need a new model of mission: one that is not about maintaining the status quo like churches, but that is in consonance with the New Testament and at the same time appropriate to the questions of the people of today. In a post-Christendom society, it is difficult to reach out to people because Christianity is identified with old problems of history rather than with a promising vision of the future. That is why mission today needs to connect with the intercultural set-up of world Christianity, so people can learn from each other about the Bible, the context, and the church.

Jörg Zehelein, currently lecturer at the Tumaini University Makumira, in his essay "Church and Mission in a (Future) Minority Situation" is therefore looking at "mission from the margins" from the angle of shrinking churches in the European context. In his contribution to the discourse about "Mission facing Secularities," the author attempts to locate mission under the condition of secularities in Europe, especially Germany. The condition of secularities is interpreted as seeing to the disestablishment of organized Christianity, religious plurality, and religious indifference (*homo areligiosus*). In this connection, the concept of post-Christendom that is often used in emerging missional conversations serves to map a landscape for church and mission and witness in one of the six continents, that is, Europe. This space for mission is (increasingly) to be identified as a status of minority or marginality. With the emphasis on marginality, this contribution has to enter a

critical dialogue with the recently published and new ecumenical document of the WCC about mission, *Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes*. Even if European or German churches share in privileges of a global centre of power, they still tend to be marginalized in a way that mission features aspects of marginality in terms of a minority situation. This minority situation is envisioned—to a greater or less extent and with respect to differences of tradition, gender, ethnicity, location—as the condition of present (in urban centres and Eastern Germany) and future mission.

How is a church to think, live, and practise mission in such a situation? To start with a postcolonial theology of mission, a recently published concept of mission by Eleonora Hof will serve as a general framework embracing marginality, vulnerability, and vocation as three paradigms for missionary existence. Furthermore, suggestions from Marion Grau and Henning Wrogemann and reflections on the fragility of mission in an eschatological perspective (W. Freytag, W. Ustorf) will help to propose a theology of mission under the condition of marginality and minority. The contribution will close with a depiction of practical representations of various approaches to missionary existence in Europe and Germany that show how mission might be embodied by disestablished churches "from the margins" of a formerly Christian society.

Bernhard Dinkelaker, former General Secretary of the EMS, in his reflection on the intercontextual conversation about "Religion, Spirituality and Secularity," unfolds the following observations:

1. The description of a dichotomous opposition of "religious" and "secular" does not do justice to a complex reality. This applies in particular to a reduction of "secularity" to "secularism" as "ideologies that challenge the values of the Kingdom of God" (*Together towards Life* §91).
2. Processes of "secularization" and a "secular culture" were and are always ambivalent, associated with opportunities and risks ("blessings and challenges").
3. Secularity and "religion" / "secular" and "religious" are "less analytical categories than terms in the cultural arena." They also describe intertwined relationships and mutually dependent negotiation processes in Europe, with regional differences and temporal shifts.
4. Secularity corresponds with processes of individualization of convictions and orientations as well as with social pluralization.

5. The interconnectedness of "secularity" and "religion" is always about power relations and the differentiation of spirits.

The statement that religious and secular are not dichotomous opposites but rather intertwined histories and complex processes of negotiation applies equally to societies in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Oceania.

In Dinkelaker's opinion, the challenges of European churches do not differ significantly from those on other continents. The characteristics of state secularity, of fluid expressions of religiosity and spirituality, of individual and pragmatic orientations, especially in personal crises, and of denominational and religious plurality suggest that—despite rhetoric often to the contrary—in no place on earth can it be a matter of (re-)Christianization in the sense of a former "Christian Europe" that never existed in this form. Unlike in Europe until the 19th century, Dinkelaker knows of hardly any region in the world today where a single church would be so dominant that plurality and individuality would be called into question. The spectrum of Protestant and Pentecostal churches is so broad that no single church can claim to be dominant. Even in countries with Christian majorities (e.g., Ghana, Cameroon, South Africa, Uganda), there are significant Muslim minorities and resilient traditional religions. In Korea, which is considered a country with a very vital Christianity, the proportion of Protestant churches has levelled off at around 25 percent, similar to Germany, even with losses of former Protestants who define themselves as atheist. The proportion of people who see themselves as Buddhists is on the rise. Examples of how even micro-churches can have an amazing impact are the Quakers or the tiny minority of Japanese Christians who have done remarkable public work in the aftermath of the 2011 tsunami disaster. Vitality, regardless of the question of membership and institutional power, depends first and foremost on whether a church or Christian community revolves around itself or whether it lives the gospel as "public truth"—whether it is moved by the Holy Spirit, the Ruah of God, or by spirits that do not serve life.

The question of religion and power and the need for discernment of spirits arise in all regions. Thus, the phenomenon of the "big man" syndrome in church, society, and politics is also being discussed in African societies, not least the influence of super-rich church leaders and mega-church owners on politics. For the discernment of spirits, the search for the good life described by Michael Biehl is a necessary criterion, from a Christian perspective—above all the qualification of the "good life" in light of the biblical narrative and a liberating Christology. In his opinion, Kwame Bediako's dictum is helpful,

that of a necessary "de-sacralization" of political power with the aim of democratization, which is not synonymous with a "de-spiritualization." This applies to African contexts in which the traditional world view does not know a sharp distinction between "secular" and "sacred," and in which the ancestors belong to the community of the living. But all the more universal is the idea that "all human authority is delegated; its source is divine and therefore it is not arbitrary power." In secular language: Every political power, including and not least that which legitimizes itself through quasi-secular ideologies (e.g., fascism, ethnocentrism, communism), runs the risk of sacralizing itself. Therefore, the critical corrective of a responsibility toward instances and values of a "spirituality of life," which cannot produce political rule from itself, is needed from a Christian perspective in light of a liberating Christology.

Dinkelaker shows that a dichotomy of "religious" and "secular" cannot be more justified in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Oceania than in Europe: these continents bear many characteristics that we interpret in the European context as the result of secularization processes. Conversely, this means that the often-postulated universal development away from a religious and toward a secular world, which has been questioned by numerous studies, is not only problematic because it does not do justice to a complex reality and presupposes an understanding of development that continues to declare Europe and North America as the norm and regards other societies as "backward." To put it bluntly, it could even be argued that non-European societies have a greater wealth of experience in dealing with challenges that we associate with secularization processes. This is not about who is ahead of whom, be it under keywords like "secularization advantage" or, on the contrary, "re-Christianization." It is about sharing experiences in solidarity in the face of challenges that unite us despite all the contextual differences.

Intercultural Opening of Theological Education

The German context

Although, historically, the German population consists of various ethnic groups and was shaped by smaller and larger waves of immigration, a long-standing philosophical and political nation-building process drawing on a common German language and specific cultural expressions as tokens of a demarcation against other nations resulted in a more or less shared German cultural identity. This identity at times was contrasted sharply with other cultures which were regarded as being foreign, or even alien, to Germany.

Accordingly, and until recent years, a political majority in Germany refused to call it an immigration country.

This has changed remarkably. Not only did the industrial development after World War II bring a considerable number of mainly Turkish "Gastarbeiter" to West Germany and contract labourers from Vietnam or Mozambique to East Germany, but since the so-called refugee-crisis in 2015, people have started to realize that intercultural diversity is becoming more and more a characteristic also of German society.

That is true also for the church, and German churches are trying not only to adapt themselves to a growing diversity in church membership, but also to embrace such diversification and reflect on it. They claim, in an "Impulse paper" of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) dating from 2021, that gaining intercultural competences should become a focus of theological education and further church-based training on the following grounds:

> The Christian faith is not possible and not comprehensible in its basic concerns for anyone and in any place in the world without the inclusion of the concerns of worldwide Christianity. Moreover, theology as a critical self-reflection of faith in the space of science, as it corresponds to Protestant tradition, requires a practice of dialogue that makes cultural and confessional contours and boundaries in the coexistence of traditions understandable instead of exaggerating or levelling them.[5]

This insight can be read as a consequence of an analysis of "Ecumenism in the 21st Century" in an "EKD-Text" in 2015—which acknowledged the fact that "the worldwide ecumenical movement is reflected in local Protestant life in Germany" in so far as "congregations and church groups, Protestant nurseries and hospitals, church districts and social welfare institutions are faced with the task of relating to possible ecumenical partners and to people from other cultures and religions in general." And, according to a motivated view, all those Protestant stakeholders are also able to fulfil such task developing ecumenical endeavours already existing and embarking on new ones: "Many opportunities for ecumenical collaboration can be further strengthened, such as kindergartens and schools, educational events and social outreach projects. Reciprocal participation in clergy training and ecumenical, interfaith, and intercultural staff training could also strengthen mutual understanding."[6]

5 EKD, ed., *Ökumene in der evangelisch-theologischen Aus- und Fortbildung in Deutschland. Ein Impulspapier der Kammer der EKD für Weltweite Ökumene* (Hannover: EKD, 2021), 6.

6 EKD, ed., *Ecumenism in the 21st Century: Conditions—Theological Foundations—Perspectives* (Hannover: EKD, 2015), 64f.

It may be added that such mutual understanding is of vital importance for targeting problems and finding solutions for them with the help of religious groups and agents in a highly complex, entangled, and interdependent world. The powerful influence of religious believers, organizations, and institutions if they are interculturally educated, linked, and united in action is quite evident. We see it in the sphere of environmental sustainability, the topic of just development of society, questions of ethical values, and the struggle for ending war and fostering peace.

Yet, at the moment, and in the wake of foreseeable dwindling church finances, institutional preconditions for such education and training are in actual fact not strengthened but weakened in Germany. In an attempt to secure church life in its local traditions, the focus is often being narrowed instead of widened for a new outreach, and financial strategies are taken accordingly. Unmistakable signs of this development are the decision to shut down German's only *Fachhochschule für Interkulturelle Theologie* (FIT) in Hermannsburg in 2024, or the announcement of EKD to reduce financial support for German's long-standing international post-doc-hub, the *Missionsakademie an der Universität Hamburg*, to zero in 2030.

In this context, it seems very doubtful that the manifold "ecumenical competences" that are brought forward programmatically in the 2021 EKD-paper on ecumenism in evangelical-theological education and further education may in a sufficient manner be taught and learned. These are "ecumenical-denominational studies focussed competence" and "ecumenical-cultural sensitive competence," "ecumenical dialogue competence" and "ecumenical language competence," and "ecumenical formation competence" (*Gestaltungskompetenz*).[7] In order to enable such competence-learning processes, the paper quite rightly calls for a "plurality of ecumenical learning venues"[8] beyond "ecumenical education and further training"; but this most certainly means not without such places.

However, in the last three decades or so, modules on theological-intercultural topics have been integrated into most formal theological education syllabuses in Germany. But this seems by no means sufficient considering the huge tasks lying ahead for a church in a society undergoing rapid and far-reaching processes of cultural pluralization and diversification. A member of the study-group, Frieder Ludwig, has even questioned whether in Germany those places of theological education designed for acquiring ecumenical and intercultural competences are targeting the right aims. In his paper "Intercultural Theology:

7 EKD, *Ökumene*, 15–17.

8 EKD, *Ökumene*, 18.

Internationalization of the 'Others' or Way towards Intercultural Integration?" he focuses on intercultural study courses already established in Germany. As a pretext for his study, the following assumption holds true: in order to face the challenge of growing diversification of German society, it seems necessary for the church itself to become more diversified and intercultural.

To foster and support this, it seems likewise plausible to care for more interculturally diverse church personnel. But regulations are strict and hurdles high for becoming a pastor in Germany, and intercultural compatibility is no leading criterion for the theological curriculum:

> There are ranges of study in intercultural theology, but these do not usually lead to the pastorate of the German regional churches. For this, there is still intended a "full course of study in theology," the classical disciplines of which are hardly interculturally designed. If students of ethnic minorities take this path, they are expected to assimilate almost completely to the curriculum shaped by German theology. Assimilation, however, is something different from integration. In turn, there are hardly any German students in the intercultural courses of study.[9]

The situation, therefore, may be summarized in the sentence, "We internationalise the others."[10]

As a remedy, Ludwig recommends an "intercultural organizational development plan" for regional churches and mission works because the education needed only will gain sufficient attention and support—and that also means sufficient financial attention and support—if church organizations make it their own concern. Otherwise, intercultural theological education places will, in order to survive, resort to external sponsors—such as organizations working in health care or care of the elderly. But those sponsors, then, will also shape the agenda of such education, and that entails that the education will no longer be focused on intercultural theology as such. "This then floats along on the side-lines and continues to be regarded by church leaders as 'nice to have', but not as essential."[11] This is a bleak outlook, but what could prevent it from coming true?

9 Frieder Ludwig, "Interkulturelle Theologie: Internationalisierung der 'Anderen' oder Weg zur interkulturellen Integration?," Unpublished paper for the German study group of the IMC Centenary study process, 2022, 2.

10 Ludwig, "Interkulturelle Theologie," 2.

11 Ludwig, "Interkulturelle Theologie," 4.

Benefits of theological-educational interculturalizing and its requirements

In the light of the analysis above, the German study group discussed not only what such "organizational development plan" should imply, but also how church leaders could become interested in it in the first place, especially under the tendentially unfavourable financial circumstances mentioned. One suggestion was to point to advantages in terms of a potentially growing church membership and its effects, amongst others, in terms of financial support if German churches should become more culturally inclusive. What at first glance may seem a fairly purposely rational reflection results, in fact, from a deeper and far-reaching ecclesiastical deliberation. Since Protestantism was born out of criticism of the church's misuse of worldly power, Protestant ecclesiology has supported not only a process-orientated and functional understanding of the church. It has also fostered the concept of discrimination and unity between the visible and invisible church. The church that Christians confess is one, in many organizational manifestations of it. But, as *Confessio Augustana* 7 puts it, "to the true unity of the Church it is enough to agree concerning the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments." This entails that organizational unity of the church is nothing urgently to be defended. In Reformation times, this seemed plausible since the self-understanding of the Protestant movement was as a reformation of "the" church, and a full visible unity of it was, at least theoretically, not questioned. Moreover, right until the first half of the 17th century, with its "wars of religion," there were still efforts to reach full visible unity of the church again. So, in the charters of Protestantism, the question of many church bodies was not thoroughly reflected upon theologically, and when, later, more and more schisms within the Protestant movement occurred—with reference to the word-centred, functional understanding of the church—only the question of mutual acknowledgement of churches on the basis of doctrinal convergences was tackled.

What this entailed was an incapacity to fight imminent or manifest inner-Protestant schisms on theological grounds since—other than in the Roman Catholic tradition—to uphold organizational unity as such was not essential for a valid self-understanding as the church. The notorious organizational diversification bears witness to that "ecclesiological birth defect" of Protestantism, and the ecumenical slogan "unity in diversity" carries on the problem since it tends to be understood in a wrong sense by dissolving the tension between the invisible and visible church being one and simply converting it into the more convenient one of an "invisible unity in visible diversity." Accordingly, if discussions take place about visible unity because

the need is felt to counter a diversification that amounts to fragmentation, they revolve around mutual recognition of sacraments and church offices and the opportunity to preach. But do churches in the tradition of Protestantism and ecumenism bear witness of their unity to the world credibly enough if they permanently split up whilst declaring that this is not relevant since the really important thing is recognizing each other? The Johannian Jesus justifies the wish "*ut omnes unum sint*" with the vision "that the world may believe." But for apparent reasons it is very doubtful that the world will believe a unity that manifests itself in everlasting fragmentation and every now and then in some re-unification as, in the European context, in Germany (*Preußische Kirchenunion*, 1817), Scotland (United Free Church of Scotland, 1900), or the Netherlands (*Protestantse Kerk in Nederland*, 2004).

So, the challenge of a more diverse Christianity in Germany would ideally meet an interculturally informed and shaped willingness to integrate and unite with people and parishes from other cultural backgrounds. This would be on the basis of a thorough theological reflection and re-vision of basic Protestant ecclesiology, with welcome side effects for membership development and finances of regional churches.

If this challenge were accepted, the demand for raising intercultural and interdenominational competence, already high in our times, would rise considerably yet again. This brings into focus the need for a trans-denominational theological education as well as the shaping of theological education that not only has intercultural theology as one of its subjects, but that is meant to be theology as understanding itself interculturally in all its disciplines—a mainstreaming of interculturality, so to speak, for theological education. In order to foster such education, offers for ecumenical and also interreligious exchanges within theological studies should not remain an exception but become standard. An evaluation of exemplary experiences to date has been carried out by churches and mission bodies in Germany, the results of which have been published already.[12]

Fighting for chances and against dangers of religion: Intercultural religious education as globally networked and designed for all

In many countries, religion plays an important role in society and for politics, whilst in some others, religion in society and public affairs is either

12 Martin Repp, *Theologische Ausbildung im Zeitalter zunehmender Globalisierung, Ökumenische und interreligiöse Studienprogramme in Indien, Israel, Japan und dem Libanon* [Theological education in the age of increased globalization: Ecumenical and interreligious study programs in India, Israel, Japan, and Lebanon] (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2022).

forbidden (laicism) or its formative power is decreased significantly. But no matter whether in high regard or not, religion is part of what constitutes society, as sociology of religion assures us. And it is obvious that it more easily becomes a danger than a chance for developing a pluralist society if religious education is just for experts or narrowed down to a single cultural perspective to serve exclusive claims. General reference to recent developments in India, China, Russia, and some Arab countries may suffice to highlight this problem in an exemplary way. If the intercultural entanglement of religion is acknowledged and appreciated, the odds are high that religions will not be used as a tool for political ideology. Interreligious and intercultural issues go hand in hand here, and three aspects have been particularly highlighted in our study group: First, religious education must be offered to all people at all ages and at all education levels, and it must not be just about one's own religion, but about others' as well. Second, theoretical education and practical religious education should be linked more intensely with each other. And third, a deeper cooperation of educational places worldwide must be pursued.

As to the first aspect, religions are of high value for building societies because they are able to directly reach a layer of human existence, which in many other ways can only be approached in an indirect manner. Religion shapes people's worldviews, and it shapes intrinsic value systems. Therefore, as mentioned already, it is a basic requirement not to just educate religious experts and specialists who, then, may guide—or mislead—"their flock," but also to offer religious education to those from every level of society and for every person, young or old and regardless of their sex and gender, in a way that enables them to acquire religious discernment and learn about religious formations. If they follow a religion themselves, then, they can learn about their own and others' religion and—equally important —about their own religion in different cultural contexts and settings. The first should enable people to arrive at a better understanding and fairer judgments about other religions, and the latter should raise awareness that religion is culturally saturated, and therefore customs and traditions may be rooted not in religions themselves but in the respective cultural contexts. Therefore, absolute norms are not made worldwide, to be enforced with holy zeal, but should be treated with benevolence and tolerance for different cultural imprints.

