



Regnum Edinburgh Centenary Series

VOLUME 25



# Called to Unity For the Sake of Mission



**Edited By**

**John Gibaut and Knud Jørgensen**





REGNUM EDINBURGH CENTENARY SERIES  
Volume 25

Called to Unity  
For the Sake of Mission

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## REGNUM EDINBURGH CENTENARY SERIES

The centenary of the World Missionary Conference of 1910, held in Edinburgh, was a suggestive moment for many people seeking direction for Christian mission in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Several different constituencies within world Christianity held significant events around 2010. From 2005, an international group worked collaboratively to develop an intercontinental and multi-denominational project, known as Edinburgh 2010, based at New College, University of Edinburgh. This initiative brought together representatives of twenty different global Christian bodies, representing all major Christian denominations and confessions, and many different strands of mission and church life, to mark the centenary.

Essential to the work of the Edinburgh 1910 Conference, and of abiding value, were the findings of the eight think-tanks or ‘commissions’. These inspired the idea of a new round of collaborative reflection on Christian mission – but now focused on nine themes identified as being key to mission in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The study process was polycentric, open-ended, and as inclusive as possible of the different genders, regions of the world, and theological and confessional perspectives in today’s church. It was overseen by the Study Process Monitoring Group: Miss Maria Aranzazu Aguado (Spain, The Vatican), Dr Daryl Balia (South Africa, Edinburgh 2010), Mrs Rosemary Dowsett (UK, World Evangelical Alliance), Dr Knud Jørgensen (Norway, Areopagos), Rev John Kafwanka (Zambia, Anglican Communion), Rev Dr Jooseop Keum (Korea, World Council of Churches), Dr Wonsuk Ma (Korea, Oxford Centre for Mission Studies), Rev Dr Kenneth R. Ross (UK, Church of Scotland), Dr Petros Vassiliadis (Greece, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki), and co-ordinated by Dr Kirsteen Kim (UK, Edinburgh 2010).

These publications reflect the ethos of Edinburgh 2010 and will make a significant contribution to ongoing studies in mission. It should be clear that material published in this series will inevitably reflect a diverse range of views and positions. These will not necessarily represent those of the series’ editors or of the Edinburgh 2010 General Council, but in publishing them the leadership of Edinburgh 2010 hopes to encourage conversation between Christians and collaboration in mission. All the series’ volumes are commended for study and reflection in both church and academy.

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Volume 25

**Called to Unity  
For the Sake of Mission**

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John Gibaut and Knud Jørgensen

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## PREFACE

The Edinburgh 2010 Common Call emerged from the Edinburgh 2010 study process and conference marking the centenary of the World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910. The Common Call, cited below, was affirmed in the Church of Scotland Assembly Hall in Edinburgh on 6 June 2010, by representatives of world Christianity, including Catholic, Orthodox, Evangelical, Pentecostal, and other major Protestant churches.

*As we gather for the centenary of the World Missionary Conference of Edinburgh 1910, we believe the church, as a sign and symbol of the reign of God, is called to witness to Christ today by sharing in God's mission of love through the transforming power of the Holy Spirit.*

*1. Trusting in the Triune God and with a renewed sense of urgency, we are called to incarnate and proclaim the good news of salvation, of forgiveness of sin, of life in abundance, and of liberation for all poor and oppressed. We are challenged to witness and evangelism in such a way that we are a living demonstration of the love, righteousness and justice that God intends for the whole world.*

*2. Remembering Christ's sacrifice on the Cross and his resurrection for the world's salvation, and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we are called to authentic dialogue, respectful engagement and humble witness among people of other faiths – and no faith – to the uniqueness of Christ. Our approach is marked with bold confidence in the gospel message; it builds friendship, seeks reconciliation and practises hospitality.*

*3. Knowing the Holy Spirit who blows over the world at will, reconnecting creation and bringing authentic life, we are called to become communities of compassion and healing, where young people are actively participating in mission, and women and men share power and responsibilities fairly, where there is a new zeal for justice, peace and the protection of the environment, and renewed liturgy reflecting the beauties of the Creator and creation.*

*4. Disturbed by the asymmetries and imbalances of power that divide and trouble us in church and world, we are called to repentance, to critical reflection on systems of power, and to accountable use of power structures. We are called to find practical ways to live as members of One Body in full awareness that God resists the proud, Christ welcomes and empowers the poor and afflicted, and the power of the Holy Spirit is manifested in our vulnerability.*

*5. Affirming the importance of the biblical foundations of our missional engagement and valuing the witness of the Apostles and martyrs, we are called to rejoice in the expressions of the gospel in many nations all over the world. We celebrate the renewal experienced through movements of migration and mission in all directions, the way all are equipped for*

*mission by the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and God's continual calling of children and young people to further the gospel.*

*6. Recognising the need to shape a new generation of leaders with authenticity for mission in a world of diversities in the twenty-first century, we are called to work together in new forms of theological education. Because we are all made in the image of God, these will draw on one another's unique charisms, challenge each other to grow in faith and understanding, share resources equitably worldwide, involve the entire human being and the whole family of God, and respect the wisdom of our elders while also fostering the participation of children.*

*7. Hearing the call of Jesus to make disciples of all people – poor, wealthy, marginalised, ignored, powerful, living with disability, young, and old – we are called as communities of faith to mission from everywhere to everywhere. In joy we hear the call to receive from one another in our witness by word and action, in streets, fields, offices, homes, and schools, offering reconciliation, showing love, demonstrating grace and speaking out truth.*

*8. Recalling Christ, the host at the banquet, and committed to that unity for which he lived and prayed, we are called to ongoing co-operation, to deal with controversial issues and to work towards a common vision. We are challenged to welcome one another in our diversity, affirm our membership through baptism in the One Body of Christ, and recognise our need for mutuality, partnership, collaboration and networking in mission, so that the world might believe.*

*9. Remembering Jesus' way of witness and service, we believe we are called by God to follow this way joyfully, inspired, anointed, sent and empowered by the Holy Spirit, and nurtured by Christian disciplines in community. As we look to Christ's coming in glory and judgment, we experience his presence with us in the Holy Spirit, and we invite all to join with us as we participate in God's transforming and reconciling mission of love to the whole creation.*

### **Themes Explored**

The 2010 conference was shaped around the following nine study themes:

1. Foundations for mission
2. Christian mission among other faiths
3. Mission and post-modernities
4. Mission and power
5. Forms of missionary engagement
6. Theological education and formation
7. Christian communities in contemporary contexts
8. Mission and unity – ecclesiology and mission
9. Mission spirituality and authentic discipleship

### The Regnum Edinburgh Centenary Series to Date

Against this background a series of books was commissioned, with the intention of making a significant contribution to ongoing studies of mission. This series currently includes:<sup>1</sup>

*Edinburgh 2010: Mission Then and Now*, David A. Kerr and Kenneth R. Ross (eds).

*Edinburgh 2010 Volume II: Witnessing to Christ Today*, Daryl Balia and Kirsteen Kim (eds).

*Mission Continues: Global Impulses for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Claudia Wahrish-Oblau and Fidon Mwombeki (eds).

*Holistic Mission: God's Plan for God's People*, Brian Woolnough and Wonsuk Ma (eds).

*Mission Today and Tomorrow*, Kirsteen Kim and Andrew Anderson (eds).

*The Church Going Local: Mission and Globalization*, Tormod Engelsviken, Erling Lundeby and Dagfinn Solheim (eds).

*Evangelical and Frontier Mission: Perspectives on the Global Progress of the Gospel*, A. Scott Moreau and Beth Snodderly (eds).

*Interfaith Relations after One Hundred Years: Christian Mission among Other Faiths*, Marina Ngursangzeli Behera (ed).

*Witnessing to Christ in a Pluralistic Age: Christian Mission among Other Faiths*, Lalsangkima Pachuau and Knud Jørgensen (eds).

*Mission and Post Modernities*, Rolv Olsen (ed).

*A Learning Missional Church: Reflections from Young Missiologists*, Beate Fagerli, Knud Jørgensen, Rolv Olsen, Kari Storstein Haug and Knut Tveitereid (eds).

*Life-Widening Mission: Global Anglican Perspectives*, Cathy Ross (ed).

*Foundations for Mission*, Emma Wild-Wood and Peniel Rajkumar (eds).

*Mission Spirituality and Authentic Discipleship*, Wonsuk Ma and Kenneth R. Ross (eds).

*A Century of Catholic Missions*, Stephen Bevans (ed).

*Mission as Ministry of Reconciliation*, Robert Schreiter and Knud Jørgensen (eds).

*Orthodox Perspectives on Mission*, Petros Vassiliadis (ed).

*Bible in Mission*, Pauline Hoggarth, Fergus Macdonald, Knud Jørgensen and Bill Mitchell (eds).

*Pentecostal Mission and Global Christianity*, Wonsuk Ma, Veli-Matti Karkkainen and J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu (eds).

*Engaging the World: Christian Communities in Contemporary Global Society*, Afe Adogame, Janice McLean and Anderson Jeremiah (eds).

*Mission At and From the Margins: Patterns, Protagonists and Perspectives*, Peniel Rajkumar, Joseph Dayam, I.P. Asheervadham (eds).

*The Lausanne Movement: A Range of Perspectives*, Margunn Serigstad Dahle, Lars Dahle and Knud Jørgensen (eds).

<sup>1</sup> For an up-to-date list and full publication details, see [www.ocms.ac.uk/regnum/](http://www.ocms.ac.uk/regnum/)

## **FOREWORD: CALLED TO UNITY – FOR THE SAKE OF MISSION**

I hesitated to accept to write a Foreword to this book, aware of the highest competence and scholarship as well as the rich and multiple experiences of the contributors. So these few lines do not add particular wisdom to the one shining from the articles, but try to convey my impression of the importance of the theme and the book. I want to commend the editors for succeeding in publishing this collection of papers in the Edinburgh series, knowing how much struggle this meant. It would indeed have been strange to future historians screening Edinburgh 2010's study process to count no specific treatment of mission and unity within a list of nearly thirty books published around that major event. Having been involved in the preparations of the conference since the early stages, I remember that the first list of eight study themes did not include 'mission and unity – ecclesiology and mission'. It took some convincing arguments to add a ninth study theme to the almost canonically fixed eight (in reference to the number of 1910's commissions). It is interesting that a similar difficulty could have arisen in the aftermath of Edinburgh if, in particular, Knud Jørgensen had not insisted on the importance of that theme for contemporary world Christianity.

The book contains much more than 'just' the treatment of the relationship between mission and unity. One finds theologically argued histories of ecumenical, evangelical, Orthodox and Roman Catholic developments since 1910 as well as introductions to major denominational ecclesiologies and their views on unity, living presentations of new and often unknown mission endeavours in the West and in the Two-Thirds World, many of them not represented at the 2010 Edinburgh conference, although the meeting counted on participation from a large section of world Christianity. It is, indeed, still the case that when worldwide movements have to send few delegates, these do not represent the width and richness of their very diverse constituencies. It is also true, as one paper indicates, that not all significant new mission movements are organised at world level. Still, Edinburgh 2010 provided at least a limited picture of the variety of churches and mission experiences in the contemporary world and witnessed in that way to the heritage of the 1910 meeting. This book, similarly, counts on contributions from a very wide circle of theologians, church and mission leaders from diverse segments of world Christianity, most of them represented in Edinburgh or Cape Town 2010.

In line with the Edinburgh message, one can say that almost all agree to strive for more unity in doing mission, so that the credibility of the message would not be at stake. This common conviction is indeed encouraging: Edinburgh 2010 was not merely a dream, but an expression of reality, as

imperfect as it may have been. Some papers use the term ‘unity’ to address internal agreements within their own spiritual or theological tradition. There is nothing to argue against that. The difficulty however is to speak positively of what unity means between very different churches, not only in terms of their contextual inculturation, but also of their theological and particularly ecclesiological presuppositions. What does it imply in terms of unity in faith, in sacramental life, and in service or mission? Depending on their history and tradition, churches have grown nearer in one or two of the mentioned aspects, rarely in all three. Striving for unity also means to face the long history of clashes, conflicts, wounds, misrepresentations and oppressions. This concerns the relationships between churches of western and eastern traditions, but also between the global North and global South. I read with satisfaction what several authors wrote about reconciliation. I consider this book as a parallel reader to the one on reconciliation in the post-Edinburgh series.<sup>1</sup> Visible unity, which must include the sharing of the Eucharist, will only be reached, once churches that have harmed and been harmed have embarked on serious reconciliation processes and found ways to practise the various forms of justice (retributive, restorative, structural) required for genuine peace. As we know from political life, such processes can take generations and need both institutional backing and committed leaders to progress. They also need courageous steps in publicly asking for and granting forgiveness.

To strive for visible unity between churches is a uniquely Christian responsibility. Many important tasks in global mission can be shared at least in part with other people. To work for unity between churches is one of the specifically Christian responsibilities. Some positive developments from the last decades are highlighted by several papers, including the history of united and uniting churches, or the recent convergence between the World Council of Churches’ Commissions on Faith & Order and Mission & Evangelism, both representing larger constituencies than the WCC member-churches. Other encouraging initiatives mentioned are the opening dialogue between evangelicals of the Lausanne movement and Orthodox, or the one already institutionalised between the Roman Catholic Church and Pentecostals, not to forget all the processes linked to the Global Christian Forum. The common publication in 2011 by the World Council of Churches, the World Evangelical Alliance, and the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue of the text *Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World: Recommendations for Conduct* can be seen as a milestone on the way to mission in unity.

I like to insist on unity as reconciliation, because unity is important not only for the sake of mission (as the title of this book rightly indicates), but because it represents the very content of the gospel. *Koinonia* is what

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Schreiter and Knud Jørgensen (eds), *Mission as Ministry of Reconciliation* (Oxford: Regnum, 2013), Regnum Edinburgh Centenary Series, Vol 16.

*missio Dei* is all about, rightly argued in this book. Jesus Christ had to die on the cross in order to reconcile the world, the whole creation, to God and humans to each other, overcoming all separating walls. In early Christianity, such reconciliation led to common life and meals between people who in their religious and cultural traditions would have found that impossible. Love expressed in celebrating God and sharing bread together at the same table, in sharing goods and resources, showed *visibly* that religiously or ideologically justified rules of separation had no absolute power. The contemporary failure to worship and share bread at the same table, but also to share the world's resources, could well mean to outsiders the incapacity of Christ to heal the family twists within Christianity. How could he then possibly be believed to bring salvation to the world?

The problem is that unity presupposes humility and, just as important, abandonment of power. Churches that have institutional and religious power as well as links with economic, political or social powers usually are not easily ready to let it go, even in part. The whole debate around the moratorium in the 1970s and around attempts to change mission societies to church communions was about power in mission. It remains the key question to be asked of all existing forms of church or mission partnerships, but also to bilateral or multilateral dialogues. Much too often, (re-)affirmation of denominational identity also has to do with keeping or reinforcing structures of influence over people and so maintaining one's role in society and one's importance, not to say pride.

*Mission in Christ's way* – rightly emphasised in this book – is to be practised through renunciation of power and status. The challenge can be read in the letter of Paul to the Philippians, where he introduces and interprets the famous hymn referring to the kenotic trajectory of Christ:

‘... be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus ...’ (Philippians 2:2-5).

This is the evangelical way to unity and reconciliation, but also the most difficult. Are you ready to consider an Orthodox (or an evangelical, or a charismatic) as better than yourself, not only as a person, but also as a member of his or her church? And look not primarily to the interest of your denomination or community, but to the interests of the other?

Walking along such a trajectory is living as missional people and communities, offering signs of God's purpose to all those whom God calls to consciously become God's children. We have come some way, as this book shows, but the pilgrimage must move on. May the Spirit provide abundantly the fruit of love and the charisma that are required to heal past and present wounds, and edify authentic missional churches. Hope for unity is hope against hope, if one looks at the contemporary globalised world and missionary or church statistics. But hope is realistic, not because of

statistics, but because of the power of the Spirit to call, renew and revive. May all you who have the privilege of reading this book find inspiration and strength, so that your impatience will challenge your patience on the way to unity in mission and to full visible unity. You are called to unity – for the sake of mission. You are also called to mission – for the sake of unity.

Jacques Matthey  
Former Director of the WCC Programme on Unity,  
Mission, Evangelism and Spirituality

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## EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

John Gibaut and Knud Jørgensen

This book is one of the volumes in the Regnum Edinburgh Centenary Series, a series that has grown out of the celebration of the Edinburgh 1910 World Missionary Conference and a series that eventually will include around thirty volumes on mission in the twenty-first century. A number of the titles relate to the nine themes of the Edinburgh 2010 study process while other titles explore missiological thinking within the major confessions. In addition, there are titles on mission and the next generation, mission at and from the margins, the Bible in mission, mission and diaspora, freedom of belief and mission, and mission and reconciliation. The series also includes volumes reflecting on major 2010 events in Tokyo and Cape Town. The plan is to bring the series to completion in the autumn of 2015.

### **Mission and Unity – Ecclesiology and Mission**

An important study theme of Edinburgh 2010 was *Mission and Unity – Ecclesiology and Mission*. An early attempt to bring together perspectives and contributions for a volume on this theme did not materialize. The editors of the series did, however, not give up this project. Volumes on the other study themes are part of the series.

The theme is highlighted in the *Edinburgh 2010 'Common Call'* in the following way:

Recalling Christ, the host at the banquet, and committed to that unity for which he lived and prayed, we are called to ongoing co-operation, to deal with controversial issues and to work towards a common vision. We are challenged to welcome one another in our diversity, affirm our membership through baptism in the One Body of Christ, and recognise our need for mutuality, partnership, collaboration and networking in mission, so that the world might believe.

The purpose of a volume on *Mission and Unity – Ecclesiology and Mission* is to bring to public attention a broad overview of the history, development and perspectives on the role of mission in the pursuit of unity, and the central Biblical focus on unity as a prerequisite for an authentic witness in mission.

Our aim has been broad participation and broad perspectives. The book therefore includes both scholarly and practical input on various aspects of the topic and from various parts of the world. There is, as far as we know,

no other conceptual treatment of this issue from such a broad ecumenical perspective. Pulling in a broad and diverse team of contributors has served to strengthen the ecumenical and professional focus of the project.

Some key documents have been major references for the book and the writers:

- ‘Report on Theme 8: Mission and Unity – Ecclesiology and Mission’, in Daryl Balia and Kirsteen Kim (eds), *Edinburgh 2010: Witnessing to Christ Today* (Oxford: Regnum, 2010).
- ‘Parallel Session on Theme 8: Mission and Unity – Ecclesiology and Mission’, in Kirsteen Kim and Andrew Anderson (eds), *Edinburgh 2010: Mission Today and Tomorrow* (Oxford: Regnum, 2011).
- Relevant sections from the Vatican II documents *Lumen Gentium* (1964) and *Ad Gentes* (1965).
- Relevant sections from the *Cape Town Commitment* (The Lausanne Movement 2011).
- Relevant sections from *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* (World Council of Churches, 2013).
- Relevant sections from *Together Towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes* (World Council of Churches, 2012).

Several of the topics and perspectives in the book are taken from these reference documents, particularly from the first two.

### **Called to Unity – For the Sake of Mission**

The title is inspired by the World Council of Churches’ statement on *Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation* which highlights the ‘growing awareness among churches today of the inextricable relationship between Christian unity and missionary calling, between ecumenism and evangelization. “Evangelization is the test of our ecumenical vocation”<sup>1</sup>. At the same time, mission is increasingly seen as being a matter of the very essence of the church, thus making the link between unity and mission even more important. Mission belongs to the very being of the Church. It cuts across all four attributes of the Church (apostolicity, unity, holiness and catholicity) as they relate both to the nature of God’s own being and to the practical demands of authentic and credible mission. The ‘engine’ or driving force is mission because we have come to realize that the world will not believe that the Father sent the Son if the messengers of the Good News are divided (John 20:20-23). Spiritual unity is not enough; the world must see that we love one another. So the high goal of the visible unity of all God’s people cannot be given up.

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<sup>1</sup> Jacques Matthey (ed), *You Are the Light of the World: Statements on Mission by the World Council of Churches, 1980-2005* (Geneva: WCC, 2005), 4-38.

**Section 1** of the book presents historical and missiological perspectives, drawing a map of the journey from Edinburgh 1910 to the present day and highlighting the Biblical and theological foundations. The section also lays out an overview of how the global church views the relationship between unity and mission.

**Section 2** deals with ways of doing mission in unity in different contexts. The section includes global initiatives, church initiatives, illustrations of new movements and divergent perspectives. John Gibaut's chapter, 'From Unity and Mission to *Koinonia* and *Missio Dei*: Convergences in WCC Ecclesiology and Missiology towards Edinburgh 2010' is the gateway to this section and brings together two of the key issues in contemporary ecclesiology and missiology. Under *Church Initiatives* the reader will find contributions from Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Anglican, and Pentecostal contributors. In the sub-section on *New Movements* we are taken on an exciting tour of Europe (Stefan Paas), a worldwide tour of emerging movements (Mark Oxbrow), and a journalistic ride around Christian groups formed by vastly different circumstances (Kåre Melhus). And under *Perspectives* we have collected contributions from Cuba, India and Korea. We are particularly grateful for the contribution from Dr Younghoon Lee, one of the leaders of the Yoido Full Gospel Church in Korea. In a concluding chapter, Knud Jørgensen binds the many strands by weaving them together in a way that focuses on the credibility of our witness as a church and as Christians in mission.

The book is the work of twenty-one people representing various church traditions and various views and positions. They come from five continents and bring with them both their context and their experience. We want to thank our collaborators and colleagues; it has been inspiring, sometimes cumbersome, but always enlightening to work with them.

John Gibaut and Knud Jørgensen  
December 2014

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**SECTION ONE**

**HISTORICAL AND  
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# EDINBURGH 1910: EVANGELIZATION AND UNITY<sup>1</sup>

Brian Stanley

The centenary of the World Missionary Conference held in the Assembly Hall of the United Free Church of Scotland in Edinburgh, 14-23 June 1910, was marked by a considerable number of commemorative events held in different parts of the globe during the year 2010, including the official centennial conference that took place in Edinburgh itself, 2-6 June 2010. The various centennial commemorations witnessed to the fact that all sections of the global Protestant family, from the most committed of ecumenists to the most conservative of evangelicals, were keen to pay their several acts of homage to the cherished memory of 'Edinburgh 1910', and to display their apostolic credentials as the true heirs of this historic assembly. The Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches also showed their eagerness to be involved in the commemoration of an event that forms no part of their own histories. It was noticeable during the commemorations how frequently statements were made that implied that Edinburgh 1910 was an ecumenical conference in something like the modern sense, and that it marked the beginning of the ecumenical movement. The year 2010 thus added a new chapter to the ongoing narrative of reinterpretation of the conference, a narrative that began even before it reached its conclusion. There can be few other episodes in modern church history that have been burdened with such a weighty cargo of symbolic meaning and, as a result, have been so liable to the distorting effect of selective remembrance. This article will attempt to disentangle history from myth, and assess the true significance of the conference with particular reference to its ecumenical consequences.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Earlier versions of this article were published in *Expository Times*, 121/7 (April 2010), 325-31, and in Viggo Mortensen and Andreas Østerlund Nielsen (eds), *Walk Humbly with the Lord: Church and Mission Engaging Plurality* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 15-26. I am grateful to Sage Publications and to Eerdmans for permission to reproduce much of my original article here.

<sup>2</sup> For a fuller account of the conference and its place in the Protestant missionary movement, and for fuller references than are supplied in the footnotes to this article, see my *The World Missionary Conference: Edinburgh 1910* (Grand Rapids, MI, and Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2009).

### **The First International and Ecumenical Missionary Conference?**

Contrary to what is often alleged, Edinburgh 1910 was neither the first international missionary conference, nor was it an ‘ecumenical’ conference except in a strictly limited sense of the word. Its original title was indeed the ‘Third Ecumenical Missionary Conference’, since it followed two earlier (and now generally forgotten) large Protestant missionary gatherings held in London in 1888 and New York in 1900. The first international conference of Protestant missionaries was in fact held in New York in 1854, albeit on a much smaller scale than the meetings in 1900 or 1910. It is a nice irony that, when at a crucial planning meeting held at Wycliffe Hall in Oxford in July 1908, it was decided to abandon the title ‘Third Ecumenical Missionary Conference’ in favour of ‘The World Missionary Conference’, the reason given was that ‘the word “ecumenical” has acquired a technical meaning’ – in other words, its modern meaning, associated with the very movement for church unity to which Edinburgh gave birth.<sup>3</sup> As John H. Ritson, an English Methodist minister, secretary of the British and Foreign Bible Society, and member of the British executive committee, observed, the word ‘ecumenical’ had been dropped, ‘as it cannot be used truthfully while great sections of the Church are in no way connected with the Conference.’<sup>4</sup> There were, of course, no representatives of the Roman Catholic, Orthodox or Oriental Churches, although one Roman Catholic modernist, Bishop Geremia Bonomelli of Cremona, did send a letter of greeting which was, eventually, read to the conference on 21 June by his friend, Silas McBee, an American Episcopal layman from New York, with the tacit and unofficial approval of the conference business committee.

The organizers of the Edinburgh conference were thus humble enough to recognize that their overwhelmingly Protestant and broadly evangelical assembly could not justifiably claim the label of ‘ecumenical’. The most that can be said is that it was rather more ecumenical than its predecessors in that the High-Church Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG), to the chagrin of many of its supporters, was for the first time represented in a Protestant missionary conference, although the more distinctively Anglo-Catholic Universities’ Mission to Central Africa (UMCA) was not. Despite the description of the conference in one recent academic study of twentieth-century ecumenism as ‘the first modern assembly of world-wide churches’,<sup>5</sup> the participating agencies in the

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<sup>3</sup> Third Ecumenical Missionary Conference (June 1910), Minutes of International Committee, 14-20 July 1908 (Geneva: Ecumenical Centre), 9.

<sup>4</sup> J.H. Ritson to H. Smith, 24 July 1908, BSA/F4/3/1, Bible Society archives, Cambridge University Library, Fol. 69.

<sup>5</sup> John F. Woolverton, *Robert H. Gardiner and the Reunification of Worldwide Christianity in the Progressive Era* (Columbia, MO, and London: University of Missouri Press, 2005), 113.

Edinburgh conference were voluntary bodies with no ecclesial status: it was composed of delegates of western missionary societies, with the addition of a few specially invited guests. As is well known, only a tiny minority of the 1,215 official delegates came from the non-western world: at the latest count, twenty such have been identified – nine Indians (including one Eurasian Methodist woman from Madras, Grace Stephens),<sup>6</sup> four Japanese, three Chinese, one Korean, one Burmese, one Anatolian, and a solitary and heavily Europeanized black African – Mark Christian Hayford from the Gold Coast (Ghana). Hence, even if the term ‘ecumenical’ is interpreted in its original and non-ecclesiastical sense as meaning ‘representative of the entire family of humanity’, the World Missionary Conference has only a very limited right to the title.

### The Starting-Point of the Ecumenical Movement?

The Edinburgh conference is even more frequently described, not least in undergraduate essays, as the starting-point of the modern ecumenical movement. Alec Vidler’s volume in the *Pelican History of the Church* observed that ‘it is generally agreed that the movement, as it is now known, dates from the International Missionary Conference [*sic*] that was held at Edinburgh in 1910’.<sup>7</sup> John Kent’s acerbic judgement on the ecumenical movement as ‘the great ecclesiastical failure of our time’ referred to 1910 as the year ‘when the search for institutional unity was first systematically organized’,<sup>8</sup> ignoring the fact that any questions relating to the differences in doctrine and order between Christian churches were strictly prohibited from the discussions at Edinburgh. The exclusion was extracted from J. H. Oldham, the newly appointed conference secretary, in 1908 by Charles Gore, bishop of Birmingham, and Edward Talbot, bishop of Southwark, as the condition that would, they hoped, secure the participation in the conference of the SPG, many of whose supporters viewed the projected event as a lamentable gathering of Protestant sects with which no catholic Anglican could possibly be identified.

In point of fact, the terms of the exclusion of faith and order were placed under considerable strain by the weight of evidence submitted to Commission VIII on ‘Co-operation and the Promotion of Unity’, such that Protestants in India, China and Japan were ready to talk about moves towards church union, and not merely about closer co-operation between mission agencies. Nevertheless, if the conference had made any sustained venture into the forbidden territory of discussing the possible reunion of

<sup>6</sup> Grace Stephens is not identified in my book as coming from India; I owe this discovery to Professor Dana Robert of Boston University.

<sup>7</sup> A.R. Vidler, *The Church in an Age of Revolution: 1789 to the Present Day* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1961), 257.

<sup>8</sup> John Kent, *The Unacceptable Face: The Modern Church in the Eyes of the Historian* (London: SCM, 1987), 203.

western Christendom, its minority of Anglo-Catholic delegates would have promptly walked out, and disaster would have ensued.

As is well known, there is nevertheless good justification for tracing the genealogy of the World Council of Churches at least in part to the 1910 conference. John R. Mott, the American Methodist lay evangelist who took the chair at Edinburgh, was the first speaker at the inaugural assembly of the WCC at Amsterdam in 1948, and was made honorary President of the new World Council. The WCC was the offspring of the marriage in 1938 of the Faith & Order and Life & Work movements. The latter was, however, a response, not to the World Missionary Conference, but to World War I. Its principal architect, Nathan Söderblom, Lutheran Archbishop of Uppsala, was not a delegate at Edinburgh, though he was deeply influenced by the international student movement that was so formative for the collaborative and non-dogmatic approach adopted by the conference.

The Faith & Order movement, by contrast, owed its genesis to Charles H. Brent, American missionary Bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the Philippines, who was present at Edinburgh, and spoke twice. His first address was a bold contribution to the debate on ‘Co-operation and the Promotion of Unity’, in which he urged that, ‘In any scheme, practical or theoretical, for unity, we must take into our reckoning the Roman Catholic Church, which is an integral part of the Church and of the Kingdom of God,’<sup>9</sup> an emphasis that reflected his own experience in the Philippines, the most Catholic nation in Asia. His second address, made to the penultimate evening session on 22 June, referred in general terms to the ‘new vision’ that had been unfolded to the delegates.<sup>10</sup> According to Tissington Tatlow, General Secretary of the Student Christian Movement, ‘the new vision was the vision of a united Church’, though there is no conclusive evidence that church unity rather than enhanced missionary co-operation was what Brent meant.<sup>11</sup> In his old age, J. H. Oldham, the Secretary of the conference, claimed that Brent had called at Edinburgh for another conference to tackle those questions of faith and order that had been excluded from the agenda, but the evidence suggests that Oldham’s memory was at fault; no such reference is recorded in the reports of either of Brent’s conference addresses, and his diary records that the idea of a world conference on faith and order in fact came to him vividly at a

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<sup>9</sup> World Missionary Conference, 1910, *Report of Commission VIII: Co-operation and the Promotion of Unity* (Edinburgh and London: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier; and New York, Chicago and Toronto: Fleming H. Revell, n.d. [1910]), 199.

<sup>10</sup> World Missionary Conference, 1910, *The History and Records of the Conference, together with addresses delivered at the evening meetings* (Edinburgh and London: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier; and New York, Chicago and Toronto: Fleming H. Revell, n.d. [1910]), 330.

<sup>11</sup> Tissington Tatlow, ‘The World Conference on Faith and Order’, in Ruth Rouse and Stephen Charles Neill (eds), *A History of the Ecumenical Movement 1517-1948* (London: SPCK, 1954), 407.

morning Eucharist in Cincinnati on 5 October 1910 at the opening of the Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church.<sup>12</sup>

### **Was Edinburgh the Genesis of Structured Forms of International Co-Operation between Protestant Missions?**

If the Faith & Order movement owed its origins at least indirectly to the deep impression which attendance at Edinburgh made upon Charles Brent, as on many other delegates, the connection between the conference and the formation in October 1921 of the International Missionary Council at Lake Mohonk, New York state, is self-evident and well known: the first major global ecumenical body was formed, with Oldham as its Secretary, in direct succession to the Continuation Committee established at the close of the Edinburgh conference. What is rarely emphasized, however, is that there was strong pressure well before 1910 for the formation of a permanent international Protestant missionary body. That pressure came from North America and continental Europe, where Protestant ecumenism was considerably further advanced than in Britain. In North America in January 1883, twenty-three Protestant foreign missionary societies of the United States and Canada had formed an annual conference.<sup>13</sup> By 1910, the Foreign Missions Conference of North America was a well-established feature of the North American Protestant landscape, representing over fifty missionary societies, and it was this body that took the initiative in suggesting that a sequel to the 1900 Ecumenical Missionary Conference in New York be held. Similarly, on the European continent, there were regional or national bodies representing Protestant missions in Scandinavia (from 1863), Germany (from 1885) and the Netherlands (from 1887).<sup>14</sup> A conference of representatives of mission boards from Germany, Denmark, Finland, France, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland was formed as early as 1866, generally meeting every four years.<sup>15</sup>

With such embryonic national or regional structures in place, it was not surprising that some began to think in terms of co-ordination on an international plane. At the Centenary Missionary Conference held in London in 1888, a plan was submitted (in absentia) by the founding father

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<sup>12</sup> Diary of C.H. Brent, 415, entry for 5 October 1910, papers of C.H. Brent, Box 53, Library of Congress Manuscripts Division, Washington; W. Richey Hogg, 'Edinburgh 1910 – Perspective 1980', *Occasional Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 4/4 (October 1980), 148-49.

<sup>13</sup> Ruth Rouse and Stephen C. Neill (eds), *A History of the Ecumenical Movement 1517-1948* (London: SPCK, 1954), 374.

<sup>14</sup> W. Richey Hogg, *Ecumenical Foundations: A History of the International Missionary Council and its Nineteenth-Century Background* (New York: Harper, 1952), 53-74.

<sup>15</sup> Hogg, *Ecumenical Foundations*, 60-67; World Missionary Conference, 1910, *Report of Commission VIII*, 121-22.

of the new ‘missionary science’ of missiology, Professor Gustav Warneck of Halle, for the formation of a standing central committee, to be based in London, with representatives elected by national missionary conferences in ‘every Protestant nation’. It would promote co-operation, arbitrate in comity disputes, and organize an international missionary conference every ten years. The proposal was not discussed, though it was printed in the conference report.<sup>16</sup>

The breakthrough achieved in Edinburgh was that the British finally, and not without considerable misgivings in some instances, fell into line behind the Americans, Germans, and others, in accepting the necessity for a structured expression of international co-operation in mission. The way had been paved in December 1909, when the London Secretaries’ Association (an informal gathering of English missionary society executives formed in 1819) first raised the idea of forming a conference of British missionary societies, prompted by Dr Herbert Lankester, Home Secretary of the Church Missionary Society, who had visited the United States in 1906 and been impressed by the example of the Foreign Missions Conference of North America. The Association resolved to ask its Secretary, J. H. Ritson, to try to arrange a meeting of secretaries of British missionary societies during the Edinburgh conference, with a view to forming a conference of British missionary secretaries on the model pioneered in America.<sup>17</sup> No such meeting took place. The Conference of British Missionary Societies was, however, formed in June 1911, following a further meeting of the London Secretaries’ Association in October 1910, at which Oldham was present and spoke about the Edinburgh conference, which clearly provided the decisive impetus for a step that was already under serious contemplation.<sup>18</sup>

What had transpired at the conference was far more limited in scope than the formation of the permanent international missionary body for which the Americans and Germans had pressed, and which eventually came into being in 1921. The idea of proposing the establishment of a conference Continuation Committee, conceived by Father Walter H. Frere, the Anglo-Catholic liturgist from Mirfield, in personal consultation with Ritson during April-May 1910, was adopted as a minimalist measure calculated not to arouse Anglo-Catholic alarm at the prospect of a High Church mission agency being committed to a dubious course of action by a permanent

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<sup>16</sup> James Johnston (ed), *Report of the Centenary Conference on Protestant Missions of the World*, 2 vols (London: James Nisbet, 1889), II, 437; Rouse and Neill (eds), *History of the Ecumenical Movement*, 329.

<sup>17</sup> Microfilm minutes of London Secretaries’ Association, 1893-1924, minutes of 17 October 1906 and 15 December 1909; BSA/F4; J.H. Ritson to J.H. Oldham, 16 December 1909; BSA/F4/3/1; Bible Society archives, Cambridge University Library, Fol. 108.

<sup>18</sup> Microfilm minutes of London Secretaries’ Association, 1893-1924, minutes of 19 October 1910, BSA/F4, Bible Society archives, Cambridge University Library.

representative body dominated by Protestants. Edinburgh 1910 was thus, not the midwife of the ideal of Protestant missionary co-operation, but rather the occasion at which leading Anglican figures hesitantly accepted a very modest expression of an ideal to which many Protestant leaders had been long committed in the spirit of evangelical co-operation nurtured by the eighteenth-century Evangelical Revival.