As to the second aspect, theoretical and practical religious education should be linked more intensely with each other. Europe, and Germany in particular, has a deep reaching tradition of wrestling with doctrinal issues. All four of the so-called ecumenical councils—Nicaea 325, Constantinople 381, Ephesus 431, and Chalcedon 451—took place in Europe and within the boundaries of the Roman Empire. Over centuries, then, theological and

doctrinal development grew out of European monasteries and, later still, out of universities in Paris, Cologne, Oxford, or Cambridge and many more. Decisions of doctrinal importance were taken to European church councils, and wars of religion were fought on European soil. Even the idea of religious tolerance and its doctrinal justification grew out of this bloody history of the church and its power struggles. In all these times, doctrine grew out of religious practice, and religious practice received its justification from deep doctrinal reflection.

Today, in Europe, there seems to be a growing negligence of doctrinal issues—perhaps out of the experience that doctrines are contextually shaped and therefore may have no absolute, but only limited, validity claim. So, the terms "dogma" and "doctrine" are in ever lower regard and stand only for an ossified, obstinate, and narrow-minded holding onto inflexible points of view. But religious practice needs doctrinal reasoning to be able to cope with situations where decisions have to be taken. And dogma as registering consensual norms is necessary if religion is to be practised collectively and not only in an individualistic and isolated manner. Doctrine, on the other hand, needs practice as its materialization and as its touchstone—whether it is able to foster God-given life or not.

To strengthen the mutual relationship of religious doctrine and religious practice, those two should be better intertwined in religious education. It is unsatisfactory to have a theological or religious study course with only a few internships, and a second phase of religious education in preparation for pastorate or other professions with only a few references to and reflections of doctrine. Today, this holds particularly true for the challenges of a culturally entangled reality in which Christianity or another belief is being lived.

As to the third aspect, a deeper cooperation of educational places worldwide must be pursued. Sufficient intercultural competence can only be gained when theoretical knowledge acquired in one place is being processed by empirical knowledge through real encounter. Theological education, therefore, should be organized consistently as a cooperative endeavour between institutions from different cultural backgrounds and countries. Many institutions, particularly universities, already have partner-universities in different parts of the world. But this is often just on the level of the institutional cooperation or in the form of exchange of teachers. Neither does it necessarily influence the respective curricula, nor are exchange programs and visits of students a common standard—a standard that is not perceived only as a "nice to have." This is even more the case in the second phase of education, where religious personnel are being trained within their institutions. For this, too, it

should be a matter of course and compulsory to participate in direct exchange with personnel of different cultural backgrounds.

Only when religious and theological intercultural awareness, competence, and theological and ethical reflection become a standard in religious education will religious communities and churches develop that bear credible witness to the one body of Christ and that are relevant for people and societies in our age.

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PART II

Transnational Mission Networks

CHAPTER 10

Council for World Mission: A Global Transnational Partnership in Mission Serving as a Model of Cooperation between Mission Agencies and Churches

Roderick R. Hewitt

The antecedent mission organizations that gave birth to the Council for World Mission (CWM) were the London Missionary Society (1795) and the Colonial Missionary Society/Commonwealth Missionary Society (1836).[1] Both of these organizations came together to form the Congregational Council for World Mission (CCWM). In 1972, the formation of the United Reformed Church in the UK resulted in the Presbyterian Church of England and its mission organization, the Foreign Missions Committee (1848) entering into membership of CCWM. This resulted in a name change in 1973 with "Congregational" being abandoned, and the new body became the CWM in 1977.

However, notwithstanding these structural developments, the changes did not initially change the white Euro-centric leadership and ownership of mission. These antecedent missionary organizations had their missional roots within British colonialism that ushered in an era of mercantilism and industrial capitalism that embraced mechanistic dehumanization through enslavement of Africans. They provided a large, cheap, and replaceable labour force on plantations and factories that generated maximum profits for the development of Britain. The emergence of nationalists, anti-colonialist, and anti-imperialist movements from the late 19th century throughout the 20th century from political and religious networks contributed to direct challenges mounted against the "notion of European cultural superiority and the blessings of European civilization."[2] The European churches along with Western mission organizations gave moral and spiritual endorsement to this rogue system of capitalism and slavery, without engaging in self-criticism of its strategic

1 Richard Lovett, *The History of the London Missionary Society* (1795–1895), Volume 1 (London: Oxford University Press, 1899), 3.

2 *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1991), 195.

alliance during this era. However, it was not until de-colonial movements for political and economic independence emerged that mission organization began to review its identity, vocation, and witness. CWM has demonstrated since its founding in 1977 to be the most transformative of missionary organizations that have evolved out of the colonial missionary organizations and the International Missionary Council.

Mission from a Colonial to a Postcolonial Framework

The London Missionary Society being a colonial instrument of mission engagement was rooted in promoting a united evangelical common witness through ecumenical engagement. Its dominant identity was centered in the sending and caring of missionaries from different churches in the United Kingdom to bear witness and service to the gospel of Jesus Christ in different contexts and cultures. The personnel from the different churches and professions served in a wide range of capacities and positions and for different lengths of time within a colonial political order.

Being a founding member of the IMC in 1921, and later the World Council of Churches Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (WCC-CWME), it continuously participated in the global network of activities, common studies, consultations, and conferences. This ecumenical legacy was bequeathed to CWM. It could be argued that the formation of the CWM in 1977 was the inevitable result of the member churches taking seriously the new directions in mission and evangelism understanding and practice that emerged out of the IMC perspectives and practices. However, CWM emerged out of that Western missionary heritage as a relatively small but very important missional sign, willing to embrace a shift to a more just model of mission understanding and praxis. This shift is shaped by just principles of partnership in mission and not by mission being practiced though the dispensing of power by the privileged few to those who are deemed to be objects of their mission. It embraced four core mission principles: (i) mutuality through mutual learning in mission; (ii) sharing through the sharing of people, (iii) resources and skills; and (iv) partnership through equal power in decision making.[3]

3 Desmond Van der Water, ed., *Postcolonial Mission: Power and Partnership in World Christianity* (Cambridge: Sopher Press, 2010), 157.

The organizational changes were not achieved without the inevitable tensions and threats that shape the contestations between power and partnership.[4] After 44 years of postcolonial mission engagement on the basis and values of mutuality, respect and equality among the partner churches, the experience has taught them how to challenge and equip each other in mission. It could be argued that CWM has effectively demonstrated that the benefits that the member churches gained from the partnership far outweighed the risks and challenges that they encountered along the way. After 20 years of operation, John Brown concluded that CWM had achieved a significant shift from being a missionary organization characterized by a donor-recipient relationship to a partnership in mission among the member churches. There is real sharing of power and mutuality in mission.[5]

The CWM Partnership on Mission Model

The following paragraphs explore key themes and examine leading features and current trends within the CWM journey. The first is that of Partnership in Mission. The IMC had made the subject of unity in mission a key agenda of the movement, but it never became a priority for the Western mission organizations because of their quest to protect their own power and influence. The formation of CWM in 1977 followed the CWME Thailand mission conference with the theme "Salvation today." It invited churches and mission organizations to give urgent attention to contextual theology, cultural identity, and relationship between churches of the global North and South. In response, the CWM leadership invited the church leaders from the "daughter churches" from the global South to attend and participate in their meeting in Singapore.

Their participation had a profound impact on the meeting that resulted in fundamental changes to the missional identity and vocation of the organization. The Southern leaders argued that mission could no longer be understood and practised as movement from the North to the South. Rather, it must be from "everywhere to everywhere" because every church is both the receiver of gifts and the giver of talents.[6] Under the conference document "Sharing in one World Mission"[7] they affirmed that mission is the responsibility of the whole

4 Van der Water, *Postcolonial Mission*, 2.

5 Van der Water, *Postcolonial Mission*, 157.

6 Bernard Thorogood, *Gales of Change: Responding to a Shifting Missionary Context* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1994).

7 Council for World Mission, *Sharing in One World Mission*, 1975, Para 1.2.

church and not restricted to any one individual and mission organization. The concept of Partnership in Mission was embraced as the principle that defines the identity, vocation and witness of the organization.[8] This embodied the practice of just, life-affirming ways of sharing resources of people, money, power, and ideas to demonstrate their practice of discipleship as Jesus taught.

The decade of 1977–87 found CWM learning to live out the idea of being a council. The key to this was leadership. The leader of United Reformed Church in the UK, Bernard Thorogood, served as the CWM general secretary until 1981. There was great pressure from the 28 member churches, especially those from the global South, for strategic change in leadership through the appointment of a general secretary from the global South. This became possible in 1986 with the appointment of Rev. Dr Christopher Duraisingh from the Church of South India, who taught at the United Theological College at Bangalore. Along with this change, increased recruitment of executive staff and missionaries from the global South helped to transform the organization into a truly diverse missional instrument. In addition, chairpersons/moderators of the council were appointed to lead the council, with the majority of them coming from the new member churches. Programmes such as Training in Mission (1981), Ministry to the Urban Poor (1982–85), and Education in Mission (1985), among many others were developed to foster transformative ecumenical and missional relationships among the member churches. General Secretary Dr Christopher Duraisingh was recruited by the WCC-CWME to be the director of CWME in 1989, and he was replaced with the appointment of Dr Preman Niles as new CWM general secretary. He was a WCC staff director with responsibility for the Programme on Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation.

The change to Southern-led leadership continued in CWM with the appointment of Rev. Dr Desmond van der Water (2002) from South Africa and Rev. Dr Collin Cowan (2011) from Jamaica. Indeed, another staff member of CWM, Rev. Dr Jooseop Keum who was the Mission Programme Secretary, was also appointed as the CWME director (2010–18). Dr Keum is currently serving as the CWM general secretary since 2021. These different appointments confirm the close symbiotic relationship between WCC-CWME and CWM in the sharing of ideas and human resources. Therefore, it could be argued that CWM, more than any other global mission organization, has demonstrated the IMC/CWME vision of prioritizing more just relationships between churches of the North and South. Also, the continuing appointment of leaders from the global South demonstrate a recognition of the

8 CWM, *Sharing in One World Mission*, Para 2.6.

fundamental shift of numerical power of Christians and churches from the North to the South as a correction to the historic imbalance in power relationships since colonial times.[9]

Ideas are good in theory; however, the real test comes in praxis. Apart from the United Evangelical Mission (UEM) and the Community of Churches in Mission (CEVAA), no other Western mission organization at that time was willing to take such a decolonial step of transforming their organization into one where power relations and resources between Northern and Southern churches was equally shared. CWM has demonstrated over the past 40 years to be a trend-setting mission organization in the practice of Partner in Mission principles. The organization has evolved over the years from 22-member churches to 32, with each member owning equal shares in the organization. CWM has opted for a slow and controlled growth in church membership whilst cooperating with other ecumenical bodies such as the WCC and the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) through transformative ecumenical relationship.

Ministerial Formation for Mission / Equipping Local Churches in Mission

The second decade (1987–97) found CWM focusing on programmatic expression in response to the CWME emphasis on the Missionary Structure of Congregations. There was a recognition "that Mission of God sets the agenda for the mission of the church, (*and therefore*) the need for radical restructuring of local congregations for missions where they are not mission enabling."[10] In response, CWM launched its own Education in Mission programme and gave priority attention to "Ministerial Formation for Mission" and "Equipping Local Congregations in Mission." Member churches in turn were resourced to develop and launch their own contextually relevant mission education programme. Special emphasis was also paced on emerging gender issues within the church's mission through the introduction of a Community of Women and Men in Mission programme (1991).

The sending and receiving of missionaries have consistently remained central to the LMS/CWM identity. However, the missionaries recruited and commissioned were from Northern churches and sent to Southern churches up to 1977. The postcolonial era and the formation of CWM fundamentally

9 Bernard Thorogood, "Sharing Resources in Mission," *International Review of Mission* 76:304 (October 1987), 441–51.

10 Van der Water, *Postcolonial Mission*, 15.

altered the dynamics associated with the sending and receiving of missionaries. The Partnership in Mission Model of CWM necessitated that the traditional understanding of "missionary" be phased out and replaced by new recruitment of Partners in Mission. They were not life-time appointments but term, restricted to respond to specific needs of a member churches/ecumenical organizations. This strategic change resulted in more personnel from churches of the South being recruited and commissioned as Partners in Mission than those recruited from the Northern churches.

Gift of Grace

Another significant test of the CWM Partners in Mission model emerged in 1991. LMS owned lands in Hong Kong on which the Nethersole Hospital situated. The hospital was later closed, and the land was sold for housing development. CWM received approximately 95 million pounds from the sale. This transformed CWM from being a mission organization that was used to getting most of its limited financial resources from the churches in the North to a financially well-resourced mission organization. This new status raised serious questions about the nature of the missional stewardship that CWM would embrace in the management of these additional resources.

CWM embarked upon a number of new programmes to empower representatives of member churches to cross frontiers and fulfil the mandate of mutual challenge and equip each other in mission. In addition, steps were taken to financially support key ecumenical partner organizations. CWM expanded its property footprints by moving its London central office to Singapore whilst investing in regional offices in Kingston, London, Johannesburg, and Fiji with regional staff. The change to Singapore was an affirmation of the CWM moving away ideologically from its colonial past that London represented and a recognition of the growing strength of the church in the global South. This strategic move demonstrated CWM's commitment to be a decolonial missional instrument that incarnates the mission of Jesus in serving the felt needs of people through the churches by resourcing them for ministry and mission.

The Changing Landscape of Mission Theology

From its founding in 1977 to the current era, CWM mission theology has constantly evolved through its commitment to reading the signs of the times and engaging in mission reflection and action. Publications such as *Sharing in One World Mission* (1977) and *The Handbook of the Council for World Mission*

(1984, 1991) gave missiological perspectives on its structures and operations. *Perceiving Frontiers, Crossing Boundaries* (1995), and *World Mission Today* (1999) all demonstrate the ecumenical influences of CWME mission theology on CWM and how CWM's Partners in Mission experiences have influenced the wider ecumenical mission community. In a critique of CWM after only ten years of operation, Dutch Missiologist Jan van Butselaar asked whether the structural changes that CWM had embraced were actually "new shoes" or simply "stoking feet."[11] After 45 years, the question is still pertinent, but it is fair to claim that CWM has accomplished great strides in ecumenical mission understanding and praxis that others can learn from. CWM's commitment to regularly review its life and work ensures the relevance of its existence. Christopher Duraisingh's reflection on CWM after its first ten years best articulates the intrinsic nature of CWM within the ecumenical mission space. He argued that CWM has begun to understand partnership-building by "encouraging member churches to practice mutual responsibility" and by "helping them experience a liberating interdependence in mission through a mode of 'common sharing' of what each church is and has."[12] It was true then and is even more true in the contemporary life and work of CWM, in which the diverse needs and gifts of the churches are brought around a common table of partnership for reflection and action.

The continuing challenge for CWM's mission theology is the constant need to address the pervasive impact and dominance of Western theology of mission on its own ecumenical mission theology and that of the churches of the South. This is no longer a credible option because it lacks other contextual authentications. CWM has sought to address this imbalance through two significant developments. Firstly, by shifting resources to strengthen Southern institutions of higher education and the granting of numerous scholarships for emerging new leaders to access masters and doctoral studies through its Academic Accompaniment programmes. Secondly, through the development of the Discernment and Radical Engagement programme (DARE), numerous theological consultations that brought together scholars mostly from the global South have produced publications on those key issues that challenge the current mission of the church. Other publications from the OIKO Tree movement and Bible Study reflections are produced to equip congregations in mission. However, CWM spends most of its financial resources on Leadership Formation through Training in Mission (since

11 Van der Water, *Postcolonial Mission*, 37.

12 Christopher Duraisingh, "CWM's First Decade and Beyond," *International Review of Mission* 76:304 (October 1987), 473–87, at 475.

1981), Face to Face, Young Women's Leadership Development, and Youth Initiates. However, Partnership in Mission, the inheritor of the traditional missionary service programme, continues to be the bedrock of CWM presence with member churches. In the important area of capacity development, CWM continues to address the management needs of member churches.

Finally, in this contemporary era, CWM gives attention to Cutting Edge Mission Programme that includes Prophets from the South, which focuses on the life and work of key theologians from the South who have greatly contributed to the ministry and mission of the church. Its ecumenical partnership with the WCC, WCRC, and the Lutheran World Federation has resulted in joint action toward addressing the need for a New International Financial and Economic Architecture. In the church's work with the disability community, CWM has facilitated programmes that are aimed at developing "A More Able Church" that is responsive to their needs.

A signature new mission thrust called Legacies of Slavery has been broadened and renamed "The Onesimus Project". It seeks to address the unjust and systemic actions that have resulted in mechanistic dehumanization and through which the church's mission has been compromised due to its passive and active involvement. The Onesimus Project revolves around four foci: reparations for legacies of slavery; modern slavery; education and liberation; and transformative ecumenism. CWM has set out from its own life, through its members and with its partners to do the following:

- **Repent** for the silence in the face of the historic and continuing systemic racist exploitation and enslavement of people
- **Make reparation** to empower those people and communities sinned against through racism and enslavement
- **Reject** the historic and endemic privileges afforded by racism, economic exploitation, and systemic commodification
- **Rebuild** life-affirming relationships and communities that honour the interdependency of all creation
- **Challenge** other institutions with compromising history like ours to deliver reparation, racial justice, and equity
- **Create** communities that resist racism and enslavement and honour the image of God in all people
- **Arise** with those leading the work for reparation and system change

Conclusion

This reflective perspective comes through a Caribbean context of bias, recognizing that the hermeneutical lens is coloured within decolonial experiences. The article describes what CWM is called to be and do within the contemporary changing global landscape of mission as it practices postcolonial mission whilst negotiating the slippery road of (between) power and partnership whilst building communities of hope in a life-denying world.

CWM's contemporary mission is located within an increasingly dangerous landscape, with the rise of neo–Cold War activities. Religion is being used as an evil instrument to support imperial war and land-grab agendas. The growing threat to world peace arising from the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the resulting global impact on food security, especially for poorer countries; climate change; the threat to Taiwan's national sovereignty from China; and the continuing health challenges from the COVID-19 pandemic all necessitate that CWM's mission priority in this phase of its journey is to focus on radical acts of peace-building that restores human dignity. In so doing, CWM must focus on building communities of hope, which requires transformative justice (through ecumenical engagement) that empowers fullness of life in Christ.[13] Finally, the ongoing threat to CWM and its member churches' effectiveness in mission will be the lure of money being available and used to maintain unproductive ecclesial bureaucracy rather than transformative ecumenical engagement and missional equipping and renewing of local congregations.

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13 Roderick Hewitt, "Building Communities of Hope: A Case Study in Post-colonial Mission", in Van der Water, *Postcolonial Mission*, 80.

CHAPTER 11

Cooperation in Mission in the Present Time: A Strategic and Forward-looking Approach of the Community of Churches in Mission

Timothée Bouba Mbima

In the exercise of its worldwide mission, the church has experienced profound changes in its relationship with the world. In the face of legitimate and contextual human aspirations and the changing nature of the world, the church has developed dynamic mechanisms to remain within the biblical vision. Among the mechanisms used, one can cite the promotion of witness and the formation of qualified personnel. Far from getting lost in general statements, I want to present the Community of Churches in Mission (CEVAA) as one of the transnational networks that embody the mission of the church in a changing world. How did this network come into being? What cooperation does it use in its mission? How has the theology of mission changed in this cooperation? What are the specific concerns and lessons for CEVAA members?

A Brief History of CEVAA

In order to talk about CEVAA, I must first highlight its origination, which was the Society of Evangelical Missions of Paris (*Société des missions évangéliques de Paris*, SMEP). The birth of this society in 1822 was an innovation within French Protestantism. The Reformers and their successors—Reformation and Protestant orthodoxy—had not taken any major initiative in a worldwide mission in the 16th and 18th centuries.[1] The birth of the modern Protestant missionary idea depended, historically speaking, on several factors that produced the desire among European Protestants to take the gospel overseas. Among these factors, the new discoveries can be mentioned. They made it possible to understand that peoples existed elsewhere outside Europe, the Mediterranean region, and Asia Minor.

1 Pierre Gisele et al., *Encyclopédie du Protestantisme* (Paris: CERF, 1995), 979.

A real Protestant missionary blossoming took place in the decades following the French Revolution of 1789, which put an end to the absolutist monarchies in France and in several other European countries. This blossoming took shape in the creation of the English, Dutch, Swiss (Basel Mission), and German missions, as well as the SMEP. The latter was founded on 2 December 1822.[2] With its international (Swiss, Dutch, Danish, British, American) and interdenominational (Lutheran, Reformed, Congregational) character, although not legally existing, it nevertheless prepared missionaries to be sent to different countries in order to "propagate the faith."

The ambitions of the SMEP at the time of its creation did not differ from the missionary concerns of the time. Indeed, the first circular sent to the various churches that announced the foundation of the SMEP defined the purpose of the newly founded organization as follows:

> Although occupied with the needs of their own churches and seeking above all to promote the progress of the pure religion of the Gospel in their native country, the Protestants of France do not neglect nevertheless to take a sincere part in the efforts by which their brethren in other lands, belonging to the various branches of the great family of evangelical Christians, seek to propagate the light of the Gospel and to extend the reign of our divine Redeemer.[3]

From this quotation, we can understand the original name of the SMEP, which was the "Society of Evangelical Missions of Paris among non-Christian Peoples" (*Société des missions évangéliques de Paris chez les peuples non chrétiens*).

The first settlement was in Southern Africa because, under the Restoration, the French authorities, who favoured the Catholic Church, closed the French colonies to Protestant missionaries. The London Missionary Society agreed to facilitate the access of French Protestant missionaries to the region. In order to comply with the 1905 law on the separation of church and state in France, the SMEP became a religious association.

In 1964, the churches born from the missionary establishments of the SMEP wished to transform the links between themselves and the churches of the old Metropolis, which in turn wanted to integrate the mission into the church. This was achieved in 1971, when the SMEP was succeeded by two new organizations:

2 Jean Bianquin, "Les origines de la SMEP, 1822–1823," in *Encyclopédie du Protestantisme*, 979.

3 Jean François Zorn, *Le Grand Siècle d'une Mission Protestante* (Paris: Editions Karthala, 1993), 361.

- *Communauté évangélique d'action apostolique* (now *Communauté d'Églises en Mission*, CEVAA),[4] a federation of sister churches formed by five Lutheran and Reformed churches in France, the Protestant churches of French-speaking Switzerland and Italy, and the churches of the Paris Mission
- *Département évangélique français d'action apostolique* (now *Service protestant de mission*, Défap), a joint missionary service of the five French member churches of CEVAA.[5]

CEVAA Today

Since 1971, CEVAA has brought together French-speaking Protestant churches marked by the history of the missionary movement of previous centuries. It is a community born "of a renewed awareness of the relationship between the churches of the North and the South" and of the determination of 35 churches in 24 countries for mission. Although they are located in very different contexts and sometimes face conflicts distant from those of the others, all its member churches are nevertheless united by a common determination to "develop a common Christian witness." As such, CEVAA brings together, in a shared service, churches originally linked by mission activities to churches established overseas, replacing the mission links with multipartnership relations between churches equal in dignity, for "a mission from everywhere to everywhere" to "proclaim the whole Gospel to the whole world."

In this sense, the 35 churches that form CEVAA work together in all directions under the motto "Share, Act, Witness." In order to advance in the mission that God has entrusted to us, the community has set itself the following objectives:

1. To support common actions and missionary programmes for the witness and evangelization of the member churches.
2. To share human and material resources according to commonly agreed priorities.
3. To awaken the creative capacities of believers through training and community education.

4 See the CEVAA website at https://www.cevaa.org.

5 See the Défap website at: https://www.defap.fr.

4. To develop networks of vigilance for the respect of human rights, against all forms of oppression and discrimination, and for the protection of creation.
5. To stimulate responsible participation by all, men and women, in the many facets of the life of the church and society.
6. To encourage the flow of information and the sharing of experiences and mutual challenges between churches of different sensibilities, languages, and cultures.
7. To stimulate, whenever possible and with respect for each other's convictions, dialogue and collaboration with social and religious actors in a given region.

In order to achieve these objectives, CEVAA invests in the promotion of actions in the fields of justice, human rights, and the integrity of creation. In the area of capacity-building, on the one hand, it encourages training and education aimed at developing a civic awareness of sharing and solidarity; and on the other hand, it supports commitments for a world of solidarity and reconciliation, as well as for development and mutual aid.

In terms of strategies, the promotion of communication between its member churches is a key element for CEVAA. This communication is carried out through the internet: web pages provide access to documents and information and offer interactive tools (forums, opinion letters, debates, etc.). However, it should be pointed out that the majority of believers in each church cannot take an active part in the life of CEVAA because of the lack of appropriate means of communication. Direct contact with the church leaders who act as spokespersons for their organizations remains the most common means of communication. International meetings are held with the sole purpose of developing the activities of CEVAA.

In general, issues related to the problems of the African people are discussed at these meetings. These issues are the starting point for having the meetings. Sometimes it is precisely in this type of event that projects and action plans are created. Churches quite often have insufficient resources to autonomously finance projects that contribute to the improvement of life in Africa. CEVAA, in collaboration with the churches there and elsewhere, has a key position in this respect. It is at this level that the place of partnerships between CEVAA and organizations other than its member churches must be emphasized.

One aspect that makes the flexibility of the churches' participation evident is the autonomy of each member church. Each church decides on its degree of participation in a given initiative according to its local priority. A member

church may "disappear" from CEVAA for periods of time and then rejoin according to its own availabilities.

Today, CEVAA is called to work in a globalized world. Globalization proceeds at a rapid pace and its effects are felt deeply in all areas: social, spiritual, cultural, economic, and political. That is why, in this context, the theme that guides CEVAA's activities is "CEVAA: keeping the flame alive" (*CEVAA: maintenons la flame*). This flame is necessary on a spiritual level to promote unity and living together in diversity. This vision remains crucial and central to the identity of CEVAA. It should be remembered that, as it is, CEVAA is a community of churches in communion with each other. It is therefore essential to foster unity and a spirit of community within and among its member churches.

At a time when the world is going through an economic crisis, the face of the churches is deeply changed by difficulties related to financial survival, which means that the financial contribution of the churches decreases year by year. It is true that money is not what constitutes the living together of the community, but the churches must succeed in challenging each other on the question of material resources. This reality requires the promotion of a financial catechesis in the member churches of CEVAA on the material level.

In a world of multicultural changes, the challenge of dialogue and interculturality is urgent. Societies that were once rather homogeneous are now confronted with the growing demand for many different models of plurality: different cultures rub shoulders on a daily basis. Dialogue and exchange are the watchwords of CEVAA and should be promoted within the churches on the ground.

Environmental issues are on the global agenda. The Christian perception is that the world was created by God and entrusted to human beings to maintain and preserve it in a way that is comfortable for all at a time when humans have poisoned creation and their environmental actions are contributing to the deterioration of the global health situation and aggravating natural disasters. Thus, life is threatened at all levels. It is high time for CEVAA member churches to become aware of the need to "inhabit creation in a different way"—hence, the urgency of promoting environmental education within them.

Challenges and Prospects for CEVAA's Mission in Africa

In the concert of nations, African nations want to sit at the same table as others, being received not as a beggar to be helped, but as a brother, a partner, in a relationship of mutual respect, in a relationship of total symmetry. In this

sense, CEVAA emphasizes the relationships and issues that guide the relationships between its member churches in Africa and those elsewhere.

In its relationship with others, Africa has been marked by a life of confrontations. First were the influences coming from the Middle East. Then came those of the West from the 14th century on. Today Africa is under a third influence: that of globalization. Without going into detail, we can say that Africa is a continent in perpetual transition. Having undergone and still undergoing assaults linked to confrontation with the other, marginalized by its poverty, all these things constitute the substratum of the current crisis the continent is experiencing. However, despite the significant exogenous factors that contribute to blocking Africa's take-off, Africa remains "the first responsible for its own misfortunes."[6] In the following, we emphasize the responsibility of the local churches as an urgency for the success of mission in Africa.

Some authors seem to convey the impression that Africans are so unaware of their development that they do not even care about it. Even in Christian circles, we find a similar discourse. However, we can say that there is no other subject so debated in Africa, in homes and streets, in universities and schools, at work in offices and in the fields, as the question of the modernization of Africa. Africans are distressed by the state of their situation. They are not naïve or unaware. The fact that they do not have immediate answers to the questions they ask themselves does not mean that they do not ask them at all! It is also true that their questions are not publicized as elsewhere.

Indeed, several authors have tried to propose explanations for the current situation on the continent. All indications seem to converge on culture as the internal cause of Africa's stalemate. It is here that the methods of CEVAA should be highlighted, which take culture as a prime missiological opportunity not only for the African church but for the world church.

As far as CEVAA member churches are concerned, the new challenges just described allow us to think that the substance of mission must increasingly be encounter, mutual accompaniment, which is sometimes a painful journey, and mutual sharing. To listen, to accompany, to walk together in pain as well as in joy: this is the Lord's plan for mission. This is what Philippe Chanson calls the "missiology of empathy."[7] Journeying together is a risk. When one or the other leaves the road to take a path that is neither that of the one nor that of the other, this third path is that of the unknown—one could even say that of faith.

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6 Jean Paul Ngoupandé, *Racines Historiques et Culturelles de la Crise Africaine* (Abidjan: AD Editions et Editions du Pharaon, 1994).

7 Philippe Chanson, *Aux marges d'un dictionnaire: vers une missiologie de l'empathie?*, unpublished, FTPL, Laval, 2001.

The encounter must go beyond the level of commercial globalization. It must also go beyond the level of the mission of charity, because what the brothers and sisters want is not necessarily money, especially if this charity money contributes to maintaining an inferior position, a pick-and-choose mentality, or a disrespectful paternalism. It is indeed this latter attitude that maintains, against the biblical order, the unidirectional, hegemonic mission generally monopolized from North to South, from rich countries to poor ones. This mission of monopoly must be demystified.

The mission of empathy concerns the global church, not just the church in the North. Indeed, it is well known that the decadence of Western civilization is itself a challenge. CEVAA recognizes that the West is also a target of mission. In the same way as the challenges of Africa are not reserved exclusively for the African churches, the challenges of the West concern the African churches. Especially since in this global situation of economic globalization, these challenges may have their roots far from Africa. This is recognized by the Presbyterian Church in America in its report, "Partnering Together in God's Global Mission; A Report on the Strategy Process." Under the point of "Consultation for Africa," the report emphasizes that God is calling us to invest our energy today.[8]

Is it not understandable that Christians, economists, and politicians should speak out to demand more democracy and transparency in the decisions of the World Trade Organization in seeking more justice? Would not the church in the West be more missionary in denouncing the unfair ways Western governments deal with poor nations that cannot set the price of their raw materials?

Conclusion

Throughout its history, CEVAA has been a place of encounters, commitments, and achievements to be safeguarded, nurtured, and maintained. Through its achievements and related testimonies, it is time to look to the future with great perseverance, solidarity, and courage in the pursuit of the mission "from everywhere to everywhere." The challenges of developing a spirit of community with member churches and of maintaining an understanding of the call to serve the faith, to promote justice, and to dialogue with cultures and other religions in the light of the apostolic vocation—these

8 Presbyterian World Mission, *Partnering Together in God's Global Mission: Strategy Process Report. A Journey in Partnership—Now Go Deeper* (Louisville: Presbyterian Church USA, n.d.), 10, https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/wm-consultation-en.pdf.

are the tasks that come to the agenda for discussion and implementation, and which confront each member church of CEVAA as its responsibility. At a time when solidarity, especially financial solidarity, is urgently needed, the birth of new churches and new theologies presents itself as a challenge to a truly incarnated and ecumenical mission.

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CHAPTER 12

Creating a Third Space: A History of the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies amid Evangelical-Ecumenical Tensions

Al Tizon

The centenary of the founding of the International Missionary Council (IMC) has occasioned a two-year study process reflecting upon the development of the Christian global mission and IMC's enduring impact. The World Council of Churches (WCC) Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) invited study centres around the world to participate in the process, and the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies (OCMS) was among them.

Because OCMS is located in the United Kingdom, it was counted among the centres representing the European region, but OCMS proved somewhat of an anomaly among the other European centres in at least two ways. Firstly, OCMS was not founded as a European centre, although church movements in Eastern Europe were certainly included in its purview. OCMS' decision to root in Oxford, UK, reflected its desire to provide leaders in the Majority World access to academic resources, of which the global North has in abundance, as well as to give Majority World scholarly voices their due in helping to shape church and mission around the world including the Western world.

Secondly, the relatively short history of OCMS (officially founded in 1983) occurred within global evangelicalism. Both its evangelical roots and its founding being 62 years after IMC prevent OCMS from finding direct lineage to the IMC. However, the holistic or integral mission theology that OCMS represented resonated with the WCC, more specifically, with the CWME (IMC's successor).

The integral mission theology of OCMS challenged a brand of evangelicalism that espoused an evangelism-only or evangelism-is-primary theology, an approach to mission that CWME challenged as well. However, while OCMS challenged this reduction of the gospel within evangelicalism, its integral mission theology also challenged WCC/CWME's propensity toward a justice-only or justice-is-primary theology, a reduction of another sort. From an integral mission perspective, there was a time when both sides of

the ecumenical-evangelical divide were guilty of reductionism. In that light, OCMS became a kind of "third space" wherein ecumenicals and evangelicals could meet together for mutual push-back, mutual learning, collaboration, and partnership.

OCMS, hence, can be understood as emerging out of the ecumenical-evangelical divide that widened tremendously after the absorption of the IMC into the WCC. In this gap, those who can be called "radical evangelicals," who eventually established OCMS, found themselves both in fellowship with and a challenge to both the Lausanne Movement (evangelicalism's alternative to the WCC) and the WCC.[1]

After a historical rendering of the origins of OCMS, this article will identify the tensions that gave rise to the bridge-building efforts of OCMS between evangelicals and ecumenicals, as well as those who championed liberation theology among Roman Catholic theologians, particularly in Latin America.

The Emergence of the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies and the International Fellowship of Evangelical Mission Theologians

OCMS emerged primarily out of significant internal tensions within evangelicalism concerning the nature and scope of mission.[2] As evangelicals debated amongst themselves about the relationship between evangelism and social concern, a radical evangelical minority, which ultimately created OCMS, championed holistic or integral mission that theologically challenged the dichotomy altogether. OCMS strove (and strives) to bridge the gap between conversion-oriented evangelicals and justice-oriented evangelicals. The tensions were real, and the unity of evangelicalism depended on how these internal tensions were going to be managed. The focus here, however, is

1 Combining the IMC study process with the 2021 Montague Barker Lectures, OCMS invited Wonsuk Ma, Ruth Padilla DeBorst, Hwa Yung, and myself to explore the period after the discontinuation of the IMC and the emergence of the CWME within the WCC, as well as where the International Fellowship of Mission in Transformation (INFEMIT)/OCMS fits into this history and how it became a veritable "the third space" for the global church. See "Widening Vision of Holistic Mission: OCMS and the IMC," Lecture series, *Oxford Centre for Mission Studies* (June 2021) https://www.ocms.ac.uk/resources/lecture-talks-media/?q=&series=the-widening-vision-of-holistic-mission-ocms-and-the-imc-international-missionary-council-1921&biblebook=&speaker=&perpage=5 (accessed 2 November 2021).

2 See Al Tizon, *Transformation After Lausanne: Radical Evangelical Mission in Global-Local Perspective* (Oxford: Regnum, 2008), 41–52.

on how OCMS negotiated *external* tensions that existed between evangelicals and ecumenicals.

OCMS cannot be understood without taking into account the formation of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Mission Theologians (INFEMIT). The name changed in 2008 to the International Fellowship for Mission as Transformation, but it retained the acronym.[3]

INFEMIT arose out of tensions within what became known as the Lausanne Movement, which was essentially evangelicalism's answer to what evangelicals considered a departure from historic missionary commitments. The IMC's dissolution as a separate entity and becoming a mere commission of the WCC served as confirmation for many of them. Evangelicals, including the likes of Billy Graham, John Stott, and others, began meeting together apart from the WCC to emphasize the all-important task of world evangelization. The year 1974 marked the first monumental gathering in Lausanne, Switzerland; thus, this was the name of the movement ever since.

Though Lausanne '74 emphasized world evangelization, social concern was affirmed and made part of the overall task, albeit secondary. However, the Lausanne follow-up consultation held in Pattaya, Thailand, six years later in 1980 de-emphasized social concern and returned to a more traditional, urgent, even aggressive form of evangelism. Radical evangelicals who were present expressed severe disappointment, enough that they resolved to meet as a Majority World consultation.