### **Was Edinburgh 1910 the Origin of the Movement towards Church Union in Asia?**

There is little doubt that one of the most significant aspects of the legacy of Edinburgh 1910 was the firm encouragement which it gave to Asian Protestants in their existing quest for forms of church life and organization that would be free of western denominational labels. Of the twenty non-western participants, the most widely remembered today is the South Indian Anglican clergyman, V.S. Azariah, on account of his impassioned appeal made in one of the conference evening sessions to missionaries to prove the reality of their Christian love by being prepared to form genuinely egalitarian friendships with Indians – an appeal that met with a decidedly mixed response from his Edinburgh audience. On his voyage back to India, Azariah conferred with two American Congregationalist delegates, George Sherwood Eddy and J.P. Jones, on what immediate steps could be taken towards church union in India. A three-day unofficial meeting at Henry Whitehead's episcopal residence in Madras followed to discuss a possible basis for union between the South India United Church (a union of Congregationalists and Presbyterians formed in 1908) and the Anglican Church. It seems that Bishop Whitehead caught the vision of church union from Azariah.<sup>19</sup> As a result of the Madras meeting, the first regional conferences of the Continuation Committee, held in Ceylon and India under John Mott's chairmanship in November and December 1912, ended up discussing, not merely enhanced co-operation, but the issue of church union.<sup>20</sup> Hence the road which led eventually to the formation of the Church of South India in 1947 and of the Church of North India in 1970 began at Edinburgh.

A similar story can be told from China. An Asian delegate at Edinburgh whose bold call in the debate on 'Co-operation and the Promotion of Unity' for the formation in China of 'a united Christian Church without any denominational distinctions' attracted an even greater volume of contemporary comment than Azariah's plea for inter-racial friendship was

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<sup>19</sup> Susan Billington Harper, *In the Shadow of the Mahatma: Bishop V.S. Azariah and the Travails of Christianity in British India* (Grand Rapids, MI, Cambridge and Richmond, VA: Eerdmans and Curzon, 2000), 237.

<sup>20</sup> Bengt Sundkler, *Church of South India: The Movement Towards Union 1900-1947*, revised edn (London: Lutterworth, 1965), 62-77.

the 28-year-old Manchu from Beijing, Cheng Jingyi. Notwithstanding his youth, Cheng was the only Chinese to be selected as a member of the Continuation Committee, and was later appointed as Joint Secretary of its Chinese branch at its first meeting held in Canton 30 January-4 February 1913. Cheng ensured that in China also the consequences of Edinburgh would not be limited to the pursuit of co-operation between western missions. The six conferences of the Continuation Committee held in China in early 1913 consistently stressed the goal of creating a self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating church, and encouraged the idea of federation as a first step towards full union. The Continuation Committee in China led to the formation of the National Christian Council of China in 1922, of which Cheng was appointed Secretary. He also served as the first Moderator, and then General Secretary, of the Church of Christ in China, formed in 1927 from a union of sixteen denominational groups, mainly of Presbyterian, Congregational or Baptist affiliation. The vision of a single 'Three-Self' non-denominational church, which the Communists forcibly imposed on the Chinese Protestant churches after 1951, thus saw a partial realization over twenty years earlier, a fact which is often forgotten. The Edinburgh conference had played an important part by giving Cheng Jingyi and other Chinese spokesmen the platform for the initial articulation of that vision.

Similar trends towards the formation of federal or united Protestant churches in the wake of the World Missionary Conference can also be discerned in Japan, where eight denominations accounting for some 80% of all Protestant Christians in Japan, combined in late 1911 to form the Japanese Federation of Churches, a precursor to the foundation of the United Church of Christ in Japan in 1941. The decisive additional momentum which the Edinburgh conference supplied to the pursuit of church unity in Asia is thus undeniable – church planting in most of Africa was still at too early a stage for church union to be on the agenda.

What needs equal emphasis, however, is that the World Missionary Conference itself owed a great debt to Indian and Chinese precedents. As mentioned above, in South India the Congregational churches planted by the London Missionary Society (LMS) and the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) united in 1908 with Presbyterian churches planted by the Reformed Church in America and the Free Church of Scotland to form the South India United Church (SIUC). The Edinburgh conference supplied additional impetus to an existing church union movement in South India, and significantly extended its scope beyond these two denominational traditions that shared some theological affinity. In China, the first moves towards Protestant church union of a federal kind were made as early as November 1902, when a meeting of the interdenominational Peking Missionary Association appointed a committee to consider progress towards church union in China, initially on a federal basis. It sent letters to all Protestant missionaries in

China inviting their opinion on the desirability of federation: at least 90% responded in the affirmative. The Centenary Missionary Conference, held in Shanghai in April-May 1907 to commemorate one hundred years of Protestant work in China, recommended the formation of a federal union under the title 'the Christian Federation of China'.<sup>21</sup> Such moves were missionary rather than indigenous initiatives, but Chinese Christians were taking their own steps towards unity, inspired by more overtly patriotic ideals. In 1902, Yu Guozhen, a Shanghai pastor, formed a Chinese Christian Union that aimed to 'connect Chinese Christians to be a union, to promote self-propagation in China, with the heart of loving the country and its people'. In 1906, Yu formed a federation of independent congregations in Shanghai bearing the title 'The Chinese Jesus Independent Church'. By 1909, the aggregate membership was over 10,000 and a General Assembly was formed in 1910.<sup>22</sup> In February that year, four months before the Edinburgh conference, Cheng Jingyi contributed an article to the missionary journal *The Chinese Recorder* on 'What federation can accomplish for the Chinese Church'. Cheng, who from 1906 to 1908 had studied in Glasgow at the interdenominational Bible Training Institute, wrote about the creation of a 'union Chinese church where denominationalism will be out of the question'.<sup>23</sup> When in June he electrified the Edinburgh conference with his striking assertion that 'speaking plainly, we hope to see, in the near future, a united Christian Church without any denominational distinctions', he was not speaking from impulse but expressing a view that was already widely held among Chinese Protestants.

The ultimate source of the momentum towards church union in Asia evident after 1910, therefore, was not the predominantly western assembly of the World Missionary Conference but the experience of often fragile and isolated Protestant churches that found their Christian witness needlessly weakened by denominational divisions in contexts where Christianity was a small minority faith. Furthermore, mission experience in Asia supplied not simply the compelling dynamic but also the organisational template for the conference. Edinburgh 1910 represented a conscious departure from the more populist and exhortatory style of its immediate western predecessors held in London in 1888 and New York in 1900. As a working conference based on discussion of weighty reports prepared by a series of study

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<sup>21</sup> Kenneth S. Latourette, *A History of Christian Missions in China* (New York: Macmillan, 1929), 667-69.

<sup>22</sup> Marina Xiaojing Wang, 'The church unity movement in early twentieth-century China: Cheng Jingyi and the Church of Christ in China' (University of Edinburgh PhD thesis, 2012), 82.

<sup>23</sup> Cheng Jingyi, 'What federation can accomplish for the Chinese church', in *The Chinese Recorder*, 41/2 (1910), 155-60; see Wang, 'Church unity movement', 88-89. The Bible Training Institute survives to this day as the International Christian College.

commissions composed of carefully selected experts, it was modelled, to some extent, on the fourth Indian Decennial Missionary Conference held in Madras in 1902, and, more directly, on the Shanghai Missionary Conference of China missionaries held in 1907. The Madras conference (itself following a pattern pioneered on a smaller scale by the regional South India Missionary Conference in 1900) had proceeded by allocating all delegates to eight subject committees, each with its own convenor, who was charged to gather information and opinions well in advance from his apportioned delegates and more widely. Each committee then drafted a series of resolutions, usually preceded by preliminary remarks, for discussion and adoption by the conference in session. Five years later, the much larger Shanghai conference adhered to a modified version of the same pattern, drawing a clear distinction between the members of the preparatory committees and the rest of the delegates: twelve programme committees were established in advance, but in this instance with a limited membership of ten to thirteen people; the chairman of each programme committee was responsible for preparing a paper in consultation with his committee, which was to be printed in advance of the conference, and for introducing the paper and its accompanying resolutions to the conference. It was this model that provided the basis for the eight study commissions appointed in 1908 to prepare for the Edinburgh conference.

### **Present Realities and Visions of the Future**

It is fair to surmise that the majority of delegates arrived in Edinburgh in June 1910 with little thought of any movement towards the union of Christian churches in their minds. They had come on behalf of their mission agencies to discuss and if possible resolve the most pressing missionary problems of the day. Of the eight commission reports which they had been sent in advance, only the last one, on 'Co-operation and the Promotion of Unity', had an explicitly ecumenical focus. Nevertheless, it is clear that those most closely involved in the planning of the conference had developed a growing conviction that this was going to be more than just one more in the line of missionary conferences stretching back to 1854. Among some American mission leaders especially, there was a desire, as Silas McBee put it in a letter to Oldham in October 1908, that the Conference should be given the freedom

... to concentrate its attention and, if possible, the attention of the whole Christian Church at home upon the mission field and upon Christ's purpose for the Church at home for that field, and thus to find a message from Him through the field to the home Church. There was to be no effort by resolution or otherwise to interfere with the autonomy and independence of the Churches, but the idea was to let the message bear its own inherent witness to

the divided Churches of Christendom in the sure confidence that they would be drawn together in their witness for Christ.<sup>24</sup>

McBee's letter was in fact a protest against the British insistence that the exclusion of questions of doctrine and church order was to apply not simply to any resolution that the conference might pass, but even to the commission reports. Oldham held his ground on a point on which Bishop Gore had given him no room for manoeuvre, yet at heart Oldham sympathised with McBee's impatience with any attempt to circumscribe the conference's freedom to pursue the logical imperative of a united Christian witness, even so far as to trespass on the sensitive ground of western Christendom. Oldham had a hunch that, however important it was to conciliate Anglo-Catholic sensitivities, the Edinburgh conference might prove to be an occasion which transcended present ecclesiastical realities and unveil the vision of a very different global Christian future. He told McBee in January 1910 of his conviction that:

The necessity for closer co-operation seems to be so essential to the success of the work of the Church in the non-Christian world that I feel we ought not to be content to accept the present situation. I recognise that on all human calculations, the difficulties in the way of any important steps in advance are insuperable and decisive. But the issues are so great and the resources of God so incalculable, that I think we ought prayerfully to wait upon Him to know whether it is His will to bring us to something to which we cannot at present imagine a way.<sup>25</sup>

In retrospect we may conclude that Oldham's prayer was, in some measure at least, answered. Edinburgh 1910 transcended the constraints of contemporary ecclesiastical politics that had so strictly confined its terms of reference. Its delegates returned home fired by inchoate yet nonetheless exhilarating visions of what the world Church might in the future look like. For some of them, notably the Asian delegates, a defining feature of the vision was that Christianity should attempt to sever its centuries-old and paralysing connection with European cultural identity. The great majority, however, still expected western denominational mission agencies to set the agenda for future trends in Asia and Africa. Very few of them had any sense of the pre-eminent role that Africa was to play in the Christian growth of the next century. Although the wisdom of hindsight enables us to perceive that their visions were always partial and sometimes downright mistaken, it also enables us to recognize that the mythology that has come to surround memories of the World Missionary Conference was itself rooted in an original historical reality – in the ill-defined yet inescapable consciousness which formed in the minds of participants in June 1910 that a new dawn was breaking for Christianity.

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<sup>24</sup> Silas McBee to J.H. Oldham, 14 October 1908, WMC papers, Series 1, Box 8, Folder 1, MRL 12, Union Theological Seminary, New York.

<sup>25</sup> Oldham to McBee, 12 January 1910, Oldham papers, New College, Edinburgh.

# FROM EDINBURGH 1910 TO NEW DELHI 1961: CALLED TO UNITY FOR THE SAKE OF MISSION

Mark Laing

## Introduction

The twentieth century has witnessed a major recovery of ecclesiology which has brought to the fore the church's missionary nature and the church's calling to unity. Bishop Lesslie Newbigin sees three reasons for the recovery of ecclesiology: the demise of Christendom, the missionary encounters of western Christianity with the non-western world, and the rise of the ecumenical movement. As 'The ecumenical movement was in large part the outgrowth of the missionary movement',<sup>2</sup> this chapter will, by review of the major international missionary conferences, highlight how ecclesiology was recovered. It will also seek to show how mission and unity could relate, as: 'The fundamental theological integration of unity and mission call for a critical rethinking of ecclesiology. For it is only in terms of *the Church* that this relationship can find its proper theological expression' (emphasis in original).<sup>3</sup>

Through the international missionary conferences, the International Missionary Council (IMC) and laterally the World Council of Churches (WCC), an understanding of the relationship between mission and unity gradually evolved. The high point of the expression of that relationship was in the integration of the IMC into the WCC at New Delhi in 1961.

## Edinburgh 1910

It is interesting to note that the 'ecumenical movement as we here know it had its main impulse and its main achievements in what has organizationally been the most divided branch of the Church, Protestantism, but in one fashion or another it reached out to other forms of

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<sup>1</sup> J.E. Lesslie Newbigin, *The Household of God: Lectures on the Nature of the Church* (London: SCM, 1953), 1-25.

<sup>2</sup> K.S. Latourette, 'Ecumenical Bearings of the Missionary Movement and the International Missionary Council', in R. Rouse and S. Neill, *A History of the Ecumenical Movement, 1517-1948* (London: published on behalf of the Ecumenical Institute by SPCK, 1854), 353.

<sup>3</sup> W.A. Saayman, *Unity and mission: A study of the concept of unity in ecumenical discussions since 1961 and its influence on the world mission of the Church* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1984), 112.

the Faith'.<sup>4</sup> The very pragmatic Edinburgh conference of 1910, the founding inspiration for the IMC, explored avenues for better co-operation in mission. This was not from any theological impetus towards unity but from the compelling motive of evangelism, the conference delegates, under the influence of the chairman, John R Mott, adopting the Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions slogan, 'The evangelization of the world in this generation', as their own watchword. The main contribution of Edinburgh towards the relationship between mission and unity came from what Edinburgh constituted rather than from what actually took place at the conference. In constituting a continuation committee with J.H. Oldham as Secretary, and J.R. Mott as Chairman, Edinburgh 'ensured that international and interdenominational missionary co-operation should move from the stage of occasional conferences to that of continuous and effective consultation';<sup>5</sup> this committee became the IMC in 1921. An adequate understanding of the interrelationship between mission and unity required the recovery of an adequate ecclesiology. The IMC facilitated theological reflection on the relationship of church, mission and unity. This reflection was furthered by the founding of the journal the *International Review of Missions*, Oldham serving as the first editor.

Having said that what Edinburgh constituted was more significant for mission-unity relationships than the actual conference, is not to negate the contribution of the conference itself. In the opening address of King George V, which was read to the conference delegates, the King 'expressed his earnest hope that the ... Conference ... may be a means of promoting unity among Christians ...'<sup>6</sup>

Three of the eight commissions for the conference have relevance to ecumenical issues: Report I, *Carrying the Gospel to all the Non-Christian World*, emphasized the worldwide mission of the church; Report II, *The Church in the Mission Field*, examined the role of the emerging 'younger churches'; and Report VIII, *Co-operation and the Promotion of Unity*, dealt in more detail with the issues of unity. Speaking from his experience as a missionary in China, H.T. Hodgkin could comment that 'we are being brought up to this question of unity, not simply by the greatness of the difficulties we have to face but by the fact that we are in an atmosphere where unity means more than it means here in the West ...'<sup>7</sup> Again, indicating the impetus from the non-western churches, it was reported that:

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<sup>4</sup> Latourette, 'Ecumenical Bearings', 401.

<sup>5</sup> Newbigin, 'Co-operation and Unity', in *International Review of Mission*, 1970, 59 (233), 67-74.

<sup>6</sup> World Missionary Conference, *The history and records of the conference, together with addresses delivered at the evening meetings* (Edinburgh: Oliphant Anderson & Ferrier, 1910a), IX, 141.

<sup>7</sup> World Missionary Conference, *Report of Commission IV: The missionary message in relation to non-Christian religions* (Edinburgh: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier, 1910b), IV, 322.

... in some mission fields ... the problem of unity may, before long, be settled, or at any rate taken in hand, by the indigenous Churches independently of the wishes and views of western missionaries ... But this view takes no account either of the strengths of the spiritual ties which unite the Christian communities in the mission field with the western Churches, of which they are the offspring, or of the significance and lessons of the long history of Christianity.<sup>8</sup>

The missionary delegates are here indicating that paternalistic ties should constrain the actions of the indigenous churches, and that divisions evident within Christendom are not without good reason, the history and importance of which need to be imparted to the non-western churches. This being said, the issue of co-operation and unity was given extensive attention. Report VIII is rather circumspect and cautious about speculating what unity might actually look like in the mission fields, yet the report is able to state that the aim of all missionary work to plant in each non-Christian nation one undivided Church of Christ ‘... is the ideal which is present to the minds of the great majority of the missionaries [and] is evident from the movements in the direction of unity, which are taking place in many mission fields ...’<sup>9</sup>

Representation from what was to become known as the ‘younger churches’ was very small in comparison with the overall number of delegates, only seventeen being appointed by mission societies or by the executive committees.<sup>10</sup> Although numerically small, they had a voice disproportionate to their size. V.S. Azariah, who later became the first Anglican Indian bishop, gave one of the most memorable speeches.<sup>11</sup> He spoke on the topic ‘The Problem of Co-operation between Foreign and Native Workers’, pleading, ‘You have given your goods to feed the poor. You have given your bodies to be burned. We also ask for *love*. Give us FRIENDS!’<sup>12</sup>

### Jerusalem 1928

The Jerusalem conference of the IMC in 1928 was the first international conference since the inception of the IMC in 1921. The thinking of the delegates was of course profoundly influenced by major world events: in particular World War I which had started in the heart of Christendom and

<sup>8</sup> World Missionary Conference, *Report of Commission VIII: Co-operation and the promotion of unity*. (Edinburgh: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier, 1910c), VIII, 86-7.

<sup>9</sup> World Missionary Conference, 1910c: VIII, 83.

<sup>10</sup> Latourette, ‘Ecumenical Bearings of the Missionary Movement and the International Missionary Council’, 359.

<sup>11</sup> Graham commenting that this put the ‘cat among the pigeons’ regarding Azariah’s proposed bishopric, see C. Graham, ‘The Legacy of V.S. Azariah’, in *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 1985, 9(1): 16-19.

<sup>12</sup> Emphasis in original. World Missionary Conference, 1910a, IX, 315.

had pitched Christian nation against Christian nation; and the communist revolution in Russia – a secular force arising in the heart of Orthodox Christianity. Central to discussion at Jerusalem was the *Christian* message. This, for an intentionally *missionary* gathering, contrasted with Edinburgh's earlier use of the term 'missionary' in connection with the message<sup>13</sup>. 'This reflected ... the growing realization in the IMC that mission was *mission of the Church*, that mission and church were not two autonomous magnitudes existing alongside each other but rather belonged together'<sup>14</sup>. With delegates from the West and non-West assembled on the basis of parity, and there being equality in the deliberations, Jerusalem can thus be regarded as the first truly ecumenical conference.<sup>15</sup> Of particular relevance to the relationship between mission and unity was the prominence given at Jerusalem to the relationship between the 'younger' and the 'older' churches.

Jerusalem realized that the world missionary task could only be done by the one universal church and, on the basis of that insight, the concept of partnership was built. However, the ideal of mutual partnership was interpreted in practice as partnership between *missions* and the 'younger churches'<sup>16</sup>. Jerusalem was much more church-centric than Edinburgh, recognizing the mission of the *church* as a prerequisite for the interrelationship between mission and unity. This sentiment was thus stated in the summarized *Report on Relations Between Missions and Younger Churches* as:

This 'church-centric' conception of foreign missions makes it necessary to revise the functions of the 'mission' where it is an administrative agency so that the indigenous church will become the centre from which the whole missionary enterprise of the whole area will be directed ...<sup>17</sup>

Chinese delegates made this point with the most vigour, S.C. Leung stating (in an earlier report) that although foreign missionaries were still welcome in China, missions must reorganise to avoid two parallel organisations, the missions and the Chinese Church. The 'Chinese church must be recognised as the chief centre of responsibility', missions must be content 'to function only through the Chinese Church', with foreign personnel to function as officers of the Church rather than of their mission boards and property and to be under the 'complete control' of the Chinese

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<sup>13</sup> J.D. Gort, 'Jerusalem 1928: Mission, Kingdom and Church', in *International Review of Mission*, 1978, 67 JI: 278.

<sup>14</sup> Emphasis in original. Gort, 278.

<sup>15</sup> Gort, 281.

<sup>16</sup> Gort, 282-83.

<sup>17</sup> International Missionary Council, *The world mission of Christianity: messages and recommendations of the enlarged meeting of the International Missionary Council held at Jerusalem, March 24-April 8, 1928* (London: International Missionary Council, 1928a), 33.

Church.<sup>18</sup> Disunity was recognized at Jerusalem as perhaps the most serious obstacle to evangelization, the impetus for unity, as with Edinburgh, coming from the ‘younger churches’. The Council asking the ‘older churches’ to be sympathetic towards the ‘younger churches’ desire for a ‘more rapid advance in reunion’. The approved recommendation from Jerusalem thus states:

This statement would be seriously incomplete without reference to the desire which is being expressed with increasing emphasis among the younger churches to eliminate the complexity of the missionary enterprise and to remove the discredit to the Christian name, due to the great number of Christian denominations and the diversity and even competition of the missionary agencies now at work in some countries.<sup>19</sup>

There is thus an appeal given to the older churches that every effort be made ‘to solve what is perhaps the greatest problem of the Universal Church of Christ’, namely the disunity of the church.<sup>20</sup>

### Tamparam 1938

Western models of mission had evolved which were dominated by autonomous mission agencies loosely associated with sending churches which were unsure of their relationship with the ‘younger churches’ they had birthed. Hendrick Kraemer’s question at Tamparam was therefore critical: ‘The church and all Christians ... are confronted with the question: What is the essential nature of the church, and what is its obligation to the world?’<sup>21</sup>

Tamparam was the first IMC conference in which the majority of delegates were from the ‘younger churches’ rather than being western representatives of *missions*. Strong numerical representation by the church was also reflected in the centrality of ‘the church’ to this *missionary* conference. The central theme of the church was noted by the chairman, John R. Mott, when he addressed delegates in his opening address: ‘Notice it is the Church which is to be at the centre of our thinking and resolving these creative days ...’<sup>22</sup> Earlier, at Jerusalem, the ‘younger church’ delegates had made the presence of the church felt in the domain of missions, whereas now the church was very much central to the theological

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<sup>18</sup> Cited in International Missionary Council, *Jerusalem Meeting Report: The younger and older churches* (London: OUP, 1928b), 12-13.

<sup>19</sup> International Missionary Council, 1928b: 37.

<sup>20</sup> International Missionary Council, 1928b: 38.

<sup>21</sup> Cited by T. Stransky, ‘Missio Dei’, in N. Lossky, J. Bonino and J. Pobee (eds), *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement* (Geneva: WCC, 1991), 687.

<sup>22</sup> International Missionary Council, *Addresses and other records: International Missionary Council, meeting at Tamparam, Madras, December 12-29, 1938* (London: published for the International Missionary Council by the Oxford University Press, 1939a), VII, 4.

reflections on missions; at Tambaram '*mission and the Church have now found one another*'.<sup>23</sup> With all the five main themes of the conference relating to the church, this indicated a profound change in missionary reflection about the nature and role of the church in its relationship to mission. By contrast with earlier thinking, it was now 'recognized that mission and Church are indissolubly related to one another ... From now on, it is impossible to speak of "missions" without speaking simultaneously of the Church'.<sup>24</sup>

In the conference deliberations, delegates became aware of the universality of the church, a universality which overcame racial and national ties. Wolfgang Günther expressed such sentiments: 'What made Tambaram so unique was that the experience of the reality of the One Church was there for the first time.'<sup>25</sup>

Yet the conference also recognised the shortcomings of the church, chief amongst them being the disunity within the church: 'Because of its worldliness and divisions, it is often a hindrance, sometimes even the greatest hindrance to the coming of the Kingdom of God...'<sup>26</sup> Recognising the disunity within the church, and the unfinished evangelistic task, prompted renewed calls for co-operation and unity: 'The unfinished evangelistic task is primarily the responsibility of the whole Church and has the whole world as its field of action.'<sup>27</sup> In talking of co-operation, delegates were troubled that so much of the co-operation being discussed involved institutions, established by mission organisations, rather than the 'visible church'. 'Much more clearly than any previous conference, it called for the organic union of the churches as essential to their faithfulness in mission.'<sup>28</sup>

At Tambaram the indissoluble relationship between church and mission was recognized, as was the universality of the church. For understanding the relationship between mission and unity, important steps had been taken. 'The practical necessity (Edinburgh), as well as the functional advantages (Jerusalem), of mission and unity, were growing into a fundamental

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<sup>23</sup> Emphasis in original. W. Andersen, *Towards a theology of mission: A study of the encounter between the missionary enterprise and the Church and its theology* (London: SCM, 1955), 20-21.

<sup>24</sup> Andersen, 21.

<sup>25</sup> Cited by E.J. Schoonhoven, 'Tambaram 1938', in *International Review of Mission*, 1978, 67 JI: 303-04.

<sup>26</sup> International Missionary Council, *The world mission of the church: findings and recommendations of the meeting of the International Missionary Council, Tambaram, Madras, India, December 12-29, 1938* (London and New York: International Missionary Council, 1939b), 27.

<sup>27</sup> International Missionary Council, 1939b: 3.

<sup>28</sup> Newbiggin, 'Co-operation and Unity', in *International Review of Mission*, 1970, 59 (233): 70.

theological interrelationship expressed in the context of Church and mission.<sup>29</sup>

### Whitby 1947

The next enlarged meeting of the IMC took place in Ontario, Canada, soon after the end of World War II. The strength and growth of ecumenism were evident if comparison is made between the disruption to the missionary movement caused by World War I with that of World War II. During World War II, a major initiative of the IMC provided financial assistance for the orphaned German missions. This demonstration of the ‘supranationality of missions’<sup>30</sup> helped to ameliorate the commotion of war. In contrast to World War I, which caused both physical and spiritual disruption, World War II caused only physical disruption, and when the war had ceased, fellowship could be renewed between wartime foes.<sup>31</sup> An unanticipated benefit of the war was the growth in maturity and independence of the ‘younger churches’.<sup>32</sup> Financial restraints after the war impinged on the size of the conference.<sup>33</sup> Yet, despite its diminutive proportions, Whitby made important contributions to the relationship between mission and unity, most notably in the discussions which paved the way for the future integration of the IMC with the WCC.

The conference coined the term ‘partnership in obedience’. ‘One of the most impressive results of the rediscovery of the missionary and evangelistic significance of Christian *koinonia* at Whitby was the new sense of partnership between the older and younger churches.’<sup>34</sup> This sense of partnership is demonstrated in areas which had been problematic within the IMC before, such as personnel, finance, policy and administration.<sup>35</sup> The extent to which the ‘older’ and ‘younger churches’ had grown together

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<sup>29</sup> Saayman, 1984: 11.

<sup>30</sup> The title of one of the official statements. C.W. Ranson (ed), *Renewal and advance: Christian witness in a revolutionary world* (London: Edinburgh House, 1948), 219-21.

<sup>31</sup> Latourette, 1954: 371.

<sup>32</sup> Newbigin, *Unfinished Agenda: An Autobiography* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985), 66-68. Newbigin writes of his firsthand experience of this: young Christians leaving South India (a context of dependency on missions), receiving military training, and eventually returning as capable leaders.

<sup>33</sup> F.V. Carino, ‘Partnership in obedience’, in *International Review of Mission*, 1978, 67 JI: 316-28. Compared with its larger predecessors, the conference produced only a slim volume: C.W. Ranson (ed), *Renewal and advance: Christian witness in a revolutionary world* (London: Edinburgh House, 1948), in contrast to the extensive volumes published at earlier conferences.

<sup>34</sup> Carino, 1978: 324. This nomenclature (‘younger’ and ‘older’) was even then felt to be embarrassing (Newbigin 1970a: 70).

<sup>35</sup> Ranson, 1948: 176-84.

was evident in their unanimity on partnership.<sup>36</sup> Whitby affirmed that the church is in a missionary situation wherever it is found. This therefore changed profoundly the relationship between the 'younger' and the 'older' churches. No longer was their relationship conceived of in terms of giving and receiving, sending and going.

Rather, 'both are now equal and worthy partners in the task of evangelism and in the common obligation to "go into all the world"', as the church is missionary wherever it is located.<sup>37</sup>

A practical expression of partnership demonstrated by Whitby was the co-operation the conference facilitated between the IMC and the embryonic WCC. The conference 'went beyond merely encouraging co-operation by eliminating the limiting restrictions that had been imposed on the negotiations of their future relationship'.<sup>38</sup> Although integration at this stage would have been premature, the tone and spirit of discussions at Whitby on the future of relationships gave strong impetus.<sup>39</sup>

### The World Council of Churches

The World Council of Churches was formally constituted at the first assembly in Amsterdam in 1948. However, a decade before it began as a body 'in the process of formation', the war delaying its constitution but not diminishing the desire for its formation. Since its inception, members of the IMC had been intimately involved with the WCC, most notably John Mott and William Paton who served on the Provisional Committee.<sup>40</sup>

With two international ecumenical organisations in existence, one representing mission, and the other representing church unity, questions naturally arose as to their relationship with each other. How the WCC was to relate to the IMC was more than just an administrative matter; rather, it was understood as the administrative expression of a more fundamental theological relationship between mission and unity. It would be to profoundly misunderstand both to say that the IMC was concerned with mission to the exclusion of any concern of unity, or vice versa for the WCC and mission. The review of IMC meetings thus far has hopefully demonstrated the extent to which the IMC, as a *missionary* council, was very much concerned with the unity of the church, expression of that unity

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<sup>36</sup> On the statement on the 'Partnership of the Younger and Older Churches ...' representatives of each met separately and after extensive discussion submitted memoranda of their findings. 'In those memoranda *not one single major difference of opinion came to light*' between the 'younger' and the 'older' churches (emphasis in original. Ranson 1948: 173, fn 1).

<sup>37</sup> Carino, 1978: 324, 326.

<sup>38</sup> Carino 1978: 326.

<sup>39</sup> Carino, 1978: 327.

<sup>40</sup> Latourette, 1954: 372.

often coming from the ‘younger churches’. As has been previously noted, the ecumenical movement itself was birthed by the missionary movement.

Reciprocal concern for mission among the WCC was evident in several ways. As mentioned, there was close association of personnel between the IMC and the WCC. Whilst the IMC, as a *mission* council, was studying the *church*, the embryonic WCC, as a *church* organisation, was studying *mission*. There was also reciprocal use of study papers between the two – for example, the Rolle statement of the Central Committee of the WCC in 1951, ‘The Calling of the Church to Mission and Unity’, being used at the IMC conference at Willingen in 1952.<sup>41</sup> Ten years later, Newbigin referred back to the Rolle statement to give theological explanation to the relationship between the WCC and the IMC and thus between church unity and mission. Whilst speaking at the New Delhi assembly where the integration was formalised, he quoted from the Rolle statement to indicate that the relationship between mission and unity was not just the product of 150 years of Protestant missions but rather that it lay at the heart of the gospel:

The obligation to take the Gospel to the whole world, and the obligation to draw all Christ’s people together, both rest upon Christ’s whole work and are indissolubly connected. Every attempt to separate these tasks violates the wholeness of Christ’s ministry to the world.<sup>42</sup>

Until the formal merger of the IMC with the WCC in 1961, the two organisations demonstrated their interrelationship in all formal correspondence, the letterhead of the IMC saying ‘in association with the WCC’, and vice-versa.

### Amsterdam 1948

Delayed by World War II, the World Council of Churches formally came into being at its first Assembly in Amsterdam in 1948. This expression of the ecumenical movement had been birthed by the missionary movement, and it was able to draw upon the collective wisdom and insight of the IMC as well as receive specific help from IMC personnel. Missions had produced this call for unity. The assembly also recognized that mission would (must) continue to imbue the WCC with a sense of purpose in their quest for unity. ‘Our coming together to form a World Council will be vain unless Christians and Christian congregations everywhere commit themselves to the Lord of the Church in a new effort to seek together,

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<sup>41</sup> Newbigin chaired the drafting of the Rolle statement and was able to secure its adoption at the Willingen conference, see: Newbigin 1985: 131-33 and 137-38, and ‘A Statement on the calling of the church to mission and unity’, 1953: 193-94.

<sup>42</sup> Newbigin, ‘The Missionary Dimension of the Ecumenical Movement’, in *Ecumenical Review*, 1962, 14(2): 208.

where they live, to be his witnesses and servants among their neighbours.<sup>43</sup> Of the reports which were received and endorsed by the assembly, Section 2: *The Church's Witness to God's Design*, deals explicitly with the call of the church to mission. At a fundamental level, the purpose of God links mission and unity: 'The purpose of God is to reconcile all men to Himself and to one another in Jesus Christ His Son.'<sup>44</sup> Again, there is the acknowledgment that unity is not an end in itself but is for witness. Division within the church therefore impairs the effectiveness of that witness; the drive for unity coming from the 'younger churches': 'If we take seriously our worldwide task, we are certain to be driven to think again of our divisions ... The pressure for corporate unity comes most strongly from the younger churches; the older manifest greater caution,'<sup>45</sup> with the impetus for unity coming most strongly from the 'younger churches', because, as Newbigin explains, they are in a missionary situation and therefore much more aware of the imperative of unity for their witness. Being in such a position has led to a recovery of the 'heart of the gospel' by which the church understands that it participates in Christ by being reconciled to him and thus to each other.

The report similarly expresses the central and fundamental link between mission and unity which the World Council must keep sight of: 'The ecumenical movement loses significance, unless all its constituent churches bear ceaselessly in mind the prayer of Christ, "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou has sent me" (John 17:21).'<sup>46</sup> By this declaration, which was received 'unanimously' by the Assembly, Amsterdam formally declared that the institutional church understood that unity was not an end in itself, and that the World Council would lose its significance if unity did not lead to witness. Further, they acknowledged that the link between mission and unity was not merely at a pragmatic level but its fundamental source was the gospel itself. Unity is essential for mission and mission is essential for unity, the renewal of the church being dependent on keeping mission central to the ecumenical agenda and not relegating it to some secondary position.<sup>47</sup>

### Willingen 1952

In the intervening years between the Tambaram conference and the Willingen conference of 1952 there was a gradual shift in understanding

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<sup>43</sup> W.A. Visser 't Hooft (ed), *The first Assembly of the World Council of Churches, held at Amsterdam, August 22nd to September 4th, 1948. Man's disorder and God's design* (London: SCM, 1949), 10.

<sup>44</sup> Visser 't Hooft, 1949: 64.

<sup>45</sup> Visser 't Hooft, 1949: 69.

<sup>46</sup> Visser 't Hooft, 1949: 69.

<sup>47</sup> Saayman, 1984: 14.

from that of a mission-centred church to that of a church-centred mission.<sup>48</sup> By Willingen, the IMC had moved from asking the ‘How?’, ‘Wherefore?’ and ‘Whence?’ of mission to asking the more fundamental question of ‘Why mission?’, the answer to which had previously been assumed.<sup>49</sup> Karl Barth was the first in the modern period ‘to articulate mission as an activity of God himself’ in his 1932 paper read at the Brandenburg Missionary Conference.<sup>50</sup> The influence of this aspect of Barthian theology reached a peak at the Willingen conference. The recognition that mission is *God’s* mission represented a crucial breakthrough: ‘We cannot without ado claim that what we do is identical to the *missio Dei*; our missionary activities are only authentic insofar as they reflect participation in the mission of God.’<sup>51</sup> The change from missions to mission democratises the historic missions of the church and of western Christendom. Partnership in mission between ‘younger’ and ‘older’ churches was thus possible on the basis of co-operation and participation in *God’s* mission. As the church, wherever it may be located, is sent by God into the world, such terminology of ‘sending’ and ‘receiving churches’, and ‘mission fields’ became obsolete. All missions are relativised under God’s mission, and so paternalism becomes redundant – at least, in principle if not in practice.

‘A concern for unity among the churches for the sake of mission ran through much of the discussion at Willingen.’<sup>52</sup> This concern was explicitly expressed in the statement ‘The Calling of the Church to Mission and Unity’.<sup>53</sup> This dual calling of the church ‘issues from the nature of God himself’.<sup>54</sup> The church, in response to God’s love in Christ, is called to worship, unity and mission, these aspects of the church’s calling being interdependent. ‘Division in the Church distorts its witness, frustrates its mission, and contradicts its own nature. The statement continues with the acknowledgement that the delegates believe that God, through the ecumenical movement, is drawing people together ‘in order that He may enable us to discern yet more clearly the contradictions in our message and the barriers to unity which are also hindrances to effective witness in a divided world’.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991), 370.