Making good on their promise, they met together in 1982 in Bangkok, as they framed and organized the first INFEMIT consultation. This gathering led to the formation of a loose global network which they named the International Fellowship of Evangelical Mission Theologians. Although 1987 marks the year when INFEMIT officially formed, 1980 claims its true beginnings, as a radical group of evangelicals reacted strongly "against what they considered a regrettable return to pre-Lausanne mission thinking [at Pattaya '80]. They began to come to terms with the fact that the brand of holistic mission theology they espoused will probably never flow into the mainstream of evangelical missionary consciousness as long as 'managerial missiology,' as Samuel Escobar described it, dictated the current."[4]

3 INFEMIT articulates its mission in the following way: "Called and equipped by the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we are a Gospel-centered fellowship of mission theologian-practitioners that serves local churches and other Christian communities so we together embody the Kingdom of God through transformational engagement, both locally and globally"; see https://infemit.org/.

4 Samuel Escobar, "A Movement Divided," *Transformation* 8:4 (October 1991), 11–13; and "Evangelical Missiology: Peering into the Future at the Turn of the Century," *Global Missiology for the 21st Century*, William Taylor, ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2000), 109–112.

Names associated with this network include, among others, René Padilla, Catharine Feser Padilla, Kwame Bediako, Mary Bediako, Vinay Samuel, Chris Sugden, Peter Kuzmic, Melba Maggay, Ronald Sider, and Samuel Escobar. Regional entities that made up INFEMIT included Partnership in Mission-Asia, *Fraternidad Teológica Latinoamericana*, African Theological Fraternity, Evangelicals for Social Action, Institute for Studies in Asian Church and Culture, and the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Osijek. These radical evangelicals representing their respective institutions began meeting together, forging a new way of doing mission as they championed holistic, contextual, and relational theology reflective of their respective cultural and socio-political contexts.

The year 1983 proved to be significant for INFEMIT as two occurrences defined and solidified the ideals of the nascent fellowship: (1) the results of the conference in Wheaton '83, in which INFEMIT mined the riches of the word "transformation," and (2) the establishment of the OCMS.

Wheaton '83: Transformation articulated

The movement, for which radical evangelicals served as vanguard, was given a name at Wheaton '83. Convened by the World Evangelical Fellowship's Theological Commission and sponsored by approximately 50 churches, denominations, and mission groups, Wheaton '83 gathered 336 participants from 59 different countries to deliberate upon the theme, "I will build my church." The participants, of whom 60 percent came from the Majority World, met for two weeks at the Billy Graham Center of Wheaton College in Illinois from 20 June to 1 July 1983.

Compared to Lausanne '74, the Wheaton '83 Consultation could not boast of huge numbers of participants or of monumental worldwide notoriety. But in terms of the evangelical journey toward holistic mission, Wheaton '83 looms large. Organized into three tracks, the third of these, with the sub-theme "The church in response to human need," took significant strides toward holistic mission by developing a biblical, theological, and practical understanding of the term "transformation."[5]

Proponents of INFEMIT were responsible for the third track, as well as for the drafting of the Wheaton Statement on Transformation, which resulted from this track. According to the statement, "Transformation is the change

5 Since I focus on a specific movement identified as "Transformation" or "Mission as Transformation", I have chosen to differentiate it via capitalization from incidental general uses of the terms 'transformation' and 'mission' throughout the book.

from a condition of human existence contrary to God's purposes to one in which people are able to enjoy fullness of life in harmony with God."[6]

This particular understanding of Transformation has undergone its own transformations since its inception.[7] It emerged through reflections on social ethics but later expanded into reflections on a holistic missiology; thus, the name expansion from Transformation to Mission as Transformation.[8] This broadening, however, did not water down social concern; on the contrary, it became less an additive and more a part of the very substance of the church's mission. "Transformation," Vinay Samuel writes as a kind of update to the original definition, "is to enable God's vision of society to be actualized in all relationships—social, economic and spiritual—so that God's will may be reflected in human society and his love be experienced by all communities, especially the poor."[9]

Oxford Centre for Mission Studies: Transformation education for the Majority World

The Transformational movement has always been, at the core, a theological endeavour that involved deep reflection in the service of responsible mission in the world. Pressing missiological and social issues undoubtedly evoked the questions that shaped Mission as Transformation; but believing that mission finds its vitality and longevity in well-grounded theology, radical evangelicals or Transformationists have always held up the importance of doing theology—and doing it well, lest "theology [take] a backseat to strategic initiatives."[10] This conviction required solid ground; INFEMIT leaders knew that research-based graduate-level theological education was a key to the success of the movement. Enter: Oxford Centre for Mission Studies.[11]

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6 "Wheaton '83: Statement on Transformation," in *The Church in Response to Human Need*, Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden, eds. (Oxford, UK: Regnum and Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 257.

7 For developments on the definition of Transformation since 1983, see Chris Sugden, "Transformational Development: Current state of understanding and practice", *Transformation* 20.2 (April 2003), 70-72.

8 Vinay Samuel, "Mission as Transformation," in *Mission as Transformation*, Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden, eds. (Oxford, UK et al.: Regnum, 1999), 228.

9 Vinay Samuel quoted in Chris Sugden, "Mission as Transformation—It's Journey Since Lausanne I," in *Holistic Mission: God's Plan for God's People*, Brian Woolnough and Wonsuk Ma, eds. (Oxford: Regnum, 2010), 33.

10 Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden, "Introduction," *Mission as Transformation*, xi.

11 See Al Tizon, "Mission as Education: A Past-to-Future Look at INFEMIT/OCMS," *Transformation* 28:4 (October 2011), 253–64.

Founded in 1983 to help foster Mission as Transformation around the world, OCMS has been committed to both missiological research and mission practice in a distinctly transformational key. Through its course offerings, consultations, and the publication initiatives of the journal *Transformation* and Regnum Books International, OCMS had become in the words of Wonsuk Ma, "the flagship academic institution advancing the vision of holistic mission (also known as 'integral mission' or 'mission as transformation.')."[12] In 2008 INFEMIT renewed its commitment to strengthen its worldwide organizational presence and revise its structures and approaches to better meet the needs of the global church. Together INFEMIT and OCMS continue to advance the relational, contextual, and theological dimensions of Mission as Transformation.

External Tensions

This brief history of Mission as Transformation and the crucial role that OCMS has played in it reveals, among other important facts, that Mission as Transformation and its institutional expressions fall squarely within the evangelical tradition, as they have addressed intense, divisive issues within the evangelical mission family through the last five decades. However, because of the nature of the Transformational vision, OCMS engaged with and was welcomed by those outside of the evangelical fold (to the chagrin of many evangelicals). So, in addition to addressing missiological conflicts between evangelicals, Transformationists also found themselves creating a third space between evangelicals and ecumenicals and others outside of the "safe" confines of evangelical orthodoxy. In this third space, OCMS negotiated several key tensions that fluctuated in intensity through the decades between evangelicals and non-evangelicals.

Evangelism versus social concern

While the evangelism-social-concern debate continued to rage within evangelicalism in the 1970s through the 1990s, Transformationists did not lose sight of the fact that the in-fighting amongst evangelicals grew out of the same debate occurring between evangelicals and ecumenicals long before Mission as Transformation came on the scene. What constituted the core nature of the

12 Wonsuk Ma, "The Widening Vision of Holistic Mission: A Reflective Memoir of OCMS in the Changing Global Context (2006-2016)," Montague Barker Lecture (8 June 2021), https://www.ocms.ac.uk/resources/lecture-talks-media/?q=&series=the-widening-vision-of-holistic-mission-ocms-and-the-imc-international-missionary-council-1921&biblebook=&speaker=&perpage=5 (accessed 3 November 2021).

church's mission? Was it the world evangelization of the lost or the humanization of those who have been dehumanized by poverty, injustice, and war?

The publication of *Re-Thinking Missions* by William Hocking in 1932 ignited a small fire that grew into a big fire, burning a chasm in the Protestant missionary community and eventually creating two distinct camps. The "shocking Hocking Report," as it came to be called, summarized a two-year project carried out by the Layman's Foreign Missions Inquiry in the early 1930s. Though the independent study did not represent the mission boards in any official way, it was conducted in cooperation with the IMC, which reinforced the suspicion among evangelicals that the ecumenical movement was abandoning the heart of mission.

The report challenged what were then basic Protestant missionary tenets, such as the uniqueness of Christianity among the religions of the world and the necessity of preaching personal conversion to Christ.[13] Consistent with challenging what was then unchallengeable, the report proposed that the primary purpose of mission was not to convert people, but to seek religious cooperation toward a better world. Such a proposal sent shockwaves throughout the Protestant missionary community, especially those bent on the evangelization of the world.

If the Hocking Report framed the missionary evangelical-ecumenical polarity in the 1930s through to the 1950s, then the missiological developments within the WCC took the rift to unprecedented heights in the early 1960s to the mid-1970s. Beginning with the official merger of IMC and the WCC in 1961 in New Delhi, evangelicals began to solidify their suspicion that the WCC was headed toward apostasy. By the mid-1960s, evangelicals poised themselves to launch their own international missionary conferences.

In 1966, they met together not once, but twice, for the first time as a counter-WCC movement. Prior to the 1960s, with the exception of a few loud fundamentalist voices, "both evangelicals and non-evangelicals had worked together to formulate missiology."[14] But with these two gatherings—first in Wheaton, Illinois, for the Congress on the Church's Worldwide Mission, and five months later in Berlin for the World Congress on Evangelism—evangelicals called the church to remain faithful in proclaiming the gospel to all nations over and against the "unfaithfulness" of the WCC.

13 William E. Hocking, *Rethinking Missions* (New York and London: Harper & Brothers, 1932), 3–78.

14 David Tai-Woong Lee, "A Two Thirds World Evaluation of Contemporary Evangelical Missiology," in *Global Missiology for the 21st Century: The Iguassu Dialogue*, William D. Taylor, ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 134.

Many identify the WCC's 4th Assembly in Uppsala, Sweden, in 1968 and the following CWME meeting in Bangkok, Thailand, in 1972 as the proverbial straws that broke the camel's back for many evangelicals. For many evangelicals, the Uppsala-to-Bangkok trajectory of the WCC watered down the conversionary dimension of the church's mission and reduced it to humanization (Jesus Christ exemplifying the New Man) and interfaith dialogue. "The great debate over the meaning of mission finally came to a head," writes Roger Hedlund. "Two basic theologies . . . were in conflict . . . On the one side were the advocates of mission as humanization, on the other side . . . [those concerned] with . . . the evangelization of the lost."[15] To be sure, these developments within the WCC spurred influential evangelicals to convene in Lausanne in 1974 for the first international congress on world evangelization.

The WCC/CWME meanwhile valiantly sought to stay true to its vision of the unity of the church in mission, which from their perspective always included evangelization and therefore always included evangelicals. While some understood the ecumenical-evangelical polarity as a mere squabble within the Christian family and not a split, others saw a widening gap that may become permanent if it was not addressed properly.[16] Notable ecumenical attempts to address evangelical concerns include John Mackey's 1966 article published ironically enough in the evangelical magazine *Christianity Today* but clearly speaking to fellow ecumenicals. In it, he urged them to be open to learning from evangelicals whose high view of scripture and passion for the lost are much needed.[17] It also includes Mortimer Arias, a Methodist bishop and ecumenical leader in Bolivia, whose address at the 5th WCC Assembly in Nairobi on the Johannine text, "that the world may believe," called the assembly to confession and repentance for not always being faithful to vision of evangelization, even as he emphasized the crucial need to understand evangelization as integral to justice.[18]

Despite the distancing of evangelicals from WCC gatherings, issues of justice that ecumenicals raised ultimately influenced the mission theology and practice of evangelicals in significant ways. And conversely, issues of evangelization raised by evangelicals during that time period also influenced ecumenical mission thinking in equally significant ways. Although some

15 Roger Hedlund, *Roots of the Great Debate in Mission* (Bangalore: Theological Book Trust, 1997), 229. Hedlund's perspective is decidedly evangelical.

16 See T. V. Philip, *Edinburgh to Salvador: Twentieth Century Ecumenical Missiology* (Delhi: ISPCK and Tiruvalla: CSS, 1999), 97–31.

17 Philip, *Edinburgh to Salvador*, 112–13.

18 Philip, *Edinburgh to Salvador*, 116–17.

in both camps may deny the impact each has had on the other, the documents from their respective conferences of the 1970s and 1980s demonstrate, according to David Bosch, "a convergence of convictions."[19]

Transformationists, who stood uncompromisingly by both evangelization and humanization, surely contributed to this convergence. Whereas a large part of the evangelical constituency wrote off the ecumenical movement because of their alleged abandonment of evangelism, Transformationists insisted evangelicals had something to learn from ecumenicals, and vice versa. And if they passionately and urgently emphasized social justice among evangelism-only evangelicals, then they also emphasized evangelism among justice-oriented ecumenicals. For example, Transformationists contributed greatly to the Stuttgart Consultation on Evangelism in March 1987, which convened for the purpose of pre-processing and thereby providing direction for the CWME as it prepared for its upcoming gathering.

In spite of the diverse perspectives at this conference on how Christians should share the gospel, participants concluded that "evangelism always means that in one way or another, people are called to faith in Christ."[20] Transformationists gave definitive voice at Stuttgart to what they identified as "integral evangelism," which understands the evangelistic invitation contextually and inseparably from works of justice.[21]

A letter entitled "A Jubilee Call" provides another example. Written to the WCC at the 8th Assembly in 1998 at Harare, the document exemplified the commitment to evangelism and mission with which Transformationists challenged the ecumenical movement.[22] Drafted in the context of numerous meetings called by INFEMIT/OCMS leaders Vinay Samuel, David Gitari, and others, the Jubilee Call affirmed that "evangelism, as [a] call to personal turning to God, must be at the heart of the church's mission of social transformation."[23] The letter lamented that, "while the theme of the 1998

19 David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, 20th Anniversary ed. (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2011), 417–18.

20 "Statement of the Stuttgart Consultation," in *Proclaiming Christ in Christ's Way*, Vinay Samuel and Albrecht Hauser, eds. (Oxford: Regnum, 1989), 213.

21 A full list of the participants is included in Samuel and Hauser, *Proclaiming Christ in Christ's Way*, 224–25.

22 "A Jubilee Call," *Transformation* 16:2 (April/June 1999), 67–68. This letter was in line with other letters written by evangelical participants at other WCC gatherings. See for example, "Evangelicals at Vancouver: An Open Letter," *TSF Bulletin* 7:1 (September/October 1983), 18–19, written for the delegates of the WCC's 6th Assembly, and "Evangelical Perspectives from Canberra," in *Beyond Canberra*, Bong Rin Ro and Bruce Nicholls, eds. (Oxford: Regnum and Lynx, 1993), 38–43, written for the delegates of the 7th Assembly.

23 "A Jubilee Call," *Transformation*, 67–68.

Assembly 'Turn to God: Rejoice in Hope' should have led to a strong emphasis on mission, evangelism and the church, [these were] largely missing."[24] Fifty evangelicals at the assembly, most of whom were those associated with INFEMIT/OCMS, signed and presented the letter to the WCC.

The broad scope and holistic nature of Mission as Transformation, wherein evangelism and social concern flowed together, enabled Transformationists to challenge both evangelical and ecumenical mission traditions, as it created a third space for willing members of both camps to engage and dialogue with one another.

Mission versus unity

A related tension that characterized evangelical-ecumenical relations, especially from the 1950s on, was the mission versus unity debate. At the risk of overgeneralization, while ecumenicals continued to uphold the commitment to foster unity ignited at the 1910 Edinburgh World Missionary Conference, evangelicals advanced a phrase that captured the missionary spirit at Edinburgh, namely, "the evangelization of the world in this generation." Though at Edinburgh 1910, these two aspects posed neither a theological or a practical problem; mission and unity eventually became the two ends of an enduring tension between ecumenicals and evangelicals.

Referring to Commission Eight on Cooperation and Promotion of Unity, Samuel Kobia writes that "one of the dearest visions" at Edinburgh 1910 was "having one united church of Christ that is both a consequence of and bearer of mission."[25] Those who were captivated by the unprecedented possibility of global church unity developed what we call today the ecumenical movement expressed most visibly through the WCC. The WCC, which had its inaugural meeting in Amsterdam in 1948, can be viewed as the river that formed as the two streams that flowed out of Edinburgh 1910—namely, the Faith and Order stream and the Life and Work stream—merged.

The third stream, which was arguably the mainstream at Edinburgh 1910, was the evangelization of the world, many claiming triumphantly at Edinburgh and beyond that the 20th century was the *Christian* century. Unlike the other two streams that clearly created the one river of the WCC, this third stream took a few twists and turns with no agreement today on who truly continued on course.

The evangelization stream flowed from Edinburgh first as a continuation committee, led by none other than John R. Mott, in order to advance the

24 "A Jubilee Call," *Transformation*, 68.

25 Samuel Kobia, "Cooperation and the Promotion of Unity: A World Council of Churches Perspective," in *Edinburgh 2010: Mission Then and Now*, David A. Kerr and Kenneth R. Ross, eds. (Oxford: Regnum, 2009), 242.

vision of worldwide cooperation in the service of evangelization. This committee met on several occasions between 1910 and 1917 with the optimism of the times. But the work of the committee halted abruptly when World War I broke out. The halt reflected a palpable loss of missionary optimism expressed at Edinburgh 1910. That said, reports Hedlund, "Movement continued toward a definite organization, which [culminated] in the formation of the International Missionary Council in 1921."[26]

The IMC convened five themed conferences between 1921 and 1958 before it merged with the WCC in 1961. The merger included the plan to create within WCC the CWME. As a result, many legitimately claim the CWME of the WCC as the current organizational continuation of the IMC, or if one goes back further, of the missionary spirit expressed at Edinburgh 1910.

Many evangelicals, however, would make the case that the true spiritual successor of the missionary spirit at Edinburgh 1910 and the IMC was developed by and through evangelicals in the 1950s and 1960s, as they distanced themselves from the WCC. For many evangelicals, the IMC-WCC merger was one of the final straws that led to efforts that eventually developed into the Lausanne Movement. For these evangelicals, mission as evangelization in the WCC was eclipsed by social justice concerns, rendering the WCC's efforts at unity either anemic, because it was unity for mere humanitarian causes, or worse, utterly false, because it was not unity in Christ and Christ's purposes.

This is precisely where the mission versus unity debate intersects with the evangelism versus social concern debate. Evangelicals argued that if we cannot agree on the nature of the church's mission as primarily evangelistic because Jesus Christ is the only way to salvation, then any effort at church unity would be surface at best, hypocritical at worst. As for ecumenicals, they argued that compassion and justice are at the core of the church's mission along with a nuanced but clear affirmation of evangelism, and in order to do mission well, we must continue to strive for church unity.