<sup>49</sup> Lalsangkima Pachuau, ‘Missiology in a Pluralistic World’, in *International Review of Mission*, 2000, 89 (355, October): 541.

<sup>50</sup> Bosch, 1991: 389.

<sup>51</sup> Bosch, 1991: 391.

<sup>52</sup> R.C. Bassham, ‘Seeking a deeper theological basis for mission’, in *International Review of Mission*, 1978, 67: 335.

<sup>53</sup> Newbigin, *The Household of God: Lectures on the Nature of the Church* (London: SCM, 1953), 193-94. As noted, the Willingen statement drew heavily on the earlier Rolle statement, both of which were drafted by Newbigin.

<sup>54</sup> Newbigin, 1953: 193.

<sup>55</sup> Newbigin, 1953: 193-94.

At a practical level, there was a call for each respective National Christian Council to consider how they might further the cause of Christian unity, to take this onto their agendas, as 'the disunity of the churches continues to hinder the fulfilment of the Church's mission'.<sup>56</sup> There was also a call to the IMC councils that the insights and lessons they had learned could be effectively imparted to the Commission on Faith & Order of the World Council of Churches. The actual timing of the Willingen conference was such that this request was immediately fulfilled as many delegates went directly from Willingen to the Third World Conference on Faith & Order at Lund, Sweden.<sup>57</sup>

There was the desire that the calling to unity should not remain as an ill-defined abstraction, but that work be undertaken to explore the nature of unity. This was proposed in a formal letter of the Joint Committee of the IMC/WCC which – having reiterated that the church's calling to mission and unity are interdependent – asked, 'Can we articulate clearly how these two are related to each other; and can we express in the life of our congregations, our churches and our ecumenical movements this fundamental unity?'<sup>58</sup> In response to this call, the IMC made a series of practical recommendations for further co-operation, especially in the fields of Faith & Order and Inter-Church Aid.<sup>59</sup>

### Evanston 1954

The Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches was held at Evanston in 1954. Concerning the relationship between mission and unity, the assembly did not 'produce any explicit new thinking on missionary questions'.<sup>60</sup> The assembly endorsed the Rolle statement on 'The Calling of the Church to mission and unity' which had earlier been endorsed by the IMC at Willingen.<sup>61</sup> What is more important about the discussion on mission and unity was the decision at Evanston to reconstitute the Joint Committee of the IMC/WCC with a full-time secretariat.<sup>62</sup> Of major concern was the impact that the Inter-Church Aid Programme was having

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<sup>56</sup> Newbiggin, 1953: 194

<sup>57</sup> Bassham, 1978: 335-36.

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<sup>58</sup> Newbiggin, 'Mission to Six Continents', in H.E. Fey, *The Ecumenical Advance: A History of the Ecumenical Movement, Vol 2, 1948-1968* (London: SPCK, 1970b), 181.

<sup>59</sup> Newbiggin, 1970b: 181.

<sup>60</sup> Newbiggin, 1970b: 181.

<sup>61</sup> Of the 'Reports of the Sections' from Evanston the first, 'Faith & Order', deals with church unity, and the second, 'Evangelism', with the mission of the church; but there is no development beyond the Rolle statement (W.A. Visser 't Hooft (ed), *The Evanston Report: The Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches 1954* (London: SCM, 1955), 82-98, 98-112).

<sup>62</sup> Newbiggin, 1970b: 181.

on the ‘younger churches’ and the relationship such aid had to missions. The Division of Inter-Church Aid of the WCC was responsible for the channelling of huge sums of money to non-western churches. This aid was largely from donors interested in ‘service’ rather than mission, and the funds were by-passing the historic channels – the mission organisations. This raised concern that the ‘younger churches’, which had been encouraged to become self-sufficient, would now become dependent again, and some were concerned that funding for service would deflect the ‘younger churches’ from mission.<sup>63</sup> This raised at a practical level the issue of how mission and church were related.

By 1956, the Joint Committee had come to the position of recommending that the parent bodies consider full integration, but this was with the caveat that the ‘distinctive expression of mission’ that was embodied in the IMC be safeguarded.<sup>64</sup> Theologically, there was the clear argument that mission did belong to the nature of the church, but some in the IMC voiced doubt as to whether the church could be trusted with this responsibility. On the other hand, ‘From the point of view of the WCC, it was a matter of its spiritual health whether it could go on saying that mission belongs to the very nature of the Church without becoming involved in the life of missions.’<sup>65</sup> Decisive in swaying the recommendation for integration was the opinion of Dr Walter Freytag. As a German, speaking from the context of German mission, which had emerged largely independent of the churches, he argued the necessity for full integration of the IMC with the WCC. ‘If mission is the heart of the Church, the heart cannot be separated from the rest of the Church’s life.’<sup>66</sup> Historically, mission had been divorced from the church; with the recovery of a missionary ecclesiology, Freytag recognised the danger of this continued delegation for both the church and mission societies, perpetuating this relationship, and thus distorting their understanding of mission.

### **Accra 1958**

With the Joint Committee recommending full integration of the IMC with the WCC to its parent organisations, the IMC conference in Accra was the opportunity for major discussion on the issues involved in integration. Thus, although integration was by no means the only issue on the agenda at Accra, it did tend to dominate proceedings. Underlying the procedural discussion was the more fundamental question of the theological relationship between mission and church unity as understood and expressed by the ecumenical movement. The deliberations must therefore be

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<sup>63</sup> Newbigin, 1970b: 182.

<sup>64</sup> Newbigin, 1970b: 182.

<sup>65</sup> Newbigin, 1970b: 182.

<sup>66</sup> Cited by Newbigin, 1970b: 183.

understood as being more than organisational. Obedience and action require embodiment. The discussion on integration should be seen in this light – the ecumenical movement seeking the organisational embodiment to express its understanding and obedience to Christ's call to mission and unity. Freytag, in a speech delivered at a plenary session, reviewed the thirty years since the IMC had met at Jerusalem. One of the consequences of the rise in the worldwide church was what Freytag termed 'the lost directness' of mission.<sup>67</sup> Before the rise of the worldwide church, mission could be understood in terms of western nations sending, and the non-west receiving, the gospel. Mission could not now be conceived of in these terms, but no alternative model was as yet adequately articulated.<sup>68</sup> However, what was clearly expressed at Ghana (as in the statement 'The Christian mission at this hour') was the assertion that mission belonged to Christ, not to the church: 'The Christian world mission is Christ's, not ours.'<sup>69</sup> With the recognition that the church is missionary comes the realisation that the church is in a missionary situation wherever it is located. This makes obsolete the old distinctions between sending and receiving nations; and between 'younger' and 'older' churches. The terminology 'obscures the status of churches before God, and so obscures the truth that, precisely in the fact of being churches, they are all equally called to obedience to their one missionary Lord'.<sup>70</sup>

'Each of us, in his own place, each local company of Christ's people, each church in its organized life, cannot be Christ's without being His missionary servant.'<sup>71</sup> We are responsible for the 'discharge of missionary obedience', but we are also responsible to one another in Christ. The statement acknowledges that there is thus an inherent tension between mission and unity: 'There is a tension which can easily become a contradiction – the tension between missionary passion and a due regard for the claims of Christian fellowship.'<sup>72</sup> In the particular case of the IMC/WCC integration, the contradiction remains, yet 'We have, however, we believe, discerned some points at which the tension can be creative within the fellowship'.<sup>72</sup> Although the IMC delegates could not discern the details of this new model and how it relates to church unity, they believe that they are being called forward in obedience:

... out beyond the frontiers of the Churches, out beyond the sphere of inter-church relationships, out beyond the traditional patterns of missionary

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<sup>67</sup> R.K. Orchard (ed), *The Ghana assembly of the International Missionary Council, 28th December, 1957 to 8th January, 1958; selected papers, with an essay on the role of the IMC* (London: published for the International Missionary Council by Edinburgh House, 1958), 141.

<sup>68</sup> Newbigin, 1970b: 184.

<sup>69</sup> Orchard, 1958: 180.

<sup>70</sup> Orchard, 1958: 182.

<sup>71</sup> Orchard, 1958: 181.

<sup>72</sup> Orchard, 1958: 181.

activities, out into a new exposure to Him, out into a new and more real commitment to one another, out into the world where He is the Hidden King ...<sup>73</sup>

Integration was accepted ‘in principle’ by a ‘considerable majority’ of the Assembly at Ghana with the overriding aim being to put ‘the world mission of the Church at the heart of the Christian community’.<sup>74</sup> The main opposition to integration came from the evangelical wing of the IMC and was personified in Canon Max Warren, Secretary of the Church Missionary Society. Although evangelicals consented to the theological case for mission and unity belonging together, they argued that what was theologically true need not be expressed administratively in the integration of the IMC/WCC, and that both the timing and other means of relating should be further explored.<sup>75</sup>

### New Delhi 1961

In the years preceding the New Delhi conference, Newbigin, as Secretary of the IMC, was intimately involved in the process of integration. To help facilitate the process, he circulated a study document within the IMC<sup>76</sup> which, after revision, was published as a type of ‘manifesto’ of what the IMC sought in integration with the WCC (Newbigin 1958a). In reviewing the shift in mission thinking over the years, Newbigin summarised fundamental points on the emerging understanding of mission: (1) ‘The church is the mission’, one cannot speak of mission without speaking of the church and vice versa; they are inextricably linked together; (2) ‘The home base is everywhere’, the dualistic language of sending and receiving nations is obsolete as the church is in a missionary situation wherever it is located;<sup>77</sup> and (3) ‘Mission in partnership’, i.e. the paternalism of ‘older’ to

<sup>73</sup> Orchard, 1958: 184.

<sup>74</sup> Orchard, 1958: 165-6.

<sup>75</sup> For further discussion on this, see: O. Haaramäki, ‘Mission and Unity in the Missionary Ecclesiology of Max A. Warren’, in *International Review of Mission*, 1983, 72: 267-71; R.D. Winter, ‘Ghana: preparation for marriage’, in *International Review of Mission*, 1978, 67(267): 338-53; M.A.C. Warren, ‘The fusion of IMC and WCC at New Delhi: Retrospective thoughts after a decade and a half’, in *Occasional Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 1979, 3 (JI): 104-08; and Newbigin, ‘Integration: Some Personal Reflections 1981’, in *International Review of Mission*, 1981, 70 (280): 247-55.

<sup>76</sup> Newbigin, ‘The Organization of the Church, Mission to the World’, paper presented to the meeting of the Joint Committee of the IMC and WCC, Nyborg, August 14-17, 1958’, in *Papers of (James Edward) Lesslie Newbigin (1909-1998), Special Collections* (Birmingham, UK: University of Birmingham), DA29/2/9: 1958b).

<sup>77</sup> This also has implications for the role of ‘foreign missions’. Countering the position that this then spells the demise of ‘foreign missions’, Newbigin argues that to say that home-base for missions is now everywhere does not call for the

'younger' churches, is ill-founded as mission has its source in God and does not originate from any church.<sup>78</sup> In anticipating integration, Newbigin emphasises that this is not simply an organisational matter but reflects a more fundamental understanding of the relationship between mission and unity; he thus warns of the danger of losing sight of this.<sup>79</sup> As noted, some were advocating that the Inter-Church Aid Programme was now the modern equivalent of missions, that the age of missions was now past and we had now entered the age of ecumenism.<sup>80</sup> Newbigin strongly disagrees with such an assessment, arguing that *oikoumene* did not refer to the church but to the whole world:

It is important to insist that this word, which comes from the Greek word for the whole inhabited earth, is properly used to describe everything that relates to the whole task of the whole Church to bring the Gospel to the whole world. A conception of ecumenism which had lost concern for the evangelization of the whole world would be quite contrary to everything which the WCC itself stands for.<sup>81</sup>

The IMC has practised and promoted a model of mission inherited from colonialism with an emphasis on the 'mission fields' of Asia, Africa and South America. With integration into the WCC, there was the realisation that mission could not be prosecuted in the same way. The Commission on World Mission & Evangelism could not function simply as a perpetuation of the IMC, now within the WCC. The expectation was that unity would be imbued with missionary concern by integration. But there was also the realisation that ecumenical concerns would redefine mission. In integration, there was the expectation of a new synergistic relationship between mission and unity in which both would be redefined. This was evidenced in the actual change of the WCC 'Basis' at New Delhi. Originally, the WCC had identified itself as 'a fellowship of churches which *accept* our Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour'.<sup>82</sup> At New Delhi, 'accept' was replaced with 'confess', and the words 'and therefore seek to fulfil together their common calling to the glory of one God, Father, Son and Spirit' were added. 'The "common calling" was understood to refer to "confess", and thus had a clear missionary thrust, something that was absent in the original basis.'<sup>83</sup>

As the drafter of the Report from the Commission of World Mission & Evangelism, Newbigin stated the concerns and the expectations of the missionary movement in the act of integration:

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obliteration of 'foreign missions' but rather 'the universalising of them' (Newbigin 1958a: 31).

<sup>78</sup> Newbigin, *One Body, One Gospel, One World: The Christian Mission Today* (London and New York: International Missionary Council, 1958a), 25-38.

<sup>79</sup> Newbigin, 1958a: 7.

<sup>80</sup> Newbigin, 1970b: 185-88.

<sup>81</sup> Newbigin, 1958a: 11.

<sup>82</sup> Emphasis added by Bosch, 1991: 460.

<sup>83</sup> Bosch, 1991: 460.

This spiritual heritage must not be dissipated; it must remain, ever renewed in the hidden life of prayer and adoration, at the heart of the World Council of Churches. Without it, the ecumenical movement would petrify. Integration must mean that the World Council of Churches takes the missionary task into the very heart of its life ...<sup>84</sup>

And, reciprocally, there was the expectation that new insights would be brought to missions operating in an ecumenical perspective. One of the most apparent was that mission could no longer be understood as being to just three continents, but now is to all six continents. Reciprocity was expressed between the reports on 'Witness' and 'Unity' in the New Delhi Report. For example the report on 'Witness' stressed the necessity of unity: 'The question of the Church's unity is of vital importance, since the Bible teaches us that the Gospel cannot be authoritatively proclaimed to the world by a disunited Church.'<sup>85</sup> Similarly the report on 'Unity' stressed the relationship between unity and mission: 'In the fulfilment of our missionary obedience the call to unity is seen to be imperative ... There is an inescapable relation between the fulfilment of the Church's missionary obligation and the recovery of her visible unity.'<sup>86</sup>

It was no accident that this emphasis on unity coincided with the joining of the Orthodox Church at the Third Assembly: 'In Orthodox understanding, unity would not come about by missionary activity ... but, first and foremost, by recapturing the unity of the church, of which Orthodoxy was the symbol, from which effective mission would issue.'<sup>87</sup>

The New Delhi Assembly stands as a major milestone in the recovery of the relationship between mission and unity. Stephen Neill stated that '... if the theological significance of the action was realised, [the decision to integrate, then] this was indeed a revolutionary moment in church history ... [and that] Such an event had never taken place in the history of the Church since Pentecost'.<sup>88</sup> Similarly, Cavert said that the integration 'marks a new stage in the Christian world mission'.<sup>89</sup>

Although New Delhi marked a profound change in the relationship between mission and unity, already inherent in the New Delhi reports was evidence of more fundamental changes in the understanding of mission. Newbigin notes how the church-centric model of mission, which had dominated since Tambaram, was breaking down, and that: 'The report contained many signals pointing the way. It spoke of God's rule over the

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<sup>84</sup> W.A. Visser 't Hooft (ed), *The New Delhi report: the Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches, 1961* (London: SCM, 1962), 249-50.

<sup>85</sup> Visser 't Hooft, 1962: 78.

<sup>86</sup> Visser 't Hooft, 1962: 121.

<sup>87</sup> T.E. Yates, *Christian mission in the twentieth century* (Cambridge: CUP, 1994), 129.

<sup>88</sup> S. Neill, *The Church and Christian union* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 108-09.

<sup>89</sup> Visser 't Hooft, 1962: 55.

whole created world and said, “We have but little understanding of the wisdom, love and power which God has given to men of other faiths and of no faiths [sic].”<sup>90</sup> There were several factors contributing to this major missiological change in direction. The theology of *missio Dei*, which had emerged at Willingen and was developed by Georg Vicedom,<sup>91</sup> critiqued the church-centric understanding of mission and raised the pregnant question concerning God’s actions outside the church. Already at Willingen, J.C. Hoekendijk and others had been critical of a church-centric approach arguing that the world, not the church, was the focus of God’s concern and activity, and for the church to regain legitimacy it must align itself with God’s action in the world.<sup>92</sup> Based on a theology of the apostolate, this growing critique imbued the *missio Dei* concept with new meaning, and broke down what had been clearly defined boundaries between the church and the world, and between salvation history and secular history. These changes were to pave the way for an ecumenical discussion on cosmic Christology which began at New Delhi. Joseph Sittler is attributed with explicitly starting the discussion at the Assembly with his paper entitled ‘Called to Unity’.<sup>93</sup> This cosmic Christology, with its emphasis more on creation than on redemption, imported new meanings to the concepts of mission and unity: a ‘cosmic redemption’ leading to a ‘fuller unity’; that unity is grounded primarily in creation, rather than in re-creation; the apparent antithesis between church and world is overcome as they become part of the larger synthesis, thus breaking down the boundary between Christianity and other faiths;<sup>94</sup> and that ‘unity in Christ’ requires a broader definition than the classical understanding of the term.<sup>95</sup>

The organizational act of integration at New Delhi marked an important milestone in the theological understanding of the relationship between mission and unity. There were great expectations with mission being brought into the heart of the WCC. This hope was exemplified by the initiative on ‘the missionary structure of the congregation’, a study programme running over several years to explore this topic with working groups in Europe and North America. However, New Delhi also marked a major theological shift, which can be characterised as a shift from *heilsgeschichtliche* theology to that of the apostolate.<sup>96</sup> Central to this shift

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<sup>90</sup> Cited by Newbigin, 1985: 192.

<sup>91</sup> See G.F. Vicedom, G.A. Thiele et al, *The mission of God: an introduction to a theology of mission* (St Louis, MO: Concordia, 1965).

<sup>92</sup> E.g. see J.C. Hoekendijk, L.A. Hoedemaker et al, *The church inside out* (London: SCM, 1967).

<sup>93</sup> His paper is based on the text Colossians 1:15-20. A copy of his paper was reprinted as J.A. Sittler, ‘Called to unity’, in *Ecumenical Review*, 1962, 14: 177-87.

<sup>94</sup> Saayman sees a link between this concept in Sittler’s paper and Orthodox theology which is particularly influenced by Irenaeus (1984: 23).

<sup>95</sup> Saayman, 1984: 24.

<sup>96</sup> Saayman, 1984: 117-18.

was the interpretation of Christ's actions in history, the shift marking a change in emphasis from Christ's actions in the church to his actions in the world – the world not the church now being centre stage. From New Delhi on, this was to profoundly change the WCC interpretation of mission.

### **Conclusion**

In the twentieth century, the church has undergone a major revision of its ecclesiology, challenging the assumptions inherited from a defective and now redundant Christendom ecclesiology. Three reasons which have forced the church to re-examine its self-understanding are: the demise of Christendom, the missionary encounters of western Christianity with the non-western world, and the rise of the ecumenical movement. Central to this recovery is the understanding that the church is missionary and that it is called to unity. This chapter has sought to show, by examining conference documents of the international missionary conferences from Edinburgh 1910 until the New Delhi assembly in 1961: first, the recovery of ecclesiology; and secondly, how our understanding of the relationship between mission and unity has evolved this theological understanding being expressed in the organisational union of the IMC and the WCC.

# BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS: THE TRIUNE GOD AND THE MISSIONAL CHURCH

Knud Jørgensen

## Introduction

Some may like me have memories from childhood of a rather fragile church. Rambling sermons, little fellowship and dull liturgy. Was this really the sort of church Jesus prayed for in his high priestly prayer in John 17? The pastor in my teen-age period could easily have quoted Karl Barth to me: 'If we say with the creed, *credo ecclesiam* (I believe in the church), we do not proudly overlook its concrete form'.<sup>1</sup> In this chapter I shall try to walk back and forth between the Biblical images of church and mission and the real church and mission. What counts is the real church viewed through the Biblical lens. Fortunately I carry with me other experiences of church and mission than the childhood memory – experiences of being part of God's people in Ethiopia, East Africa, the United States and China. My aim in this chapter is to outline a framework for a dialogue and interaction between ecclesiology and mission.

One of the nine study themes of Edinburgh 2010 was 'Mission and unity – ecclesiology and mission'. The deliberations on the theme resulted in a report from the group which had worked with this for more than a year.<sup>2</sup> In this report *missio Dei* is a focal point: God's mission is directly related to the world and the church is the privileged instrument of God's mission. The title for this volume (*Called to Unity – for the Sake of Mission*) grows out of this report. In the report's reflections on Biblical and theological foundations of mission in unity the focus is particularly on two interlinked streams: *the triune God's mission and the church as missionary by its very nature (missional church)*. I shall therefore explore further these two streams and how they relate to one another.

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## The Triune God's Mission

The missiological paradigm which shaped the planning and execution of Edinburgh 2010 was the *missio Dei* paradigm. The Edinburgh 2010

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<sup>1</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1961), Volume IV/1, 653-54.

<sup>2</sup> Daryl Balia and Kirsteen Kim (eds), *Edinburgh 2010: Witnessing to Christ Today* (Oxford: Regnum, 2010), 199-221.

‘Common Call’ therefore opens by affirming that ‘... we believe the church, as a sign and symbol of the reign of God, is called to witness to Christ today by sharing in God’s mission of love through the transforming power of the Holy Spirit’.<sup>3</sup> And if mission is God’s mission, then mission is one: ‘*Missio Dei* stresses unity in mission not only for pragmatic reasons but as an integral part of witness to God.’<sup>4</sup> The ecumenical concern since Edinburgh 1910 has been expressed in a variety of statements reflecting that unity is bound up with the sending of the church into the world, and that the unity of the church is anchored in the unity of the triune God:

The love of the Father and the Son in the unity of the Holy Spirit is the source and goal of the unity which the triune God wills for all men and creation. We believe that we share in this unity in the Church of Jesus Christ ...<sup>5</sup>

There is a growing awareness among the churches today of the inextricable relationship between Christian unity and missionary calling, between ecumenism and evangelization. ‘Evangelization is the test of our ecumenical vocation.’ The churches of the WCC are on a pilgrimage towards unity under the missionary vision of John 17:21 ‘that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me’.<sup>6</sup>

Mission begins in the heart of the triune God and the love which binds together the Holy Trinity overflows to all humanity and creation. The missionary God who sent the Son to the world calls all God’s people (John 20:21), and empowers them to be a community of hope.<sup>7</sup>

The Faith & Order paper on *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* affirms the same: the church of the triune God is essentially missionary, and unity is essentially related to this mission.<sup>8</sup> The mission of the church grows out of the nature of the church. This is implied when we affirm the apostolicity of the church; and apostolicity cannot be separated from the other key attributes of the church – unity, holiness and catholicity. Together they describe the nature of God’s own being and the practical demands of authentic mission.

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<sup>3</sup> Kirsteen Kim and Andrew Anderson (eds), *Edinburgh 2010: Mission Today and Tomorrow* (Oxford: Regnum, 2011), 1.

<sup>4</sup> Kirsteen Kim, ‘Mission in the Twenty-first Century’, in Kim and Anderson, *Edinburgh 2010*, 353-54.

<sup>5</sup> ‘New Delhi Section on Unity’, in L. Vischer (ed), *A Documentary History of the Faith and Order Movement 1927-1963* (St Louis, MO: Bethany, 1963), 144.

<sup>6</sup> ‘Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation’, in Jacques Matthay (ed), *You Are the Light of the World: Statements on Mission by the World Council of Churches, 1980-2005* (Geneva: WCC, 2005), 5-6.

<sup>7</sup> Jooseop Keum (ed), *Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes* (Geneva: WCC, 2013), 4.

<sup>8</sup> *The Church towards a Common Vision* (Geneva: WCC, 2013), Faith & Order Paper No. 214, 2 and 6.

Similar tones are found in Lausanne documents from 1974, 1989 and 2010. The Lausanne Covenant states that ‘the church’s visible unity in truth is God’s purpose’. Evangelism is a call to unity because our oneness strengthens our witness.<sup>9</sup> The 1989 Manila Manifesto takes this a step further and affirms the ‘urgent need for churches to co-operate in evangelism and social action, repudiating competition and avoiding duplication’.<sup>10</sup> In the 2010 Cape Town Commitment the strong focus is on ‘love’ – love of the triune God and love of God’s people. This love is the first evidence of obedience to the Gospel, and ‘a potent engine of world mission’.

Love calls for unity. Jesus’ command that his disciples should love one another is linked to his prayer that they should be one. Both the command and the prayer are missional – ‘that the world may know you are my disciples’, and that ‘the world may know that you (the Father) sent me’. A most powerfully convincing mark of the truth of the gospel is when Christian believers are united in love across the world’s inveterate divisions – barriers of race, colour, gender, social class, economic privilege or political alignment. Few things so destroy our testimony as when Christians mirror and amplify the very same divisions among themselves.<sup>11</sup>

Against this background, the Cape Town Commitment calls for a new global partnership within the body of Christ, not only as a demonstration of our unity in the gospel, but for the sake of the name of Christ and the mission of God. In the Commitment’s *Call to Action*, it is stated that ‘a divided Church has no message for a divided world. Our failure to live in reconciled unity is a major obstacle to authenticity and effectiveness in mission’. We need ‘a spirit of grace’, and we ‘long for greater recognition of the missional power of visible, earthly unity’. So do not split the body of Christ!<sup>12</sup>

*Lumen Gentium* introduces a new ecclesiology built around the dynamic ‘people of God’ concept and notes the reflection of the inner life of the triune God within the church itself. The church is a people brought into unity from the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.<sup>13</sup> So the unity of the church is not based in the unity of the members, but rather on the unity of God: ‘It is one and the same God who gathers the scattered from all places and all ages and makes them into one people of God.’<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> John Stott, *For the Lord We Love* (Glasgow: Lausanne Movement, 2009), 33ff.

<sup>10</sup> J.D. Douglas (ed), *Proclaim Christ until He Comes: Calling the Whole Church to Take the Whole Gospel to the Whole World* (Minneapolis, MN: World Wide Publications, 1990).

<sup>11</sup> *The Cape Town Commitment: A Confession of Faith and a Call to Action* (The Lausanne Movement, 2011), 25.

<sup>12</sup> *The Cape Town Commitment*, 65f.

<sup>13</sup> See Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2002), 28f.

<sup>14</sup> Hans Kung, *The Church* (New York: Image Books, 1976), 353.

A slightly similar trinitarian view may be found in Eastern Orthodoxy: the Father does all things by the Word in the Holy Spirit, and the unity of the church follows from the unity of God.<sup>15</sup> And it is the visible church, the church of God on earth, which we are talking about as mirroring the triune oneness. At the heart of this ecclesiology stands the Eucharist where we bear witness to salvation in Christ by ‘telling’ and by ‘doing’. The Eucharist is thus the foundational act of the church – the act that makes the church. So in a sense one could say that the church makes the Eucharist, and the Eucharist makes the church. In the one broken bread, we who are many are one body. ‘One in many’ and ‘many in one’.<sup>16</sup> If this is so, then church life and mission become ‘liturgy after the liturgy’. And the local Eucharistic gathering is the church of God.

The foundation of mission in unity is to be found in the *koinonia* of the triune God. ‘The inner communion of the Holy Trinity is the ultimate source of the unity of the church and the aim of God’s mission: to invite every human being to experience fellowship with God and with one another according to the inner unity of the One God in three persons (John 17:21), in the eschatological hope of the restoration of the whole created world.’<sup>17</sup> The mission of the triune God is *marturia*, a witness expressed through *kerygma*, *koinonia*, *diakonia* and *leitourgia*. ‘Word’ and ‘sacrament’ have in a Lutheran/Protestant context become the primary marks of the church in its witness, but these marks belong within – and must not be separated from – a gathering of believers (*communio sanctorum*) on the way to the world – a gathering who also knows what it is to be a community of sinners (*communio peccatorum*) under the cross. In other words, the church in mission lives as *simul justus et peccator* (just and sinful simultaneously) – a mixed body who needs to hear the gospel of repentance daily and who therefore prays for the triune God to bring reconciliation between his people and himself (vertical) and among his people (horizontal). But the unity is not primarily a unity among sinners, but a unity that may be expressed in the following manner (in a document on the dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and Pentecostal churches):

... the *koinonia* between Christians is rooted in the life of Father, Son and Holy Spirit ... this trinitarian life is the highest expression of the unity to which we together aspire: ‘That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ’ (1 John 1:3).<sup>18</sup>

Unity in mission grows out of what we have seen and heard, and calls others into fellowship with the triune God.

<sup>15</sup> Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology*, 22.

<sup>16</sup> Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology*, 96.

<sup>17</sup> Daryl Balia and Kirsteen Kim (eds), *Edinburgh 2010. Witnessing to Christ Today*, 208.

<sup>18</sup> Quoted from Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology*, 86.

The way one understands the Trinity carries over to one's ecclesiology. If our view of the Trinity is hierarchical, we shall also have a hierarchical view of the church, according to Jürgen Moltmann. An open view of the Trinity leads to an open church with egalitarian relationships. As the Trinity is open, so was Jesus' friendship – inclusive, revolutionary, going out to meet the other. Such friendship prepares the ground for a friendlier world, Moltmann says.<sup>19</sup> For Moltmann the logical consequence is a 'free church' model, quite different from his own 'state church' model. A 'relational ecclesiology' built on an open Trinity also leads to *a church for others* – a church which understands its mission and its meaning, its roles and its functions in relation to others. A church which is open for God, open for men and open for the future of both God and men. Such a church will exist for the world and will live for and out of mission, a mission which in the same manner is 'open' and ready to join in with the Spirit. Trinitarian mission is to participate in the mission of the Spirit.

Life in the Holy Spirit is the essence of mission, the core of why we do what we do, and how we live our lives. Spirituality gives deepest meaning to our lives and motivates our actions ... This mission spirituality has a dynamic of transformation which, through spiritual commitment of people, is capable of transforming the world in God's grace.<sup>20</sup>

The Spirit of mission is also the Spirit of unity whom we pray and hope will heal, reconcile and renew the whole creation.

The mission of the church grows out of the nature of the church, and this nature reflects the nature of the triune God. Miroslav Volf's trinitarian ecclesiology attempts to show and view the church as the image of the Trinity.<sup>21</sup> This leads him to 'define' the church as the presence of Christ amidst the gathered community, as described in Matthew 18:20. Volf is here also leaning on Ignatius, Tertullian and Cyprian: 'I will join this long tradition by taking Matthew 18:20 as the foundation not only for determining what the church is, but also for how it manifests itself externally as a church.'<sup>22</sup> In Volf's answer to the question 'What is the church?', the same tone is heard:

Whenever the Spirit of Christ ... is present in its *ecclesially constitutive activity*, there is the church. The Spirit unites the gathered congregation with the triune God and integrates it into a history extending from Christ ... to the eschatological new creation. This Spirit-mediated relationship with the triune God ... constitutes an assembly into a church.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* (London: SCM, 1977), 121.

<sup>20</sup> Keum, *Together towards Life*, 4.

<sup>21</sup> Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998)

<sup>22</sup> Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 136.

<sup>23</sup> Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 129.

### The Spirit of Unity and the Spirit of Truth

When Jesus prays for the unity of his followers, he prays that, in this way, they will emulate and reflect the triune God: ‘... that they may be one, as we are one’ (John 17:11). As they do so, they will be engines in God’s mission. Finding unity in the church and in a congregation requires that the church is moving out in mission. Equally important is to keep in mind that the high priestly prayer is also a prayer that the disciples may become holy and that they may realize the truth. *So unity, holiness and truth go together with and in mission.* We must not concentrate on one in such a way that we isolate it from the others. John Stott warned against a search for structural unity without a comparable quest for the truth and life of authentic unity. And he added:

Others have been preoccupied with truth (doctrinal orthodoxy), sometimes becoming dry, harsh and unloving in the process, forgetting that truth is to be adorned with the beauty of holiness. Holiness seems of paramount importance to others, that is, the state of the church’s interior life. But such people sometimes withdraw into a self-centred piety, forgetting that we have been called out of the world in order to be sent back into it, which is ‘mission’. So mission becomes the obsession of a fourth group which, however, sometimes forgets that the world will come to believe in Jesus only when His people are one in truth, holiness and love. Truth, holiness, mission and unity belonged together in the prayer of Jesus, and they need to be kept together in our quest for the church’s renewal today.<sup>24</sup>

In his high priestly prayer Jesus is not praying for the world, but ‘on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours’ (John 17:9). He wants the world to believe and to join his people. This may happen through the witness of his people, and ‘that witness will be most effective when it comes from people who have truly come to know Christ through repentance and faith, conversion and new birth, and who know they have become “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and God’s own people”’.<sup>25</sup>

In that perspective one may claim that all true and genuine believers are already one in Christ. In Christ, we have all been brought near in the blood of Christ (Eph 2:12-14). The challenge is then whether we can and will grasp this and whether we can and will manifest it. To this should be added that Jesus seems to be praying for a unity in truth of his people *today* with his people *then*: ‘I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one’ (John 17:20-21). John Stott puts it this way:

Jesus’s prayer was first and foremost that there might be a historical continuity between the apostles and the post-apostolic church, that the

<sup>24</sup> John Stott, *The Contemporary Christian* (Leicester, UK: IVP, 1992), 268-69.

<sup>25</sup> Michael Cassidy, *The Church Jesus Prayed For* (Oxford, UK, and Grand Rapids, MI: Monarch, 2012), 271.

church's faith might not change with the changing years but remain recognizably the same, and that the church of every generation might merit the epithet apostolic because of its loyalty to the message and mission of the apostles.<sup>26</sup>

The unity in mission begins as a unity with the apostles and the apostolic gospel. This is what 'apostolic succession' means in my ecclesial context. And this unity is not a rigid doctrinal matter, but something that may grow, for Jesus prays: 'May they be brought to complete unity/become completely one' (17:23). Our unity is real, but not perfect. The reasons are many, also deep and genuine theological divergence on central issues; but equally important are the reasons found at the level of praxis, of attitude, at the level of love. The hard fact in many contexts is that lack of Christian unity in the church destroys our credibility in the world. Michael Cassidy quotes a prayer in the Anglican Prayer Book: 'Give your church power to preach the Gospel of Christ, and grant that we and all Christian people may be united in truth, live together in your love, and reveal your glory in the world.'<sup>27</sup> Today this is often termed 'doing mission in Christ's way': 'Evangelism is closely related to unity: the love for one another is a demonstration of the gospel we proclaim (John 13:34-35) while disunity is an embarrassment to the gospel (1 Corinthians 1).'<sup>28</sup> 'Doing mission in Christ's way' may sound simplistic, but implies the whole range of *kenotic* love, humility, co-suffering, offering healing, respecting cultural, ethnic and social diversities and the dignity of each human being. Our lives are in actual mission in Christ's way. This has to do with the sacramental life of the church and it has to do with a spirit which abolishes egoism, arrogance and self-contentment. Here, I believe, is the core of visible unity – in our deeds and attitudes, our common work for peace, justice and reconciliation in a broken world. One may call this 'the missionary opening up' of the church to the world.<sup>29</sup> It is here, as we actually do mission in Christ's way, that the so-called invisible unity<sup>30</sup> becomes visible – in being able to co-operate and witness together, in accepting diversity as a gift from God and

<sup>26</sup> Stott, *The Contemporary Christian*, 266.

<sup>27</sup> Cassidy, *The Church Jesus Prayed For*, 314.

<sup>28</sup> Keum, *Together towards Life*, 31.

<sup>29</sup> Daryl Balia and Kirsteen Kim (eds), *Edinburgh 2010: Witnessing to Christ Today*, 208.

<sup>30</sup> I do not subscribe to the concept of an 'invisible church'. The church may be hidden. Just as the glory of Christ was hidden, and not invisible, in his incarnation and humiliation, so the real nature of the church/*koinonia* as *sanctorum communio* is hidden or concealed, but not invisible. God did not reveal his glory (himself) in Christ *in spite of* his humanity, but in the complete humanity (profanity) of the incarnate *logos* (i.e. in his life, death and cross). In the same way, the hiddenness of the *koinonia* lies in its visibility, in its incarnational character, in its provisional character, in its becoming *communio sanctorum et peccatorum*. Hidden under its contradiction (*sub contrarie specie*), i.e. its brokenness and sinfulness, but not invisible.

at the same time avoiding divisions, discrimination and intolerance. *Unity in mission is unity in diversity*. As we pursue structural unity, diversity must continue to be counted as an enrichment.

### The Missional Church

Both ‘unity’ and ‘mission’ begin with ‘being’ rather than ‘doing’. They are so to speak the ‘nature’ or DNA of the church. Emil Brunner is often quoted in this connection: ‘The church exists by mission as a fire exists by burning.’<sup>31</sup> The Spirit of Christ who empowers the church in mission is also the life of the church. Jesus breathed the Holy Spirit into the church at the same time as he sent the church (John 20:19ff). Ergo, *the church is missionary by its very nature*.<sup>32</sup> The church exists in being sent and in building up itself for the sake of mission. Missionary activity is not so much the work of the church as simply the church at work.

The American missiologist Van Gelder writes:

... the church, as the people of God in the world, is inherently a missionary church. It is to participate fully in the Son’s redemptive work as the Spirit creates, leads, and teaches the church to live as the distinctive people of God ... *The church is. The church does what it is. The church organizes what it does.* The nature of the Church is based on God’s presence through the Spirit. The ministry of the church flows out of the church’s nature. The organization of the church is designed to support the ministry of the church.<sup>33</sup>

The word ‘missionary’ refers to the specific mission activities of the church, whereas the word ‘missional’ is related to the nature of the church, as being sent by God to the world. It began with Lesslie Newbigin who differentiated between the church’s missionary *dimension* and its missionary *intention*.<sup>34</sup> It was the same Newbigin who, after having served as a missionary in South India for several decades before returning to Birmingham in the 1970s, started writing books about the church in the West. Not only did he castigate the rationalistic modernism of the West; he also claimed that modern, western culture was the least receptive to the Gospel:

There is a cold contempt for the Gospel which is harder to face than opposition ... England is a very pagan society, and the development of a truly

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<sup>31</sup> Emil Brunner, *The Word and the World* (London: Student Mission Movement Press, 1931), 108.

<sup>32</sup> David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991), 372.

<sup>33</sup> Craig Van Gelder, *The Essence of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 31, 37.

<sup>34</sup> Newbigin, *One Body, One Gospel, One World* (London and New York: International Missionary Council, 1958), 21, 43.

missionary encounter with this very tough form of paganism is the greatest intellectual and practical task facing the Church.<sup>35</sup>

Reading Newbigin helped me realize that my own experiences as a young missionary in Ethiopia and with the East African revival – and later from the growing church in China – were experiences of how the church was meant to be. Not only were these churches following in the footsteps of the Acts of the Apostles with regard to the power and presence of the Holy Spirit; they also represented a living people of God, in praise and weeping, people who gave priority to walking in the light, and who in their lives demonstrated God's renewing and healing power in their contexts.

The term 'missional church' is based on different streams from Orthodox, Roman Catholic, ecumenical and evangelical theology and practice and represents in that way a joint ecumenical concern which often has been running parallel and been intertwined with the concern for unity and common witness. The term itself came out of *The Gospel and Our Culture* network, which was initially established in England in 1989, and soon exported to North America and elsewhere. The network was inspired by Lesslie Newbigin and his early books *The Open Secret* (1978), *Foolishness to the Greeks* (1986) and *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (1991).<sup>36</sup>

It was the American *The Gospel and Our Culture* network that created the term *missional church*.<sup>37</sup> Darrell L. Guder, who was a key figure in the network, raises the issue of the *conversion of the church* in his book, *The Continuing Conversion of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans,

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<sup>35</sup> Newbigin, *Unfinished Agenda: An Autobiography* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985).

<sup>36</sup> The influence of Newbigin's theology of cultural plurality on these missiological streams has been well documented by George R. Hunsberger in *Bearing the Witness of the Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 1998). The American version of the network also pays tribute to Newbigin; at the same time, it is very preoccupied with its own North American context. This is illustrated by the fact that all the books on the topic mention North America in their titles – for example, *The Church between Gospel and Culture: The Emerging Mission in North America* (Hunsberger & Van Gelder 1996), *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Guder 1998), and *Confident Witness – Changing World: Rediscovering the Gospel in North America* (Van Gelder 1999). The focus on context is a common feature within missional church thinking: What does our mission context require in terms of calling, tasks and witness? And what kind of leadership does this context call for?

<sup>37</sup> Darrell Guder (ed), *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998). This book was the result of a three-year study project aiming at analyzing the situation of the American church and at defining its challenges within a mission context. Here, missional is defined to underline 'the essential nature and vocation of the church as God's called and sent people'. Further, it is emphasised that missional ecclesiology should be Biblical, historical, contextual, eschatological and practicable.

2000). This conversion is related to re-thinking theology, evangelization, worship, leadership and structures. Most importantly, it demands undertaking measures against the gospel reductionism within the church. The early church went from being a movement to becoming an institution. Constantine's church replaced the understanding of the gospel as an event with the formulation of a defined faith system consisting of truths; the Kingdom of God was conceived as the eternity that awaits a Christian after death; salvation was handed out to the individual by the church, in particular through the sacraments. On the basis of these gospel reductions, the organizational structure of the church was transformed into state religion and the administrator of religious meaning in society. Likewise, the reformation and pietism have reduced the gospel to a matter of salvation for the individual: 'The benefits of salvation are separated from the reason for which we receive God's grace in Christ: to empower us as God's people to become Christ's witnesses. This fundamental dichotomy between the benefits of the gospel and the mission of the gospel constitutes the most profound reductionism of the gospel.'<sup>38</sup>

David Bosch described how we experience a shift from the modern Enlightenment paradigm in the history of Christendom, towards a post-modern, ecumenical paradigm.<sup>39</sup> *Corpus Christianum* – the idea of a unity made up of state, religion and culture as the canopy for the church's work – no longer functions. According to missional church thinking, the West is witnessing the end of the era that has lasted from the Constantinian state church and church tradition in the fourth century. This calls for a dramatic readjustment process. The idea of *Corpus Christianum* symbolized wedlock between the church and the holders of power which, in different ways, turned a missionary church into a pastoral institution. As the state religion of Rome, the Christian faith became the civil religion and the society's administrator of religious meaning. The church's structure adopted the shape of the society's structure, with parochial churches, and a clear division between *clerici* (priests) and *idiotes* (lay people). Faith was practised by taking part in the arrangements of the church, and evangelization was replaced with 'Christianization'. Breaking with the Constantinian tradition, with its access to power and influence, is not easy. In other parts of the world, a break with the Constantinian church has already taken place, or was never present in the first place. To westerners in Northern Europe it has in some cases become an obstacle to mission because it conceals the fact that we are situated in a mission context.

The vision to be a missional church is born out of a critique of the western concept of church. The response to a mission situation is not to initiate efforts to 'communicate with modern man'; rather, it is to ask what

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<sup>38</sup> Darrell L. Guder, *The Continuing Conversion of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 120.

<sup>39</sup> Bosch, 349ff.

is wrong with today's church since the gospel appears so irrelevant to so many. The features of the Constantinian church are similar to a Lutheran/Protestant conception of the church as the place for preaching the gospel and administering the sacraments. A missional church is where the people of God participate in God's mission through being, word and action, in their daily lives. The symbols of the Constantinian church are the place, the temple, the Word, the sacred, whereas the symbols of the missional church are the way, discipleship, wholeness, common witness and everyday life. Likewise, one can distinguish between the custodians of the Constantinian church – a clerical hierarchy of static institutions – and the custodians of the missional church – lay people, who dynamically live out their faith in everyday situations. This does not rule out the ordained ministry, but sees its role in equipping God's people for service (Eph 4:11ff).

In the midst of this paradigm shift, the question is: How are we to be God's church in our time? This question in turn leads to a number of new questions – about everything we are and do as Christians and as church. This is not a matter of new methods or models. When encountering the challenges of a changing society, westerners tend to think in terms of analyses, solutions, projects – new church models, electronic church, reshaped worship, and evangelization efforts – whereas the shift that we experience today raises questions about theology, missiology and spirituality. We are forced to re-read the Scriptures about what it means to be God's people in the world, and about being signs of the Kingdom of God through who we are, what we do, and what we say. In this light, one can but wonder how many of our churches in the West have for decades made the traditional church structure such an integral part of the gospel, and how we have carried out a determined reduction of the gospel (from making disciples to a preoccupation with the personal salvation of the individual), and a reduction of what it means to be church – from the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church – to a church that defines itself only by what it does – the proclamation of the gospel and the administration of baptism and communion.<sup>40</sup> In this way, the reformers shifted the attention away from what the church is to what the church does. Through this focus on sermon and sacraments, the church service became the primary task of the church. Wilbert Shenk is preoccupied with the same issue:

The confessional statements ... all emphasize the function rather than the being of the church. Ecclesiologically, the church is turned inward. The thrust of these statements, which were the very basis for catechising and guiding the faithful, rather than equipping and mobilizing the church to engage the world, was to guard and preserve.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Van Gelder, *The Essence of the Church*, 53ff.

<sup>41</sup> Wilbert Shenk, *Write the Vision: The Church Renewed* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press, 1995), 38.

The missional church concept tries to capture the old truth that mission is part of the church's *esse*. Without mission there is no church. It lies in the genes of the church to be missional, and any ecclesiological discussion without this point of departure will necessarily derail and end up speaking of something other than the church. Therefore, mission should not be reduced to a task or a programme; it is primarily the nature of the church – a nature that grows out of God's nature. In the midst of the crisis that the established church of the West experiences, what will remain is a missional fellowship of people who live by and demonstrate the gospel of the Kingdom of God through being, word and action. Such was the ecclesiological paradigm of the early church, and such should the new paradigm be. This is a matter of finding the right balance between the nature of the church (what the church is), its tasks (ministry; what the church does), and its structure (how the church organizes itself).

The task is not to invent a number of mission programmes to attract new churchgoers. Instead we are challenged to be what the church has always been: people of flesh and blood carrying the reality of the gospel within them, communicating it through missional being and action. For that reason, it is likely that the famous, but seldom realized, priesthood of all believers will become the basic church and mission structure. Together with this structure, one could hope for a rediscovery of the gifts of the Spirit, in a broad Biblical perspective, as that which equips the missionary congregation in a post-modern reality. Our ability to be magnets attracting people to Christ becomes important, as it is in our sister churches in the global South. A missional church will therefore often emphasize meditation, spirituality, presence, genuineness and lifestyle. Modelled on our brothers and sisters in the South and East, we may in a new way become personal carriers of the spiritual reality the world longs for. Before becoming centrifugal, we need to return to the centre – to live centripetally.

And when going out, our primary task is *to be witnesses*. The church's missional call, according to the New Testament, is to be witnesses. Mission is witness. *Marturia is the sum of kerygma, koinonia, leitourgia and diakonia* – all four of which constitute important dimensions of the witness for which the church is called and sent: 'We are using a missiological hermeneutic when we read the New Testament as the testimony (witness) of witnesses, equipping other witnesses for the common mission of the church.'<sup>42</sup> Thus, testimony becomes a demonstration through the lives and actions of God's people to the fact that the Kingdom of God becomes present in the disciples of Jesus Christ. In this way, the testimony of the gospel defines the identity, activities and communication to which the church has been called since Pentecost.

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<sup>42</sup> Guder, *The Continuing Conversion of the Church*, 53-55.

## Conclusion

I have in this chapter reflected on Biblical and theological foundations for mission and unity from two major perspectives: ‘the triune God’s mission’ and ‘missional church’. In my treatment I have particularly highlighted the ontological dimensions of unity and mission. My point of departure has been the ancient trinitarian concept of *missio Dei*. It was, I believe, this concept which opened up new landscapes for mission in the 1950s (the Willingen Conference in 1952) after World War II, the Holocaust and the Maoist takeover in China. *The missio Dei paradigm makes impossible the separation of mission and church. If the church is defined by mission, then the unity of the church and mission are deeply interrelated.*

How may we on the way into the future keep these two interrelated? No doubt, there will be theological and practical hurdles and issues to tackle, and the major actors (Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Ecumenical and Evangelical) will continue to explore avenues of convergence, undoubtedly with church and mission leaders from the global South expanding and refocusing the global conversation.

Could ‘spirituality’ be one of the avenues? In several of the documents and statements from 2010, spirituality is highlighted, a spirituality that encompasses prayer, worship, Scripture, and the call to live as witnesses in our daily life. Could it be that ‘transforming mission’ today is about spirituality? It is the Holy Spirit who makes the dead bones live again. The life of church and mission is the life of God’s Spirit in the world. The sources for this life are to be found in Word and Sacrament. The means of grace transform us into new human beings. This spirituality finds many expressions: adoration, prayer, meditation, contemplation, spiritual guidance, and equipping God’s people with spiritual gifts. And let us pay attention to the spiritual yearning among many. Note such signs as the retreat movement, the interest in pilgrimage, the Taizé movement, the Sant’Egidio movement, *lectio divina* – and do not forget to monitor what happens on the borders of Christian communities in the form of new religious movements and a secular spirituality. We need in new ways to live within the triangle of ‘word’, ‘prayer’ and ‘everyday life’. Many among us live a superficial spiritual life. God’s people need to wake up to God’s power. When he acts, the renewal comes, as Christians in the global South experience. Learn from them how to live out spirituality in everyday life outside the walls of the church, in a life of incarnation. ‘If the Word does not become flesh (*sarx*), the church becomes the *sarcophagus* (the coffin) of the gospel.’<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> See Knud Jørgensen, ‘Edinburgh, Tokyo and Cape Town – comparing and contrasting on the way to 2110’, in Margunn Serigstad Dahle, Lars Dahle and Knud Jørgensen (eds), *The Lausanne Movement: A Range of Perspectives* (Oxford: Regnum, 2014).

# FROM CO-OPERATION TO COMMON WITNESS: MISSION AND UNITY, 1910-2010

Dana L. Robert

In living memory, Christianity has undergone some of the greatest demographic and cultural shifts in its history. Given the local variations in theologies, cultures and practices that have resulted from the expansion of Christianity in the past century, what does it mean to think of the church as a worldwide community? What is the relationship between the missionary witness that undergirds Christian diversity and expansion, and the unity for which Jesus Christ longed, when he prayed that his followers would be one?

Tension between mission and unity has been a persistent issue since the time of the early church. The followers of Christ on earth live between the centrifugal force of evangelism and expansion across boundaries, and the centripetal force of consolidation and stabilization, including shared doctrine. Unity without witness can be stagnant and oppressive. Witness without unity can stimulate divisive competition between different parts of the Body of Christ. Yet somewhere in this tension lies the identity of Christianity as a global fellowship.

In this essay, I examine three themes in the relationship between mission and unity over the past century. This historical overview is merely suggestive, as the subject is far larger than can be covered in a brief essay. But each theme reflects the evolving understanding of Christianity as a worldwide religion.<sup>1</sup>

## **1910: Co-operation for World Evangelization and the Kingdom of God**

The late 1800s and early 1900s marked the height of European imperialism. The era also saw unprecedented missionary expansion by Protestants. Young people, energized by the possibility of evangelizing the world in their own generation, used the technologies of the day to take the gospel to non-Christian parts of the world. The steamship, railway and telegraph energized an expansionist mentality similar to how the Internet and air travel have created energy around globalization today. Although the connection with colonial expansion created serious ethical and practical

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problems, western missions were often seen as engines of social progress, bringing education, medical care and women's rights to a world in which God was opening doors for the advancement of the Kingdom.<sup>2</sup>

In 1881, the YMCA created an emblem that represented the hopes and dreams of the emerging Student Christian Movement.<sup>3</sup> At the centre of the seal was the Chi Rho, overlaid by verse John 17:21: '*that they may all be one. As you, Father, 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.*' Circling the edges were inscribed the names of inhabited regions of the world: Asia, Europa, Oceania, Africa and America. With Christ at the centre, the students' vision of unity extended to all the world's peoples, in outward movement through co-operative evangelization and social uplift.

In 1910, the youthful energy of the global student movement, led by YMCA President John R. Mott, converged with the missionary network to produce the World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh. Its well-known accomplishments include a broad interdenominational Protestant focus. It produced preliminary study reports that surveyed the world missionary movement and analyzed such issues as Missions and Governments, the Missionary Message in Relation to Non-Christian Religions, World Evangelization, Education in Relation to National Life, and Missionary Training. Although delegates were mostly mission leaders from Europe and the United States, participants experienced a profound sense of spiritual unity from meeting with each other and engaging with the roughly twenty delegates from Asia and Africa.<sup>4</sup> At the conclusion of the conference, Mott expressed the common experience of fellowship with soaring rhetoric, 'Gathered together from different nations and races and communions, have we not come to realize our oneness in Christ? ... It is not His will that the influences set forth by Him shall cease this night. Rather shall they course out through us to the very ends of the earth.'<sup>5</sup>

On a practical level, the keyword used in conference documents to express the growing relationship between missionary witness and unity was that of 'co-operation'. Missionaries felt the gospel was being hampered by

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<sup>2</sup> See, for example, such popular and optimistic mission titles as John R. Mott, *The Evangelization of the World in This Generation* (New York: Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions, 1900); James L. Barton, *Human Progress Through Missions* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1912); Sidney L. Gulick, *The Growth of the Kingdom of God* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1897).

<sup>3</sup> 'YMCA Logo – History', YMCA: [www.ymca.int/who-we-are/history/ymca-logo-history](http://www.ymca.int/who-we-are/history/ymca-logo-history) (accessed 2 February 2014).

<sup>4</sup> See Brian Stanley, *The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009).

<sup>5</sup> John R. Mott, 'Closing Address', in *World Missionary Conference 1910, The History and Records of the Conference together with Addresses Delivered at the Evening Meetings* (Edinburgh and London: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier; and New York, Chicago and Toronto: Fleming H. Revell, 1910), 347-48.

the divided witness of multiple competing sects formed by western ethnic and theological disputes. But the Commission on Co-Operation & Unity did not produce one blueprint for creating worldwide Christian fellowship through mission work. It explored multiple options including comity, conferences and associations to bring people together, and joint action ranging from prayer meetings to schemes for regional mission federations. Practical co-operation included joint projects for Bible translation, the provision of Christian literature, united political advocacy, and support for institutions of higher education in colonized lands. Following the 1910 conference, new courses and schools for missionary training were established in the United States and Europe, including anthropological and linguistic training at the Kennedy School of Missions at Hartford Seminary and the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London. Women responded with co-operative enterprises of their own, including the provision of Christian literature for youth, and raising funds for interdenominational women's colleges and medical schools in Asia.<sup>6</sup>

The impressive list of resolutions on co-operation and unity collected by the Commission of that name showed that the Edinburgh 1910 conference stood at a turning-point in Protestant history. Co-operation was a fresh idea coming from the experiences of missionaries working together with first and second-generation Christians. The new big vision of worldwide fellowship was both a motivator and a result of mission work. Concluded the Commission, 'While we may differ from one another in our conception of what unity involves and requires, we agree in believing that our Lord intended that we should be one in a visible fellowship ... The Church in western lands will reap a glorious reward from its missionary labours if the Church in the mission field points the way to a healing of its divisions and to the attainment of that unity for which our Lord prayed.'<sup>7</sup>

After the Edinburgh conference, John Mott travelled around the world organizing regional Christian councils that included both missionaries and national partners. A framework of councils became the structure for both co-operative action and discussions about church unity. The 1910 conference itself founded a Continuation Committee to further its vision. This grew into the International Missionary Council, a global body for co-ordinating and supporting the mission concerns of the various church councils. To deal with theological issues and justice issues on an international level, the 'Faith & Order' and 'Life & Work' movements grew from the seeds planted at Edinburgh 1910.

The idea of co-operation in mission allowed missionaries and national church leaders to forge partnerships with those of other theologies,

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<sup>6</sup> Dana L. Robert, *American Women in Mission: A Social History of Their Thought and Practice* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1996), chap. 4.

<sup>7</sup> Edinburgh Conference 1910, *Report of Commission VIII: Co-operation and the Promotion of Unity* (Edinburgh and London: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier; and New York, Chicago and Toronto: Fleming H. Revell, 1910), 131.

Protestant denominations, and nationalities, but without losing their own identity. The practical and political obstacles against co-operation were so huge that only a powerful vision of the Kingdom of God could provide an adequate motivation for its pursuit. The Bishop of Southwark said it well in his inspiring address, when he identified Christian unity as ‘the ideal, the end, the true state of nature in the Kingdom of God. This our Lord has taught us; and the Spirit teaches’.<sup>8</sup>

In historical perspective, ‘co-operation’ had its limitations and strengths as a model for mission and unity. First was its relatively uncritical assumption of the colonial and Christendom matrix in which the mission movement operated. Its focus on Kingdom-building was overly optimistic, with inadequate consideration of the unequal power dynamics between western missions and so-called ‘younger churches’. At the same time, co-operation recognized that the theological and structural individuality of its participants should be respected. Co-operation was a distinctively Protestant model that honoured the voluntarist ethic of its participants, who chose to work together for common purposes. The ethic of co-operation continued to grow during the 1920s. Its ethos was captured by Archbishop Nathan Söderblom of Sweden, the father of the Life & Work movement, who affirmed the spiritual unity of the church, despite its many differences and divisions. Grounded in Christ, Christian unity did not need to be created so much as recognized.<sup>9</sup> It is no surprise that Söderblom’s passion for unity came from his youth in the student mission movement.

### 1948-1963: One World, One Church, One Mission

Twentieth-century missions grew in tandem with a steadily increasing awareness of global political and economic interdependence. By the 1940s, both secular and religious movements sought ‘one world’, characterized by peace and justice among nations. Leading Christian internationalists like Japanese social reformer Toyohiko Kagawa, Anglican Archbishop William Temple, and American evangelist E. Stanley Jones, promoted a variety of ‘Kingdom of God’ movements for worldwide peace and justice among nations, including support for a new economic world order and world government. The longing for peaceful unity intensified during World War II. The year 1948 thus saw the birth both of the United Nations and the World Council of Churches as the culmination of heroic efforts to move beyond fratricidal conflict towards global community.

The logo of the World Council of Churches illustrated how ‘ecumenism’ had replaced the earlier voluntarist model of ‘co-operation’.<sup>10</sup> One boat

<sup>8</sup> *Report of Commission VIII*, 231.

<sup>9</sup> Nathan Söderblom, *Christian Fellowship; or, The United Life and Work of Christendom* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1923), 11.

<sup>10</sup> ‘About the WCC Logo’: [www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/logo](http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/logo) (accessed 2 February 2014).

floating on the sea, with a cross as the mast, encircled like a rainbow by the Greek word *oikoumene*, expressed the mid-twentieth-century longing for global unity. This image evoked Jesus reassuring the disciples upon the Sea of Galilee, and calming the waters with ‘Peace, be still’. It was not enough for the world church to live ‘as if’ spiritual unity was the reality. Rather, Christians needed to unite around one church that took one mission into one world.

The mid-century inseparability of mission and unity was expressed in 1951 by the Rolle Declaration. Aware of widespread confusion over the meaning of the word ‘ecumenism’, the Central Committee of the WCC stated: ‘It is important to insist that this word, which comes from the Greek word for the whole inhabited earth, is properly used to describe everything that relates to the whole task of the whole church to bring the Gospel to the whole world. It therefore covers equally the missionary movement and the movement towards unity, and must not be used to describe the latter in contradistinction to the former. We believe that a real service will be rendered to true thinking on these subjects in the churches if we so use this word that it covers both Unity and Mission in the context of the whole world.’<sup>11</sup> This vision of mission was broader than evangelization, and included the public witness of a united church to tackle social problems bigger than any one denomination or nation-state could address. The social vision was succinctly stated in the Foreword to a volume published from the conference ‘Christian Bases of World Order’, held in 1943 at Ohio Wesleyan University: ‘World order has a moral and spiritual base, and the fundamental issues which are involved in world order are the concern of men of good will everywhere. World order is peculiarly related to the world mission of the Christian church.’<sup>12</sup>

Ecumenical ideals led to the articulation of the idea of ‘World Christianity’. By the late 1940s, the hope for Christianity as a global fellowship was being summed up in the terms ‘World Christianity’ or ‘World Church’. World War II revealed that only united Christian community was adequate to meet the challenges of one interconnected world. While ‘World Christianity’ was on one level the product of missionary success, it also led to new understandings of the meaning of mission. Although some of its staunchest supporters soon realized that the World Council of Churches was a flawed instrument for bringing in the Kingdom of God, the strength of the dream behind it – the inseparability of mission and unity – was foundational to the idea of ‘World Christianity’ as both an intellectual construct and a spiritual reality.

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<sup>11</sup> ‘The Calling of the Church to Mission and to Unity’, in *Minutes and Reports of the Fourth Meeting of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, Rolle (Switzerland), August 4-11, 1951* (Geneva: WCC, 1951), 65.

<sup>12</sup> Henry A. Wallace (ed), *Christian Bases of World Order: The Merrick Lectures for 1943* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1943), 5.

In his 1947 book *World Christianity: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow*, the President of Union Theological Seminary, Henry P. Van Dusen, declared that ‘only a world Church is effective amidst planetary war ... To an age destined to survive, or to expire, as “one world”, we bring a world Church. We have seen that in the past century Christianity has become, for the first time, a world reality’.<sup>13</sup> Following Kenneth Scott Latourette, Van Dusen argued that the previous 150 years – from roughly 1800 to 1950 – saw unprecedented numerical and geographic expansion, with one third of the world becoming Christian, and widespread influence on humanity in such areas as advocacy for human rights. His vision of ‘World Christianity’ was not so much that of multiculturalism, but of organic unity. While he predicted that by the year 2000, all churches would be united except for ‘sects’ and Roman Catholics, he noted the ‘countervailing trends’ of the largely western demographic base of Christianity, the twin threats of secularism and communism as alternative global visions, and anti-Christian nationalist revolutionary movements.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, Van Dusen argued, there was a historical record of Christian progress to its present condition of encompassing one third of the world. The 1948 founding of the World Council of Churches represented for him both the culmination and the end of the historic expansion of Europe, and the beginning of the new age of ‘World Christianity’. The centrifugal movement of missions gave birth to the centripetal movement of church unity, which together characterized the world church of the twentieth century. Van Dusen not only used missions and ecumenism as the two poles of his historical analysis, but he worked to unite them visibly in his role as chairman of the joint commission for the integration of the International Missionary Council and the World Council of Churches in 1961.

What was the mission of one worldwide church to one interconnected world? This question captured the imaginations of the greatest mission leaders of the mid twentieth century. For some, like India Bishop Lesslie Newbigin, then head of the International Missionary Council, the new mission was expressed as ‘The whole Church, with one Gospel of reconciliation for the whole world’.<sup>15</sup> In his little book *One Body, One Gospel, One World*, published by the International Missionary Council in

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<sup>13</sup> Henry P. Van Dusen, *World Christianity: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1947), 248-51, quoted in Dana L. Robert, *Christian Mission: How Christianity Became a World Religion* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 67.

<sup>14</sup> Van Dusen, *World Christianity*, 95. The global unity expressed by the term ‘World Christianity’ was also used by other mission scholars during the early Cold War as a counterweight to the equally global vision of communist revolution. See, for example, Richard Shaull, *Encounter with Revolution* (New York: Association Press, 1955).

<sup>15</sup> Newbigin, *One Body, One Gospel, One World: The Christian Mission Today* (London and New York: International Missionary Council, 1958), 12.

1958, Newbigin reflected that while the mission of Christ's church remained the same from age to age, the prevailing situation of the Cold War combined with erupting nationalist movements, meant that worldwide church unity was the only firm basis for mission. The church could no longer talk about world evangelization unless it spoke as one united body across cultural and racial and political barriers. The launching platform for world mission was no longer the West, but the worldwide Body of Christ, the world church. In fact, he said, 'The Church is the Mission.'<sup>16</sup> From now on, missions should flow from an understanding of the global unity of the church, not the separate activities of professional missionaries sent by competing groups.

The implication for Newbigin of one world and one church was the idea of one mission. Mission was from everywhere to everywhere, not from the West to the rest. The missionary was someone who crossed frontiers of unbelief, wherever they were found.<sup>17</sup> Two major principles resulted from seeing mission as one. First, mission rested on cross-cultural partnerships, in which every part of the church took responsibility for its mission, and all parts of the church were welcome to participate. Second, the integrity of the Body of Christ needed to be acknowledged and respected in each place, and therefore normally would be consulted when new missionaries were sent to its area.<sup>18</sup> The need for mutuality and unity in mission led Newbigin to support the integration of the International Missionary Council into the World Council of Churches. To Newbigin, to merge the church councils, including missionary societies, into the WCC, would affirm that 'mission is the mission of the whole Church to the whole world'.<sup>19</sup> Unity in Christ was itself a goal of mission, for 'We cannot stand together before men in the highways of the world and ask them to give up everything in order to be reconciled with God through Jesus Christ, if we do not face the question of our own lack of reconciliation'.<sup>20</sup>

In 1963 occurred the first world mission conference after the International Missionary Council merged into the World Council of Churches. With the theme 'Witness in Six Continents', this meeting in Mexico City was the high point of optimism about the inseparability of missions and organic unity. The conference located itself amid the interdependence and interconnectivities of the modern world, what is now

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<sup>16</sup> Newbigin, *One Body, One Gospel*, 25.

<sup>17</sup> Newbigin, *One Body, One Gospel*, 29.

<sup>18</sup> Newbigin, *One Body, One Gospel*, 36.

<sup>19</sup> Newbigin, *One Body, One Gospel*, 47. The most direct source for this famous phrase was the Rolle Declaration, 'The Calling of the Church to Mission and to Unity', about the relationship of ecumenism and mission, probably drafted by J.C. Hoekendijk under the leadership of Lesslie Newbigin in 1951. See *Minutes and Reports of the Fourth Meeting of the Central Committee, Rolle (Switzerland) August 4-11, 1951* (Geneva: WCC, 1951).

<sup>20</sup> Newbigin, *One Body, One Gospel*, 55.

called globalization, and charged the whole church to proclaim the gospel of reconciliation to the whole world. It urged lay people to cross frontiers everywhere to witness to God's Kingdom. The meeting took place in the context of post-war optimism for big solutions to the world's problems, including macro-development projects, faith in the United Nations, and confidence in the persuasive power of a united world church. The meeting included the Orthodox Churches for the first time, and was held while the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) was opening Roman Catholicism to new relationships with other Christians. The convergence of these realities made it seem as if all roads were leading towards missional unity among all branches of Christianity.

The affirmation of one Gospel and one Lord was ultimately the engine behind the mission of one world Church. Stated the conclusion to the 1963 conference message: 'We therefore affirm that this missionary movement now involves Christians in all six continents and in all lands. It must be the common witness of the whole Church, bringing the whole Gospel to the whole world. We do not yet see all the changes this demands; but we go forward in faith. God's purpose still stands: to sum up all things in Christ. In this hope we dedicate ourselves anew to his mission in the spirit of unity and in humble dependence upon our Living Lord.'<sup>21</sup>

With the hindsight of history, the limitations and strengths of the mid-twentieth-century formulations are apparent. First was the failure of organic unity to drive the future of 'World Christianity'. Despite some obvious successes such as the formation of the Church of South India in 1947, the United Church of Christ in Philippines 1948, and the United Church of Christ (USA) in 1957, the growth of the late-twentieth-century world church would proceed from the expansionist margins rather than from the centre of unity movements. A second limitation was the corporate triumphalist assumption that increased unity represented progress in mission. The voluntary and evangelistic notion of Christian witness was downplayed in the mid-century love affair with top-down ecumenism. On the positive side, one of the greatest strengths of the mid-twentieth-century movement was its realization that mission was to and from everywhere. A post-colonial mission cracked open the door to self-theologizing among Christians in Asia, Africa and Latin America.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> World Council of Churches, *Witness in Six Continents; Records of the Meeting of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches held in Mexico City, December 8th to 19th, 1963* (New York: Friendship Press, 1964), 175.

<sup>22</sup> For a historical overview of the relationship between missiology and contextual theologies in the twentieth century, see Dana L. Robert, 'Missiology and Post-Colonial Consciousness', in Sarah Coakley and Richard Cross (eds), *Oxford Handbook to the Reception History of Christian Theology* (Oxford: OUP), Part 1c.

### **2010: Common Witness and Relational Networking**

By the 1970s, the idea of ‘World Christianity’ was yesterday’s news and soon forgotten. Within twenty years of its founding, the World Council of Churches was riven by divisions. In the West, young people’s interest in the ecumenical movement collapsed. Amid cries of ‘missionary go home’ by councils of churches in Asia, Africa and Latin America, the mission structures of western mainline Protestantism declined or morphed into development agencies. Important contextual and local theologies replaced the consensus models of ecumenical unity so beloved by the World War II generation. Theologians of pluralism rejected evangelization as a form of imperialism. In the meantime, an alternative evangelical mission movement gathered strength, and it also rejected the hard-won ecumenical framework that had been crafted over many decades.

In retrospect, the dominant framework in mainline missiology from the 1960s to the 1990s was that of decolonization and post-colonialism. Just as western missions had supported the modernization that undercut and reshaped the world views of non-western and colonized societies, so the logic of modernization and secularism ultimately blasted apart the remnants of Christendom in the West. The end of Christendom marked the end of the colonial context in which the western missionary movement had operated for several hundred years. The Mexico City meeting in 1963, with its motto of the whole church taking the whole gospel to the whole world, was both the culmination of the linkage between mission and unity that began in 1910, and a declaration for a post-colonial future.

By the late 1990s, however, the term ‘World Christianity’ began to reappear. The recognition that Christianity had become a multi-cultural religion, with Europeans comprising only one quarter of the total, clearly had profound implications for mission practice. By the twenty-first century, missionaries were likely to be African, Asian, or Latin American Christians. Growing churches around the world included Catholics, Pentecostals, non-western Protestants and independent groups previously considered sects, rather than the older western communions that had struggled so hard together to create the ecumenical movement. In the West itself, the number of ‘professional’ missionaries was surpassed in the early twenty-first century by the millions of ordinary Christians who sent themselves on short-term mission trips of two weeks or less to poor countries around the world.

In such changing circumstances, what is the relationship between mission and unity in the twenty-first century? The hundredth anniversary of the World Missionary Conference of 1910 created an unprecedented opportunity for a networked, worldwide conversation on the meaning of mission. The renewal of discourse about ‘World Christianity’ shows that the dream of worldwide community based on the Revelation vision of people from all nations and races praising God retains its capacity to

inspire.<sup>23</sup> But this time, instead of ‘World Christianity’ being a synonym for a ‘world church’, with hope for ecclesial unity and united action, the idea of ‘World Christianity’ assumes multiculturalism, decentralization and multi-directional personal relationships. In short, united action for mission is characterized, not by ambitions for centralized unity, but by relational networking. Plans for organic unity and co-ordinated action through global church bodies have given way to the messy reality of multiple centres of authority, thousands of mission sending agencies, millions of freelance short-termers, and the recognition that globalization has unleashed forces beyond the ability of even a worldwide church to control. It is a legitimate question whether the promotion of ‘World Christianity’ today is subconsciously connected to a practical need to keep diversity from spinning out of control.

Yet as a networked conversation about mission, the series of 2010 conferences provided a renewed opportunity for reconsidering the meaning of Christian unity. The major conferences that commemorated the centennial of the World Missionary Conference provided an important historical moment for creating worldwide Christian fellowship by embodying new relationships between mission and unity. Simply making the huge effort to hold representative international conferences illustrated that mission-minded Christian leaders understood themselves as part of a global witnessing community.

The two most important gatherings in Edinburgh and Cape Town each demonstrated commitments to mission and unity in the context of Christianity as a global movement. While both the Edinburgh and the Lausanne conferences took the World Missionary Conference of 1910 as their starting-point, what is fascinating is how each in some respects returned to the historical moment after the International Missionary Council merged into the World Council of Churches, and before the evangelical/ecumenical split in world mission leadership. The Lausanne Congress in Cape Town affirmed the motto ‘Calling the Whole Church to take the Whole Gospel to the Whole World’, a phrase nearly identical to the core message of the WCC Mexico City meeting of 1963. As I have already shown, this motto grew from the need for a united church to address the problems of an interconnected world, amid post-colonial understandings of mission as movement from everywhere to everywhere. The difference with the Lausanne movement today is that the definition of ‘whole gospel’ is defined through the grid of the evangelical Lausanne

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<sup>23</sup> For my plenary address at the Edinburgh 2010 conference, I selected Revelation 7:9-10 as the text, based on its ubiquitous use during historical moments of challenge and transition for Christians. Dana L. Robert, ‘Mission in Long Perspective’, in Kirsteen Kim and Andrew Anderson (eds), *Edinburgh 2010: Mission Today and Tomorrow* (Oxford: Regnum Books, 2011), 55-68.