Of course, the ecumenical call to unity was never, with only a few exceptions, at the expense of their understanding of witness, however nuanced that understanding may have been. Although the idea of unity underwent definitional changes since Edinburgh 1910, efforts at unity were always for the purpose of mission, that is, of witnessing to the gospel in the world.[27] And vice versa: the call to mission and evangelism from evangelicals throughout the last

26 Hedlund, *Roots of the Great Debate in Mission*, 56.

27 Dana L. Robert, "From Co-operation to Common Witness: Mission and Unity, 1910-2010," in *Called to Unity for the Sake of the Mission*, John Gibaut and Knud Jørgensen, eds. (Oxford: Regnum, 2014), 46–58. Though I reference only one chapter from this volume, the whole volume speaks to the organic connection between unity and mission.

hundred years was not devoid of unity, but they stressed "true unity in Christ," and not what they considered the "false unity of human ecumenism." By this, evangelicals made a distinction between the oneness of like-minded Christians across traditions—invisible, spiritual unity—and the visible, institutional unity of churches for which the ecumenical movement erroneously strove.

Those associated with Mission as Transformation largely constituted the evangelical presence at WCC-related gatherings since the 1980s, and this in and of itself served if nothing else a symbol of possible reconciliation between evangelicals and ecumenicals. As already mentioned, their participation in events such as the Stuttgart Consultation in 1987 and the WCC assembly in Harare, Zimbabwe, in 1998 contributed significantly to ecumenical missiology. Additionally, Ma points out a number of different ways OCMS contributed to WCC and other ecumenical gatherings. OCMS was present, for example, at the WCC's 10th Assembly in Busan, Korea, in 2013, wherein a new statement of mission called *Together towards Life* [28] was presented to the member churches.

OCMS also participated in the gatherings of the Global Christian Forum, which started in 1998, "to create an open space wherein representatives from a broad range of Christian churches and inter-church organizations . . . can gather to foster mutual response, to explore and address together common challenges."[29] Ma led the Theology Working Group of the Forum and produced the document, "Our Unfolding Journey with Jesus Christ." Moreover, OCMS' *Transformation* journal published the Forum's 2007 papers, while Regnum Books published its major documents and proceedings.[30] Directly and indirectly, OCMS fostered (and fosters) the delicate relationship between unity and mission and therefore between ecumenicals and evangelicals.

OCMS was represented at the last missionary conference of the CWME, which convened in Arusha, Tanzania, in 2018. Joining the wide constituency including Roman Catholics, Orthodox, and Pentecostals, the OCMS representatives offered a workshop where they presented the approach and work of the OCMS as a third space since its inception and the current contribution of its scholars from the majority world to mission theology. The theme of transforming discipleship appealed to the transformational approach of OCMS

28 *Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes*, Jooseop Keum, ed. (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2013).

29 Global Christian Forum, "Guiding Purpose Statement," https://globalchristianforum.org/introduction/guiding-purpose-statement/ (accessed 5 November 2021).

30 Hubert van Beek, ed., *Revisioning Christian Unity: The Global Christian Forum* (Oxford: Regnum, 2009).

and the representatives joined the discussions which led to *The Arusha Call to Discipleship*.

Transformation versus liberation versus development

Transformationists also found themselves creating a third space between evangelicals and radical movements among the poor. Evangelicals did not escape the compelling challenges of liberation theology, as the many conferences and publications among them in the 1970s and 1980s demonstrated.[31] Of course, evangelical responses to liberation theology varied. Those who categorically rejected it on the basis of unacceptable hermeneutics and Marxist sympathies were able to dismiss its challenges fairly easily. At best, they credited liberation theology for pricking the church's social conscience; but beyond that, they branded it as a tool of Marxist-based socialism (an enemy of the gospel) and opposed it at every turn.[32]

Transformationists, however, represented by regional groups, such as the *Fraternidad Teológica Latinamericana* (FTL) based in Argentina, were affected deeply by liberation themes. For unlike conservative evangelical mission theologies coming from the global North, liberation theologians were addressing the life-and-death crises of poverty and injustice that plagued the land. Referring to a North American sponsored conference in 1969 with the theme, "Action in Christ for a continent in crisis," Ruth Padilla DeBorst recalls:

> The US-American agencies had designed the Congress as a means to hold back the growing wave of socially committed missional reflection and action … which they deemed to be a negative influence of the progressive Protestant sectors of the church . . . Samuel Escobar's speech, "The Social Responsibility of the Christian," however, issued a clear shout for independence and liberation of theological tutelage, and [it] confronted the dichotomy between evangelism and social engagement head on. The Congress offered Latin American leaders the occasion to gather and recognize the need to work together on a theology that responded in a holistic way to their reality.[33]

31 For example, see *Evangelicals and Liberation*, Carl E. Armerding, ed. (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1977), which compiles papers on liberation theology from an evangelical perspective presented at the 1976 Annual Conference of the Evangelical Theological Society of Canada.

32 See for example Richard John Neuhaus, "Liberation Theology and the Captivities of Jesus," in *Mission Trends 3: Third World Theologies*, Gerald H. Anderson and Thomas F. Stransky, eds. (New York et al.: Paulist and Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 41–61.

33 Ruth Padilla DeBorst, "Catalyzing Border-Breaking Friendships for Transformation," Montague Barker Lecture (22 June 2021), https://www.ocms.ac.uk/resources/lecture-talks-media/?q=&series=the-widening-vision-of-holistic-mission-ocms-and-the-imc-international-missionary-council-1921&biblebook=&speaker=&perpage=5 (accessed 3 November 2021).

As radical evangelicals in Latin America (and beyond) resonated with liberation's commitment to the poor and oppressed, they increasingly found imported theologies from the West profoundly wanting. Theology had to address social, political and economic questions of the day, or else it is useless. They felt compelled to respond to the call of liberationists "to participate in the revolutionary struggle," as part and parcel of missionary faithfulness to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Of course, they were vilified by the conservative constituency, enduring charges of selling out to revolutionary Marxism and/or radical liberalism. Radical evangelicals, however, saw their vision for social justice as fundamentally biblical and historically orthodox. Ronald J. Sider, for example, turns the table on conservatives and writes, "By largely ignoring the central biblical teaching that God is on the side of the poor, evangelical theology has been profoundly unorthodox."[34] With such convictions, radical voices like Escobar, Padilla, and Costas from Latin America; Maggay and Lim from the Philippines; Samuel and Sugden from India and the UK; Sider and Wallis from the USA; Bediako and Gitari from Africa; and many others took every opportunity to challenge fellow evangelicals to rethink the missionary task from the perspective of the underside.

Having just established their deep affinity to liberation theology, however, it may seem contradictory now to claim that for the most part radical evangelicals could not ultimately identify with the movement. They took issue with liberation theology on at least four grounds.[35] First, the beginning point of the concrete situation of the poor often led to inadequate theological hermeneutics. For Transformationists, anything short of Jesus Christ as the starting point for theology indeed fell short of being Christian. Second, liberation theology, especially during its early years, espoused a reductionistic soteriology that was primarily socio-political in nature. They took liberationists to task over the notion of socio-political salvation as vigorously as they did conservative evangelicals over the notion of a purely spiritual salvation. Third, over-reliance upon Marxist social theory often led to inadvertent greater allegiance to Marx than to Christ. René Padilla articulates it this way: "The question is . . . whether liberation theology has not, by and large, gone beyond an acceptance of Marxist insights . . . and fallen into a sociological captivity."[36] And fourth, liberation theology's early romance with revolution

34 Ronald J. Sider, "An Evangelical Theology of Liberation," in *Perspectives in Evangelical Theology*, eds. Kenneth Kantzer and Stanley Gundry (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 132.

35 Tizon, *Transformation after Lausanne*, 60–65.

36 C. Rene Padilla, "Liberation Theology: An Appraisal," in *Freedom and Discipleship:*

often led its proponents to sanction violence. Radical evangelicals, especially those of the historic peace churches, had fundamental trouble supporting this. In fairness, liberationists did not take the issue of violence lightly, as they called the government's unjust policies "institutional violence," which was responsible "for the death of thousands of innocent victims," and to counter this with armed revolution as a last resort constituted a just form of violence.[37]

As a Transformational theological institution, OCMS was both the incubator and clearing house of evangelical liberation sympathies, essentially formulating for the global church what can be called an "evangelical theology of liberation."[38] Rather than go with that moniker, however, proponents of holistic mission adopted the term "transformation" over "liberation," the preferred term among Roman Catholic liberationists and ecumenicals. By adopting it at Wheaton '83, they sought to avoid the ideological baggage associated with liberation theology. Besides, they believed it aligned better to their biblical understanding of deep-seated change that occurs comprehensively from the human heart to human society. Despite the absence of any direct "transformation versus liberation" language in the literature surrounding Wheaton '83, a search for an alternative term was implicit; for if these radical evangelicals were content with "liberation," why did they not simply accept the term and join the ranks of liberation theologians?

If the choice of "transformation" over "liberation" was implicit, its choice over the term "development" was decidedly explicit. The five-year study process on development, which began in 1978, revealed in the end that the very term "development" posed insurmountable problems. Samuel and Sugden's *Church in Response to Human Need*, which made available the definitive papers of the third track, suggests just by the sequence of the chapters the intentional moving away from the term "development" and officially adopting the term "transformation." Tom Sine's paper, which questioned the assumptions of the concept and practice of development, started the book, followed by Wayne Bragg's "From Development to Transformation," which made the case for the term "transformation" to replace "development" on the grounds that it far better conveys the biblical notion of complete change.[39] After 13 more

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Liberation Theology from an Anabaptist Perspective, Daniel Schipani, ed. (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1989), 45.

37 Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1973), 109.

38 See Ronald J. Sider, *God's Invitation to Peace and Justice: Sermons and Essays on Shalom* (Valley Forge: Judson, 2021), 2–25. This is the chapter entitled, "An Evangelical Theology of Liberation."

39 Tom Sine, "Development: Its Secular Past and Its Uncertain Future," in *The Church in Response to Human Need*, Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden, eds. (Oxford: Regnum

substantial chapters dealing with aspects of Transformation, the book climaxes with the Wheaton '83 Statement on *Transformation*—not Development.[40] Once again, OCMS sought to avoid categories of development and underdevelopment, and thus also avoid Western paternalism in mission.

Majority World theology versus Western theology

It would not be out of line to understand the previous tensions as growing out of this last tension concerning which theology would guide the missionary movement since Edinburgh 1910. The debates between evangelism and social concern, mission and unity, as well as the critiques levelled against liberation theologies may have occurred in the halls of Western academia, but they had worldwide impact through the missionary enterprise. Majority World thinking leans naturally toward perspectives that are more holistic than categorical, more spatial than linear, and more shaded with gray than with clear black and white lines. So, when one encounters dichotomies between soul and body or spiritual and social, as well as tendencies to prioritize evangelism over social concern or vice versa in the non-Western world, it would be safe to assume it was greatly influenced by Western missionaries.

Hwa Yung contends that for all that Edinburgh 1910 spawned for the worldwide missionary movement, the church failed to build upon the influence of majority world leaders at the conference. He asserts that, "WCC/CWME theology in the twentieth century did not reflect the thinking of the growing edges of the churches in the majority world [planted at Edinburgh 1910]."[41] Granted, majority world representation at conference was quite

and Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 1–19; and Wayne Bragg, "From Development to Transformation" in the same volume, 20–51.

40 Of course, not everyone agreed upon the wisdom of doing away with the term "development." The argument to retain it was more on pragmatic grounds. The Wheaton '83 Statement on Transformation itself reflects this sentiment. It states, "Some of us still believe . . . that 'development', when reinterpreted in the light of the whole message of the Bible, is a concept that should be retained by Christians. Part of the reason for this choice is that the word is so widely used. The Statement read, 'A change of terms, therefore, would cause unnecessary confusion'" (256). Such sentiment probably accounts for the fact that the term continues to be used among evangelicals. In fact, Bryant Myers' influential work *Walking with the Poor* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1999) has popularized the term "transformational development," which has been picked up even by Sugden and others (see *Transformation* 20:2 [April 2003], where Sugden's article, "Transformational Development: Current State of Understanding" appeared).

41 Hwa Yung, "Will Lausanne Evangelicals post Cape Town 2010 Repeat Edinburgh 1910's Mistakes?" Montague Barker Lecture (15 June 2021), https://www.ocms.ac.uk/resources/lecture-talks-media/?q=&series=the-widening-vision-of-holistic-mission-ocms-and-the-imc-international-missionary-council-1921&biblebook=&speaker=&perpage=5 (accessed 8 November 2021).

small,[42] though for the times, it reflected an intentional and valiant attempt to take seriously such voices for theology and mission. According to Yung, to the detriment of the global church, Western theology continued to dominate most of the 20th century.

If Yung's critique is aimed at how ecumenicals continued to be ruled by Western mission theologies, Padilla DeBorst's presentation points out the deficiencies of Western evangelical mission theology, particularly in Latin America, as "managerial missiology" hailing mostly from North American evangelical institutions continued to impose Western models of mission. The desire of Latin American radical evangelicals who longed to respond to the needs and crises of their respective local contexts, gave birth to a truly contextual and integral theology of mission, represented institutionally in the *Fraternidad Teológica Latinamericana*.

The groundbreaking efforts of Latin American radical evangelicals—such as Emma and Pedro Arana, Lily and Samuel Escobar, and Catalina and René Padilla—to forge contextual, integral, and relational mission worldwide cannot be overstated. It would not be inaccurate to view INFEMIT and OCMS and the whole transformational movement as globalized expressions of the vision and values of FTL—not *just* FTL, Padilla DeBorst points out, but one cannot speak of Mission as Transformation without engaging the major players of FTL, past and present.

The commitment of OCMS to do theology and mission in a distinctly Transformational key (contextual, integral, and relational) has provided a powerful platform for Majority World voices to inform both mission scholarship and mission practice. Even a cursory look at the offerings of Regnum Books, for example, would demonstrate the width and breadth of majority world missiological scholarship. The very founding of OCMS was to serve the Majority World church. As such, just by virtue of its example, INFEMIT/OCMS issued (and continues to issue) a call to the whole church, ecumenical and evangelical, to *be* the whole church in all its diverse glory as it engages the whole world with the whole gospel—that is, with all the radical demands of the good news of peace, justice, reconciliation, and salvation. It was and is in "third spaces," such as OCMS that has enabled such a vision to be realized in these desperate times.

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42 Brian Stanley, "Edinburgh 1910: Evangelization and Unity," in *Called to Unity: For the Sake of the Mission*, John Gibaut and Knud Jørgensen, eds. (Oxford: Regnum, 2014), 3–13. Stanley reports that there were "nine Indians, four Japanese, three Chinese, one Korean, one Burmese, one Anatolian, and a solitary and heavily Europeanized black African" out of the 1,215 overall participants (5).

CHAPTER 13

Reflections on Transnational Orthodox Networks and their Role in Mission in Kenya: Past, Present, and Future

H. E. Archbishop Makarios of Nairobi and Exarch of all Kenya

Throughout the history of Christendom, success in mission has more often than not been realized where mutual relations existed, either in a community of believers, across communities, or in a broader aspect across nations and continents. Missionaries, I can confidently say, have been and continue to be the fuel that drives the engine of the gospel. This is, of course, only possible through the grace of God, for, despite the sheer will and desire to evangelize, these missionaries have met untold misery and hardships, such that, devoid of the grace of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, their efforts would have amounted to nought.

When I reflect on the above and think of my missionary journey here in Africa, as well as that of my predecessors, I see only the miracles wrought by God's sufficient grace, which has facilitated cooperation and relations from the world over, which eventually led us to the present memorable success.

Mission without education is impossible. I have faced the difficulties of evangelizing literate, semi-literate, and outright illiterate communities. By illiterate, I don't want to imply primitive—these communities had their own developed culture and way of traditional worship. I mean that they were illiterate in terms of modern language and cultures, though mission in my opinion should not be a change of culture but rather enculturation oriented.

As such, I wish to recognize and applaud the efforts and visions of the late President and Ethnarch of Cyprus, His Beatitude Makarios III. He saw the need for theological education in Africa and immediately put in motion the process of constructing a seminary school in Nairobi. Through this initiative, Kenya and Cyprus have deepened diplomatic relations, which has further opened ways for the church in Kenya to grow while also opening ways for the youth of Kenya to advance their education in universities and colleges in Europe.

This relation has also opened a channel for the church to advance the medical field through its parishes into the remotest areas, as well as to educate many youth in the medical field. The many medical organizations from Cyprus have made this initiative a reality.

The office of the president of Cyprus has shouldered the burden of funding the seminary school in Nairobi throughout the years, and continues to do so to date, further advancing the cordial relations of the two nations. By being a friend of Kenya, Cyprus has enjoyed ease of access to the nation, and many missionaries have over the years travelled and served in Kenya. The Doctors of the World (Cyprus) has sent many missions to Kenya, while Shacolas missions has constructed, supported, and financed many children homes and feeding programmes in the remotest areas of our country. From Cyprus also came the Kittion Cyprus relief fund, which has not only benefited our church financially but has also offered countless scholarships for our people.

The Orthodox Christian Mission Center (OCMC) from America has also been a great partner throughout the years since its inception in the times of great names like Dimitrios Coushel. This man once invited me to tour America and speak about mission in Kenya, where I was able to shed light on the challenges and opportunities therein. Through that tour, once OCMC was born, they prioritized our mission in Kenya for clergy training through support for the seminary school as well as higher education for the graduates of the seminary. They also initiated a campaign to help build schools and clinics around the country as well as construction of churches. This organization, after realizing the hardships faced by the priests in the mission, created a fund (Support a Mission Priest), which helped the priests financially in their mission work. Through this relationship, many projects have been born, nurtured, and primed, bringing hope to our people. Countless children of lower primary, primary, and secondary school are being educated through the support of this mission.

It is important to note that, while many international missions might serve and greatly help from afar, the OCMC is among the several missions that incorporate a hands-on approach to mission. This is beneficial in several ways; the benefactor is able to personally assess the needs in the field, immediate and long-term. This enables the locals to be in touch and direct relation with the benefactor/missionary and therefore develop a better sense of gratitude and cooperation. This also eliminates the error of duplication, where a single community may end up initiating similar projects and thus limiting the eventual beneficial intent of the missionaries. For example, there will be no need to sink three bore holes in the same locality where one bore hole could serve the community through piped water. I can confess that, although I had

already trained a priest from the arid Turkana and Lodwar region, it is the OCMC that constructed the first church there and helped in the expansion of Orthodoxy in that part. They have also been practically involved in the construction of churches they have funded, and as a result reaped the benefit of seeing their efforts and dreams fulfilled. This makes it easier for them to move on to other equally important and beneficial projects.

Another great relationship is with the office of Apostoliki Diaconia in Greece. This official organ of the Orthodox Church of Greece has been a great pillar of the expansion of the mission work in Kenya throughout the years. Many graduates of the seminary have accessed higher education abroad, and even as I write down these reflections, several students are currently studying in Greece, hosted by this great mission office. Each Bishop in Africa has had continuous support from this mission office.