Covenant of 1974. The ‘whole church’ includes multicultural, global evangelicalism, rather than a communion of denominations.<sup>24</sup>

Yet for global evangelicalism, concern for reconciliation and social justice embedded in the idea of the ‘whole gospel’ echoed 1963. The notion of ‘whole gospel’ allowed the leaders of the Lausanne movement to put larger social issues on the table, under the rubric of evangelization. Similarities with ecumenical formulations were partly acknowledged by Christopher Wright, the head of the Lausanne Theological Commission, in an article ‘Whole Gospel, Whole Church, Whole World’ published to explain the theological basis of the forthcoming Lausanne meeting.<sup>25</sup> Another key difference from 1963, however, was the ecclesiology. While both conferences focused on united witness, mission leaders in 1963 were concerned for ecclesial unity. Lausanne movement leaders were concerned for doctrinal and missiological unity. And yet, Wright also pointed out the scandal of division within the church as a barrier to witness. So the wholeness of the church itself, described by Wright as ‘global Christian community’, is necessary to legitimize its mission to the world.<sup>26</sup> The notion of ‘whole world’ has been expanded to include concern for God’s creation, rather than using technology to exploit its fruits, as was the case in the early 1960s.<sup>27</sup>

‘Witnessing to Christ Today’ was the theme of the Edinburgh 2010 conference. In 1963, the ecumenical movement broke new ground by including the Orthodox as full partners for the first time, and Vatican II held the promise of future ecclesial unity with Roman Catholics. The Edinburgh 2010 conference involved representatives from all the world’s major ecclesial bodies and church families, including Catholics, Orthodox, Protestants and indigenous churches. Thus for the Edinburgh 2010 movement, the united conversation about worldwide witness became a framework for the expression of ecclesial, ethnic, gender and theological diversity. The ‘Common Call’ that resulted from the conference stated that ‘Recalling Christ, the host at the banquet, and committed to that unity for which he lived and prayed, we are called to ongoing co-operation, to deal with controversial issues and to work towards a common vision. We are challenged to welcome one another in our diversity, affirm our membership

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<sup>24</sup> See in this volume Grace Mathews, ‘That They All May Believe: What Sort of “Unity” is Required? An Evangelical Context’.

<sup>25</sup> Christopher Wright quotes ecumenist Willem Visser ’t Hooft from 1961 on the nature of the whole gospel, ‘Whole Gospel, Whole Church, Whole World’, *Christianity Today* 53:10 (October 2009), 1: [www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2009/october/index.html](http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2009/october/index.html)

<sup>26</sup> Wright, ‘Whole Gospel, Whole Church, Whole World’, 4.

<sup>27</sup> The Mexico City 1963 documents were shot through with ‘dominion theology’ and a sense that technology, while frightening, contains answers to the world’s problems. One of the biggest changes in mission theology since the 1960s is the emphasis on the preservation or salvation of God’s creation.

through baptism in the One Body of Christ, and recognise our need for mutuality, partnership, collaboration and networking in mission, so that the world might believe'.<sup>28</sup> This statement harkened back to the co-operative vision of a century ago, but without the Christendom framework. Rather than beginning with the western missionary movement and moving towards 'World Christianity', Edinburgh 2010 proceeded from the diversity of Christianity as a multi-cultural, worldwide movement towards mission.

In June of 2011, the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID), the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) issued their first common agreement, called 'Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World'.<sup>29</sup> Despite ongoing theological differences, the combined weight of these developments, including acceptance of the right to change one's religious affiliation, implied new willingness to accept the validity of each other's faith. Thus at a formal level, shared commitment to witness provided a common ground for bridging differences.

By the late 1990s, the need to broaden conversations about witness and unity beyond the old ecumenical movement had become urgent. So the Global Christian Forum (GCF) was founded 'to create an open space wherein representatives from a broad range of Christian churches and inter-church organizations, which confess the triune God and Jesus Christ as perfect in His divinity and humanity, can gather to foster mutual respect, to explore and address together common challenges'.<sup>30</sup> Just as the YMCA emblem expressed the co-operative missionary vision, and the WCC logos expressed the ecumenical vision, so today the symbol of the Global Christian Forum expresses the diversity of contemporary world Christianity. Superimposed over a globe a simple mosaic cross, made with coloured tiles, both evokes ancient eastern traditions of Christian art, and represents the diversity of the world's Christians united in witness to the triune God.<sup>31</sup>

The Global Christian Forum focuses on networks of personal relationships as the way forward towards unity midst a world in which the ethnic and cultural diversity of 'World Christianity' exceeds that of any time in human history. There is no commitment to an organization, a headquarters, or permanent staff. In early October of 2011 occurred the

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<sup>28</sup> 'Common Call', Edinburgh 2010 Conference: [www.edinburgh2010.org/fileadmin/Edinburgh\\_2010\\_Common\\_Call\\_with\\_explanation.pdf](http://www.edinburgh2010.org/fileadmin/Edinburgh_2010_Common_Call_with_explanation.pdf)

<sup>29</sup> World Council of Churches, Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, and World Evangelical Alliance, 'Christian Witness in a Multi-religious World: Recommendations for Conduct', 28 June 2011: [www.worldevangelicals.org/pdf/1106Christian\\_Witness\\_in\\_a\\_Multi-Religious\\_World.pdf](http://www.worldevangelicals.org/pdf/1106Christian_Witness_in_a_Multi-Religious_World.pdf)

<sup>30</sup> 'Purpose Statement', Global Christian Forum: [www.globalchristianforum.org/statement.html](http://www.globalchristianforum.org/statement.html) (accessed 2 February 2014).

<sup>31</sup> For logo, see 'Global Christian Forum gets a new visual identity': [www.globalchristianforum.org/logo.html](http://www.globalchristianforum.org/logo.html) (accessed 2 February 2014).

second worldwide meeting, in Manado, Indonesia. This meeting represented the full range of Christian denominations, communions and traditions worldwide, including Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, Pentecostal, Evangelical and indigenous churches. The premise of the GCF process is to build respectful Christian community through listening to others' experiences of Jesus Christ. The process behind the GCF is extremely important because of the competitive anarchy that often takes place among Christian groups, especially where Christianity is expanding. The GCF approach begins with relationships, not with doctrine, or even service, as the touchstone for Christian co-operation.

While it is too soon to evaluate contemporary efforts to relate mission and unity, such as the 2010 Edinburgh and Lausanne processes and the Global Christian Forum, a few summary words are in order. The difference between now and a century ago is that theological, ethnic and cultural diversity is the starting-point rather than the goal of Christian mission. Today, Christianity is a world religion, and mission proceeds from that reality. Common witness to Jesus Christ is integral to unity, rather than an instrument to actualize the Kingdom, or to build ecumenical structures. Relational networks define a world in which there are multiple centres of Christian life, and peripheries extend in every direction.

'At the end of the day, shared commitment to witness reminds us that "World Christianity" is an eschatological vision that guides us towards God's reign, in continuously expanding and deepening fellowship across human boundaries. The plurality of Christian churches is creating global networks. To be a worldwide church means reaching both across geography, and back across the generations to the communion of the saints, through the living, to the future when all will gather before the throne of Christ, lifting their voices in celebration.'<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> This final paragraph is taken from the plenary address I gave at the 2011 Global Christian Forum in Manado, Indonesia. Dana L. Robert, 'Witness and Unity in 21st Century World Christianity', in *Transformation: International Journal of Holistic Mission Studies* 30:4 (October 2013), 246.

# GROWING TOGETHER IN UNITY AND MISSION

Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen

## Introduction: The Urgency and Dilemma of Unity

What the missionary document *Ad Gentes* of the Roman Catholic Church's Second Vatican Council says of the missionary nature of the church is widely embraced by all Christian traditions: 'The pilgrim Church is missionary by her very nature, since it is from the mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit that she draws her origin, in accordance with the decree of God the Father' (#2). Similarly, the important current ecumenical document, *The Nature and Mission of the Church*, speaks of the mission of the church deriving from the 'reflection of the communion in the Triune God' (#34), meaning that 'mission belongs to the very being of the Church' (#35).<sup>1</sup> These statements anchor the essentially missionary nature of the church in the sending nature of the trinitarian God, the one God.

Consequently, mission and unity are deeply and integrally related. This call for seeking unity in mission and mission in unity in the beginning of the new millennium is succinctly described in the following two statements, the first one from the evangelical Lausanne Movement's Cape Town Commitment and the second from the ecumenical American *The Princeton Proposal for Christian Unity* document:

We lament the dividedness and divisiveness of our churches and organizations. We deeply and urgently long for Christians to cultivate a spirit of grace and to be obedient to Paul's command to 'make every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace'.<sup>2</sup>

In late modernity we fear unity, often with good reason. We cherish our particularity – our family and ethnic heritage, our established patterns of life and thought. We look with suspicion on the political and economic forces that impose homogeneity. We celebrate diversity and pluralism, sometimes as a good in its own right, because we fear the constraints of single sets of ideals.<sup>3</sup>

Rightly, the German Lutheran dogmatician Wolfhart Pannenberg has reminded us that only '[if] Christians succeed in solving the problems of

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<sup>1</sup> *The Nature and Mission of the Church*, Faith & Order Paper 198 (Geneva: WCC, 2007), #62. For the most recent important ecumenical statement on ecclesiology, see the 2013 'The Church: Towards a Common Vision'.

<sup>2</sup> 'The Cape Town Commitment' of the Lausanne Movement (2011), II.F.1. a; available at [www.lausanne.org/en/documents/ctcommitment.html#p2-6](http://www.lausanne.org/en/documents/ctcommitment.html#p2-6) (accessed 16 January 2014).

<sup>3</sup> *In One Body through the Cross: The Princeton Proposal for Christian Unity*, Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (eds) (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), #2, 12

their own pluralism, may they be able to produce a model combining pluralism and the widest moral unity which will also be valid for political life'.<sup>4</sup>

Hence, the Biblical mandate for seeking the unity of the church for the sake of Christ's mission and reflecting the unity between the Son and the Father (John 17:26) is an urgent task given for all the church. 'Visible Christian unity is ... not a modern dream, but a permanent and central aspect of Christian life'. It calls us 'to a deeper unity of common prayer, common witness, shared conviction, and mutual acceptance'.<sup>5</sup> Yet, unlike in modernity, in our age the concern for diversity and otherness compels us to mind differences as well. 'In our post-modern age, the desire to celebrate the different and suspect the same, to prefer ... the alien over the identical' is the starting-point.<sup>6</sup> How do we balance these two somewhat conflicting tasks – to work for unity and allow for diversity? Negotiating such a balance is the unique challenge of ecumenism for the third millennium. While attending to that task, ecumenists should also consider the implications for the work for unity stemming from both modern missions history and the current global spread of Christianity.

Particularly from the time of the Protestant Reformation, the unity of the church has been threatened and frustrated with ever-intensifying plurality and schisms. While socio-political changes such as industrialization and colonialization played a significant role from the beginning of the nineteenth century, nothing probably compares with the role of the modern missionary movement in spreading and diversifying the one church of Jesus Christ. As a result, Christianity became a global religion extending to all corners of the world. Although until the mid-twentieth century the universal church was unevenly spread throughout the continents of Africa, Asia and Latin America – more often than not following the coastlines of the colonists – by the end of the second millennium a decisive shift had appeared.<sup>7</sup> Most Christians are now found in the global South and, by 2020, Africa will be the largest Christian continent. The rise of the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements, which currently comprise more than a quarter of the worldwide membership of the church, along with the steady growth of the closely related Evangelical movement, have further diversified – and helped split! – the one church.

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<sup>4</sup> Wolfhart Pannenberg, 'Christian Morality and Political Issues', in *Faith and Reality* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1977), 38.

<sup>5</sup> *In One Body through the Cross*, #3, 4 respectively, 12-13.

<sup>6</sup> F. LeRon Shults, 'Theological Responses to Postmodernities or Tending to the Other in Late Modern Missions and Ecumenism' – unpublished presentation for the Nordic Institute for Missiological and Ecumenical Research Annual Meeting at the University of Abo, Turku, Finland, 19-22 August 2007, 1.

<sup>7</sup> See further my 'Ecclesiology', in *Mapping Modern Theology*, Kelly Kapic and Bruce McCormack (eds) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 345-46 (345-76).

Add to this complex picture the well-known observation that the way of doing mission by the Catholics and Protestants has been vastly different; the difference has a definite bearing on the search for unity. Whereas, in the spread of the Protestant church, mission societies and entrepreneurial individuals played a key role, in Catholic missions, monastic and other religious orders were in the forefront. Furthermore, while the Catholic Church virtually withstood the influence of the Enlightenment until Vatican II (1962-65), Protestant churches were from the beginning influenced by the Enlightenment.<sup>8</sup> We should not ignore the missionary enterprise of the Eastern Orthodox Church, notwithstanding its smaller scale: Orthodox priests and monks travelled to Russia, Siberia, Alaska, and other places to establish significant Orthodox constituencies.<sup>9</sup>

All this is to say that, by the opening of the twentieth century, the question of the churches' self-understanding and clarification of their identities in relation to the one church of Christ and other churches had become a major theological task.<sup>10</sup> With this task in mind, let us first examine the differing ecclesiological self-understandings of Christian communities in the global church. Thereafter, we will seek briefly to put the differing visions of unity into perspective with regard to the main issues and see what kinds of tasks await us in the future. Finally, having outlined the challenges, we seek to offer a number of potential resources and viewpoints that may further help our churches to grow together in unity and shared mission.

### **Different Perceptions of the Unity among Church Traditions<sup>11</sup>**

For the Orthodox Church, it is not easy to define an official ecumenical standpoint, for the simple reason that official pronouncements are few and far between. What is clear is that the Eastern Church considers schism a grave problem and believes itself to be standing in the unbroken line of the apostolic church. Hence, rediscovering and re-establishing unity is a key concern, as is evident also in the prayers of the divine liturgy. The very minimum for Orthodox Christians to overcome the painful divisions, is the

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<sup>8</sup> See Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2004), chap. 7.

<sup>9</sup> Bevans and Schroeder, *Constants in Context*, 227-28.

<sup>10</sup> See further Jaroslav Pelikan, 'Christian Doctrine and Modern Culture (since 1700)', in *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine 5* (Chicago/London: Chicago University Press, 1989), 282.

<sup>11</sup> This section is drawn from Chapter 7 of my *An Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical, and Contextual Perspectives* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2002). For supporting sources, see Harding Meyer, *That All May Be One: Perceptions and Models of Ecumenicity* (Grand Rapids, MI, and Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 1999), 15-36. I am also indebted to Risto Saarinen, *Johdatus Ekumeniikkaan* (Helsinki: Kirjaneliö, 1994), 81-110, 113-21.

recognition of the apostolic succession of the episcopate and sacramental priesthood in addition to the apostolic tradition as formulated in the ancient creeds.<sup>12</sup> The Orthodox Church also argues that ‘the unity of the church [is] grounded in its foundation by our Lord Jesus Christ and in the communion of the Holy Trinity and in the sacraments’. Where can this unity be found? According to Orthodox interpretation, this ‘unity is expressed through the apostolic succession and the patristic tradition and has been lived up to the present day within the Orthodox Church’.<sup>13</sup>

More thoughtfully and authoritatively than any other Christian family, the Roman Catholic Church has carefully and publicly defined its understanding of Christian unity at Vatican II: ‘The restoration of unity among all Christians’ which was ‘one of the principal concerns’ of the council (*Unitatis Redintegratio*, #1). Along with the Orthodox Church, Catholics affirm only one church of Christ on earth. Importantly, *Lumen Gentium*, the defining ecclesiological document, helped correct and balance features of the Roman understanding of the church that obviously stood in the way of unity. Three points are crucial for our purposes. First of all, rather than considering the Church as the ‘perfect society’ (after Vatican I), *Lumen Gentium* imagines the church as a Pilgrim People on the way – not yet arrived, still in process (chapter 7). That kind of attitude of course facilitates mutual learning, correction, and seeking for unity together with other churches. Second, rather than equating the Church of Christ with the Catholic Church, it teaches rather that Christ’s Church ‘subsists in the Catholic Church’ (#8), leaving open the possibility for the same in other Christian communities.<sup>14</sup> Third, although the Council affirmed that ‘the Church, now sojourning on earth as an exile, is necessary for salvation’ (#14), it also famously set forth the most comprehensive and inclusive vision of the levels that other Christians and even followers of other faith traditions may be linked to the Catholic Church. Of other Christians with whom the Catholic Church shares so much in common from its Scriptures to the triune God to the sacraments, and so forth, it is said that ‘in many ways she is linked with those who, being baptized, are honoured with the name of Christian’ (#15). These and similar ecumenically pregnant

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<sup>12</sup> See further C.G. Patelos (ed), *The Orthodox Church in the Ecumenical Movement* (Geneva: WCC, 1978).

<sup>13</sup> The statement of The Third Pan-Orthodox Pre-Conciliar Conference in Chambésy, Switzerland, 1986, in *Episkepsis* 369 (December 1968).

<sup>14</sup> I do not take this statement as necessarily contradictory to that of *Lumen Gentium* #13, which expresses the desire (that could also be said by all church communities which are missionary by nature): ‘All men are called to be part of this catholic unity of the people of God which in promoting universal peace presages it. And there belong to or are related to it in various ways, the Catholic faithful, all who believe in Christ, and indeed the whole of mankind, for all men are called by the grace of God to salvation.’

statements are not meant to try to ‘whitewash’ the contemporary Roman Catholic vision of unity in order to make it more appealing.

Bishops, among whom the Bishop of Rome, the Pope, has the primacy, are the guardians of the unity of the church in the Catholic understanding of ecumenism.<sup>15</sup> The Roman Catholic Church makes the bold claim that the unity of the church already ‘exists’ within herself, and therefore they expect that other churches will ‘return’ to that church. Even though this mentality of the ‘return of separated brethren’ was qualified by Vatican II, it is still part of the Catholic ecumenical view. ‘The unity, we believe, subsists in the Catholic Church as something she can never lose, and we hope that it will continue to increase until the end of time.’<sup>16</sup>

For the Anglican Communion, as explicated in the ‘Thirty-nine Articles’ (#19 and #34) of 1563 and 1571, the unity of the church is based on the preaching of the Word of God and the sacraments. However, the later ‘Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral’ from 1870 went further in its specifications regarding unity, and outlined four aspects which shift the ecclesiological identity definitely towards the Roman Catholic and Orthodox view (and away from the Protestant one): Scripture, the Apostles’ Creed, the two sacraments, and the episcopate.<sup>17</sup> Ecclesiologically speaking, it should be noted that, whereas the Reformation churches leave the leadership question open, for Anglicans the unity of the church requires the presence of a bishop. As is well known, within the worldwide Anglican communion is a great deal of plurality and diversity – and recently, the real threat of a split within the Anglican Communion between the predominantly liberal North and conservative South poses an urgent challenge.

The churches of the Reformation have stipulated a very minimum for Christian unity, namely, the preaching of the Word of God and the right administration of the sacraments. This is the position of the Lutheran Church as formulated in the Augsburg Confession #7 (the same principle is to be found also in the Reformed Second Helvetic Confession #17 and is materially followed by most Protestants):

It is also taught, that one holy Christian church must always be and remain, which is the assembly of all believers, among whom the gospel is purely preached and the holy sacraments are administered according to the gospel. For it is sufficient for the true unity of the Christian church, that the gospel is harmoniously preached and the sacraments administered according to the Word of God. And it is not necessary for the true unity of the church, that everywhere the same ceremonies established by human beings be observed.

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<sup>15</sup> See further especially *Lumen Gentium* #23.

<sup>16</sup> *Unitatis Redintegratio* #4.

<sup>17</sup> *The Book of Common Prayer*, Historical Documents of the Church, Lambeth Conference of 1888, Resolution 11. The Lambeth Quadrilateral can be found at [http://anglicanonline.org/basics/Chicago\\_Lambeth.html](http://anglicanonline.org/basics/Chicago_Lambeth.html) (accessed 20 April 2009).

As long as there is basic unanimity in the understanding of the gospel, then church structures, liturgies, leadership patterns, and other such matters may differ. Even though the personal faith of individuals is not a matter of indifference, unity can never be based on it (as is the case with Free Churches).

The newest Christian churches, the Free Churches, have entertained many kinds of suspicions, even doubts, concerning ecumenism. The guiding principle for them has been the idea of ‘spiritual union’ according to which God-given unity already exists between either ‘true’ churches or at least ‘true’ individual believers. The Free Churches have not located unity either in creeds or even in the Bible, although for most of them these two elements have been very important, but rather in the hearts of believing individuals.<sup>18</sup> The Unions of Baptist Congregations in Austria and Switzerland, and the Union of Evangelical Free Churches in Germany, defined their understanding in a way that illustrates the wide and diverse movement whose roots go back all the way to the Anabaptists of Reformation times and the sixteenth century, and the Baptists of the early seventeenth century.

The Christian experiences the communion of the community above all in the local assembly of the faithful. In it, baptism for the confession of faith is performed, and the one bread, bestowed by the one Lord, is broken and shared. That is why the local parish understands itself as the manifestation of the one body of Christ, filled with the one Spirit and fulfilled with the one hope.<sup>19</sup>

Four aspects of this unity are highlighted in the Free Churches: first, the personal faith of every Christian; second, the local church as the focus; third, the priesthood of all believers; and fourth, reservations with regard to the idea of visible unity.<sup>20</sup>

Currently, the largest Free Church constituency and the most rapidly growing segment of Christianity, namely Pentecostals, basically define their ecclesial self-understanding along the same lines. What makes Pentecostalism both theologically and ecclesiastically more complex is that as the usual nomenclature ‘Pentecostal/Charismatic movement’ suggests, the phenomenon is multi-layered. Whereas ‘Pentecostal’ refers to diverse and rapidly proliferating movements stemming from the revivals started at the beginning of the twentieth century, ‘Charismatic’ movements refer to

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<sup>18</sup> For the Baptists, see William L. Pitts, ‘The Relation of Baptists to Other Churches’, in *The People of God: Essays on the Believers’ Church*, Paul Basden and David S. Dockery (eds) (Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1991), 235-50. For the Pentecostals, see Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Spiritus ubi vult spirat: Pneumatology in the Roman Catholic-Pentecostal Dialogue, 1972-1989*, Schriften der Luther-Agricola Gesellschaft 42 (Helsinki: Luther-Agricola Society, 1998), chap. 5.

<sup>19</sup> Bund Evangelisch-Freikirchlicher Gemeinden in Deutschland, ed. *Rechenschaft vom Glauben*, Vol 2, No 7 (1977).

<sup>20</sup> Meyer, *That All May Be One*, 24-27.

Pentecostal-type movements located within traditional churches. Thus, we can speak of ‘Roman Catholic Charismatic Renewal’ or ‘Lutheran Charismatics’. It is noteworthy that this second layer – let alone the third one, currently named ‘Neo-Charismatics’ which consists of numerous independent movements around the globe – is larger than the original one. Catholic Charismatics alone number over 100 million, thus making them more numerous than any single Protestant family or Anglican communion. The ecumenical questions concerning Pentecostals and subsequent Charismatic movements are understandably different as the latter are part of their own respective church traditions – or, as with neo-Charismatics, they are part of no self-defined tradition!

### What Kind of Unity Are We Talking About?

In summary, the various views of unity among Christian churches with all their differences have a common feature: that all churches ground the unity of the church in the unity of the triune God and the apostolic tradition as conveyed to us in the Bible and the ecumenical creeds. It is highly promising that even the currently youngest ecclesial tradition, Pentecostalism, in long-term international dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church, made this highly significant mutual statement. The *Final Report* (1985-89) of the International Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and Pentecostal churches opens with an important mutual affirmation (#29):

Both Pentecostals and Roman Catholics believe that the *koinonia* between Christians is rooted in the life of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Furthermore, they believe that this trinitarian life is the highest expression of the unity to which we together aspire: ‘That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ’ (1 John 1:3).<sup>21</sup>

That said, there are two wide and deep areas of disagreement and debate that have to be tackled as we hope to grow together towards unity in mission. The first one is the question of ‘ecclesiality’, namely, what makes the church, the church. Orthodox and Catholics (and to a large extent, Anglicans) regard the episcopate (presence of a bishop) and sacraments (celebrated under the legitimate bishop) as essential to church unity. (Where Orthodox and Anglicans differ from Roman Catholics is that they do not acknowledge the Papacy.) To Protestants and Free Churches, including Pentecostals, ministry patterns are a non-issue in relation to

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<sup>21</sup> *Perspectives on Koinonia*, #29. Report from the Third Quinquennium of the Dialogue between the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and Some Classical Pentecostal Churches and Leaders (1985-1989), #29 (available at the website of Centre Pro Unione:

[www.prounione.urbe.it/dia-int/pe-rc/doc/e\\_pe-rc\\_pent03.html](http://www.prounione.urbe.it/dia-int/pe-rc/doc/e_pe-rc_pent03.html)).

church unity. Furthermore, as already mentioned, Free Churches take the personal appropriation of faith as the requirement for the ecclesiality of the church communion; often this may lead to suspicion about the true churchly nature of other kinds of communities.<sup>22</sup>

The second very difficult question is the topic of visible unity. Let it suffice to mention this much in this context: on the one hand, all traditional churches and the ecumenical movement have set visible unity as the stated goal and ultimate aim of the pursuit of unity. On the other hand, no one can at this point tell definitively what the nature of visible unity is! In contrast, it is quite easy to state what visible unity is *not*: it is widely agreed that it does not mean one ‘world church’, or the deletion of denominational distinctives, or similar solutions. The lack of consensus about what visible unity is means that the nature of unity is a continuing agenda in ecumenical conversations and work.

Moreover, one continuing development in the global church has everything to do with how unity may be realized, namely, the constant and rapid emergence of new congregational models, particularly in the Majority World (Asia, Africa, Latin America), but also in the United States and elsewhere. Many observers of world Christianity hold the opinion that the ‘Independent’ or Free Church type of congregational model will be the major paradigm in the third millennium. It is significant that the former Pope Benedict XVI (in his capacity as the Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith), well known for severe reservations about congregational ecclesiologies and their counterparts in the Roman Catholic Church, has admitted that this is the direction into which Christian *oikumene* is heading.<sup>23</sup> The implications for how to seek the unity of the church including these disparate, diverse, and organizationally disconnected movements have not been much reflected on by the ecumenists. What is the vision for unity in that light? What is the ecumenical ‘method’?

Having now briefly outlined the current differences in Christian visions of unity, and identified some of the deepest underlying issues, the rest of the essay seeks to tap into potential resources and insights on the way to a fuller unity in Christ’s mission and church.

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### **Some Ways and Forms of Seeking Unity in the New Context**

In no particular order of importance, let us seek to identify some viewpoints, resources and insights that may facilitate growth together in unity:

<sup>22</sup> See further Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 133-35.

<sup>23</sup> Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *The Ratzinger Report: An Exclusive Interview on the State of the Church, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger with Vittorio Messori* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius, 1985), 45ff.

First, I suggest that we discern carefully some of the implications for Christian mission and unity of the radically changing mosaic of the global church. In other words, how would ecumenical work be reshaped as a result of the ‘Macro-reformation’<sup>24</sup> taking place before our very eyes as Christianity is moving from the global North (Europe and North America) to the global South? As is well known, by 2050 only about one-fifth of the world’s three billion Christians will be non-Hispanic whites.<sup>25</sup> At the same time, the composition of the church worldwide is changing dramatically: at present, one half of all Christians are Roman Catholic, another quarter is composed of Pentecostals/Charismatics (in three sub-groups as outlined above), while the rest are Eastern Orthodox Christians, by far the largest segment, and mainline Protestants, including Free Churches.<sup>26</sup> These demographics have several effects: there are going to be two major poles of the Christian church in terms of size and influence, namely, Roman Catholic and Pentecostal/Charismatic. They together comprise three quarters of all church membership. All this means that conservative and traditional mindsets will be strengthened around the Christian church, even while theological liberalism reigns in western academia and in the worldwide Christian communions led by leaders from the global North. Moreover, the ‘Pentecostalization’ of the Christian church in terms of Pentecostal/Charismatic spirituality and worship patterns infiltrating all churches continues to reshape the lives of the churches.

Second, in the light of these dramatic developments, I propose we take another careful look at the issue of ecclesiality, briefly outlined above. We need to rethink the necessary and sufficient conditions for a community to be called the church in the theological sense. The approach of traditional theology has too often been to impose its own, often quite-limited, definition of ‘church’ on its younger counterparts. Naturally, those churches that define what ecclesiality means usually themselves fulfil the requirements of their own definitions! But ecumenically, this does not further the discussion. For older churches, just to discard the enormous potential and force of non-traditional churches by classifying them as something less than a church is both dangerous and useless. We have to raise this blunt question: is there really any theological justification for denying the true churchliness of hundreds of millions of Christian

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<sup>24</sup> Justo L. González, *Mañana: Christian Theology from a Hispanic Perspective* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1990), 49.

<sup>25</sup> See Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (Oxford: OUP, 2001). Regrettably, Jenkins’s book title is most unfortunate: there will never be another Christendom. Yet the basic argument of the book is not compromised by the uninformed choice of title.

<sup>26</sup> The basic statistical source is David B. Barrett, George T. Kurian and Todd M. Johnson, *World Christian Encyclopedia*, 2nd edn (New York: OUP, 2001); for global statistics, see especially 12-15, as well as the January 2014 edition of *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*.

communities from Pentecostals to other Free Churches to, say, the rapidly growing House Church movement in China or African Instituted Churches, and so on? Isn't such denial just another form of colonialism, a form of exercising power by the 'Old World' (i.e. old Christendom) over the 'New World'?

This leads us to my third suggestion: rather than unilaterally imposing one's own definitions as to what makes for the true church, both the principle of Christian hospitality and the needs of the diverse global church demand that we seek to learn from each other. This mindset was wonderfully present in the drafting of the American Princeton Proposal for Christian Unity. Looking at the younger churches, it says:

Evangelical and Pentecostal Christians and their institutions also have a unique role. All churches may benefit from their vitality, their zeal for evangelism, and their commitment to Scripture. They demonstrate a spirit of co-operation with each other and sometimes with others that breaks down old barriers, creates fellowship among formally estranged Christians, and anticipates further unity. The free-church ecclesiologies of some Evangelicals bring a distinct vision of unity to the ecumenical task.<sup>27</sup>

One hopes that Free Churches and Evangelicals reciprocate in acknowledging the strengths of and lessons from older churches. Moreover, both parties are called to constructive self-criticism and self-scrutiny.

Fourth, we need to work towards finding ways of continuing to affirm the necessity and legitimacy of evangelization and mission, on the one hand, and the need to involve all Christian communities in the condemnation of proselytism, on the other. Too often, it seems to me, some older Christian traditions fail to make the needed distinction between 'evangelization' and 'proselytism', as if all forms of evangelistic activities (most often done by the younger Christian communities) were suspicious, if not totally unacceptable. The new WCC document *Together Towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes* (2012) represents a historic milestone as a number of Pentecostal and Evangelical communities, known for their missionary enthusiasm, have also been involved in its drafting and endorsement. Working towards finding ways of sharing common witness among Christian churches and collaboration in social work, reconciliation and peace-building are other related challenges and opportunities for Christian unity.

Fifth, let us be humble and modest about the aim of unity. Rather than full communion,<sup>28</sup> which is a hopelessly unachievable goal, at least in the

<sup>27</sup> *In One Body through the Cross*, #67, 55-56.

<sup>28</sup> The WCC 1991 Canberra Assembly formulated it this way: 'The goal of the search for full communion is realized when all the churches are able to recognize in one another the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church in its fullness. This full communion will be expressed on the local and the universal levels through conciliar forms of life and action. In such communion, churches are bound in all aspects of their life together at all levels in confessing the one faith, sharing sacramental life,

contemporary ecumenical milieu and stage of development, why do we not seek for a partial communion? That is a more modest and realistic standard to begin with. Partial communion ‘means mutual recognition despite substantial or significant differences or disagreements’.<sup>29</sup> That kind of goal may better help churches enter into a relationship of communion with another church that may seriously differ from themselves. This notion of communion admits many degrees. Just consider the principle of partial communion in relation to one of the defining aspects of ecclesiality, namely apostolicity, which is also the foundation for the church’s missionary nature. The Jesuit ecumenist Roger Haight puts it succinctly: ‘The apostolic character of common ecclesial existence provides the grounds for partial communion ... As a common apostolic dimension in all the churches, this ecclesial existence contains the possibility to serve as a basis for partial communion among the churches. Indeed, it urges such communion and even demands it.’<sup>30</sup>

Finally, and related to the goal of partial communion, I believe it is important to imagine flexible, creative, and diverse processes and structures in the service of seeking unity. That kind of imagination, rather than rigid structures, better fits the mosaic of the Christian church at both the local and global levels. Just consider work for unity with the global Pentecostal/Charismatic movements. There are supreme difficulties even in trying to involve Pentecostals in long-term ecumenical work at the global level – even after the desire has been expressed! There is no global structure or umbrella that unites all Pentecostals, nothing like the global structures uniting traditional church families. Even when granted that there are co-operative organs such as the Pentecostal World Fellowship, one must keep in mind that even this does not represent a majority of Pentecostals, and its organizational capacity or intention is far from that of the corresponding global fellowships among traditional churches. Many more such examples could be given from other younger churches.

### **In Lieu of Conclusions: A Vision for Unity in Diversity**

If we believe that ‘Christian unity is given by God through the Holy Spirit’,<sup>31</sup> then that is also the key to affirming unity in diversity. More than a convenient ecumenical catchword, the principle of unity in diversity is the

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and engaging in common witness, sustained by recognized and reconciled ministry.’ O.C. Edwards Jr, ‘Meanings of Full Communion: The Essence of Life in the Body’, in *Speaking of Unity* 1 (2005): 11 (electronic journal of Faith & Order Commission of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA: [www.nccusa.org/speakingofunity](http://www.nccusa.org/speakingofunity)).

<sup>29</sup> Roger Haight, *Ecclesial Existence: Christian Community in History*, Vol 3 (New York and London: Continuum, 2008), 277.

<sup>30</sup> Haight, 285-86.

<sup>31</sup> *In One Body through the Cross*, #5, 13.

way to go about the work of unity in our pluralistic and diverse world. This expression speaks both to the heart of the Christian search for oneness and the late modern appreciation of The Other.

Only the kind of unity that honours the otherness of the other is worth its name. ‘The unity of the church does not ... reduce difference to uniformity. In the New Testament the church is neither a zone of intimate sympathy among the like-minded nor a space of live-and-let-live.’<sup>32</sup> That principle sets the seeking for Christian unity on a dynamic and challenging path. It is to steer between the Scylla of a ‘simplistic celebration of the *different* [that] provides no resources for appropriate attachment’, and the Charybdis of an ‘anxious fusion to *the same* ... [that] hinders us from appropriate differentiation’.<sup>33</sup> While diversity is a high value both theologically and culturally, we also need to beware of diversity that ‘is easily conscripted to sinful purposes’; at times, it is not so easy to see the difference between a diversity that is valuable and that which is to be deplored.<sup>34</sup> Yet the difficulty should not hinder our efforts but challenge us to new, creative work together.

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<sup>32</sup> *In One Body through the Cross*, #23, 28-29. *The Nature and Mission of the Church*, #62, puts it succinctly: ‘Authentic diversity in the life of communion must not be stifled: authentic unity must not be surrendered.’ This is also what Schleiermacher emphasized much earlier: see Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, H.R. Mackintosh and J.S. Stewart (eds) (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1963), #150: ‘Whenever separations actually occur in the Christian church, there can never be lacking an endeavor to unite the separated.’ See also #151, 152.

<sup>33</sup> Shults, ‘Theological Responses to Postmodernities’, 3.

<sup>34</sup> *In One Body through the Cross*, #22, 27-28. For a helpful discussion on the ‘Limits of Diversity’, see #63 in *The Nature and Mission of the Church*, 37-39.

## **SECTION TWO**

# **WAYS OF DOING MISSION IN UNITY IN DIFFERENT CONTEXTS**

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# GLOBAL INITIATIVES

## FROM UNITY AND MISSION TO *KOINONIA* AND *MISSIO DEI*: CONVERGENCES IN WCC ECCLESIOLOGY AND MISSIOLOGY TOWARDS EDINBURGH 2010

John Gibaut

### Introduction

Like fraternal twins, the International Missionary Council and Faith & Order – the earliest historical expressions of the modern ecumenical movement – were both born at the World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh in 1910. Not unlike the famed Biblical twins, Esau and Jacob, Faith & Order and the International Missionary Council have seemingly struggled with one another, competing for the blessing and inheritance of the modern ecumenical movement ever since. At times, ecumenical discourse has not been on ‘unity *and* mission’, but rather ‘unity *or* mission’.

The literature on unity and mission is vast. The ‘self-limiting ordinance’ of this chapter, however, are the specific conversations within the World Council of Churches between the Commission on Faith & Order and the Department of (later, Commission on) World Mission & Evangelism (CWME), the successor of the International Missionary Council. The particular focus will be on the remarkable convergences the two commissions had achieved with one another by the time of the Second Edinburgh Conference in 2010, even if not at the 2010 event itself. Faith & Order and the CWME have moved through the unity and mission debate to the theologically deeper discourse of *koinonia* and the *missio Dei*. Their convergence contributes to a fresh common quest for unity, mission, justice and peace.

After lengthy preparations before and after Edinburgh 2010, both commissions completed in 2012 major statements on ecclesiology and mission respectively, which were both published and sent to the churches in 2013. From Faith & Order came the convergence text *The Church*:

*Towards a Common Vision*,<sup>1</sup> the first convergence since *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, 1982. From the Commission on World Mission & Evangelism came *Together Towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes*,<sup>2</sup> the first WCC Mission Statement since *Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation* was also completed in 1982. As if on converging timetables, both commissions had completed their previous major texts – *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* and the WCC Mission Statement – on the same timetable thirty years earlier in 1982. In 2012 both texts were presented to the WCC Central Committee, and both were featured (albeit in varying degrees) at the 2013 WCC Assembly in Busan. Both texts are in various stages of reception by the churches.

### The Common Cradle: Edinburgh, 1910

With the goal of the evangelization of the world within a generation, the World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh in 1910 had as one of its intermediate goals increased co-operation amongst the western missionary societies; the unexpected outcome, however, was a vision of a united Church. The delegates at Edinburgh worked through the reports of eight preparatory commissions dealing with various themes around mission. The eighth commission was on ‘Co-operation and the Promotion of Unity’. The report recognised that Asia was the first region to recognise ‘the need for concerted action and closer fellowship’ by the churches and missionary societies.<sup>3</sup>

With the vision of a Church united rather than simply missionary, co-operation did not emerge from the western professors of ecclesiology anticipating the coming Faith & Order movement, but rather from amongst the relatively few representatives of the younger churches of India, Japan and China who pushed the question far beyond co-operation in mission to Christian *unity* for the sake of mission, linked to Jesus’ prayer ‘that they may be one’. One of the most famous speeches at Edinburgh 1910 came from the Chinese delegate Cheng Ching Yi:

As a representative of the Chinese Church, I speak entirely from the Chinese standpoint. We may, and we may not, all agree, but I feel it is my duty to present before you the mind of the Chinese Church as frankly as possible. The Christian federation movement occupies a chief place in the hearts of our leading Christian men in China, and they welcome every effort that is made towards that end ... In educational work, evangelistic work, and so on, the Churches joined hand in hand, and the result of this is most encouraging.

<sup>1</sup> *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, Faith & Order Paper 214 (Geneva: WCC, 2013).

<sup>2</sup> Jooseop Keum (ed), *Together Towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes (with a practical guide)* (Geneva: WCC, 2013).

<sup>3</sup> In David A. Kerr and Kenneth R. Ross (eds), *Edinburgh 2010: Mission Then and Now* (Oxford: Regnum, 2009), 233.

Since the Chinese Christians have enjoyed the sweetness of such a unity, they long for more and greater things ... Speaking plainly, we hope to see a united Christian Church without any denominational distinctions. This may seem somewhat peculiar to some of you but, friends, do not forget to view us from *our* standpoint, and if you fail to do that, the Chinese will remain a mysterious people to you.<sup>4</sup>

The one act of the 1910 conference was to set up a 'continuation committee' for ongoing co-operation, which in 1921 became the International Missionary Council. It was a unanimous decision, and the delegates were so moved by what had happened that they stood to praise God in song together. The modern ecumenical movement had begun. As one of the delegates, Anglican missionary-bishop Charles Brent said at the end of the Edinburgh conference:

During these past days a new vision has been unfolded to us. But whenever God gives a vision, He also points to some new responsibility, and you and I, when we leave this assembly, will go away with some fresh duties to perform.<sup>5</sup>

He later said of his experience of Edinburgh:

I was converted. I learned that something was working that was not of man in that conference; that the Spirit of God ... was preparing a new era in the history of Christianity.<sup>6</sup>

The unforeseen vision of Christian unity in Edinburgh 1910 and the ecumenical movement that sprang from it was intrinsically mission-oriented. The representatives at Edinburgh saw with striking clarity that Christian disunity as expressed in inter-Christian competition, hostility and unhealed division was the greatest obstacle to mission. How is it possible to proclaim a gospel of reconciliation – a gospel of repentance and forgiveness of sins to all the nations – when the bearers of that gospel were not themselves reconciled to one another? Or, as Diarmaid MacCulloch has more recently outlined the dilemma:

All the historic bitterness which we have seen develop over nineteen centuries came to seem less relevant once Western Christianity moved out of its European homeland and started trying to convince non-Europeans of its value. It became increasingly difficult to explain to a sceptical Hindu why religious bodies which talked constantly to the oneness of the church and of the love of Christ should remain at permanent loggerheads over whether a bishop or a presbytery should govern Christ's church.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> In W.H.T. Gairdner, *Edinburgh 1910: An Account and Interpretation of the World Missionary Conference* (London: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier, 1910), 184-85.

<sup>5</sup> In Tissington Tatlow, 'The World Conference on Faith and Order', in Ruth Rouse and Stephen Neill (eds), *A History of the Ecumenical Movement, Volume 1, 1517-1948* (Geneva: WCC, 2004), 407.

<sup>6</sup> Alexander C. Zabriskie, *Bishop Brent* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1948), 145.

<sup>7</sup> Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Groundwork of Christian History* (London: Epworth, 1987), 282.

With the accent on co-operation, the self-limiting ordinance of Edinburgh 1910 was not to enter into discussion on divisive issues. This was a tactical decision, because the aim of the conference was co-ordination and co-operation, and the conference organisers wanted as wide a participation as possible. But, it did beg the question about what did keep the churches apart, and how to move from disunity to unity. Fresh from the experience and vision of Edinburgh, people like Charles Brent saw with acute clarity that the way forward was dialogue and structured conversation about the questions of the historic and present church-dividing issues that kept Christians apart. One of the extraordinary results of Edinburgh was to apply the insights from the vulnerabilities of Christian disunity not just to the mission field, but to the churches in Europe, North America and Australasia as well.

And so in 1910, a number of plans were proposed for a global meeting to address the unity of the Church, and to begin to explore issues around the 'faith' and the 'ordering' of the churches that separated Christians from one another. In the end, the plan that succeeded was the one proposed by Bishop Brent himself. Brent returned to the USA in 1910 for the General Convention of the Episcopal Church of that year. On 19 October 1910, the General Convention unanimously passed a resolution calling for a world conference of the representatives of all the churches 'for the consideration of questions pertaining to the Faith and Order of the Church of Christ'.<sup>8</sup>

In the course of planning such a conference from 1910 to 1914, renewed relationships were being forged between the churches around the world, together with their leaders and theologians, who were equally inspired by the Edinburgh vision of Christian unity.

Following World War I, the concerns with unity and mission were given fresh impetus through Christian commitment to justice and peace, with a particular (but not exclusive) focus in the Life & Work movement. The focus of ecumenical missiology shifted to seeking justice in international and inter-racial divisions. For missionaries like Brent, the unity of the church was not an option but a gospel imperative, linked with the very mission of the Church.

Faith & Order had a sense of urgency because the visible unity of the Church was an imperative in its service in mission, justice and peace; or, to put it in the negative, Christian disunity was not only a distortion and contradiction of the nature and mission of the Church, but actively contributed to the forces of injustice and violence that arguably contributed to the catastrophe of World War I.

In the years from the preparatory meetings in Geneva in 1920 to the First World Conference on Faith & Order in Lausanne, 1927, it was around the table of Faith & Order that the divided churches formally met one another

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<sup>8</sup> In G.K.A. Bell, *Christian Unity: The Anglican Position* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1948), 154.

for the first time. Their leaders and theologians met, not in an atmosphere of suspicion and hostility, but with the goal of reconciliation with one another before them. The way forward was through informed and respectful theological dialogue, putting away the caricatures, historic condemnations and memories of past conflict. Rather than defending or attacking theological positions, the leaders and theologians presented their doctrines about God, the person of Christ, salvation, sacraments, the Church. Equally divisive were the questions about how ministries and leadership were structured and how the churches were governed; division in the questions of order were frequently also matters of faith. From the beginning, the methodology of Faith & Order has been theological dialogue about church-dividing issues in which theologians seek to find common ground and mutual understanding, and to resolve doctrinal disagreements or misunderstandings on any divisive issues in order to further the visible unity of the Church. Not unlike the surprise at Edinburgh 1910, something happened to the delegates at Lausanne in 1927. Divided Christians could show that they shared far more in common with one another that united them in Christ than in those things that separated them. The summary of the experience of the First World Conference on Faith & Order in 1927 is well captured in its 'Call to Unity':

God's Spirit has been in the midst of us. It was He who called us hither. His presence has been manifest in our worship, our deliberations and our whole fellowship. He has discovered us to one another. He has enlarged our horizons, quickened our understanding, and enlivened our hope. We have dared and God has justified our daring. We can never be the same again. Our deep thankfulness must find expression in sustained endeavour to share the visions vouchsafed us here with those smaller home groups where our lot is cast.<sup>9</sup>

The three earliest expressions of the ecumenical movement – Faith & Order, the International Missionary Council, and Life & Work – with their different accents and complementary visions, often involved the same churches and the same people. The early leaders who took up this cause, such as John Mott or Charles Brent, were first and foremost missionaries. So interconnected were the three movements that it made sense to the churches to bring them together into a single structure. In 1937 Faith & Order and Life & Work made the decision to come together to create the World Council of Churches, 'in formation'. It was not until 1948 that this would take place, and not until 1961 that the International Missionary Council would formally join the WCC rather than being in association with it. One of the reasons for the hesitation of the missionary organizations to join the WCC was antipathy towards Faith & Order, with its church-

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<sup>9</sup> 'The Call to Unity: unanimously adopted by the full Conference, August 20, 1927', in *Reports of the World Conference on Faith and Order, Lausanne, Switzerland, August 3 to 21 1927* (Boston, MA: Faith & Order Secretariat, 1927), 6.

orientation and commitments to ecclesial unity that seemed to detract from the urgent needs of Christian mission.

The earlier tripartite vision was eclipsed at times, but never lost. Councils of churches, such as the WCC, have kept them institutionally together in expressions of self-identity such as their constitutions.<sup>10</sup> Yet over time and for different reasons, the unity of triune movements began to fade, at least within the WCC. Perhaps that is what happens when prophetic movements become institutions with structures that by their very nature demand separate space, separate funding, separate agendas, and distinct constituencies. It is not difficult to imagine how academically oriented ecumenical theologians, evangelically minded members of missionary societies, and activists engaged in ecumenical justice coalitions might drift apart from one another.

While this analysis might well describe the lengthy middle section of the relationship between theological and missiological ecumenism, that is, between Faith & Order and IMC and later the WCC's Commission on World Mission & Evangelism, it does not describe the earliest nor the most recent stages in the relationship between the two earliest pillars of the ecumenical movement. The range of stances from dislike, mistrust or, even worse, disinterest between the missiologists and ecclesiologists are alien to the earliest roots of the ecumenical movement both from the 1910 Edinburgh Missionary conference and the aftermath of World War I.

### **Ships that Passed in the Night: Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry and Mission and Evangelism: Ecumenical Affirmations**

A significant example of such institutional drift within the WCC is seen in the two major twentieth-century texts of the Commission on Faith & Order, and the Commission on World Mission & Evangelism. The year 1982 saw two major publications produced by the WCC. Faith & Order produced its first convergence text, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (BEM)*.<sup>11</sup> Twenty-one years after joining the WCC, the CWME produced the WCC's first

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<sup>10</sup> E.g. WCC Constitution, §3: 'The World Council of Churches is constituted by the churches to serve the one ecumenical movement. It incorporates the work of the world movements for Faith & Order and Life & Work, the International Missionary Council, and the World Council of Christian Education. The primary purpose of the fellowship of churches in the World Council of Churches is to call one another to visible unity in one faith and in one eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and common life in Christ, through witness and service to the world, and to advance towards that unity in order that the world may believe.'

<sup>11</sup> *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, Faith & Order Paper 111 (Geneva: WCC, 1982).

mission statement, *Mission and Evangelism: Ecumenical Affirmations*.<sup>12</sup> Both texts remain foundational texts of the WCC and continue to inform the life of the fellowship of the churches.

Placing the two texts together, one is struck by how little they have to do with one another in terms of agenda, methodology, and even style. While both texts are concerned with unity, they are from vastly different perspectives. Both have a clear sense of the demands of the ethics of the Kingdom of God, but again, from different discourses and understandings. Beyond these common points, one would be hard pressed to discern any internal or institutional connection between the two texts. It is difficult to remember that they were published at the same time, let alone by the same organisation. And, it is difficult to place the two texts into conversation with one another. In short, Faith & Order's *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* and the CWME's *Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation* are like the two proverbial ships passing in the night, and reflect how Faith & Order and CWME had little to do with one another during that pivotal time in the life of the WCC.

In the light of the convergence that would emerge thirty years later between Faith & Order and CWME, it is also interesting to note that BEM has very few references to communion<sup>13</sup> and never uses the term *koinonia*. This is odd, given an instance on understanding of the church as the 'communion of believers' from the First World Conference in 1927 onwards. Similarly, *Mission and Evangelism: Ecumenical Affirmations* does not mention *missio Dei* as a term, or any of the rich reflection on the term. Rather, there is a more Christocentric vision of mission: 'The mission of the church ensues from the nature of the church as the body of Christ, sharing in the ministry of Christ as Mediator between God and creation.'<sup>14</sup> This, however, is an equally curious omission since *missio Dei* had been proposed by IMC missiologists since 1952.

### Convergences towards Edinburgh 2010

In a sense, all Faith & Order work from the 1920s onwards has been about ecclesiology in one form or another. Differences in ecclesiology are perceived to be the greatest obstacle to the goal of the visible unity of the Church. The challenge of apparently irreconcilable ecclesiologies – both as theological expressions of self-understanding and as praxis in mission – are held to be so great that it becomes impossible to speak of the unity of the Church, and increasingly difficult to speak of councils of churches such as

<sup>12</sup> 'Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation', in Jacques Matthey (ed), *You are the Light of the World: Statements on Mission by the World Council of Churches, 1980-2005* (Geneva: WCC, 2005), 1-38.

<sup>13</sup> See *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, 'Eucharist', §§19, 21, and 'Ministry', §4.

<sup>14</sup> *An Ecumenical Affirmation*, §6, in Matthey (ed), *You are the Light of the World*, 8.

the World Council of Churches, or national councils. Disagreement on ecclesiology is a significant obstacle to the unity and mission of the Church. These are the questions that Faith & Order has sought to address from its very beginnings, culminating in its 2012 convergence text on ecclesiology, *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*.

A more focused study on ecclesiology began after the publication of the responses of the churches to *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*. Although the responses were largely favourable, one of the anxieties registered was disagreement on ecclesiology, on which convergences on the issues of baptism, the Eucharist and ecclesial ministries depend.

From the 1990s there were a number of developments within ecumenical ecclesiology and missiology, and within the WCC emerging reflections that began to propose a common vision of the Church. For example, the 1991 Canberra Assembly with its accents on the Church as communion/*koinonia* together with a vision of mission as a ‘reconciled humanity and a renewed creation’ was an important development that also brought the mission and unity agendas closer together, and with them the Commission on Faith & Order and the new Commission on World Mission & Evangelism.

The Canberra accent on *koinonia* and mission as a ‘reconciled humanity and a renewed creation’ bears resonances with the 1990 Faith & Order study *Church and World: The Renewal of the Church and the Renewal of the Human Community*, which brought together the historic quest for the unity of the Church and its mission and prophetic witness in the world.<sup>15</sup> The text uses *koinonia* as its broadest understanding of the Church as both mystery and prophetic sign: ‘Accordingly, *koinonia* also implies the indissoluble inter-relation between the nature and the mission of the church.’<sup>16</sup> The Fifth World Conference on Faith & Order in 1993 further articulated a holistic understanding of *koinonia* integrating trinitarian communion ecclesiology with service, mission and justice. At the 1993 World Conference, in his magisterial paper ‘Towards *Koinonia* in Faith, Life and Witness’, Archbishop Desmond Tutu unequivocally linked the quests for mission, justice and unity:

Our experience, which would probably be repeated elsewhere, has been that you really should not separate church unity from the pursuit of justice or, even more starkly, that that pursuit is made infinitely more hazardous and difficult, perhaps even impossible, when the church is divided. When our church held a consultation on mission, our overseas partners declared categorically, ‘apartheid was too strong to be overcome by a divided Church.’<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> *Church and World: The Renewal of the Church and the Renewal of the Human Community*, Faith & Order Paper 151 (Geneva: WCC, 1990).

<sup>16</sup> *Church and World*, §44, 29-30.

<sup>17</sup> Desmond Tutu, ‘Towards *Koinonia* in Faith, Life and Witness’, in T. Best and G. Gassmann (eds), *On the Way to Fuller Koinonia* (Geneva: WCC, 1994), 96-97.

The insights of the 1993 World Conference on *koinonia*, mission and justice set the agenda for the Faith & Order reflection on ecclesiology that would reach its convergence in *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* in 2012.

A similar trend is evident in CWME reflection. The 1997 text *Towards a Common Witness* notes both BEM and the report of the 1993 Faith & Order World Conference.<sup>18</sup> Addressing the issue of proselytism, the text necessarily touches on issues of ecclesiology. One of the recommendations within *Towards a Common Witness* was that the WCC ‘undertake a study on ecclesiology and mission, since many of the points of tension and division in relation to common witness stem from conflicting understandings in these areas’.<sup>19</sup> The 2000 text, *Mission and Evangelism in Unity Today*, makes clear use of the *missio Dei*<sup>20</sup> in a holistic, trinitarian and ecclesiological way. *Missio Dei* is cited again in the 2004 CWME text on *Mission as Ministry of Reconciliation*,<sup>21</sup> which significantly refers to the church as *koinonia*.<sup>22</sup>

Faith & Order reflection towards a common ecumenical vision of the nature and mission of the Church continued in similar ways. While the foundational work was laid in 1993 at the Fifth World Conference on Faith & Order at Santiago de Compostela, the dialogue continued in the Commission for the next twenty years. The reports of the dialogue on ecclesiology included two interim texts on their way to a common statement, *The Nature and Purpose of the Church* (1998) and *The Nature and Mission of the Church* (2005). Both developed Faith & Order reflection on *koinonia* and mission. The two texts were sent to the churches for the response as part of much wider dialogue. The responses from the churches and other ecumenical and academic bodies contributed to the next stages of development.

One of the principle differences between *The Nature and Purpose of the Church* and its successor, *The Nature and Mission of the Church*, is reflected in the title: the shift from ‘purpose’ to ‘mission’. Taking into account the responses to *The Nature and Purpose of the Church* which asked for this change, Faith & Order began to take more seriously the relationship between ecclesiology and mission. Consequently, missiologists began to take a direct interest in the work of Faith & Order. For example, for the first time, responses were sent by mission organizations to Faith & Order on an ecclesiological text. The four detailed responses from mission

<sup>18</sup> *Towards Common Witness*, in Matthey (ed), *You are the Light of the World*, 47.

<sup>19</sup> *Towards Common Witness*, in Matthey (ed), *You are the Light of the World*, 57.

<sup>20</sup> *Mission and Evangelism in Unity Today*, §§11, 12, 13, in Matthey (ed), *You are the Light of the World*, 65.

<sup>21</sup> *Mission as Ministry of Reconciliation*, §22, in Matthey (ed), *You are the Light of the World*, 101.

<sup>22</sup> *Mission as Ministry of Reconciliation*, §23, in Matthey (ed), *You are the Light of the World*, 101-02.

organisations<sup>23</sup> on *The Nature and Mission of the Church* were generally supportive of the new direction in Faith & Order, but critical about weak use and understanding of mission. A major critique on *The Nature and Mission of the Church* from the CWME, for instance, was the absence of any reference to sources and texts from its own reflection on mission.<sup>24</sup> A critique from missiologists and ecclesiologists alike was the very title of the 2005 document, which suggested that the ‘nature’ and the ‘mission’ of the Church were two distinct things! While such was not the intention of Faith & Order, it underscored that, for ecclesiologists and missiologists, it is not theologically possible to speak about the Church apart from mission.

The period following the 2006 Porto Alegre Assembly of the WCC marked a new era for the relationship between Faith & Order and the Commission on World Mission & Evangelism. First, both commissions were placed within the same programmatic unit within the WCC: Unity, Spiritually, Mission and Evangelism, which also included the projects of the Just and Inclusive Communities networks. Second, the director of this programme unit was the Rev. Jacques Matthey, at the same time Secretary of the CWME and an *ex officio* officer of the Commission on Faith & Order. Third, sharing in his integrating vision of Faith & Order and CWME was the new Director of Faith & Order, John Gibaut, and the new Executive Secretary for mission, Jooseop Keum, later Secretary of the CWME after Jacques Matthey. Fourth, there were a number of decisive consultations between staff and commissioners of both Faith & Order and CWME in 2008, 2009, 2011 and 2012 that contributed significantly to the two draft texts that would eventually become *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* and *Together Towards Life*.

A significant occasion for Faith & Order took place at the 2009 meeting of the Plenary Commission in Crete where one of the main speakers was the Moderator of CWME, Metropolitan Geevarghese Mar Coorilos. In his otherwise appreciative assessment of *The Nature and Mission of the Church*, the Metropolitan raised serious questions from the methodological perspective of WCC missiology about the lack of any contextual reflection on the Church. The surprise came not so much from Mar Coorilos’ CWME perspective, but its reception by the Faith & Order commission as expressed in a lengthy ovation of some minutes’ duration. That session resulted in a change in the architecture in the next stages on Faith & Order reflection, itself reflected in the structure of *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*. *The Nature and Mission of the Church* begins with substantial theological affirmations about the Church of the triune God and

<sup>23</sup> Responses were received from the Association of Protestant Churches and Missions in Germany (EMW), the Francophone Ecumenical Association for Missiology (AFOM), the Swedish Mission Council, and the WCC’s Commission on World Mission & Evangelism.

<sup>24</sup> For instance, see Kirsteen Kim, ‘Mission Theology of the Church’, in *International Review of Mission*, 99/1 (2010) 42.

*koinonia*. *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, however, begins with a narrative account of the Church in the context of history, beginning with the mission of Jesus and the apostolic community.

Regrettably, the growing convergence within WCC ecclesiology and missiology was not reflected at Edinburgh 2010, where Faith & Order was conspicuous by its absence. For instance, Theme Eight, 'Mission and Unity, Ecclesiology and Mission' did not include representatives from the Faith & Order Commission, and hence bore no reflection on its developments in *koinonia* ecclesiology, although the *missio Dei* is mentioned several times. Yet, significantly, the themes of unity, ecclesiology and mission were in dialogue with one another. The summary of the convenors and moderators did include an encouragement for 'closer co-operation and dialogue towards convergence in our respective and joint statements on mission and ecclesiology'; *The Nature and Mission of the Church* is, however, included in the list of texts for further study.<sup>25</sup> The 21-page final report of Theme Eight cites Faith & Order work three times: a citation from *The Nature and Mission of the Church*, linking mission with apostolicity, and thus a mark of the Church;<sup>26</sup> the report of the Fifth World Conference on Faith & Order; and *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*.<sup>27</sup> *Koinonia* is mentioned only twice. The Church is referred to as 'living a reconciled and reconciling fellowship (*koinonia*)'.<sup>28</sup> Significantly, the report goes on to associate mission and *koinonia*: 'Thus, the mission to the world in *koinonia* becomes testimony to Christ himself'.<sup>29</sup> Although not developed further, it makes an explicit connection between communion and mission. Faith & Order's reflection on *koinonia*, mission and justice from 1993 onwards would have added depth and diversity to Theme Eight. Granted, Edinburgh 2010 was not a WCC event, which might well have included the Commission on Faith & Order. Yet, as an historic pillar equally born in Edinburgh 1910, Faith & Order's curious absence was a lost opportunity.

### *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*

*The Church: Towards a Common Vision* is the convergence text of the Commission on Faith & Order about what it means to be Church, that is, ecclesiology. The central theme in *The Church* is *koinonia*. Even salvation

<sup>25</sup> 'Theme 8, Mission and Unity, Ecclesiology and Mission', in Kirsteen Kim and Andrew Anderson (eds), *Edinburgh 2010: Mission Today and Tomorrow* (Oxford: Regnum, 2011), 181-82.

<sup>26</sup> 'Theme 8, Mission and Unity, Ecclesiology and Mission', in Daryl Balia and Kirsteen Kim, eds., *Edinburgh 2010, Volume II: Witnessing to Christ Today* (Oxford: Regnum, 2010), 203.

<sup>27</sup> 'Theme 8', *Edinburgh 2010 Volume II*, 213.

<sup>28</sup> 'Theme 8', *Edinburgh 2010 Volume II*, 209.

<sup>29</sup> 'Theme 8', *Edinburgh 2010 Volume II*, 209.

history is interpreted through this lens: ‘The dynamic history of God’s restoration of *koinonia* found its irreversible achievement in the incarnation and paschal mystery of Jesus Christ’ (TCTCV §1). *Koinonia* is fundamental for understanding the nature of the Church and its unity, and the underlying purposes of God for all creation:

The unity of the body of Christ consists in the gift of *koinonia* or communion that God graciously bestows upon human beings. There is a growing consensus that *koinonia*, as communion with the Holy Trinity, is manifested in three interrelated ways: unity in faith, unity in sacramental life, and unity in service (in all its forms, including ministry and mission). The liturgy, especially the celebration of the Eucharist, serves as a dynamic paradigm for what such *koinonia* looks like in the present age. In the liturgy, the people of God experience communion with God and fellowship with Christians of all times and places. They gather with their presider, proclaim the Good News, confess their faith, pray, teach and learn, offer praise and thanksgiving, receive the Body and Blood of the Lord, and are sent out in mission. St John Chrysostom spoke about two altars: one in the Church and the other among the poor, the suffering and those in distress. Strengthened and nourished by the liturgy, the Church must continue the life-giving mission of Christ in prophetic and compassionate ministry to the world and in struggle against every form of injustice and oppression, mistrust and conflict created by human beings.<sup>30</sup>

Communion ecclesiology was not new; it had been studied and presented by theologians across the ecumenical perspective for a long time;<sup>31</sup> *koinonia* is a theme featured in many of the reports of the bilateral theological commissions.<sup>32</sup> Communion ecclesiology is part of the identity of some of the Christian world communions: the Anglican Communion; the Lutheran World Federation: A Communion of Churches; and more recently, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches has become the World Communion of Reformed Churches. And, it has been the dominant ecclesiological theme in Faith & Order reflection since the 1920s with even more prominence since the 1990s and beyond. What is new in *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, however, is that *koinonia* ecclesiology with all its implications is being proposed to the churches as normative; it is now an ecclesiological principle seeking formal ecclesial response.

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<sup>30</sup> TCTCV, §67.

<sup>31</sup> For example, there are the recent ecclesiological contributions of theologians such as Jean-Marie Tillard (Roman Catholic), John Zizioulas (Orthodox), Paul Avis (Anglican), and others for whom *koinonia* is the central theological image of the Church.

<sup>32</sup> See, for example, some of the recent international dialogues such as Anglican-Roman Catholic, *Life in Christ: Morals, Communion and the Church* (1993); Lutheran-Reformed, *Called to Communion and Common Witness* (2001); World Evangelical Alliance-Roman Catholic, *The Church, Evangelisation and the Bond of Koinonia* (2002); Anglican-Lutheran, *Growth in Communion* (2002); Anglican-Orthodox, *The Church of the Triune God* (2007).

With its ecclesiological principal that the Church does not exist for itself, but for service ‘in and for the world’, Faith & Order *koinonia* ecclesiology brings into mutual accountability diverse aspects of being Church: mission and evangelism; promotion of justice and peace; protection of the environment; interreligious co-operation; moral discernment and action; the quest for just and equitable social order; peacemaking and advocacy; healing, reconciliation and unity. In short, as a reflection of the communion of the triune God, the Church is meant to be a sign and servant of God’s design for the world.

*The Church: Towards a Common Vision* is also shaped by the *missio Dei*: ‘God’s plan to save the world (sometimes referred to with the Latin expression *missio Dei* or “the mission of God” or “God’s mission”), is carried out through the sending of the Son and the Holy Spirit. This saving activity of the Holy Trinity is essential to an adequate understanding of the Church.’<sup>33</sup> Like *koinonia*, the *missio Dei* also interprets salvation history.

### *Together Towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes*

*Together Towards Life* (TTL) is the second WCC statement on mission, following from the first mission statement of 1982, *Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation*, but not succeeding it. In deep resonance with *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, *Together Towards Life* roots mission in the Trinity: ‘Mission begins in the heart of the triune God and the love which binds together the Holy Trinity overflows to all humanity and all creation’ (TTL §2). And also,

Mission is the overflow of the infinite love of the Triune God. God’s mission begins with the act of creation. Creation’s life and God’s life are entwined. The mission of God’s Spirit encompasses us all in an ever-giving act of grace. We are therefore called to move beyond a narrowly human-centred approach and to embrace forms of mission which express our reconciled relationship with all created life. We hear the cry of the earth as we listen to the cries of the poor and we know that from its beginning the earth has cried out to God over humanity’s injustice (Genesis 4:10).<sup>34</sup>

The methodological approach urged by the Moderator of CWME to Faith & Order is central in *Together Towards Life*, which includes a contextual account of understanding the world today. World Christianity has its centres in the South and the East. Mission is no longer from North to South, or even from centre to the margins. Migration is a central reality, and with it multi-religious and multi-cultural pluralities. Globalization and the global market economy with their consequent social and ecological injustice and crisis belong to this context. Mission within this context is

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<sup>33</sup> TCTCV, §3.

<sup>34</sup> TTL, §19; see also §55.

broad and comprehensive: ‘God did not send the Son for the salvation of humanity alone or give us a partial salvation. Rather the gospel is the good news for every part of creation and every aspect of society. It is, therefore, vital to recognise God’s mission in a cosmic sense, and to affirm all life, the whole *oikoumene*, as being interconnected in God’s web of life’ (TTL §4).

An important feature of this text is ‘mission from the margins’, rather than mission to the margins (§§36-5), which reverses the direction of mission from the powerful to the powerless, from the privileged to the marginalised. ‘The aim of mission is not simply to move people from the margins to centres of power but to confront those who remain the centre by keeping people on the margins. Instead, churches are called to *transform* power structures’ (TTL §40). And so there is a heavy accent in TTL on mission struggle and resistance, justice and inclusivity, healing and wholeness, which equally resonates with *The Church*.

*Together Towards Life* is a deeply ecclesiological text built on a communion ecclesiology with an unequivocal accent on unity. As the ‘communion’ of disciples, ‘church is a gift of God to the world for its transformation towards the kingdom of God. Its mission is to bring new life and announce the loving presence of God in our world’ (TTL §4). Participation in God’s mission necessitates Christian unity, thus ‘overcoming the divisions and tensions that exist among us, so that the world may believe and all may be one (John 17:21)’. *Together Towards Life* holds the unity and the mission of the Church together in fresh ways that add something vital to the very meaning of what it means to be a fellowship of churches. The way it links unity and healing is one such example (TTL §69).

Like *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, *Together Towards Life* keeps church and mission together: ‘Mission is not a project of expanding churches, but of churches embodying God’s salvation for the world’ (TTL §58). Here the sense of mission resonates with the language of Faith & Order that describes the Church as the sign and instrument of God’s design for the world, that is, ‘together humanity and all of creation into communion under the Lordship of Christ’.<sup>35</sup>

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### A Convergence of Convergences

Not without some irony, the Faith & Order text begins with the ministry of Jesus and the mission of the apostolic community, while the CWME text begins with the triune God as the source of mission. A first reader might well wonder whether the covers of the two texts were mistakenly reversed by the printers! But the two beginnings signal some of the convergences between *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* and *Together Towards*

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<sup>35</sup> TCTCV, §25.

*Life*. Despite different goals, content, methodologies and constituencies, the twin texts bear an uncanny family resemblance to one another.

Prominent in both texts are varying accents on ecclesiology and missiology, unity and mission. *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* harvests insights from contemporary missiology, especially the concept of the *missio Dei* (Chapter 1, §3). Conversely, *Together Towards Life* harvests the reflection on *koinonia* ecclesiology. And yet Faith & Order's use of *missio Dei* is not the same as CWME's use of the term. Conversely, CWME's use of *koinonia*/communion ecclesiology is not quite the same as Faith & Order's use either. A degree of diversity is what one would expect in an ecclesiological and a missiological text. Yet the fact that the two commissions have received and harvested so much from one another is a significant ecumenical achievement to be celebrated.

However, where the most striking convergence is seen in the two texts is not that they both employ a communion ecclesiology and the *missio Dei*, but rather on the convergence between *koinonia* and *missio Dei* themselves within the two texts. *Missio Dei* and *koinonia* are theological terms that not only resonate deeply with one another, but in complementary ways point more deeply to the same reality.

Faith & Order and CWME identify both communion and mission, not as a human or even as an ecclesial achievement, but as a gift flowing from the life of the triune God. As *Together Towards Life* states, '... God in God's own life is a life of communion and that God's involvement in history aims at drawing humanity and creation in general into this communion with God's own life' (TTL §19).<sup>36</sup> As such, communion and mission are inclusive of the life of the Church – in fact they define it – but the Church cannot exclusively contain them either. The Church is not the goal of communion, and mission is not about bringing people into the Church; both communion and mission are trinitarian, cosmological and eschatological realities.

Faith & Order identifies the mission of the Church to be the 'sign and servant of God's design for the world', which is 'to gather humanity and all creation into communion under the Lordship of Christ' (TCTCV §25). 'Communion, whose source of the very life of the Holy Trinity is both the gift which the Church lives, and at the same time, the gift that God calls the Church to offer to a wounded and divided humanity in hope of reconciliation and healing' (TCTCV §1). *Together Towards Life* says:

The church is a gift of God to the world for its transformation towards the kingdom of God. Its mission is to bring new life and announce the loving presence of God in our world. We must participate in God's mission in unity, overcoming the divisions and tensions that exist among us, so that the world may believe and all may be one (John 17:21). The church, as the communion of Christ's disciples, must become an inclusive community and exists to

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<sup>36</sup> See Kirsteen Kim, 'Mission Theology of the Church', in *International Review of Mission*, 99/1 (2010) 40.

bring healing and reconciliation to the world. How can the church renew herself to be missional and move forward together towards life in its fullness? (TTL §10).

Both *missio Dei* and *koinonia* are inseparable from the demands of justice and peace. Both the *missio Dei* and *koinonia* are dynamic forces moving forward to the fulness of life. Both express broad understandings of mission that are about witnessing to the values of the Kingdom of God: justice and peace, creation and environment.

**Then Esau Said, ‘Let Us Journey on Our Way,  
and I Will Go alongside You’ (Genesis 33:2)**

Without wishing to identify too precisely either text – or either commission – with Jacob or Esau, ecclesialogists and missiologists within the WCC have been divided for many of the years between the first and second World Missionary Conferences at Edinburgh. For many ecumenical Christians in those intervening years, the agendas of unity and mission were not patently related to one another. Around the time of the second Edinburgh conference, the twin movements from a century earlier met each other again, not as children, but as mature movements within the WCC that had given and received much from each other.

Faith & Order and CWME had also moved beyond the discourses of ‘unity *and* mission’ and ‘unity *or* mission’ to a new place with a new common discourse from the Biblical and ancient Christian insights of *koinonia* and *missio Dei*. The two movements and the two commissions are not identical twins but fraternal twins, with distinct contributions to make to the one ecumenical movement. In the time that remains until the third World Conference on Mission in Edinburgh, 2110, may they journey alongside each other as ‘signs and servants of God’s design’ for the Church, the Christian community, that it may be the ‘gift of God to the world for its transformation towards the kingdom of God’.

# CLOSER TO CHRIST, CLOSER TO ONE ANOTHER: EVANGELICALS IN PARTNERSHIP<sup>1</sup>

C. Rosalee Velloso Ewell

## Introduction

Historical and theological differences have often made partnership difficult, such that Christians are too often known for their disagreements and disputes rather than their good works and service. Such challenges to mission and unity are not unique to our times but were there from the very beginning, from God's calling to Israel to be a missionary people to the witness of the early church. The Biblical narratives are the foundation for evangelical theology and missionary practice, and so to them this chapter turns as a way to give an example of how the World Evangelical Alliance has worked towards unity and collaboration as a fundamental way to witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ. In other words, this is how one group of Christians has tried to embody Jesus' vision that we all may be one. As the Edinburgh 2010 'Common Call' makes explicit,

Recalling Christ, the host at the banquet, and committed to that unity for which he lived and prayed, we are called to ongoing co-operation, to deal with controversial issues and to work towards a common vision. We are challenged to welcome one another in our diversity, affirm our membership through baptism in the One Body of Christ, and recognise our need for mutuality, partnership, collaboration and networking in mission, so that the world might believe.

We are all partners in the gospel and it is the gospel that makes unexpected partnerships possible.

## Power, Prejudice and Mission

Theologians and missiologists the world over have debated the 'traditional' relationships missionaries have had with those they worked amongst, as having a 'power' dimension. A shift in the centre of gravity of missionary sending in recent decades has initiated a change in the nature of relationships that mission workers have with those they serve and work alongside. This is both exciting and challenging.