Finland has played an equal share in mission here in Kenya, from long before I arrived in Nairobi. Many parishes that stand around the country and in East Africa are the selfless work of the Finnish mission. When the HIV/Aids scourge was ravaging Africa and the world, the Finnish mission, through partnership with local churches, initiated the Churches United Against HIV and Aids (CUAHA), an initiative funded by the church of Finland and through which many people were trained in caregiving and in training of caregivers. This organization disseminated a great deal of education and information on the HIV/Aids.

While Australia may seem far off from the coasts of Kenya, it has however been so close to us here in more ways than one. Much help in initiating and nurturing projects has also come from this continent. Our sister Orthodox Church in Australia has been so close to us in the mission journey. At our headquarters stands a majestic teachers' training college, started by the Australian Mission through Fr. Themistocles, who is now Bishop Themistocles serving the mission in Sierra Leone. Through this effort, the college, initially started as a training school for early childhood development education teachers, has developed into a fully-fledged institution offering, among other things, diplomas in education, community development, information technology, and fashion and design, as well as accounting courses.

The sister church in Australia has also been instrumental in supporting many missions in our country through individuals and parishes and through the mother church as a whole. We have greatly witnessed the benefits, and we truly appreciate this relationship.

Many other missions from Greece have also had a fair contribution in further advancing our mission work in Kenya. Missions such as the External Mission of Thessaloniki, the Patras, and the Larissa missions have also been

instrumental in advancing our mission here in Africa. Many of these missions have dedicated monthly financial support for the advancement of mission here in Kenya and in Africa at large.

While established missions have done so much commendable work, many private individuals have also supported the mission work in silence, only desiring that God sees the intent of their hearts and rewards them in his great mercy. There are many individuals not only from Cyprus and Greece but from all over the world, who have solely constructed churches and only visited during the construction of those churches. The relations between our church and their sister church, however far away, made this connection possible for the glory of God.

These relations have not only helped evangelize and expand the horizons of the mission, but they have also helped cement international relations with sister countries and offered opportunities of trade and education to our people. More than this, they have greatly aided the efforts of ecumenism over the years. The great commission of Christ would be hard to realize were it not for such relationships. It is a definite path to ensure the reality of the prayer of Christ, "that they may all be one" (John 17:21).

What is the future of these mission networks? Well, truth be told, that is only in God's hands. I say this because at the time of writing these reflections, the entire globe is still recovering from the devastating effects of COVID-19. Many missions have had to close their doors—for some, permanently. Those that are still open and operating have to deal with the financial hardships that are among the effects of the pandemic. As a result, many missions have stopped their projects abroad, and those that supported missions financially have had to cut down on their help. As it stands, many networks may be facing their last days. But by God's grace, they may yet rise again and continue impacting missions positively, as before. As I said, it is all in God's hands.

CHAPTER 14

SEDOS: Together as Mission Partners

Peter Baekelmans and Stephen Bevans

The impact of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council continues to shape the life and the mission of the church today. The Conciliar Decree *Ad gentes* of Vatican II defined and put emphasis on the missionary nature of the church; this new concept of mission was a significant paradigm shift in the understanding of mission.

Pope John XXIII taught how to listen to the world and how to be receptive both to the world and to the Spirit through the continual reading of the signs of the times. Reading the signs of the times is an effective tool because the challenges emerging from the global megatrends transform the mission situation of today. In fact, we are living in a multicultural, multireligious community, and the Service of Documentation and Study of Global Mission (SEDOS) has creatively fostered the dialogical dynamic ushered in by the nine superiors general who were council fathers and who founded SEDOS.[1] Their clarion call to an ongoing inter-congregational dialogue continues to resound in the ears of the now more than 80 SEDOS member institutes and congregations. The structures set up by the nine founders are still relevant and meet needs of the church's missionary action today. They invited us to be open to new ways of contemplating the incarnation of Jesus, the one who invites us to continue his mission with the same attitudes as his and to stimulate the interconnectedness so necessary to missionary cooperation in our globalized world.

The idea to launch a structure to support their vision germinated in "Centro *Ad Gentes*," in NEMI (Rome), where many council fathers and theologians gathered regularly to discuss important topics during Vatican II (1962–65). With their unflagging interest, they gradually brought to realization and then finally founded in 1964, on their own initiative, an Inter-Congregational Union committed to ongoing dialogue and reflection on the global mission of the church, and called their child SEDOS.

1 See Sr Nzenzile Lucie Mboma, FMM, *The Nine Founders of SEDOS, 1964–2014*, SEDOS intern document. We are much indebted here to this research done in view of the celebration of 50 years SEDOS.

The ecumenical approach to mission—as it is expressed by the World Council of Churches (WCC) and its Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) for instance in the last mission document, "The Arusha Call to Discipleship," which was drafted with Roman Catholic participation at the World Mission Conference in Arusha in 2018[2]—has been at the roots of SEDOS.

> We look back to our origins and ask: what have we achieved at all since then? Our first modest answer is: our questions through the years—more than our answers—have kept us inter-congregationally faithful and creative to our common mission charism. We next look forward and ask ourselves: whither SEDOS henceforth? Let us renew our trusting openness to the Holy Spirit who will surely spur and lead us onwards—if only we keep on asking, searching, and knocking together as mission partners.[3]

As an inter-congregational union, we modestly realized that we have been faithfully carrying out, for the past 55 years, the prophetic initiative of the founders who let themselves be guided and transformed by the Holy Spirit; and in this period of the history of the church, we feel that we are called to become more and more "Spirit-filled evangelizers who pray and work; who develop the ability to cultivate an interior space which can give a Christian meaning to our missionary commitments and activities."[4] SEDOS was inspired by the Holy Spirit and was born to help missionaries to find again their proper place in the new historical world situation and in the church, while keeping faith with their original charisma and yet in touch with the new era.

The Birth of SEDOS

As early as the Second Session of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, the nine future SEDOS founders were inspired to embark jointly on a practical project. In hindsight, theirs was an anticipated response to Pope Paul VI's insightful definition, in the final session of the council, of Pope John XXIII's pivotal watchword: "From now on *aggiornamento* will signify for us a widely

2 The two authors of this article were present at the Arusha Conference on World Mission and Evangelism in 2018: Fr Peter Baekelmans, CICM (Director of SEDOS), as member of the delegation from the Vatican, and Fr Stephen Bevans, SVD, as member of the WCC Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME).

3 Pio Estepa, SVD, "Review of SEDOS Seminars 1990–2014," *SEDOS Bulletin* (July-August 2014), 140–45.

4 See Pope Francis, *Evangelii gaudium*, n. 262.

undertaken quest for a deeper understanding of the spirit of the Council and the faithful application of the norms it has happily and prayerfully provided."[5]

The 16 Vatican II documents focused on and clarified the desired twofold renewal of all the "inner" and "outer" dimensions of the church. John XXIII envisioned primarily a profound inner transformation of the church, not so much a change in its external structure. This call to renewal demanded a spirit of cooperation that prompted the would-be SEDOS' founders to widen their circle of partnership.

In the beginning, in Rome, there was the Federation of Socio-Religious Research Institutes (FERES). Set up in 1958, its function was to coordinate and consolidate the efforts of centres to incorporate the social sciences in the works of the church. The first secretary general of FERES was Fr Linus Grond, OFM, a farsighted and genuine Franciscan. He worked with Fr François Houtart and with a group of FERES men. In time, Fr Grond realized that religious superiors, like bishops, could also benefit from such a service like the one being offered by FERES. This insight was to give birth to SEDOS in the context of three specific intentions, three goals:

1. To pool ideas and forces in a common effort, given that there are some objectives of the religious institutes that can only be achieved by the various institutes joining forces.
2. To apply social sciences to help answer the various needs of their institutes, especially the need to work in common, as referred to above.
3. To try out SEDOS, given the originality of the above two intentions.

These intentions impelled the superior generals to give a concrete and creative response to the initiatives of FERES. Informal meetings began in 1963, intensified in 1964, and culminated in a formal meeting in June at the White Fathers' Generalate. A Report by Fr Houtart, who succeeded Fr Linus Grond as the secretary general of FERES, was discussed, and a private study group was formed. Later, in September 1964, the permanent secretariat of this private study group was established. The services of two sociologists and a secretary were engaged. Rev. Rosario Scarpati was appointed as part-time director with Miss Joan Overboss (USA) as his senior executive secretary. Miss Itala Mannias (Italy) was employed as secretary. This secretariat was named

5 James H. Kroeger, *Exploring the Treasures of Vatican II* (Manila: Claretian Publications, 2011), 8.

the *Servizio di Documentazione e Studi* [Missionari] (SEDOS). Eventually, the overall organization set up by the superior generals' study group became SEDOS. The founders defined the framework of the whole organization.

By the end of June 1965, the General Assembly, in eight meetings, had drafted the statutes and regulations of the study group and formulated the basic policy—the most radical aspect of which was the decision to coordinate the common missionary efforts of the member institutes. Structurally, the first year saw the emergence of the Technical Council defined by the SEDOS statutes as follows:

> The Technical Council composed of constituent members, selected by the General Assembly, because of their knowledge, may include some personalities, religious, ecclesiastical or secular, not even missionaries, whose cooperation is required because of their expertise in the specific area of interest to the Service program. The Technical Council assists the Director in his various tasks, especially liaison with the religious institutes concerned. It is convened by the Director of the Department with the approval of the President.

In fact, the Technical Council soon developed into a group of highly competent men who spelled out in operational terms the policies adopted by the General Assembly and who prepared the way for the new policy decisions by the latter. Subsequently, the Technical Council formulated, in operational terms, the policies adopted by the General Assembly. It is worth noting that from its creation up to 30 June 1966, the Technical Council convened for a meeting 13 times!

Two significant developments marked the second year of SEDOS. First, the Technical Council has become an effective and vital link between the superiors general, their members, and the Permanent Secretariat. A small but closely functioning group, it offered an invaluable service to the common missionary effort and, in the process, to their respective institutes and to the church. Second, this year also saw the emergence of the working groups. As the Technical Council spelled out the technicalities of its various projects, it soon became evident that more specialized organs were necessary. And so, in 1966, a working group was formed to direct each programme. One or more of its members belonged to the Technical Council, with others recruited from the various Institutes.

By the beginning of June 1966, the structures of SEDOS had been clearly defined: The General Assembly, composed of the superiors general of the member institutes (or their delegates), meets five times a year to define policy, make decisions, and, in general, assume responsibility for the running of

SEDOS. The Permanent Secretariat acts as the coordinator and technical organizer for the General Assembly, the Technical Council, and the working groups. It also provides them with the basic office facilities and secretarial services. The Technical Council, made up of representatives of each institute (appointed by the respective superiors general), meets at six-week intervals to activate the policies and implement the decisions of the General Assembly and, in general, to assume responsibility for the technical and operational side of SEDOS. A number of working groups, each consisting of a member of the Technical Council and others who were selected for their competence, were formed to take on the responsibility for the management of the various programs. They had recourse to panels of advisers and experts for the solution of specific problems.

Over the first two years, 1964–66, SEDOS developed and actualized a communication system with a twofold function. First, the system facilitated sharing of information among the member institutes and within each institute. Second, it served as an instrument of common planning and, ultimately, of good management by the various institutes for the common apostolic action of the church. In June 1966, the founders defined and finalized the role of the official study group. In February 1966, Reverend Benjamin Tonna (from Malta) was appointed director, replacing Rev. R. Scarpati who resigned in late 1965 in view of his research mission in Venezuela. Looking at the archives of SEDOS, one can see that Reverend Tonna has played a great role in stabilizing SEDOS as an important tool for mission within the Roman Catholic Church during his time in office from 1966 to 1970.

As mentioned earlier, the year 1966 marked the end of the exploratory phase. In 1967 Fr Johann Schütte, Superior General of the Society of the Divine Word Missionaries, succeeded Fr Volker who completed his mandate as superior general of the White Fathers. As the president of SEDOS, Fr Schütte initiated the evaluation of SEDOS. He also opened the door of their guest house (situated at the entrance of the Generalate of SVD in Rome) and offered to accommodate the Permanent Secretariat of SEDOS in the spacious offices of the first and second floors. It houses SEDOS up to this very day. This generous gesture of the Divine Word Missionaries has been of immense help to SEDOS. It has contributed to the effectiveness of the services rendered to the congregation members. Moreover, the assurance of a permanent residence has given SEDOS a deeply appreciated sense of stability.

Evolution of SEDOS

The growth of SEDOS through the years has been encouraging. From nine men religious missionary congregations at its foundation in 1964, membership rose to 72 men and women congregations on its 25th year in 1989, and now with a grand total of 84 member congregations! SEDOS also cooperates with the Union of Superiors General (USG: men) and the International Union of Superiors General (UISG: women). These two unions and their different commissions have always been an unfailing support for the executive director of SEDOS. On many occasions, we organized joint events. However, the main scope of the activities for SEDOS is always the mission. This is the indelible character of SEDOS.

From its inception, SEDOS had a clear-cut prophetic role: to update and empower member institutes to implement, in a concrete and creative way, the vision and aim of the council, set into motion by John XXIII and brought to completion by Pope Paul VI. Also, Pope John XXIII wished the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council

> to be an opportunity for a spiritual renewal and reinvigoration of the Church that would make it more faithful to Christ's will; and for an updating (aggiornamento) of its pastoral attitudes, habits, and institutions to make them more effective in the changed conditions of the modern world. If these two goals could be achieved, the Council would also greatly promote the restoration of unity among Christians.[6]

Of the three goals that were set at the beginning of SEDOS, two have stood the test of time. First, SEDOS has become a reality in the Roman Catholic Church as the reference point when it comes to the mission activities performed by mission-minded religious or lay institutes. An example is the fact that the Vatican always invites the director of SEDOS to join their delegation to the World Mission Conference organized by the WCC, and the recent article that was requested by the Pontifical Council of Interreligious Dialogue at the occasion of the celebration of ten years of the document "Christian Witness in a Religious World."[7] It is an important role to be the spokesperson for the missionary dimension of the church. And its role is even

6 Trisco, R. F. and J. A. Komonchak, "Vatican Council II," *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2nd ed., eds. Thomas Carson and Joann Cerrito (Washington, DC: Thomson Gale, 2003).

7 Peter Baekelmans, Andreas Göpfert, James D. Redington, Edgar Nicodem, Agnes Lanfermann, and Victor Roche, "Missionary Religious Institutes and Christian Witness Past, Present and Future," in *Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World*, ed. Indunil J. Kodithuwakku K. (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2022), 141–60.

recognized beyond the Roman Catholic Church, as this very article requested by the WCC's CWME is a proof of it.

Second, the inter-congregational effort for mission makes it possible for smaller congregations to avail themselves of high quality seminars, workshops, and a bi-monthly bulletin, to get updates on new trends in mission and to find answers to problems that all have in common. The larger congregations supply not only money but also their knowledge through speakers and articles, most of whom are missiologists. SEDOS has held three main missiological congresses up to now. The first one was very soon after the erection of SEDOS, in 1969, and had two main topics: "Development and Dialogue."[8] The main language at that time was French. This was followed by another congress in 1989, whose book received the title *Mission in Dialogue*.[9] This shows that the aspect of one-way development had become less important, and mission became more of a two-way activity: namely, in dialogue with people, culture, and other religions. The common language of SEDOS had become English in the meantime. The last congress, SEDOS Mission Symposium 2021, was held last year in October and the talks were brought together in a volume entitled, New Trends in Mission, The Emerging Future, published in 2022 by Orbis Books.[10] The new trends that came up by listening to all the sharing on so many a topic were summarized in the following way:

- Synodality and communion
- Dignity and human fulfilment
- Christ-connectedness and witness
- Holistic approach and unity

The structure of SEDOS has evolved through the years to what it is now. There is an annual General Assembly toward the end of the year where the activities and finances of SEDOS are evaluated and planned by the superior generals and delegates of SEDOS members. Next, an executive committee of about ten members (president and vice-president, bursar, director, and six

8 SEDOS Symposium on "Mission Theology for our Times" held in Rome in March 1969. Published in French as "salut et dévelopment," in *Spiritus* 10:39 (1969), 327–528. Published in English as *Foundations of Mission Theology* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1972).

9 Mary Motte, FMM, and Joseph R. Lang, MM, eds., *Mission in Dialogue: The SEDOS Research Seminar on the Future of Mission, March 8–19, 1981, Rome, Italy* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1982), 634.

10 Peter Baekelmans, CICM, and Marie-Hélène Robert, OLA, *New Trends in Mission: The Emerging Future* (New York: Orbis Books, 2022).

councillors) meets twice monthly to further plan the activities. This committee is always built up in a gender-equal way. And, last but not least, the executive director, with the help of a small secretariat, executes the planned projects. SEDOS is too small to do research on its own, but through organizing seminars and workshops and the bi-monthly SEDOS bulletin, it is able to make the most recent studies and study programs available to its members and others as well. Whereas in the beginning SEDOS gathered all the documents published by its members, it now has evolved to refer to interesting missiological websites and study programmes through its SEDOS website (www. sedosmission.org) and offers all its published articles online.

The transnational networking of SEDOS goes beyond its own members, with the 84 member congregations representing in total about 60,000 missionaries working in many fields in the world. The director is a member of the Interreligious Dialogue Commission and the Justice and Peace Commission of the USG/UISG, a member of the International Association of Catholic Missiologists (IACM) and the International Association for Mission Studies (IAMS), and a member of the Interreligious Dialogue group of the Italian Conference of Bishops (CEI). Through taking part in these different associations, the director builds a healthy relationship with groups and persons outside its own organization, which helps in finding the right person to speak or write on a special topic related to global mission. Recent topics that have been dealt with lately include "mission in China," "mission and Islam," "living green mission," "youth and mission," "women in mission," "structures in the service of mission," and "the economy in the service of mission."

At the occasion of 500 years since the Reformation, a common celebration was organized at the local Evangelical Lutheran Community with its pastor, Rev. Dr Jens-Martin Kruse. He wrote a few years before, at the occasion of the 50 years celebration of SEDOS, the following words:

> Mission as communion on the way. Thus, the meaning of this Easter story can be summarized. The journey to Emmaus can be understood as a story of calling, which can encourage us to make our journey and give us impulses on how to live up to the task of Jesus.
>
> Part of this is, first of all, to go to the places where people live and listen carefully to what moves them. Secondly, accompany people on their journey and seek dialogue with them. Thirdly, to speak of the Word of God and bear witness to one's faith and, fourthly, to be both prudent and frank, clear and fearless. It would be fatal if, out of a false sense of respect, we wanted to silence our faith. Because then, we would take from others what they are entitled to, namely the gospel of salvation and freedom of Jesus Christ.

> From Jesus we can learn to reconnect with the faith and research of people, with their questions and answers in order to tell them, in the midst of the daily life of the world, of the truth and beauty of faith. We can do nothing more than tell it. But we don't even need to do more than that. So, let's start doing it! For everything else, there is the blessing and success that God gives us![11]

During my participation [PB] at the WCC Conference on World Mission and Evangelism, I felt these two main aspects of mission strongly: bringing the gospel message (evangelism), but at the same time also living it in a concrete way (mission). Among the members of SEDOS, we can find a similar difference between those for whom evangelizing is a must, and those who consider working for the kingdom of God through charitable works is essential. However, a healthy balance between words and deeds is indeed needed.

This has been formulated at the WCC Conference on World Mission and Evangelism of 2018 in Arusha by the call to "Transforming Discipleship." As disciples of Jesus, we are asked to transform (sanctify) not only the world, but also ourselves. This aspect of transformation in mission came to the fore at the latest SEDOS Mission Symposium, as Cardinal Tagle pointed out in his opening speech at the SEDOS Mission Symposium 2022,[12] but it can be found in other works as well. For instance, Mill Hill missionary Fr Len Kofler speaks in relation to "formation for mission" about "paradigm of process." Religious persons should be aware that they are part of a bigger world that is in constant change, and thus they as well should be "living in process." Discovering this process in one's own world and the world around one is part of the "bio-psycho-spiritual journey."[13]

The impact of the Arusha Call to "Transforming Discipleship"

To measure the impact of the Arusha Call document on all the SEDOS members as such is impossible, but we thought of giving an example. We therefore asked Fr Stephen Bevans, SVD, to point out what his participation in the conference at Arusha has meant for him and for his congregation:

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11 Pastor Dr Jens-Martin Kruse, "Talking about God in the World: The Missionary Responsibility of the Church Today," in *SEDOS Bulletin* 47:7/8 (2015 July-August).

12 See, Peter Baekelmans, CICM, and Marie-Hélène Robert, OLA, *New Trends in Mission: The Emerging Future* (New York: Orbis Books, 2022).

13 Len Kofler, MHM, *A Way Forward for Leadership and Formation in the Church of Our Time* (Rome: Institute of St Anselm, 2022).

My appointment to the WCC's CWME has been one of the great honours of my life. That a member of the Society of the Divine Word (SVD) would be able to contribute to the tradition begun by giants like J. H. Oldham, Hendrik Kraemer, and Lesslie Newbigin, and then later by great leaders like Christopher Duraisingh, Jacques Matthey, and Joseph Keum has been both exciting and humbling for me. To be a member of the group—once the International Missionary Council and now the CWME—that developed the basic understanding of what became the theology of the *missio Dei* at Willingen, Germany, in 1952 was for me an amazing privilege. *Missio Dei* theology greatly influenced the theology of Vatican II in *Lumen gentium* and especially *Ad gentes*, Chapter I—the latter written under the leadership of legendary SVD Superior General Johannes Schütte—and it is the theology that has greatly influenced my own education in the theology of mission. Membership in the CWME has been truly an amazing grace for me personally and for the missionary congregation to which I have belonged for 50 years.

Unfortunately, I don't think that the great work of the CWME has been much known—yet alone appreciated—by the SVD. Our own missiological thought—developed around the themes of "passing over" and "prophetic dialogue"[14]—have certainly been in the spirit of the CWME, but I don't believe that there has been an explicit connection. These ideas were more rooted in the robust missiology that had developed after the Second Vatican Council, especially under the leadership of popes Paul VI and John Paul II, and how this missiology was developed and interpreted by SEDOS. One thing is clear, however, and that is that the missiology of the SVD and the CWME was never in conflict. The missiology of the WCC had been developed under the same Catholic influences, as well as under the influence of great figures like David Bosch and Hans-Werner Gensichen. A leading Catholic missiologist of the 1980s and 1990s, Karl Müller, SVD, developed his thought in the context of committed ecumenism, and toward the end of his life edited, with Theo Sundermeier, a landmark dictionary of mission theology.[15]

In the past several years, most likely because of my participation in the CWME, there has been a kind of indirect influence by the CWME in the SVD. This is particularly true in the document that was the result of the World Mission Conference at Arusha, Tanzania, in 2018: "The Arusha Call to

14 Following the Word, Nr. 1 (Rome: SVD Publications, 1988), 44–56; *In Dialogue with the Word, Nr.1* (Rome: SVD Publications, 2000), 30–36.

15 Karl Müller and Theo Sundermeier, eds., *Lexikon Missionstheologischer Grundbegriffe* (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1987). The work appeared in English as Karl Müller, Theo Sundermeier, Stephen B. Bevans, and Richard H. Bliese, eds., *Dictionary of Mission: Theology, History, Perspectives* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1997).

Discipleship."[16] I was on the planning committee for the Arusha Conference, and worked on its preparatory document, a document reflected in the conference's final report.[17] The theme of the Arusha Conference was "Moving in the Spirit: Called to transforming discipleship," and the final report of the conference acknowledges that the conference was profoundly influenced by the CWME's 2013 groundbreaking document *Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes*.[18] One of the key connections the preparatory document and the final report made was to connect the idea of transforming discipleship with Pope Francis's idea of *missionary discipleship*.[19]

It was because of this connection that the term "transforming missionary discipleship" appeared in the preparation document for our SVD 18th General Chapter in 2018. One of the members of the preparatory commission read an article that I had published in preparation for the Arusha Conference, and so connected the two terms with one another.[20] In the final document of the General Chapter, section 1.3, is entitled "Transforming Missionary Discipleship," part of which reads as the following:

> As Divine Word Missionaries, we are inspired and compelled to commit ourselves to carry out the work of *Missio Dei* to become transforming missionary disciples of Christ in each place, among every people, and for all cultures. As transforming missionary disciples we draw upon Christ's love for us as well as our love for Christ.[21]

The CWME, in the aftermath of the Arusha Conference, has dedicated itself to deepening the understanding of transforming discipleship in the coming years. This is evident in the collection of study documents published in the volume already referred to that is edited by CWME Director Risto Jukko. Significantly, the SVD in some way at least has committed itself to the same deepening. The theme for its upcoming 2024 General Chapter is "'Your light must shine before others' (Matt. 5:16): Faithful and creative disciples in

16 See Risto Jukko, ed., *Call to Discipleship: Mission in the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2022), 12–14.

17 "The Arusha Conference Report," in Jukko, *Call to Discipleship*, 19–21.

18 World Council of Churches, *Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2013).

19 "The Arusha Conference Report," in Jukko, *Call to Discipleship*, 20.

20 Stephen Bevans, "Transforming Discipleship: Missiological Reflections," *International Review of Mission* 105:1 (402) (July 2016), 75–85. The commission member was my colleague and friend vanThanh Nguyen, SVD.

21 *In Word and Deed: Documents of the 18th General Chapter SVD 2018, No. 6* (Rome: SVD Publications, 2018), 22.

a wounded world." In a circular letter to the Society dated 27 January 2022, Superior General Paulus Budi Kleden wrote that "the **objective** of this general chapter is to enhance our growing in authentic discipleship by strengthening our identity, being creative in our ways of proclamation and witnessing to Christ in a wounded world."

The influence of the CWME and its documents on the SVD has not been all that great, and yet, in some way the influence is there. One can only hope that the coming chapter will have recourse to the significant body of reflection that the CWME has produced already and will produce in the future. If there is any way that I can make that happen, I will.

Conclusion

Early on, in the wake of the questions and hopes surfaced by the Second Vatican Council, the emerging group of SEDOS founders organized a theological symposium in 1969 to discern the paths of mission. In his opening address, the president, Fr Monde, underscored the challenges that faced the missionary congregations:

> It must be said without equivocation that the missionary institutes are preoccupied, worried and uncertain about the future of missions. This is not to indulge in pessimism. In a changing world which daily poses new problems, it is perfectly normal that the missionary world also should ask questions about its own function in this rapid and often radical evolution.[22]

Fifty five years later, today, we recognize the prophetic import of Fr Monde's view of "a changing world which daily poses new problems." Indeed, in the last five decades, the world has undergone fundamental changes in varied areas: in technology, arts, and sciences, in the global concerns about demography, gender, climate, planetary resources, moral codes, and values; in ecclesial, theological, socio-geo-political, and cultural trends, etc. As an evangelizer, the church starts with being evangelized herself (*Evangelii nuntiandi*, no. 15). As the people of God immersed in this world, and often tempted by idols, she needs to constantly and contemplatively "see and hear" the "mighty works of God," source of the freshness, vigor, and strength with which she goes forth to proclaim the gospel. Only a church evangelized by constant conversion and renewal stands ready to evangelize, in a credible way, this

22 SEDOS Symposium on "Mission Theology for our Times," held in Rome in March 1969. Published in French as "salut et dévelopment," in *Spiritus* 10:39 (1969), 330.

constantly changing world. SEDOS is a humble but effective tool in this world and mission in constant transformation.

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CHAPTER 15

Conclusion: Fresh Inspiration

Kenneth R. Ross

An alliance of Western missionary agencies, formed at the height of the colonial era, might appear today as something that is best forgotten. Yet the commitment of the World Council of Churches Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (WCC-CWME) to remember its origins in the formation of the International Missionary Council (IMC) in 1921 has proven to be fruitful. Of course, it had to mark the centenary in a self-critical way. While those involved in the IMC were impressed by the unprecedented breadth of representation that it achieved, from a longer historical perspective we are struck more by how many were absent or excluded, whether considered in terms of geography, ecclesial identity, race, or gender. Hence the exercise of marking the centenary has been intentional in "drawing the circle wide," particularly by giving centre stage to some who were marginalized in 1921. The study centres spread across the eight WCC regions have sought to be as inclusive as possible as they have gathered participants from different church traditions as well as seeking balance in terms of age, gender, and background.

The discussions of the various study centres have recognized the limitations of the IMC, acknowledging its shortcomings and blind spots. Yet all have also come to recognize that it represents something of permanent significance and ongoing inspiration. It was the beginning of something that is cherished even by those with no historical or institutional connection with the IMC. More than its founding members could ever have guessed, it turned out to be the harbinger of what we know today as World Christianity, a faith no longer identified with any one region or culture but finding expression in every part of the globe. It was the historic task of the IMC to navigate a journey from a "West to the rest" understanding of mission to one of "from everywhere to everyone." It is also distinguished by its realization that when we are called to mission, we are necessarily brought into a dynamic relationship with others who share the same calling, regardless of how different they might be from ourselves. Hence mission and unity are intimately interrelated—the conviction that ultimately convinced the IMC to integrate with the WCC in 1961.

History tells us how the IMC pursued its sense of calling to mission and unity. Reflection on this history resulted in the first volume in the two-volume publication that has resulted from the centenary study process: *A Hundred Years of Mission Cooperation: The Impact of the International Missionary Council 1921–2021*.[1] Now this second volume has taken up a more contemporary question: in light of the IMC history, how do we assess mission cooperation in our own time and what might we imagine as future possibilities? As study centres in different parts of the world have grappled with these questions a consensus has emerged that, whatever its flaws, the IMC was on to something. Coming together to assess our situation in relation to Christ's call to mission remains both important and inspirational. This is demonstrated by the fruits of the work of the study centres that have been harvested in this volume.[2]

Key Insights from the Study Centres

China represents one situation where the early concerns of the IMC remain highly relevant. Chinese Christians played an influential role in shaping the thinking of the council during its early years, particularly through the work of Cheng Ching-yi, General Secretary of the National Christian Council of China, who was elected vice-chair of the IMC in 1928. One of their great concerns was that Christianity in China should not be defined by external forces but rather by a profound internal engagement between Chinese culture and Christian faith. This concern for a truly Chinese expression of Christian faith drove a powerful movement for church unity. The ambition was that Christianity in China should not be defined and organized according to Western denominational categories but rather should come together in pursuit of an authentically Chinese Christianity.

Collaboration and contextualization were therefore two poles of the same movement. The more Chinese Christians could come together, the more they could free themselves from external control and venture along the path toward a truly Chinese Christianity. Today, as demonstrated by the work of the Nanjing study centre, a vision of further contextualization continues to be inspirational for Chinese Christians. The experience of the China Christian Council and the Three-Self Patriotic Movement has demonstrated

1 Risto Jukko, ed., *A Hundred Years of Mission Cooperation: The Impact of the International Missionary Council 1921–2021* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2022).

2 A more extended outcome of the work of the study centres will be the projected multivolume WCC-Regnum Studies in Mission Collaboration, to be published by Regnum Books in Oxford from 2023.

that Chinese churches can achieve unity while at the same time becoming a fully integrated part of Chinese society. Now they seek a further contextualization of Christianity in China as this engagement is taken to ever deeper levels of culture and society. As Chinese Christians pursue this goal today, they affirm what they have learned from their own history: that unity and authenticity are two sides of the same coin.

In India, by contrast, the 21st century has seen the emergence of quite a new social and political context with the rise of Hindutva. The social and religious plurality for which India has been distinguished in the past seems to be under threat from the homogenizing approach currently prevailing as Hindutva holds sway. As was the case in China, Indian Christians too had a long struggle during the rise of nationalism to overcome the perceived "foreignness" of Christianity. Now this battle has to be fought in a new way in a context where all minorities are subject to suspicion, discrimination, and exclusion. Engagement and mutual learning between the Bangalore-based United Theological College and the South Asia Institute of Advanced Christian Studies, on the one hand, and the Aizawl Theological College, on the other, have shown how both in South and Northeast India, a fear of Christian proselytization continues to provoke a reaction from the advocates of Hindutva.

Indian Christians find themselves being constructed as outsiders in their own homeland as identity politics takes hold and being Hindu is increasingly viewed as essential to being truly Indian. The many Christians who come from tribal backgrounds have long suffered discrimination, but this now intensifies as majoritarian domination becomes the order of the day. Discerning how best to respond to this challenging situation is now an urgent issue. There is need to actively address the suspicion of Christianity prevalent among Hindu groups while also bringing renewed vigour to discussion of how minority groups like Christians can contribute to nation-building in India. The passion for evangelism that is a distinguishing characteristic of some of the Indian churches needs to be considered in relation to the question of building harmonious relationships among different faith communities. Authenticity in terms of living out the faith in a truly Christian life may well prove crucial to Christian witness in the current context. With powerful forces of fragmentation and exclusion at play, the quest for unity represented by the IMC continues to be relevant not only within the Christian movement but in relation to other religious communities and the society as a whole.

The Kenya study centre brought to the process an acute awareness of the dynamism and diversification of African Christianity at the present time. Though African Christians did not participate in the creation of the IMC, many of its concerns prove to be relevant to their context today. New

independent and Pentecostal church movements have brought revitalization but often seem to be characterized more by competition than by cooperation. However, the question of the unity for which Christ prayed does not go away—will the answers come in new forms in the 21st century?

Cultural issues continue to loom large in the African context. Colonial rule casts a long shadow; and in many parts of the continent, the coming of Christianity coincided with the imposition of alien cultural norms. For example, Western individualism conditioned the understanding of Christianity that came with the missionary movement. Today, there is a reassertion of Africa's communitarian traditions, which provide a very different lens through which to consider the Christian faith. Another critical angle comes from gender awareness. Often in the past, Christianity has been wrapped up in various forms of gender injustice. Today, these do not go unchallenged, and there is productive work to reinterpret Christian faith in ways that are liberative rather than oppressive when it comes to matters of gender. The IMC concern for cooperation and unity is reflected today not only in church but also in society. Conflict is a pressing concern in several parts of East Africa and the role of church and mission in peace-building is paramount. Urbanization brings new pressures, often resulting in a polarization between rich and poor, with the latter sometimes exposed to extremes of deprivation. There is need for fresh forms of missionary engagement that witness to the justice promised in the kingdom of God. Rethinking mission on a broad canvas is a task that calls today for new forms of collaboration.

One of the first issues to which the IMC gave sustained attention during its early years was the question of race and racism. The study centre in Pretoria in South Africa found that race, racism, and whiteness continue to be matters of great concern to Christians inspired by the ecumenical vision. In what has been described as the "afterlife of apartheid," church life to a considerable degree continues to be marked by segregation on racial lines. Naming "whiteness" as an issue to be addressed has proved helpful for some, since in the past there has been a tacit assumption that being white was normal and unproblematic whereas Black identity was presented as a difficulty. Another helpful critical angle was an examination of the intersection of race and class, with racism functioning as a device to protect the interests of the property-owning classes. This brings the question of economic justice once more to the heart of the ecumenical agenda.

The Pretoria study centre paid particular attention to the phenomenon of "white flight." This is evident in society as white people leave areas with racially mixed communities in order to relocate to areas with a clear white majority. It also finds ecclesial expression as white members opt to leave a

racially mixed congregation in order to join one that is predominantly white in composition. This process has led to some denominations losing almost all their white members. Similar dynamics have been observed in theological education where white students tend to withdraw from spaces that are not culturally white or under white control. Such trends pose serious questions to those who cherish the ecumenical vision. Do we discover our identity and unity primarily in racial solidarity or in our oneness in Jesus Christ? This is not a new question, but it is asked with new sharpness in the world of the 21st century.

The Middle East study centre, based at the Near East School of Theology in Beirut, offered a focus on contemporary global issues that are having their impact on the Middle East: climate change, economic inequality, political conflict, rights violations, and forced migration. Such is the pressure brought to bear on church communities by these forces that it can be very tempting to turn inward and concentrate simply on self-preservation. Participants in the study process, however, argued that ecumenical cooperation is needed more than ever if we are to address these challenges in meaningful and constructive ways. Climate change is exacting a heavy toll on the environment of the Middle East; and the churches are called to an ecological conversion, drawing on the richness of their theological traditions, if they are to be effective agents in addressing the crisis. Educational institutions are a vital point of engagement for the churches of the Middle East and a crucial seedbed of positive values that can reshape society. Interfaith dialogue also plays a crucial role in creating the conditions for a peaceful shared future in the region. Another inescapable feature of life in the Middle East is migration, including the harrowing experience of forcibly displaced people.

No wonder that the Middle East study centre highlighted diakonia and hospitality as two vital dimensions of mission in their region today. Service to the vulnerable discovers a particular quality when it is intimately related to the liturgy and the eucharist, speaking of the hospitality of God. Monasticism and martyrdom are two further features that stand out when it comes to the expression of mission in the Middle East. Monastic communities continue to be primary agents of mission, as each follows their own particular calling. The consecration required by the monastic calling is also related to martyrdom, which has marked the history of Christian witness in the Middle East since its beginnings. Ours too is an age of martyrdom, as monks and others have paid with their lives for their witness during times of aggression. The deaths of the martyrs point to the sacrificial death of Christ and continue to provide fresh motivation for costly missionary engagement. In the Middle Eastern context, this involves building bridges between communities that can all too easily

become polarized by the exclusionary dynamics of our time. The laying down of life in martyrdom subverts assertiveness and opens up new possibilities of peace and reconciliation, creating hope in place of despair.