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<sup>1</sup> An extract from this article was previously printed in *Mission Matters* (Spring 2014), a publication of Global Connections, Leamington Spa, UK ([www.globalconnections.org.uk](http://www.globalconnections.org.uk)).

In 2012 Robert Woodberry, an American professor and sociologist, published the results of 14 years of research and data collection in an article entitled ‘The Missionary Roots of Liberal Democracy’.<sup>2</sup> Part of the research traced the relationship between state-sponsored and independent missionaries and their influence upon the growth of liberal democratic structures in both the political and socio-economic spheres. Woodberry studied the correlation between ‘conversionist, non-state-funded white European missionaries’ and the rise of democratic governments in places like Africa or Asia. The results suggested that not all missionary efforts were to the detriment of those to whom they took the gospel; not all had the horribly negative results so often quoted in post-colonial analyses. Woodberry’s extensive data pointed to the fact that certain missionaries from the UK to Ghana, for example, who were not funded by the state, tended to be those who looked after the rights of the native tribes whom they sought to serve; the missionaries worked in favour of land acts that would make those lands rightly belong to the people who dwelt there, they helped in education (especially for women), and overall had a positive impact on the culture, even when they did not necessarily intend to do so. The missionaries set out to tell the people about Jesus, and they ended up helping establish democratic forms of government and stable economies.

Woodberry’s research is full of stories and statistical data that have caused quite a stir among political scientists and sociologists who examine the history, the rise and fall of democracies, and so forth. I mention this study because it illustrates some of the questions that we often ask ourselves or that have been put to the church that engages in mission. One way to phrase the question is, ‘What leads the church that engages in mission to “use” power rightly or wrongly?’

Power can be looked at from many different perspectives, whether we want to emphasise power in politics, religion, economics or family relationships. But we need to think about power in the light of some Biblical texts, and in particular its relation to mission; then, given what we learn, ask ourselves what it means in relation to our calling as God’s people. For evangelicals, if mission is not tied to God’s calling upon the church and to God as the source of all mission, then it is not Christian mission and not about the liberating gospel of Jesus Christ.

The story of the Biblical prophet Jonah is a story of politics, power and race. The narrative tells us that ‘the word of the Lord came to Jonah, son of Amittai, saying, “Go at once to Nineveh, that great city and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before me”’ (Jonah 1:1-2).

Nineveh was the capital of the Assyrian Empire. It was failing and was plagued by internal corruption and mismanagement, but it was still the seat of power of a cruel and ruthless force in the region. Assur was its god – a

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<sup>2</sup> Robert D. Woodberry, article in *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 106, No. 02, May 2012, 244-74.

violent, cruel and dominating god, a god that stands in stark contrast to the loving, liberating, covenantal God of Israel. What person in their right mind would want to face Assur or go on a mission to Assur's henchmen, the Ninevites?

Jonah is a man from the margins, his people are oppressed and suffering under the weight of Assyria. As a prophet, Jonah's job is to listen to God and to reveal God to his people. So when God says, go to Nineveh, it is like saying, 'Don't bother with the margins or with your own people right now – I want you to go to those in power so that I might redeem them.' Jonah has his own prejudices and is a grumpy character. But despite his unwillingness, eventually he does not lose the vision of what God demands of him. He also does not lose his courage and finally submits to participating in God's work, even if it means forfeiting his own life at the hands of the enemy.

In this mission, Jonah must learn to give up what little power or confidence he has in order to obey God. He must discern that this is indeed what God wants and trust in ways that are uncomfortable for him. Who are we in Jonah's story? Where does the church today see itself in this narrative, especially regarding mission? Despite his disobedience and ill-will towards the Ninevites, Jonah's story shows a level of intimacy with God that is quite unique in the Bible. Jonah listens to God, has confidence in him and is so familiar with God's justice and love that he would rather try to run or even die at sea than see God spare Nineveh. In the belly of the fish he does not even apologise for fleeing. And at the end of the story, after God does not destroy the city, Jonah sits down and complains, saying he would rather be dead because he knew that sparing Nineveh is exactly what God would do. The prophet Jonah did not want to obey God's call to mission. Furthermore, he totally opposed any idea that people like the Ninevites would be beneficiaries of God's forgiveness and grace. Yet even in his disobedience – when he was fleeing and in the boat with the sailors – he was witnessing to God (Jonah 1:9-10). Do we know God so well that even when we are not being obedient we are still witnesses to him?

So often in mission we are tied to strategies or results, to evidence of the positive outcome of witnessing to the gospel, as in the case of Woodberry's research. But in Jonah we see the opposite – it is the very success of his mission that he resents and that leads him to anger. Jonah's discernment as prophet allows him to see or to anticipate the work that God is going to do. He does not like the implications of that work – the Ninevites are saved, the ruthless empire becomes the beneficiary of God's grace, and Jonah is not prepared to put up with that. Are we prepared to give up our desired outcomes, to withhold the power of judgement and submit to the fact that God will do things God's way, and that such ways might be very different from what we anticipated or even prayed for? Partnership in God's mission will usually mean a 'laying down' of ourselves and our own agendas.

Another text to consider in terms of how it sheds light on God's call to the church towards mission and unity is the narrative of Acts 10. In this chapter we have the great story of some rather frightening dreams and the beginning of what was perhaps a very good friendship. First, the reader is told about Cornelius, a Roman centurion stationed in Caesarea who is a good and God-fearing man, well respected by the people (Acts 10:2). He is frightened by an angel of God who tells him that his prayers have ascended to heaven. In a vision Cornelius is told to summon Simon Peter from the other seaside town, Joppa. Cornelius obeys immediately and sends his men and a devout soldier to ask Peter to come to his home.

Meanwhile the next day, Peter is waiting for some food and has his own rather bizarre dream about all sorts of animals sent by God for him to slaughter as food to satisfy his hunger (Acts 10:10-12). Peter tries to argue with the angel about dietary laws – three times, the text tells us, he argued and challenged the messenger – but he gets told off and remains puzzled by the vision until Cornelius' men knock at the door and explain their own master's dream. Peter discerns then that the vision of the animals was God's way of breaking down some of his prejudices ... but he still had lessons to learn.

The rest of the story is familiar: Peter comes to understand his vision in the light of the message from Cornelius and goes to Caesarea to meet him and his household. There he finds a large crowd gathered and preaches to them all about Jesus' life and ministry. Before Peter can finish his sermon, the Holy Spirit descends upon the Gentiles and they are filled with the gift of God's Spirit. Peter and his Jewish friends are amazed – they have witnessed the power of Israel's God fall upon a great crowd of Gentiles (Acts 10:34, 44).

Peter's earlier vision had caused him confusion and raised in him questions of racial purity and the order of things – for any good Jew, things had to be a certain way, food had to look a certain way or come from a particular place. This worldview extended to his mission and the way he viewed evangelism – there were still barriers; there were still 'us' and 'them'. But through the power of the Holy Spirit, God changes Peter. In their encounter, both Peter and Cornelius are changed.

In mission, how often do we imagine God's calling upon us within certain boxes or ways of doing things? What does mission, unity or partnership in mission 'outside the box' really mean? Perhaps we do not have the same ideas about racial purity as did Peter, but we have other issues that can blind us to the work of the Spirit, particularly as God works in people who are 'outside'. Do we still do mission with the sense of 'us' and 'them'? For Peter, Cornelius and his household were 'other', they were outsiders to God's promises and God's covenant, just as Jonah saw the Ninevites as outsiders and unfit recipients of God's blessings.

Luke's play on who has the power is fascinating in this text. According to society's schemes, Cornelius is the one who holds the power – he

commands soldiers, he is of the rank of a centurion – he is part of the power structure in his society. Peter is not – he was a fisherman, he is from the oppressed group – oppressed by Gentile authorities and now persecuted by the Jewish religious authorities. But it is the power of racial purity, of who gets to play in God’s story of redemption and who does not, that becomes the focus in these texts. In this story, Peter thinks he has the upper hand. But the vision of the animals surprises Peter and guides him to the point of discerning such that he can affirm at the beginning of his sermon, ‘I truly understand that God shows no partiality ...’ (Acts 10:34). The story well illustrates that the gospel makes unexpected partnerships possible.

Both Peter and Cornelius are models for mission today. In Acts 10:4, 30 and 31, there are references to Cornelius’ prayer life: the angel had come to him because God had answered his prayers. When Peter asks, ‘Why have you sent for me?’ he says, ‘Because I prayed and the angel said God had heard me’ (Acts 10:29). One might ask, what did Cornelius pray for? He was already a God-fearing and devout man. The last mention that we have of Cornelius in the Bible is verse 33 when he says to Peter, ‘All of us are here in the presence of God to listen to all that the Lord has commanded you to say.’ Perhaps Cornelius had heard of the gift of the Spirit and needed to know more; perhaps he wanted to hear firsthand about Jesus. Perhaps he just knew how important it is to spend time with God. Whatever the case, Cornelius and Peter are evangelists of the best kind. The centurion does not miss a chance and gathers a large crowd at his house so that all can listen to Peter talk about Jesus. And Peter does not miss a chance and preaches Christ crucified and risen, the promises of God and the forgiveness of sins. It is an extraordinary sermon that is blessed by the coming of the Spirit. The Spirit of God not only changed Peter and Cornelius, but made them friends, and through that friendship many were blessed.

### **Experiencing God’s Power in Partnership**

Part of being the prophetic and the missionary people of God means learning to discern and learning to expect God to surprise us. While we might be confident about God’s character as Jonah was, the church is called to be that voice that preaches repentance and deliverance, even to our enemies. While we might be confident about our roles and our place as Peter was, we are called to submit to the unusual things God is doing, giving up power and knowing that it is not up to us to solve everything, but that God will do things in God’s time. We might not like God’s time, as Jonah did not. There is room for that, too, in God’s mission. Is the church, as we know it, powerful? If it is, is it in its mission able to listen to the prophets that come from the margins like Jonah and who call it to repent? Or is the current suffering of the church such that it needs to recover its

own prophetic voice in order to send prophets out, like Jonah, to announce the coming justice of God and the love of Jesus?

Partnerships, genuine Christian unity, are one way in which the church witnesses to the power of the gospel, especially in a world so torn by schisms and divisions. Showing the world that we are one is also a way for the church to be prophetic. A unified, obedient and witnessing church takes the story of the gospel in words, deeds and character to wherever it is sent, near or far. One concrete example of this is the process and outcome of the joint collaboration between the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, the World Council of Churches and the World Evangelical Alliance. The five-year-long process concluded with the launch of the joint document, *Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World: Recommendations for Conduct*, in June 2011.<sup>3</sup>

The uniqueness of the document does not lie only in the fact that it symbolises Christian unity in a new and unprecedented way, but that it does so around the theme of mission and the ethics of living as God's people in the world today. Furthermore, the process is just as significant as the outcome. Like Peter and Cornelius, there were stereotypes and differences that at first could have been the cause of further division between the different traditions represented. Yet through practices of common prayer, of sharing stories and of mutual listening, evangelicals, Catholics and ecumenicals came together and became friends. The Spirit of God was indeed at work in their midst, breaking down barriers and raising challenges for the church that we had previously not been able to see. Through the process, concern for the gospel and its testimony in a turbulent world remained the focus and through such focus, unity between Christians was strengthened.

Learning to listen to others who come from different traditions, and learning to listen to God's Spirit, is fundamental for any attempt at mission and unity. Just as Jonah had to listen to God, and just as Peter and Cornelius listened to each other, Christians from all traditions are challenged by these Biblical stories to see the 'other' through the eyes of the Spirit that is at work in the church today. For the World Evangelical Alliance, participating in the process leading to the launch of the joint document *Christian Witness* was an enriching and life-giving experience, and one which is hopefully just the beginning in a long line of collaborations.

Being partners in the gospel means telling the story of Jesus and discerning the gifts God has bestowed on others, not just on ourselves. It means spending time with God and listening to God, and then being faithful to God's call, even or especially when this call means we must work alongside others with whom we think we disagree. It is in growing closer to Christ that we find ourselves also closer to others. As we

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<sup>3</sup> [www.worldevangelicals.org/resources/categories/index.htm?cat=67](http://www.worldevangelicals.org/resources/categories/index.htm?cat=67)

participate in the divine plan for the redemption of all of creation, we might just be surprised by God's Spirit among us.

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# TOWARDS NEW FORMS OF PARTNERSHIP IN MISSION: THE CREATION OF INTERNATIONAL AND INTERCULTURAL MISSION BODIES

Ganoune Diop

## Introduction

The landscape of world Christianity gives many reasons to rejoice in mission accomplishment. To sense the pulse of the breakthrough to make Jesus Christ known, we could mention one of the many Christian organizations which make a strong case for the need to collaborate: visionSynergy is among such contemporary mission partnership initiatives.

**VisionSynergy** points out that there are more than two billion Christians worldwide, five million churches, 43,000 denominations, and 12 million Christian workers. In spite of the fact that there are hundreds of mission-sending organizations in the world, and thousands of missionaries who have given their lives, the goal of world evangelism remains unfulfilled. Thousands of people groups, including more than 300 million people, have no missionary among them. Thousands of languages still have no Bible. Millions of people are oral learners who cannot or do not read. Moreover, world religions active all over the world do not know the Jesus revealed in the Bible.<sup>1</sup>

One of the areas, however, where the track record of Christianity has not been outstanding is partnership among Christians to fulfil the Great Commission together. Today, however, the prospects of new partnerships are promising. A compelling case can be made that new forms of partnerships are needed on a global scale.

Our world has become multi-polar. Interconnectedness characterizes pluralistic societies. It has created a new reality, both a challenge and an opportunity for testifying to Jesus Christ. Christians from all streams of Christianity have the opportunity to share their experience of God, not only through technology and other means of communication, but more decisively with their own testimony of the faith. New realities require new ways of commitment and engagement in mission. New forms of partnerships and networking are highly necessary for our time.

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<sup>1</sup> See <http://visionsynergy.net/why-collaborate>

*Presuppositions and premises*

The basic premises upon which this article is based are the following:

1. God uses all members of Christ's body, the Church, to fulfil the Great Commission. To fulfil the whole purpose of God, as the Apostle Paul puts it (Acts 20), the Holy Spirit is working within churches, but also beyond the confines of ecclesiastical structures. He has created movements of peoples across nations and ethnic groups. These movements have been intentional about partnership to make Jesus Christ known. Inter-church initiatives are present in each Christian tradition. Inter-church partnerships are clearly manifested in international ecumenical bodies such as the World Council of Churches (WCC), the Global Christian Forum (GCF), the Conference of Secretaries of Christian World Communions (CS/CWC), and in continental and regional Christian organizations such as the All African Council of Churches (AACC), African Indigenous/ Independent/ Instituted Churches (AIC), Asian Outreach and many others.

2. Dialogue among Christian churches opens the possibility of discovering the depth and riches found in each Christian tradition.

3. Partnership from a Christian perspective is more than a contract; it is a necessary commitment to Christ's commission. To partner in a Christian setting is fundamentally to join God in what God is doing to save the world and lead people to life.

4. To join God implies the dedication of one's whole life to the glory of God. Partnership among Christians is in itself a doxology, a glorification of God. Creative partnerships are therefore as essential as a form of mission that consists exclusively in verbal proclamation of the gospel message.

5. Jesus initiated partnership, whether one thinks of the Twelve, the Seventy or the disciples he sent out two-by-two. Also, the post-resurrection era saw the pattern for partnership well in place whether one recalls Paul and Silas, Paul and Barnabas, or even the apocalyptic language of the two witnesses in the book of Revelation, or the three angels of Revelation 14 that follow each other.

6. Each Christian communion presents gems that deserve to be assembled for the blessing of every person and people group.

7. Partnership consists in a deliberate commitment to participate in the teachings of Jesus as recorded in the Beatitudes in order to show the world the values of Jesus Christ, his kingdom and his righteousness.

8. Christians are partners in prayer. The customary greeting 'Maranatha', used in the early Christian communities, is a prayer, an expression of hope, an affirmation of faith, and a sign of belonging or communion. Christians are partners in hope, faith and love.

9. Partnership is necessitated by the fact that every Christian is a missionary. Mark Oxbrow makes a compelling case for a kind of partnership – as he puts it, 'on a global scale where power relationships are renegotiated and resources are pooled.' He continues by saying that, 'My greatest hope, however, is that, as the Majority World begins to control the

dance tune and discovers new steps and rhythms, so we in the Minority World will at last escape our blinkered professionalization of mission. My hope is we will again see clearly that every baptized believer is a missionary; that most of them are women; most are poor; and the monk, the diplomat, the refugee, the trader, and the overseas student, are all in this together. God's mission comes in all shapes and sizes.<sup>2</sup>

10. Every Church is a centre for mission empowerment. The emphasis on every Christian being a missionary is vital for the Church to rediscover its intrinsic missional identity. Inter-church partnership to foster a culture of mission identity for all Christians is then most welcome.

### *Theological foundations*

Partnership in mission brings together the main domains of the Christian faith. The foundation of the whole endeavour is anchored in the revelation of God.

#### THE UNIQUENESS AND FULLNESS OF GOD'S REVELATION IN CHRIST

The best thing that Christians can share with the world is the truth about the revelation of who God is: 'God is love' is the climax of the revelation of the Christian message (1 John 4:8). For Christianity its message is the locus of God's unique revelation. It claims to give expression to God's message, which raises man to his highest dignity, goodness, and beauty', according to Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI. With reference to the possibility of the co-existence of truths, he adds: 'It is not the same thing to say that Christ is the Son of God in whom the full presence of the truth about God finds expression, and to say that various kinds of truths are also present in other religions, that they have something like fragments, or beams, of the great light, that in certain respects, they even represent an inner movement towards him. The claim that God is present in Christ, and that the true God himself thus appears and speaks to us in him, does not rule out that the other religions also contain truths – but that is just the point: truths that, as it were, point to The Truth ...'<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Mark Oxbrow, 'Recovering Mission: Majority World Mission – A Return to Mission for the Majority', in the *Lausanne World Pulse* website (Wheaton, IL: Institute of Strategic Evangelism, Evangelism and Missions Information Service and Intercultural Studies Department (Wheaton College) and the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization).

<sup>3</sup> Benedict XVI, *Light of the World: The Pope, the Church, and the Signs of the Times. A Conversation with Peter Seewald* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2010), 153-54.

#### PARTNERSHIP GROUNDED IN THE ONENESS OF GOD AND THE TRINITARIAN REVELATION

Perfect unity is an attribute of God. God is one. For God's people, unity is realized when they embrace God and embody the trinitarian life of love, grace and fellowship. This unity is birthed in the freedom that is a prerequisite to any genuine relationship. Freedom of conscience and of choice are essential to the mission Christians join in. No coercion, manipulation or hegemonic propaganda, but deep respect of peoples' dignity, characterizes partnership in mission. As the world witnesses how the spirit of Christian mission is respectful of every person's right to freedom and truth, authentic dialogue and witnessing take place as worldviews are shared in the context of our pluralistic contemporary societies where freedom and self-determination are *conditio sine qua non* for the legitimacy of one's testimony. As Christians partner in unity, they give the world a chance to believe that Jesus Christ was indeed sent to bring true liberation.

#### PARTNERSHIP AS FULFILMENT OF CHRIST'S HIGH-PRIESTLY PRAYER

The reality of Christian unity is a fulfilment of Christ's prayer that connects trinitarian love with ecclesiology and mission. For the sake of the world, Christ commissions his church to reach out to all peoples with the gospel of love. This high-priestly prayer highlights the fact that all followers of Jesus Christ are gifts of God the Father to the Son, who sent us as signs of God's love for the world so that the world might believe in Jesus Christ (John 17).

#### PARTNERSHIP AS PARTICIPATION IN CHRIST'S MINISTRY

All Christians are called to share in Christ's ministry, a ministry of reconciliation and peacemaking in a world plagued with divisions of all kinds. Partnership is certainly for the purpose of helping people overcome ethnic conflicts and artificial racial divides of the one human family.

#### PARTNERSHIP NECESSITATED BY PARTICIPATION IN THE SUFFERING OF JESUS CHRIST

The rising tide of persecution and martyrdom of Christians of various denominations around the world is in itself a reality of the common experience of suffering in the name of Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul says, 'The suffering of Christ abounds in us' (2 Corinthians 1:5; see also Colossians 1:24-29). Furthermore, he elaborated on the knowledge of Jesus Christ through the 'power of his resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead'.

*The mission imperative: a response to God's commission*

Churches in partnership for the sake of mission do this in obedience to Jesus Christ's command to make disciples of all nations in the Great Commission (Matthew 28). The book of Revelation in symbolic language portrays the church as a messenger with an everlasting gospel to share with the whole world – to every nation, tribe, tongue and people the text specifies (Revelation 14:6). Jesus told his disciples that they would be his witnesses all over the world (Acts 1:8). The call of the Lausanne Movement for the whole church to take the whole gospel to the whole world is in accordance with Christ's expressed will.

**Intra-Communion and Inter-Church Partnerships**

At the international level, various Christian world communions have invested a wealth of resources to serve the world and to make it a better place. It is not our aim to provide an exhaustive report of partnerships within communions and among them, nor even to report the breadth of activities within each communion; however, a few examples may suffice to illustrate what is being done as Christian communities continue to partner to change the world.

*Anglican Communion*

A significant example is found in the Anglican Communion. The members articulate their objectives as follows:

Partners in Mission is a continuing process by which the Churches of the Communion contribute to each other's local mission. It assists Churches in sharpening their mission priorities and setting goals. They can share with others from their resources such as experience of poverty and weakness, acting for justice, spirituality and prayer, friendship, enthusiasm, patterns of development, liturgy, dance and song, people and money. They can receive from the resources of others. In so doing, all participate in God's mission in the world.<sup>4</sup>

*World Communion of Reformed Churches*

The World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) singled out gender justice, ecological justice, and economic justice. It has established an Office of Justice and Partnership, which works with WCRC's regional councils, member-churches, and ecumenical partners to encourage active engagement in justice issues through various programmes. The depth of Christian partnership is indeed expressed within Christian communions such as this one. The focus on justice is a needed reminder that justice is an

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<sup>4</sup> [www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/mission/resources/guidelines/partnership](http://www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/mission/resources/guidelines/partnership)

attribute of God. Care for the whole creation is a necessary aspect of restorative justice.

### *The Lutheran World Federation*

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) is active through various departments, including its Department for World Service, which works 'through strategic partnerships and networks that are guided by internationally recognized codes, principles, and guidelines in humanitarian assistance and international development'.<sup>5</sup>

Beyond partnership for humanitarian purposes, and a significant involvement in other partnerships in the ecumenical body, the LWF is actively engaged in witnessing to Jesus Christ. Recently, in Finland, LWF organized a major consultation on partnership and mission attended by member-churches from several countries.

The global collaboration and mutual enrichment between member-churches signal the new awareness that mission nowadays is from everywhere to everywhere. Churches from every region of the world learn from one another and work together to further the purposes of God.

### *Baptist World Alliance*

The Baptist World Alliance (BWA) is a fellowship of 228 conventions and unions in 121 countries and territories consisting of 42 million members in 177,000 congregations. During the coming years, they say they are committed to: 1) Promoting worship, fellowship and unity, 2) Nurturing the passion for mission and evangelism, 3) Responding to human need through relief and sustainable community development, 4) Defending human rights and justice, and 5) Promoting relevant theological reflection. They have adopted a holistic approach to mission within their own fellowship. Broadening their partnership with other churches expands the scope and holistic orientation of their service to humanity. For this member of the body of Christ, partnership is key to participating in the mission of God.<sup>6</sup>

### *The United Methodist Church*

This fellowship of Christians has been intentional in working for the advancement of the United Nations' goals from the prism of a Christian worldview and global impact. By hosting several Christian organizations at the famous church building just in front of the UN office in New York, United Methodist women are facilitating partnerships among Christian organizations for the work of restoration captured by not only the

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<sup>5</sup> [www.lutheranworld.org/sites/default/files/DWS-StrategicPlan-2013-low\\_0.pdf](http://www.lutheranworld.org/sites/default/files/DWS-StrategicPlan-2013-low_0.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> [www.bwanet.org](http://www.bwanet.org)

Millennium Development Goals, but also through sustainable development goals. The United Methodists insist that the best values have their deeper expressions in Jesus Christ. Furthermore, the United Methodist Church has enabled the Office of Christian Unity and Interreligious Relationships to organize programmes in reference to the United Methodist Ecumenical and Interreligious Training (UMEIT). UMEIT is an interactive training session which brings together United Methodist ecumenists from all levels of the denomination to further Christian witness and build inter-faith communities.<sup>7</sup>

### *United Church of Christ*

The United Church of Christ (UCC) has developed a global partnership handbook with the stated goal of pursuing vital reciprocal relationships with international partners through global ministries. There is intentionality in their endeavour to ‘experience the unity of Christ that reaches across cultural, racial and national boundaries’. One of their stated goals is to share and to spread the light and love of God in Christ. It is also of significance that they specify ‘each Partner brings respect and genuine desire to enter the lives of the other, neither as a benefactor nor as a recipient, but as equals with strengths and needs that enhance the even growth of the relationship. Friendship without material benefits from either party’.<sup>8</sup> The core values they strive to live by are the following:

- Presence – Manifesting God’s love by living in intentional, committed relationships.
- Mutuality – Walking in hope with others in God’s mission.
- Community – Building interdependence and unity among all of God’s children.
- Justice – Living out God’s radical love by confronting powers that deny the fulness of life and the integrity of creation.
- Peace – Embodying reconciling relationships with God, humanity and creation.

It is certainly an encouraging sign that Christians of all streams claim core common values. This is good news for holistic mission.

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### *General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists*

Seventh-day Adventists (SDA) have inscribed in their *General Conference Working Policy* (O 110), that they ‘recognize every agency that lifts up Christ before men as a part of the divine plan for the evangelization of the world, and ... hold in high esteem the Christian men and women in other

<sup>7</sup> [www.gccuic-umc.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=432&Itemid=1](http://www.gccuic-umc.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=432&Itemid=1)

<sup>8</sup> Cf. [globalministries.org](http://globalministries.org)

communions who are engaged in winning souls to Christ'.<sup>9</sup> One influential figure among Adventists, Ellen G White, encourages Adventists as follows:

Pray for and with ministers of other denominations ... Our ministers should seek to come near to the ministers of other denominations. Pray for and with these men, for whom Christ is interceding. A solemn responsibility is theirs. As Christ's messengers, we should manifest a deep, earnest interest in these shepherds of the flock.<sup>10</sup>

The emphasis of Adventists on the idea of judgement and being part of the Good News is an integral part of the hope of the end of impunity. Justice matters to God and also to those who hope for the establishment of his kingdom of freedom, justice and peace. All violence will cease. But love will never end.

### III. Landscape of Christian Partnership

Partnership implies shared values and worldview. For Christians of various denominational backgrounds, reality is apprehended through the prism of the good news of God who is Lord and Saviour.

#### A. Global inter-church partnership

##### 1. HISTORICAL EXPRESSIONS

The historic Christian churches have since their inception invested their lives in mission. Hans Urs Von Balthasar wrote, 'Jesus intended the Church to be essentially missionary in character, a community with a centrifugal movement, not a people enclosed in itself. This makes her so different from Israel, which is not a missionary but a centripetal people, adhering to itself, far more so than any other people on earth. For Israel, the movement of salvation consists in the gathering of the diaspora, in the retrieving of exiles from the remote corners of the earth into the holy, ancestral land. The Church, on the other hand, lives by her mission, as expressed in the closing chapter of Matthew: "Go out into the world, to all nations."' <sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. the official text of policy No 075 in the *General Conference Working Policy*; see [www.adventist.org/information/officialstatements/documents/article/go/O/relationships-with-other-christian-churches-and-religious-organizations](http://www.adventist.org/information/officialstatements/documents/article/go/O/relationships-with-other-christian-churches-and-religious-organizations)

<sup>10</sup> Ellen G White, *Testimonies to the Church*, Vol 6, 78.

<sup>11</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar (28 September 2012), *Test Everything* (Kindle locations 39-44: Ignatius Press: Kindle Edition).

### a. Edinburgh Conference

The 1910 Edinburgh Conference was an historic moment in the partnership of Christian churches. This conference sowed the seeds for the modern ecumenical movement. It was not long after that Christian churches saw the need to formally engage in a movement that would significantly shape the twentieth-century Christian world.

The General Council of Edinburgh 2010 expressed the following: ‘It is “in humility and hope” we pray that the outcomes both of the conference and the study process can inspire and encourage us to engage our churches around the world, and take forward our common task of “witnessing to Christ today”.’<sup>12</sup> The conference was marked by a vivid consciousness that a common partnership to witness to Christ today is an urgent task for all Christians.

### b. The founding of the World Council of Churches

The World Council of Churches (WCC) claims to be ‘the broadest and most inclusive among the many organized expressions of the modern ecumenical movement, a movement whose goal is Christian unity. The WCC brings together churches, denominations and church fellowships in more than 110 countries and territories throughout the world, representing over 500 million Christians and including most of the world’s Orthodox churches, scores of Anglican, Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist and Reformed churches, as well as many United and Independent churches. At the end of 2012, there were 345 member-churches.’<sup>13</sup>

The core in the rationale that brought about the founding of the WCC was a burden for mission. The challenge of bringing a diversity of churches together for the sake of Christian unity is a daunting task, but failure to try to work for Christian unity would be unthinkable in the light of Jesus Christ’s priestly prayer and God’s overarching purpose to save his people and the whole world. Key among the goals of the WCC is the promotion of common witness in work for mission and evangelism. Common witness implies a need for partnership among the various churches. The invitation of guest observers and participants from non-member-churches is a clear sign that the leaders of the modern ecumenical movement take partnership seriously and inclusively.

### c. World Evangelical Alliance

In their own words, the ‘World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) serves and representing more than 600 million evangelicals. Launched in 1846 to unite

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<sup>12</sup> <http://www.edinburgh2010.org/en/about-edinburgh-2010/governance/general-council.html>

<sup>13</sup> See the WCC website.

evangelicals worldwide, the WEA continues to be a dynamic movement with seven regional and 129 national Evangelical Alliances, and over 150 member-organizations. WEA's mission is to speak as a trusted voice, to equip members and leaders for global impact and to connect its members and others for common action in the furtherance of God's reign'.<sup>14</sup>

The WEA connects several church networks, ministries and organizations, as a response to Jesus' prayer for unity among Christians, with the belief that unity is essential to evangelism. 'WEA's various projects foster unity, synergy and collaboration between its members and many others on topics of common concern'.<sup>15</sup> The association of Evangelicals in Africa (AEA) is a member of the WEA.

Their mission commission has as its first objective that of 'creating a missional arena and a forum that facilitates and encourages mutual learning, networking and co-operation between national, regional and international mission leaders in all related missional bodies'.<sup>16</sup>

'Connecting God's people around God's purposes ... Igniting multiplying movements ... Transforming lives and communities with Christ's love and truth'<sup>17</sup> cannot happen without intentional and sustained partnership. Especially in the light of the fact that in Africa alone, of the 3,750 people groups, 868 remain on the least-reached list and need to hear the gospel.<sup>18</sup> Partnership is therefore an integrative part of the ethos of several evangelical associations, including the Association of Evangelicals in Africa and the World Evangelical Alliance, that serves as the dynamic center for equipping and resourcing ... and the connecting hub for greater strategic impact'.<sup>19</sup>

#### d. The Lausanne Movement

The Lausanne movement calling the whole church to take the whole gospel to the whole world is another approach to partnership in fulfilment of God's mission. It is a global partnership of Christians to fulfil the *missio Dei*. Meetings such as the one in Cape Town in 2010 created an opportunity for Christians of various traditions to mingle, study together, fellowship and envisage together the future of mission in increasingly secular and materialistic societies. A deliberate focus on partnership in the truth as revealed in Scripture was a major contribution of that conference. A rich reflection on the nature and scope of the gospel, the cross of Jesus Christ and its implications for atonement, reconciliation and restoration was part of the theological insights.

<sup>14</sup> [www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/mission/resources/guidelines/partnership](http://www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/mission/resources/guidelines/partnership)

<sup>15</sup> [www.worldea.org/whoware/vision-mission](http://www.worldea.org/whoware/vision-mission)

<sup>16</sup> [www.worldevangelicals.org/commissions](http://www.worldevangelicals.org/commissions)

<sup>17</sup> [www.convergeworldwide.org](http://www.convergeworldwide.org)

<sup>18</sup> Joshua Project estimate. See <http://joshuaproject.net/continents/AFR>

<sup>19</sup> [www.worldea.org/whoware/vision-mission](http://www.worldea.org/whoware/vision-mission)

#### e. Conference of Secretaries of Christian World Communions

This organization represents globally two billion Christians from a variety of denominations. Since 1957, the CS/CWCs have met annually for an informal exchange of ideas and fellowship. Churches are encouraged to dialogue and partner with one another. This gathering and mingling create opportunities for God to bring members of his body to draw closer to each other, to overcome prejudice and discover the riches and depth of each faith tradition.

### 2. OTHER CONTEMPORARY EXPRESSIONS OF PARTNERSHIP

A cursory survey of the ‘mission statements’ of major streams of world Christianity reveals how similar their respective goals and objectives are. This shows how fundamentally close Christian traditions are to one another. An emphasis on the gospel of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit is a shared gift that calls for intentional partnership across denominational lines.

#### a. The Pentecostal World Fellowship

The Pentecostal World Fellowship is a co-operative body of Pentecostal churches and groups worldwide. In their Constitution, dated August 27, 2013, their objectives are stated as follows:

- (1) To encourage mission partnerships among participating Pentecostal groups.
- (2) To speak to governments and nations on behalf of Pentecostal believers everywhere, and especially in countries where persecution exists or where individual rights and freedoms are compromised for the sake of the gospel.
- (3) To share as a Pentecostal World Fellowship in humanitarian aid through its various Pentecostal members by sharing information of assistance given, and where possible, to co-operate in humanitarian efforts worldwide.
- (4) To serve as a co-operative fellowship whereby educational institutions approved by individual Pentecostal members of the Pentecostal World Fellowship would be recognized by other member-groups.
- (5) To pursue the fulfilment of the Lord’s command to evangelize the lost in the shortest possible time, providing them with the opportunity to hear and respond to the gospel in all its fulness, by encouraging and assisting one another, promoting harmonious relationships, and seeking the most effective means of its accomplishment under the dynamic leadership of the Holy Spirit.
- (6) To emphasize worldwide prayer networks and co-ordinated prayer.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> [www.pentecostalworldfellowship.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/PWF-Revised-Constitution-REVISED-2013-AUG-27-FINAL-R1.pdf](http://www.pentecostalworldfellowship.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/PWF-Revised-Constitution-REVISED-2013-AUG-27-FINAL-R1.pdf)

The Pentecostal World Fellowship has established a 'World Missions Commission' whose mandate is to promote partnership. They state it as follows:

The purpose of WMC is to nurture an environment of co-operation and flexibility among Pentecostal mission organizations worldwide. Recognizing the diversity of historical and experiential backgrounds of various Pentecostal enterprises, the WMC works towards providing solid Biblical and missiological foundation for holistic mission activities.<sup>21</sup>

b. African Churches and African Independent Churches: new forms of collaborative mission initiatives

Considering that there are well over 10,000 independent Christian denominations in Africa, it has been stated that most of the spread of Christianity throughout Africa in the twentieth century can be attributed to African Independent Churches (AIC). AIC is a conglomerate of linguistically and ethnically diverse churches that arose out of the need to contextualize the gospel in indigenous forms. Growing co-operation between these churches is part of the contemporary Christian engagement with Africa.<sup>22</sup>

c. Movement for African National Initiatives (MANI)

Partnership is exemplified in the Movement for African National Initiatives. It is a network of networks focused 'on catalysing African National Initiatives and mobilizing the resources of the Body of Christ in Africa for the fulfilment of the Great Commission'. The stated purpose of the organization is 'to affirm, motivate, mobilize and network Christian leaders by inspiring them with the vision of reaching the unreached and least evangelized in Africa and the wider world, through the communication of up to date research, reports and models, consultations and prayer efforts focusing on the unfinished task'.<sup>23</sup>

The major forthcoming events scheduled for the next three years will foster partnerships among various church traditions. This organization has provided the world church with valuable resources and statistics, for example, of the least-reached people groups sorted by country.

MANI is part of the International Partnering Associates (IPA), a co-operative association of people who belong to other mission agencies but who partner through fifty globally-based Regional Partnering Associates. They serve over 450 mission entities around the world.

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<sup>21</sup> [www.pentecostalworldfellowship.org](http://www.pentecostalworldfellowship.org)

<sup>22</sup> [www.patheos.com/Library/African-Independent-Churches.html](http://www.patheos.com/Library/African-Independent-Churches.html)

<sup>23</sup> [www.maniafrica.com](http://www.maniafrica.com)

#### d. All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC)

The All Africa Conference of Churches is a fellowship of churches and institutions that represent more than 120 million African Christians in 174 national churches and regional Christian councils. They work together in their common witness to the Gospel by mobilizing to faithfully live the message of God's love, nurturing a common understanding of the faith, interpreting and responding to challenges to human dignity, and acting prophetically in word, life and service for healing.