Turning to Latin America, the study centre based at the Center for Social and Theological Research of the Latin American Biblical University in Costa Rica took an empirical approach to assessing cooperation in mission in the region today. It carried out an extensive survey, covering churches, theological schools, faith-based organizations, and regional networking bodies. This mapping exercise has revealed that many agents of mission in Latin America cooperate internationally, a large number with partners in the United States (where many have their origins) but also substantial numbers with relationships linking them with Germany, Switzerland, and Canada. In most cases, such relationships involve provision of support, particularly for work among the vulnerable. Often, support takes a financial or material form, but it can also involve secondment of personnel.

The study centre worked with the premise that "Cooperation in mission occurs when Christians from different contexts and social locations participate in God's mission together. The relationships that are constructed in this process are not incidental to mission. Instead, they form an integral part of mission."[3] On this basis, it sought to elicit a qualitative assessment of the experience of cooperation. Most of the surveyed institutions indicated that their partners have a high level of concern for their work and a high level of respect for the integrity of their internal operations; but when it came to effective communication, lower levels of satisfaction were recorded. Points of concern include a tendency for international partners to be guided more by their own criteria than by the situation on the ground and the imposition of sometimes inflexible processes that are not well adapted to the local context. The prevalence of these issues reveals an unequal distribution of power within a number of the partnerships. A clear finding was that institutions in Latin America and the Caribbean would like to be more involved in the decision-making processes that govern the shared work. It appears that mission cooperation does not always escape the asymmetries of power that prevail in today's world. Coloniality continues to reassert itself. As we become more aware that mission is from the margins, the Costa Rica study centre has shown that there is still work to be done to attain greater justice and dignity in relationships of mission cooperation.

Another Latin American study centre, based in Lima, Peru, at the Evangelical Center for Andean and Amazonian Mission, has offered a

3 See Chapter 6, p. 98.

historical study. Sidney Rooy traces the life and career of the lay leader Luis Enrique Odell from Argentina, one of the key Latin American participants in the work of the IMC, who played a leading role in the integration of the IMC and the WCC in 1961. Recognition of the prophetic role played by Odell in the ecumenical movement during the middle years of the 20th century exemplifies the shift in World Christianity's centre of gravity that was occurring within the life of the IMC, as initiative and leadership increasingly passed to the global South. The IMC provided one global network within which this significant shift could be discerned and facilitated. In terms of today's missiology, the IMC discovered that God works not from the centres but rather from the margins.

The study centre for Eastern and Central Europe, based at the Faculty of Orthodox Theology, Babeș-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca, offers a missional review of the contemporary situation in Czech Republic, Poland, Romania, and Serbia. This reveals a fast-changing situation as societies become more plural and are less organized around any one unifying faith tradition. While there has been a loss of vitality in the ecumenical movement, the new situation provides new opportunities for ecumenical engagement. People belonging to different Christian traditions face common challenges as they seek to bear witness in their societies. Evidence suggests that while formal ecumenical instruments are weakening, there are new possibilities and new energy at the grassroots level.

Any renewal of ecumenical life will have to reckon with a worldview conflict that is polarizing and shaking many societies. Intense debate about ethical issues, especially in relation to gender, sexuality, and family life, are creating deep fault lines in many countries. These can be divisive also for the churches, introducing new challenges for those seeking to nurture ecumenical life. The ordination of women and pentecostalization of worship also often prove to be polarizing issues. Meanwhile, secularization is a force to be reckoned with, though not in the sense that religion entirely disappears from the life of the people. Rather, even in a secularized society, religion continues to find expression in both individual and communal forms. In this region, Orthodox identity is often closely integrated with national identity, which can inhibit ecumenical life. Even among the Orthodox churches themselves, Russia's war on Ukraine has been deeply divisive to the extent of causing some to break communion with one another. Fundamental ecumenical challenges will need to be addressed in the coming years.

The German study group, based at the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Missionswissenschaft* and the *Missionsakademie* at the University of Hamburg, took up the question of mission in a secular society. While there are aspects

of secularization that need not be considered hostile to religion and indeed some that can be traced to the influence of Christianity, it has to be acknowledged that the place of the church in society has become much less central as secularization has taken effect. In a dramatic change, European churches find themselves in a position of minority and marginality. In a plural context, the witness of the churches cannot depend on any inherited status or authority deriving from tradition. Rather, it will stand or fall according to how far it speaks convincingly to the human situation of the community.

A related concern is the transformation of a country like Germany from its traditional monoculture to the multi-ethnic and multicultural reality that is increasingly apparent today. This means transformation also for the church as it finds expression in much more varied and diverse forms than were ever known in the past. The ecumenical frontiers of today might be less to do with relations between Europe's historic Christian traditions and more to do with navigating the world Christianity that is coming to expression on European soil. This has implications for theological training since the church leaders of the future will need to be competent in their understanding not only of historic European traditions of Christianity but also across the whole range of world Christianity. Yet, in a context of declining resources, will the European churches be able to give such training the priority it deserves? For the sake of integrity and relevance in its own European context, church life will need to actively engage on a global basis, becoming more ecumenical, not less.

Perspectives from Mission Networks

The work of the regional study centres has formed the core of the effort to mark the jubilee of the IMC. In this volume their reports are complemented by a series of reflections from networks of ecumenical collaboration in mission. The first of these, the Council for World Mission (CWM), has a history that is interwoven with that of the IMC, since its predecessor body, the London Missionary Society, was one of the IMC's founding members. As Roderick Hewitt explains, the CWM has given a lead in transforming a colonial model of mission into one based on just and equitable partnership. No longer does power and decision-making lie with mission agencies of the global North. Instead, since its formation in 1977, it has become a global transnational network of mission, striving for justice in a new pattern of partnership among the 32 widely scattered mission agencies and churches that form its membership. They have committed themselves to a model of mission marked by equal power in decision making, mutual learning, and the

sharing of people, resources, and skills. As a fellowship of mission agencies and churches, they seek to maintain a radical edge, cherishing the transformative dimension of ecumenical engagement and seeking to equip local congregations with such missionary vision.

Though there were always differences of emphasis among Western mission agencies, the formation of the IMC in 1921 was a remarkable statement of their shared understanding and common purpose. As the years passed, however, it became apparent that there was a parting of the ways between those who would later be identified as "Evangelicals" and those identified as "Ecumenicals." This came to a head in the debates in the 1950s about integration of the IMC and the WCC and was cemented by the formation of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization in 1974. There were now two camps when it came to the understanding and practice of mission. The evangelical camp stressed personal evangelism and church-planting, sometimes even to the exclusion of other dimensions of mission. The ecumenical camp stressed a broad view of mission with much attention to issues of social justice, sometimes even to the exclusion of evangelism and church-planting.

Into this contested environment stepped the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies (OCMS), formed in 1983 by evangelicals who had a concern for a holistic or integral approach to mission. This orientation enabled them to imagine a "third space" where the evangelical-ecumenical divide might be bridged. Al Tizon traces how OCMS has pursued this vocation across four decades, advocating social justice among evangelism-only evangelicals while equally advocating evangelism among justice-only ecumenicals. The liberation theology perspective that God is on the side of the poor, with its strong biblical resonance, was an important instrument in bringing fresh challenge to the polarized situation. Another was the orientation of OCMS to the Majority World, which exposed the extent to which the division in the missionary movement was rooted in Western thinking that carried little relevance for the fast-growing churches of the global South. Through this work, OCMS anticipated and fostered the convergence in the understanding of mission that became evident in the second decade of the 21st century with the WCC's *Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes* (2013)[4] and the "Arusha Call to Discipleship" (2018).[5]

4 Jooseop Keum, ed., *Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2013).

5 Risto Jukko and Jooseop Keum, eds., *Moving in the Spirit: Report of the World Council of Churches Conference on World Mission and Evangelism, 8-13 March 2018, Arusha, Tanzania* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2019); see further Kenneth R. Ross, "The Arusha Call: Signal of Missiological Convergence?" *International Review of Mission* 107:2 (December 2018), 443–57.

A very different ecclesial environment is found among the Orthodox churches. As noted above, they have sometimes struggled even to remain in communion with one another, but a different side of the story is told by Archbishop Makarios of Kenya, who has been at the centre of a network of mission cooperation that has involved Orthodox Christians from many different parts of the world. At the heart of it is a longstanding commitment by the Orthodox Church in Cyprus to support Orthodox mission work in Kenya, a relationship that extends beyond the ecclesial realm to include cordial relations between the two countries. Another key player has been the Orthodox Center for Mission Studies in the USA, which has been a channel for the sharing of human and financial resources. Orthodox churches in Greece, Finland, and Australia have also played substantial roles in the collaboration that has led to the emergence of a flourishing Orthodox Church in Kenya, which in turn has launched missions in many other parts of Africa. It is another case that demonstrates that forming relationships, cultivating vision for mission, and creatively sharing resources can have fruitful results in today's world.

In the Catholic Church with its many different missionary orders, one significant forum for collaboration is the Service for Documentation and Study of Global Mission. Formed in Rome at the time of the Second Vatican Council, it took inspiration from the *aggiornamento* (openness) promoted by Pope John XXIII. Accommodated in the offices of the Generalate of the Society of the Divine Word, it has created a common forum for a variety of missionary congregations and has cultivated a broad view of mission, particularly through a dialogical attitude toward the social sciences. From modest beginnings with a membership of nine male missionary congregations, today it counts 84 missionary congregations in its membership (who between them represent some 60,000 missionaries working in all parts of the world). For them, it operates as a think-tank that helps them to keep up to date with trends in mission thinking and in the world at large. It is alert to the need for constant conversion and renewal to remain relevant in a rapidly changing world. It has consciously sought to form a point of connection between the renewal of mission thinking in the WCC and the life and experience of the Catholic missionary congregations. As a network, it thrives on the sharing of ideas within a common commitment to discern the meaning of mission in our time.

The experience of the networks highlights the reality that mission revolves around relationships. As Archbishop Makarios opens his chapter in this volume: "Throughout the history of Christendom, success in mission has more often than not been realized where mutual relations existed, either in a community of believers, across communities, and in a broader aspect, across

nations and continents."[6] This was the inspiration that gave rise to the IMC in 1921. The work of the study centres demonstrates, in wide variety of ways, that it remains inspirational today and for the future. It is clear that many of the structures created during the 20th century to foster ecumenical collaboration, including the IMC itself, proved to be time-limited. Yet the ecumenical vision that they represented is enduring. As we journey into the 21st century, the call to mission continues to be a call that breaks down barriers and creates unity. Much will depend on how we respond to this call.

Facing the Future: Challenge and Inspiration

The importance of this ecumenical impulse is underlined in the work of the study centres by the integral connection between the life of the church and the life of the society. It is clear that there are divisive, fragmenting, and exclusionary forces that are shaking our world order at the present time. The church, with its calling to witness to justice, peace, and reconciliation in Christ, is called to confront such forces and to point in a very different direction. It does this not only for itself but also for the wider society of which it is a part. The ecumenical vision can never confine its gaze to the life of the church alone. Always it must look further to embrace people of all different persuasions and the earth to which we all belong. In many different contexts around the world, the work of the study centres has shown that the struggles of the churches with questions of mission and unity are vitally connected to the struggles occurring in the societies of which they are a part.

While critical appraisal of the IMC has exposed certain weaknesses, one feature of its life that has stood the test of time is the value that it placed on creating a common platform for thinking through the meaning of mission. The continuing vitality of what was once the IMC journal, the *International Review of Mission*, is one testimony to this. Another is the recent work of the WCC-CWME, which found expression in *Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes* and the "Arusha Call to Discipleship." These documents have been arguably the most influential statements of mission theology in the 21st century and arise directly out of the IMC tradition of conferring at a global level with a view to forging a common understanding of the contemporary mission imperative.

This clearly affirms the ongoing value of the CWME as the direct successor body to the IMC. Though a small unit in terms of staff and budget, as the IMC was in its time, it has an influence disproportionate to its institutional

6 See Chapter 13, p. 219.

size because of the wide network that it mobilizes around the world. The study process built around the IMC centenary has demonstrated the convening power of CWME and its director. This is a precious resource that needs to be cherished. Another lesson that might be learned from the study process is the benefits that can be derived from making the connection between CWME and theological education. At the heart of the study process were institutions whose primary purpose is delivery of theological education. Some of them are the fruit of the IMC's Theological Education Fund, one of its most far-reaching initiatives. Looking to the future, a way needs to be found to sustain this mutually beneficial interaction between CWME and the network of theological educators whose work is showcased in this volume. Additionally, this book reveals the value that can be added by transnational mission networks. Collaboration with and among them holds much promise for the future.

The CWME effectively continues the reflection and the study work that the IMC started and continues to organize the World Mission Conferences on behalf of the WCC. The commission comprises those representing the member churches as well as mission councils and organizations working with the WCC. One conspicuous point, however, is that the commission's reflection focuses on the role of the local churches in mission. It has been observed that the WCC mission affirmation *Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes* speaks about the important role of local congregations in mission and evangelism but not about missionaries, in a period in which more missionaries are moving from everywhere to everywhere than in the decades of the IMC.[7] In this line, it will be helpful if future discussions on mission and evangelism include practitioners and offer more reflection on who is a missionary, keeping in mind the observation that globalization may contribute to the spread of Christianity from below through people's movement (geographical) and personal contacts.[8] Furthermore, there is the question about the role of parachurch organizations and mission bodies within the WCC constituency and the many that exist outside of it. In the research papers produced by the study centres, one will find hints pointing to this discussion that should not be neglected but intentionally be kept in mind

7 See Marina Ngursangzeli Behera, "Cooperation in Mission in Word—and in Practice? The Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches," in *Together in the Mission of God: Jubilee Reflections on the International Missionary Council*, Risto Jukko, ed. (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2022), 59–82, at 81–82.

8 Behera, "Cooperation in Mission in Word—and in Practice?," 69.

in a search for a responsible and context sensitive witnessing as it is expressed in the document *Christian Witness in a Multi-religious World*.[9]

The study process culminating in this volume is further testimony to the ongoing validity of the enterprise that began with the IMC in 1921—organizing to understand the challenge of mission in each different context and to learn from one's another's experiences and perspectives. The study process demonstrates several important points for mission studies in today's world. It enlarged the already wide constituency of the CWME beyond the realm of the WCC fellowship. The process proved successful in its attempt to invite those who are willing to engage by contributing studies that they think to be insightful for the global debate on mission. The study process as such was a move from representation—representative delegation into a commission—to participation. The contents of this volume demonstrate the continuing fruitfulness of such an approach. Another point it demonstrates is that, with current modern means, the online platforms invite a wide participation unrestricted by travel restrictions, which can be used to work intensively in new formats. In-person conferences undoubtedly have their merits, but they come with high demands in funds and with some restrictions in a world in which travelling and visas tend to become privileges. The experiment of the study process provides exciting possibilities by heightening the availability of people to join global processes with a wide and inclusive involvement. This model should be further developed as an instrument for global, participatory, and inclusive processes.

A final point that emerges from the work of the study centres is the cry for authenticity that can be heard in many different contexts today. Institutional authority, intellectual theory, and inherited tradition, in many situations, are no longer convincing when it comes to matters of faith. What is needed is "lived religion," a faith that finds expression in a way of life that speaks of love, joy, and hope. This is what some have described as a "Monday to Saturday faith."[10] It underlines the importance of the work done by the WCC-CWME to recover the idea of discipleship as a crucial concept for mission in our time. Its "Arusha Call to Discipleship" begins with the words, "We are called by our baptism to transforming discipleship: a Christ-connected way of life in

9 *Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World: Recommendations for Conduct* (WCC, 28 June 2011), https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/christian-witness-in-a-multi-religious-world.

10 For example, in Ecumenical Conversation No. 1, "Mission Reimagined: Transforming Disciples Challenging Empire," World Council of Churches Assembly, Karlsruhe, 31 August to 8 September 2022.

a world where many face despair, rejection, loneliness, and worthlessness."[11] As a longing for cooperation and togetherness continues to arise in many different quarters, it is through the invitation to share in this transformative journey of discipleship that ecumenical mission offers something distinctive in the world of today and tomorrow.

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11 Jukko and Keum, *Moving in the Spirit*, 45.

FURTHER INFORMATION

IMC Centenary Videoconference 2021 (three public sessions):
https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLI22eVXX9FYkg3BmsSCF2ddhJOd3HnZVs

IMC/CWME documentation:
https://archive.org/details/worldmissionaryconferences

For a display by date of publication:
https://archive.org/details/worldmissionaryconferences?&sort=date

For a display by alphabetical order of the titles:
https://archive.org/details/worldmissionaryconferences?sort=titleSorter

Professor Brian Stanley's IMC Jubilee lecture (2022):
https://www.oikoumene.org/news/brian-stanley-lectures-on-history-of-international-missionary-council-and-its-relevance-to-today

Risto Jukko, ed. *Call to Discipleship: Mission in the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace. World Council of Churches Commission on World Mission and Evangelism Documents 2018–2021* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2021).

Risto Jukko, ed. *Together in the Mission of God: Jubilee Reflections on the International Missionary Council* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2022).

Risto Jukko, ed. *A Hundred Years of Mission Cooperation: The Impact of the International Missionary Council 1921-2021* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2022).

Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes (2013)
https://www.oikoumene.org/sites/default/files/Document/Together_towards_Life.pdf

This book is a must for academics, pastors, or mission practitioners interested in how Christianity expanded in the 20th century through mission work, how this has transformed into World (or Global) Christianity, and what mission looks like in the 2020s and beyond.

The first part answers two questions through nine regional reports. These reports came from an international study process led by the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches for the centenary of the commission's predecessor, the International Missionary Council:

- For some 30 years now, most Christians have lived in the global South. What is their understanding of mission in today's world in crisis, and what will it be in the years to come?

- Many of these Christians live in conditions that threaten their existence because of war, poverty, and the effects of climate change—such as droughts, floods, and famine. What hope can the good news of Jesus Christ give to those who are most vulnerable and often wounded?

The second part of the book contains five studies of transnational mission networks. The International Missionary Council was originally a "council of councils and mission networks," creating a model followed by many since 1921. Transnational mission networks offer a huge potential for churches and mission actors in their work in a world that is facing many unexpected and overwhelming challenges. How can these networks foster mission, justice, reconciliation, and unity?

RELIGION/MISSION

World Council of Churches

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