AACC is committed to partnership of churches in Africa. Members are committed to operate honestly and with integrity, and in a spirit of love. AACC claims to provide a prophetic presence and witness of the churches in Africa, an ecumenical instrument facilitating synergy amongst its members, and to foster a unity that allows them to speak with one voice on issues affecting the people of the African continent. AACC expresses its commitment to the Christian life and a strong sense of an ecumenical vocation in pursuit of renewal, restoration of human dignity and hope in the continent.<sup>24</sup>

### 3. ASIAN CONTRIBUTIONS

New missionaries from Asia are sent around the world spreading the knowledge of Jesus Christ. South Korean churches, among others, send missionaries to challenging places. Christians celebrate with gratitude this development of such new forms of partnership. It is part of the new reality of mission whereby people from everywhere serve everywhere. The boldness and creativity of Asian missionaries is an admirable gift of God. Furthermore, in an Asian context, it is evidence of a success story to the extent that the Three-Self principles of the indigenous church have come to maturity to some degree when Asian churches are able not only to self-sustain, self-govern and self-propagate, but also reaching the point of sending missionaries to all parts of the world.<sup>25</sup>

This new configuration in the world of mission makes partnership a necessity for the sake of the whole global church fulfilling God's purposes in a creative manner. The kind of partnership needed is characterized by co-ordinated effort, not for control but to avoid redundancy and a lack of efficiency. Sending agencies may greatly benefit from partnership with local fields for the sake of effective mission work.<sup>26</sup> Over a decade ago at a

<sup>24</sup> [www.aacc-ceta.org](http://www.aacc-ceta.org)

<sup>25</sup> See William T. Snider, 'An Historical Overview of Partnership in Missions', in *International Journal of Pentecostal Missiology*, 1 (2013).

<sup>26</sup> Chin Do Kham, 'Partnership Issues and Challenges in Asian Mission', in *Asian Church & God's Mission*, Wonsuk and Julie C Ma (eds) (Hopelawn, NJ: Mountain World Mission, 2003), 45, observes: 'Some Asian local churches are sending their own short-term and long-term missionaries to other countries without much co-ordination with other mission agencies or even their national headquarters. As a

symposium in Manila, a call was made in the following terms: 'Leadership should look ahead and develop a Kingdom-centered Asian mission model to ensure that mistakes of past missionary efforts are not repeated. To meet this challenge, Asian Christian leaders from all denominations and organizations need to come together to pray and develop strategic plans for new century mission in Asia.'<sup>27</sup>This endeavour would benefit from input from Christians everywhere because of the increasingly global nature of our world today. The number of people of Asian origin living in the western world presents great opportunities for partnerships with mission-minded people and ethnic Asian churches in many urban centres acquainted with Asian cultural and distinctive features. Many Asian Christians are familiar with the Confucian ethos, the Taoist worldview, Hindu and Buddhist values and approaches to reality. They can facilitate, help equip disciples of Jesus Christ as to how to reach out their Asian neighbours, and share the good news of God. Cities such as Vancouver in Canada and other cities all over the world with significant Asian populations could greatly benefit from such intentional sharing of resources, training and partnerships. Initiatives and partnerships, for example, at the Asian Center for Missions (ACM), itself in partnership with a significant number of churches, schools and agencies, are a promising trend. Asians leaving to serve as missionaries in other Asian countries is good news for mission, creating new movements that make a real difference.<sup>28</sup>

#### 4. RECENT CREATIVE INTER-CHURCH INITIATIVES AND OPPORTUNITIES

##### a. The Global Christian Forum

The Global Christian Forum (GCF) is a vision whose aim is to bring together into intentional, ongoing fellowship at a global level the main 'families' of the Christian community – Orthodox, historic Protestant, Evangelical/Pentecostal, and Catholic. Its primary goal has been to bring all churches to the table of relationship with one another, more specifically relating those who have been engaged in the ecumenical movement with those who have not joined the WCC. The GCF provides a space where partnerships and alliances for common witness for the sake of Christ may develop. The GCF opens and extends its hands to the whole Christian body.

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result, there is unintended duplication and competition among groups and individual missionaries. Unless serious and careful attention is given, there could be undesirable consequences in the near future. As individual local churches function independently from other organizations or missionaries, they tend to lack pre-field orientation, missionary care and educational programs for missionary children.'

<sup>27</sup> Chin Do Kham, 'Partnership Issues and Challenges in Asian Mission', 50.

<sup>28</sup> The 1,000 missionary movements initiated by Dr Jairong Lee from Korea is one remarkable example.

One of its projects is to convene an international consultation on discrimination, persecution and martyrdom; this will be of great service for partnership of various Christian faith traditions sharing in the suffering of the Lord Jesus Christ.

#### b. Migration and Intercultural Partnership

The current age of communication offers constant interactions between cultures from everywhere in the whole world. The concept of mission from the West to the rest of the world has been replaced by the new paradigm of mission from everywhere to everywhere. The Rev. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson has elaborated on this new reality prompted by world migration.<sup>29</sup> The global face of Christianity necessitates a new level of partnership whereby intercultural collaboration for the sake of Christ is necessary. There is an unprecedented need for cross-cultural partnership of churches from various backgrounds and geographical regions. Korean churches, African or Caribbean churches, to name some, cannot function as islands or ghettos detached from their environment in the western world or the northern hemisphere.

In a divided and fragmented world where nationalism, tribalism, and ethno-centrism are tenaciously stubborn, it is not easy to cross over. But Christians are given a different mandate. Going to the other side, to people of different cultures and backgrounds, represents a challenge, but Christian allegiance to God makes us always see humanity as one race, one family:

Christ tears away the wall of partition, the self-love, the dividing prejudice of nationality, and teaches a love for all the human family. He lifts men from the narrow circle that their selfishness prescribes. He abolishes all territorial lines and artificial distinctions of society. He makes no difference between neighbours and strangers, friends and enemies. He teaches us to look upon every needy soul as our neighbour and the world as our field.<sup>30</sup>

The justification and need for cultural partnership are based on the incarnation of God for the transformation of the world. The church takes upon itself cultural flesh in every context in order to reverse the works of death and infuse the life of God, just as Jesus Christ did. He came so that people may have life and have it abundantly (John 10).

The planting of the church in every human soil need not dilute the wholeness, purity and transforming power of the good news of God.

Partnership in mission is based on a deep commitment to uphold every person's dignity. This dignity is the foundation of human rights. But for

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<sup>29</sup> Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, *From Times Square to Timbuktu* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013).

<sup>30</sup> Ellen G White, *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessings* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1955), 42.

Christians this dignity itself is grounded on the fact that humans are created in the image of God.

Creative approaches to mission cannot bypass meeting people where they are, engaging them as they wrestle with common challenges that are part of the human condition. In this process of sharing the gospel, it makes sense to begin using common values that are important to all. An overlapping consensus such as the concept of dignity is certainly one of the best platforms to collaborate with people of various philosophical and religious backgrounds.

The world of international organizations, such as the United Nations, will greatly benefit if representatives of various churches would consult and agree on common initiatives to better our world and impact people with the vital contributions of the faith of Jesus Christ. This is already happening. Christians rallied to support the Millennium Development Goals and the sustainable development goals.

This endeavour to work together is in itself a testimony to the mission of Jesus Christ, the God who came to unite the family of humans. Christian unity is the best argument for the Christian faith.

Christians of all streams of world Christianity present on campuses around the world are making an enormous difference in keeping Christ visible in the public space. Multiplying such partnerships of Christians in places where peoples of all nations mingle, in international forums, in universities and college campuses, with the needed intentionality and passionate commitment would greatly contribute to furthering the mission of Jesus Christ.

Beyond physical places, there are also new creative initiatives using information technologies to make a difference in the world. Such venues also serve the mission of Christ. Global Media Outreach is a leading pioneer in Internet evangelism and discipleship. It has a significant number of online missionaries making disciples of people of all the nations (9,000 missionaries active in 100 countries in the world). Internet Outreach can enter the world of partnership as an efficient vehicle for a witness to all nations.<sup>31</sup>

##### 5. PARTNERSHIP IN THE DIGITAL AGE: NEW INITIATIVES FOR MISSION

From the dawn of Christianity in the Roman Empire, Christians have done and continue to do much good, to make the world a better place for countless people. Christianity from its inception has been humanitarian. *Caritas Internationalis*, the umbrella organization for 165 Roman Catholic relief, development and social entities, which operates in more than 200 countries and territories, is an example of the work of solidarity with people whose circumstances are unfortunate: the poor, the vulnerable and

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<sup>31</sup> [www.globalmediaoutreach.com](http://www.globalmediaoutreach.com)

oppressed, the strangers and disfranchised. It is one of the world's largest humanitarian networks.<sup>32</sup>

The contemporary initiative of the Methodists concerning InfoPoverty among many other denominational and cross-denominational initiatives to defeat poverty, for example, is making a major difference in the world. They collaborate with the UN system and programmes to improve the lives of millions around the world. Christians of all traditions partner in the realm of humanitarian work.<sup>33</sup>

It would go beyond the scope of this article to document centuries of selfless involvement of Catholics, Orthodox, and people of all streams of world Christianity, to affirm human dignity in caring for people stricken by the plight of poverty, disease or other predicaments. Suffice it to say that the need for Christian partnership integrates and goes beyond socio-economic concerns. Partnership among Christian churches has at its core the mission of spreading the fragrance of Jesus Christ, the knowledge of his person, into all parts of the world (2 Corinthians 2:14-15). It means responding to the call of Jesus Christ to be witnesses of his resurrection.

In God's providence, dedicated Christians across denominations have provided enormous and valuable resources to foster partnership for effective mission endeavours. Tools have served well the global Christian community fostering mission awareness for the benefit of all Christian communities. Operation World and the 'Future of Global Church: History, Trends and Possibilities'<sup>34</sup> are among such tools that have benefited communities across the Christian world. They are themselves the results of partnerships whereby various gifts have produced valuable empowerments of Christians to be effective witnesses. Christians have worked together to collect information and indicate prayer needs where there are challenges for the gospel to be effectively shared.

The interconnectedness of people everywhere in the world provides new opportunities for significant partnership for outreach. This new reality necessitates creative partnerships, intercultural and cross-cultural partnerships whereby relationships between agencies from countries in the global North, instead of creating dependency among entities in countries in the global South, overcome the pitfalls of patronizing agendas dictated by affluence in resources. True partnership creates trust.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> [www.caritas.org](http://www.caritas.org)

<sup>33</sup> [www.occam.org](http://www.occam.org) and <http://unsdn.org/?tag=infopoverty-world-conference> (United Nations Social Development Network).

<sup>34</sup> Patrick Johnstone: *The Future of the Global Church: History, Trends and Possibilities* (IVP/Authentic Media/GMI, 2014).

<sup>35</sup> Mark Oxbrow, in his article 'Missional Global Partnerships', in *Lausanne World Pulse* (see footnote 276 above for details of publisher) draws attention to the types of challenges partnerships have to overcome, and mentions the following:

- Lack of trust between leaders. Trust needs to be built up over extended periods of time with a focus on prayer, fellowship, and personal (not ministry)

With this new reality on a global scale, communication has reached a new level that requires adjusting the means for partnership in mission. The web flourishes with organizations focused on fostering partnership among Christians.

#### VISIONSYNERGY

VisionSynergy is one of them. Their objective is to help Christian organizations work together for maximum impact by developing and strengthening strategic ministry networks and partnerships in critical areas of world mission. Their stated goal is ‘to act as a catalyst, coach, and consultant – providing advisory services for numerous multi-lateral networks and partnerships of Christian mission organizations’. They aim at empowering these groups to accomplish together what they could never do alone as they seek to advance the Gospel in every part of the world where Christ is not yet known.

They also provide a variety of tools and training to equip collaborative leaders both within the specific networks we serve and in the broader Christian community.

They make the case that ‘collaboration is the best single strategy’. They are building what may turn out to be a landmark tool for Christian mission. Committed to be in tune with our times, they are launching a community site dedicated to empowering leaders of missional networks, partnerships and other collaborative initiatives.

They postulate, ‘Collaborative leaders see the world differently. They see networks and synergies, not organizations and limitations. Collaborative leadership is not just about effective teamwork. It is about working across boundaries – across ministries, agencies and organizations – to accomplish goals, solve problems and realize dreams beyond the capacity of any individual.’<sup>36</sup>

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relationships.

- Misunderstandings over resources, principally money. Resources can easily be used as a form of power, and power without vulnerability is divisive.
- Different cultural styles of leadership. We have had to learn how to appreciate different styles of leadership, and be brave enough to honestly (and humbly) critique each other.
- Different understandings of accountability. Some think of accountability in terms of finances, others in terms of personal relationships or the use of time, while still others focus first on spiritual accountability. Which takes priority?
- Inertia. It is much easier (we think!) to go on doing things alone, exactly as we always did. But we need to look around. Do multinational companies act alone? Do academics not collaborate on global research projects? And what about political activists? Does God act alone?

<sup>36</sup> See [powerofconnect.net](http://powerofconnect.net)

## FAITH2SHARE

Faith2Share is an experiment in doing mission in a new way, a corrective of the not-so-glorious track record of collaboration of Christian churches in doing mission together. According to Mark Oxbrow, ‘it sits on the cutting edge of many of the more difficult issues surrounding effective collaboration in mission.’<sup>37</sup>

Faith2Share movements understand God’s mission to be concerned with all creation. They believe that ‘God seeks to address every human need and is also concerned about the renewal of the whole creation. Whether a child is hungry, a man seeks spiritual reality or a woman cries out for justice, God’s mission is to that person’.

One of the vital understandings of mission embraced by Christians engaged with Faith2Share is the concept that partnership among Christians is purposed to be holistic in nature, attending to human needs whether physical, mental, emotional, social or spiritual. A fitting reminder of the holistic nature of Christian mission is captured in the Anglican Communion’s statement of what is called the Five Marks of Mission, namely:

1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom.
2. To teach, baptize and nurture new believers.
3. To respond to human need by loving service.
4. To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind, and to pursue peace and reconciliation.
5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth.<sup>38</sup>

Partnership in mission is not a mere human endeavour. It is primarily God using his whole body, the church, to fulfil his purposes. This God Mission takes on tangible forms in the collaboration of Christians of various denominations, faith traditions and experiences to testify to the Lordship of Jesus Christ

## 6. CONCLUSION

God has united members of Christ’s body with the purpose of revealing Jesus to the world. That in itself is a miracle. To consolidate the gift of this unity, Christians of all streams of world Christianity are called to partner with God and with one another to present Christ in creative ways suited to address the issues of our day.

Unity of the churches in mission for the sake of uplifting Jesus Christ before the world seems to find consensus among Christians of various denominations. The miracle of partnership in mission has already a solid

<sup>37</sup> See Mark Oxbrow, ‘Missional Global Partnerships’.

<sup>38</sup> These Five Marks of Mission were first set out in *Bonds of Affection*, 1984, ACC-6, 49 – and later in *Mission in a Broken World*, 1990, ACC-8, 101.

foundation among historic and more recent denominations. The potential for witnessing to make Jesus Christ known is providential. God oversees his mission in which Christ's body, the church, participates. Christians join the Father and the Holy Spirit to show the world the Son in whom all of God's will is demonstrated. The resources God has spread among Christian denominations have the potential to turn the world upside down for its salvation, as when the early Christians united at Pentecost for the sake of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Partnership for mission for the sake of Jesus Christ is an answer to the Lord's Prayer and a mandate to his whole body. Empowered by God's Holy Spirit, Christians are a force for the good of the world.

Christians partner in humanitarian work to alleviate suffering and improve their neighbours' lives. They do more; they partner to make this world more humane. Still more, they point all others to the one they believe is the human *par excellence*, the one who became 'the Son of Man' in order to show us how to be human. He indeed came to restore the image of God in all who trust in his person, values and Kingdom.

Paraphrasing the description of the UN office for partnerships, we pray that global Christian organizations continue to function as gateways for partnerships promoting new collaborations and alliances in the furtherance of God's mission of restoration, healing, peace-building and good news sharing until the blessed hope of Jesus' coming becomes a reality. Meanwhile our communication age provides us with opportunities to connect in unprecedented ways, making gospel sharing, capacity building, cross-cultural learning, thinking together, collaborative leadership and common witnessing for the sake of the total healing of our world an experience in which all Christians are called to participate. God's mission deserves our best. He gave his best in his Son, Jesus Christ.

# CHURCH INITIATIVES

## CO-OPERATION AND THE PROMOTION OF UNITY: AN ORTHODOX PERSPECTIVE<sup>1</sup>

Viorel Ionita

### Edinburgh and the Orthodox

The Orthodox Churches were not present at Edinburgh in 1910, first of all because of the fact that in the beginning of the twentieth century there were no Orthodox missionary councils at work. On the other hand, almost all Orthodox Churches were confronted at that time with big problems which prevented them from being actively involved in international gatherings. The report of Commission Eight mentioned a correspondence with Archbishop Nicolai of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Tokyo. Archbishop Nicolai reported: 'I am in friendly; more than that, there are brotherly relations with all the missionaries of other sections known to me, and so are there between our Christians with their Christians. So shall we be from our part always, because we know that the first duty of us Christians is to cultivate Christian love to all men, and particularly to our brothers in Christ. But, nevertheless, there is no real and full unity between us and other sections; more than that, we are far from such unity because we are divided in Christian doctrine.'<sup>2</sup>

The Russian Archbishop expressed a position that is still valid for the Orthodox understanding of co-operation and unity in mission. Archbishop Nicolai pointed out the close relationship between the unity of the Church and unity in mission. Actually, this Archbishop appears to have been quite progressive in his attitude towards co-operation with other missionary groups in the same context. Motivated by Christian love, he considered that he should have a brotherly openness towards his fellow Christians, but felt constrained to underline that the unity that might exist between them is not

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<sup>1</sup> This article was published in David A. Kerr and Kenneth R. Ross (eds), *Edinburgh 2010: Mission Then and Now* (Oxford: Regnum 2009). It is published here in a slightly shortened form and with the permission of the author, the editors and the publisher.

<sup>2</sup> *World Missionary Conference, 1910, Co-operation and the Promotion of Unity, Report of Commission VIII*, Edinburgh and London: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier; and New York, Chicago and Toronto: Fleming H. Revell, 1910, 4.

a full unity, because full unity in mission would imply also full unity of the respective churches, which was not the case.

Coming back to the report of Commission Eight, we should point out that some questions dealt with in this report challenge us even today. Speaking about 'Comity', the second chapter of this report refers to the very difficult issue of 'Delimitation of territory'. In this respect, the report underlined that, 'Few would refuse to accept as an abstract principle the view that it is undesirable to press in where others are working when neglected fields are calling for labourers.'<sup>3</sup> It also indicated: 'The avoidance of overlapping and interference with the work of others is also demanded by the spirit of Christian charity, which should be pre-eminently manifested in the work of Christian missions.'<sup>4</sup> If this principle had been respected everywhere, many conflicts would have been avoided; such as the difficult debate around the concept of 'canonical territory', to which the Russian Orthodox Church has made reference during the last decades.

The report also referred to obstacles on the way to co-operation and unity in mission, 'which are grounded in differences of doctrine or ecclesiastical polity' and which 'are, perhaps, harder to overcome'.<sup>5</sup> It argued that divisions between the churches 'weaken their testimony and confuse the total impression made by Christianity on the minds of the non-Christian people'.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, the divisions between the churches had not been created by the situation in the mission field, but they did affect the mission field. Consequently, one of the most significant contributions of the report from 1910 to the ecumenical movement as a whole was the reference to the close relationship between unity in mission and the unity of the Church. The issue of the unity of the Church had been a concern for the divided churches for a long period of time. But in 1910, more than ever before, the World Mission Conference pointed out the negative impact of this division for the mission of the churches at a world level.

The concern of Orthodox theologians over the close link between the doctrinal differences and the mission of the churches in the world of today was best addressed by Metropolitan Ignatios Hazim, the current Patriarch of Antioch, in his speech at the fourth General Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Uppsala, in 1968, on the theme *Behold, I Make all Things New*. In his presentation, which was probably one of the most prophetic addresses ever delivered at a WCC Assembly, the then Metropolitan Ignatios approached inter-church relations from an eschatological perspective, and asked whether the best way of solving the doctrinal dispute, which is still preventing full communion, would not be 'to turn together towards the Coming Lord?' He continued, 'There is no programmatic sentimentalism in this, but rather that same evidence of faith,

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<sup>3</sup> *Co-operation and the Promotion of Unity*, 12.

<sup>4</sup> *Co-operation and the Promotion of Unity*, 13.

<sup>5</sup> *Co-operation and the Promotion of Unity*, 50.

<sup>6</sup> *Co-operation and the Promotion of Unity*, 9.

which would enable us to re-centre everything in the heart of the Mystery. The dialogue between the churches has perhaps remained at the stage of the time before Isaiah 43:18, when one still considered “the things of old”. But it is certain that the Lord is “doing a new thing”; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?”<sup>7</sup>

The report from 1910 also makes references to some ‘Joint Actions’ in mission, which were very relevant for the Orthodox Churches during the twentieth century. We would like to underline two of these joint actions, namely, the translation and publication of the Bible and co-operation in philanthropy. On the first issue, the report emphasizes that ‘there is no sphere of missionary work in which the value of co-operation has been tested and appreciated more than in the translation, publication and distribution of the Word of God; and not least among the fruits of this work must be reckoned the friendships which have been formed between men separated ecclesiastically and diverse in nationality but called to work around the same translation board’.<sup>8</sup>

One of the most urgent missionary needs within the Romanian Orthodox Church during the time of oppression from the Communist regime (1945-89) was the publication of the Bible and liturgical books. With the support of the United Bible Societies the patriarch Justinian (1948-77) published two editions of the Bible, in 1968 and 1975, and several editions of the New Testament. The distribution of the Holy Scripture during that period of time proved to be one of the most fruitful missionary actions. This is only one out of many examples of co-operation between the Orthodox Churches and missions or the Bible Societies.

Finally, another aspect underlined by the report of 1910, which has been relevant for the co-operation in mission from an Orthodox perspective, is, as the report formulated it, the ‘work of philanthropy and Benefice’. The report stated that ‘in time of famine, flood, earthquake, and fire, Christian men [*sic*] do not discuss whether they should co-operate, but simply do so as a matter of course. By the organisation of relief funds and the judicious disbursement of monies raised, countless thousands have been saved from suffering and death’.<sup>9</sup> The co-operation between churches of different confessional traditions, when facing catastrophic situations around the world, did bring the churches nearer and often helped them address theological differences from a new perspective. Orthodox theology underlined repeatedly during the last decades that *diakonia*, or service to fellow human beings, is an integral part of the mission of the church in the world of today, and therefore co-operation in *diakonia* is co-operation in mission.

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<sup>7</sup> Constantin G. Patelos (ed), *The Orthodox Church in the Ecumenical Movement: Documents and Statements 1902-1975* (Geneva: WCC, 1978), 264.

<sup>8</sup> *Co-operation and the Promotion of Unity*, 56.

<sup>9</sup> *Co-operation and the Promotion of Unity*, 79.

Although the Commission Eight report did not have a direct impact on Orthodox mission, it opened up a complex process of reflection about mission in the world today, which would in due course include a specific Orthodox contribution. Already the Encyclical Letter of the Ecumenical Patriarchate from January 1920, which constitutes a Magna Carta for Orthodox involvement in the ecumenical movement, strongly suggested a ‘wholehearted mutual assistance for the churches in their endeavours for religious advancement, charity and so on’.<sup>10</sup>

### The Orthodox Understanding of Mission

His Beatitude Anastasios, Archbishop of Tirana and All Albania, one of the most representative Orthodox theologians in respect of the missionary renewal during the last century, considered that when talking about Orthodox mission, the first thing to do was ‘to state that by this word we mean witness to the living trinitarian God, who calls all to salvation and binds human beings together in the church, who otherwise would not belong to it or who have lost their ties with it’.<sup>11</sup> In this respect, ‘for every local church, mission is “inward” or “internal”, when it takes place within its geographical, linguistic and cultural bounds, and “outward” or “external” when it reaches beyond these bounds to other nations and lands’.<sup>12</sup>

The very purpose of mission is to build up the communion with God and with one another through Christ in the Holy Spirit’.<sup>13</sup> According to this view, mission is not just the export of new religious doctrine, but bearing witness to the love of God for the whole world, love which was revealed in Christ, communicated by the Holy Spirit, and present in the hearts of those who practise his commands. Therefore we should not forget that ‘the famous text on mission – “go and make disciples from all nations ...” (Matthew 28:19) – has no complete meaning without the experience of what is said in the following verse, “I will be with you always, even until the close of ages.” In other words, those who preach Christ and make disciples of Christ must themselves experience the presence of Christ or of his Spirit in them.’<sup>14</sup>

Following Jesus Christ or living in Christ means being a member of the body of Christ, which means being a member of the Church. Strictly speaking, for the Orthodox, the Church doesn’t have her own mission, but

<sup>10</sup> Patelos, *The Orthodox Church in the Ecumenical Movement*, 42.

<sup>11</sup> Anastasios of Androussa, ‘Orthodox Mission: Past, Present, Future’, in George Lemopoulos (ed), *Your Will be Done: Orthodoxy in Mission* (Geneva: WCC, 1989), 63.

<sup>12</sup> Anastasios, ‘Orthodox Mission’, 64.

<sup>13</sup> Daniel Ciobotea, *Confessing the Truth in Love: Orthodox Perspectives on Life, Mission and Unity* (Iasi, Romania: Trinitas, 2001), 136.

<sup>14</sup> Ciobotea, *Confessing the Truth in Love*, 137.

she participates in God's mission. 'The very being of the Church is missionary; the Church is, indeed, a missionary event. Therefore, mission is not one of the "functions" of the Church, but the life of the Church that goes beyond itself to embrace the whole of humanity and the whole creation. The mission of the Church is not the expansion of the Church, but the establishment of the kingdom of God. Unity and mission must be understood in the perspective of the kingdom. They are for the kingdom and, as such, they are dynamically interrelated.'<sup>15</sup>

Mission is, for the Orthodox, exclusively a task of the Church. The Church is both the instrument and the purpose of mission. The real purpose of mission is to bring people to Christ and to help them grow into the body of Christ, which is the Church. The preaching of the gospel alone, without bringing new people into the body of Christ, is not enough. The purpose of mission is not simply to bring new people into the Church, but also to continue to accompany them throughout their whole life. The pastoral task of the Church is therefore an integral part of her mission. Finally, mission is the task of the whole Church, both of ordained and lay people, of men and women, of old and young believers.

The Orthodox understanding of mission could be summarized by the following four points: 1. *Kerygma*, or the proclamation of the Gospel; 2. *Leitourgia*, as public service for the praise of God; 3) *Marturia*, or witness to the faith as a lifestyle; and 4) *Diakonia*, or service to one's neighbour, or service to the whole world. Orthodox theology is developing its mission, which is the mission of God in this world, following without break the tradition of the early church. Such tradition, which in this context is the Holy Tradition and should not be confused with church tradition or traditions, is not a dead letter, a collection of dogmas and practices of the past. This Tradition is for the Orthodox the history of salvation. It is the experience of the Holy Spirit in the history, who constantly illuminates men and women to become sons and daughters of God the Father, in Jesus Christ, through the grace of the Holy Spirit. Through this Tradition, the Orthodox Church of today stays in an unbroken continuity with the Apostles.

### **Orthodox Contributions to the Ecumenical Approach of Mission**

When the International Missionary Council (IMC) became an affiliated body of the WCC, at the third WCC General Assembly in New Delhi, India, the Orthodox Churches opposed this integration. They did so, first of all, for ecclesiological reasons. They did not consider the IMC to be a church. It therefore could not be a full member of a 'fellowship of churches'. Secondly, the Orthodox considered that they were the victims of

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<sup>15</sup> Aram Keshishian, *Orthodox Perspectives on Mission* (Oxford: Regnum, 1992), 98.

proselytism exercised by churches or missionary agencies in membership with the IMC. However, in 1961 a large group of Orthodox Churches became members of the WCC as well, and this fact opened up new perspectives for the co-operation of the Orthodox Churches with other churches, including work in mission and evangelism.

One of the most important actions, which improved the co-operation of the Commission for World Mission & Evangelism with the Orthodox Churches, was the creation, in 1970, of an executive position on Orthodox Mission Studies and Relations within the WCC. The first Orthodox theologian appointed to this position was the current Archbishop Anastasios of Tirana and All Albania, followed by Fr Dr Ion Bria, Mr George Lemopoulos and Fr Dr Ioan Sauca. Through this desk, several consultations have been organized, much material about the Orthodox understanding of mission has been published, and a network of Orthodox theologians committed to mission has been established. In the course of these discussions, a distinctive Orthodox perspective has been developed on a number of key topics.

### *Mission in relation to other religions*

For Orthodox theology, the confrontation with other religions has been a painful one.<sup>16</sup> The starting-point of an Orthodox theological approach for relationships with other religions, or for a possible Orthodox theology of religions, is a Christological approach. According to this approach, the Logos (Word) of God inspired, already before his Incarnation, all the good ideas in the different Holy Scriptures, not only in the Old Testament, but also in the holy scriptures of the East, or even in ancient Greek philosophy. Together with the Church Fathers from the Alexandrian tradition (like Clement of Alexandria or Origen), the Old Testament is not the unique Gospel-type scripture; 'it is rather the prototype of all other Holy Scriptures.'<sup>17</sup>

Metropolitan George Khodre of Mount Lebanon argues:

... God has also revealed Himself in these Scriptures. Our God is a hidden God. It does not befit us to define objectively the intensity of the Divine Presence in the Abrahamic Bible, for instance, but rather simply to seek in it the traces of Christ who is eternal Logos, and whose manifestation before the Incarnation and outside the historical heritage of the Incarnation is possible. These many modes of God's revelation can only be read in the light of the Gospel. They all point to the mercy and meekness of the Divine Logos

<sup>16</sup> George Khodre, 'The Church as the Privileged Witness of God', in Ion Bria (ed), *Martyria/ Mission: The Witness of the Orthodox Church Today* (Geneva: WCC, 1980), 32.

<sup>17</sup> Khodre, 'The Church as the Privileged Witness of God', 33.

manifesting itself, not only within a sacred historical tradition but even in a certain manner outside this tradition where the veil is thicker.<sup>18</sup>

This veil will be taken away from the minds of people only by turning to Christ (2 Corinthians 3:16). In other words, other religions should not be simply rejected as wrong, but considered in the perspective of their relationship with the Logos of Christ. Orthodox Christians came to this view, not simply through an abstract theological, or even philosophical, reflection, but rather through their long experience living next to or among people of other religions.

Alongside this view, the Middle East Council of Churches, which include not only Orthodox Christians but also Christians of other confessions, declared at its fourth General Assembly that, if the Christian faith is lived authentically, then Christians have the responsibility to struggle for the rights, not simply for a particular group, but also for the dignity of each and, above all, for the integrity of those who are victims of injustice. 'This responsibility of all people in every society, regardless of colour, race or creed, becomes a spiritual dimension, a fidelity to Christ, who calls us to assume on behalf of everybody all true human solidarity.'<sup>19</sup> In this way, Orthodox believers learned to approach other religions, not simply from an abstract theoretical point of view, but from their spirituality. This approach could be a specific Orthodox contribution to the theology of religions, or even to the very delicate issue of Christian mission among other religions.

### *The missionary tasks of the local community*

Mission is, first of all, the task of the whole church, and is best expressed through the local community. The issue of the missionary task of the local community was addressed at the consultation organized by the WCC with representatives from the Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Churches (in Neapolis, Greece, 16-24 April 1988). This consultation constituted a preparatory meeting for the World Conference for Mission and Evangelism that was then organized at San Antonio, USA, in 1989 under the theme *Your Will be Done*. According to the Neapolis statement, the mission of the local community is to make it possible for everyone to have the opportunity 'to know Christ, to live in him and witness to him by word and deed'.<sup>20</sup> In this respect, the first missionary task of the local community refers to the 'internal' mission, which is the major pastoral task of every church. But when the Eucharistic assembly experiences the truth of the resurrected Lord, 'the necessity to share the joy of the resurrection with all people is a

<sup>18</sup> Khodre, 'The Church as the Privileged Witness of God', 33-34.

<sup>19</sup> George Lemopoulos (ed), *Your Will be Done: Orthodoxy in Mission* (Geneva: WCC, 1989), 97.

<sup>20</sup> Lemopoulos, *Your Will be Done*, 55.

natural consequence'.<sup>21</sup> In this case, the mission of the local community becomes an external mission, which 'includes even those who are baptized, yet ignorant of the calling and election they have received through baptism'.<sup>22</sup>

The same statement was formulated as a practical recommendation to the Orthodox Churches, namely, that it is essential to develop contemporary means to help all baptized believers to 'return to the fellowship of the church. The church's mission also calls us to the task of peacemaking, reconciling and defending justice for everyone, especially in contexts where the people of God suffer from injustice, oppression and war. When the Eucharistic assembly does not engage in such outreach, it fails to realise its missionary responsibility'.<sup>23</sup>

### *Liturgy after the liturgy*

The phrase 'liturgy after the liturgy' was formulated at the consultation organized by the WCC with Orthodox participants on *Confessing Christ through the Liturgical Life of the Church Today* (Etchmiadzin, Armenia, 1975). In that context, Archbishop Anastasios of Tirana and All Albania, then a professor at the University of Athens, wrote that each of the faithful 'is called upon to continue a personal "liturgy" on the secret altar of his own heart, to realize a living proclamation of the good news "for the sake of the whole world". Without this continuation the liturgy remains incomplete'.<sup>24</sup>

The late Fr Ion Bria, who was responsible for the most substantial contribution to the whole issue of Orthodox mission and the WCC, further developed the concept of 'liturgy after the liturgy', so that this expression has been more and more identified with his name. Bria underlined that 'in ensuing ecumenical discussions other dimensions of "the liturgy after the liturgy" have been discovered. The church's liturgical and diaconal functions are connected, for liturgy reshapes the social life of Christians with a new emphasis on the sharing of bread, on the healing of brokenness, on reconciliation and on justice in the human community. The concept has also come to be associated with other facets of the life of the church, including education, evangelisation, concern for creation, spirituality and social ethics'.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Lemopoulos, *Your Will be Done*, 55.

<sup>22</sup> Lemopoulos, *Your Will be Done*, 55.

<sup>23</sup> Lemopoulos, *Your Will be Done*, 55.

<sup>24</sup> Ion Bria, *Liturgy after the Liturgy: Mission and Witness from an Orthodox Perspective* (Geneva: WCC, 1996), 20.

<sup>25</sup> Bria, *Liturgy after the Liturgy*, 21.

*Mission and unity*

The issue of the mission and unity, or of mission in unity, was best addressed at the above-mentioned Neapolis consultation. In the final report of this consultation, a special section was dedicated to the issue of ‘Mission and Unity’. In this section, the following aspects are addressed: 1) Ecclesiological perspectives; 2) Common witness; 3) Proselytism; and 4) Ecumenical vision. From an ecclesiological perspective, the Church, as the presence of the Kingdom of God in the world, is called to manifest the trinitarian communion and love ‘within its fold and towards the world. The church’s mission is the expression of this unity and love’.<sup>26</sup> In other words, the unity of the Church is based in the unity of the Holy Trinity, and from this unity results also unity in mission, which is nothing other than the unity of the Church.

In relation to the issue of common witness, the consultation from Neapolis recommended some concrete actions for co-operation between all Orthodox Churches as well as for the co-operation of the Orthodox Churches with other churches. ‘Common witness’ is a concrete expression of the unity in mission. In regard to the topic of proselytism, it was noted that, from the Orthodox perspective, proselytism is a most difficult obstacle on the way towards unity in mission. Finally, the question of ecumenical vision was discussed. The Neapolis statement refers to the fact that one impetus for the modern vision ‘was originally inspired by the committed search for a common witness to the good news of salvation. It still remains the primary objective of our ecumenical involvement – to offer common witness in love to the power of Christ, crucified and risen, so that those who are caught up in this world of division, conflict and death may believe and be transfigured’.<sup>27</sup>

*The issue of proselytism*

The representatives of the Orthodox Churches in the ecumenical movement have complained, from the beginning, about the fact that missionary groups from other churches are often stealing believers from Orthodox Churches. The statement of the consultation from Neapolis, mentioned above, addressed the issue of proselytism in connection with the question of unity in mission. In this respect, the ‘proselytism, along with the actual disunity among the churches, creates major obstacles for our common witness’.<sup>28</sup>

The statement recommended that ‘all proselytism by any church should be condemned, and all antagonism and unhealthy competition in mission work should be avoided, as constituting a distorted form of mission’.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Lemopoulos, *Your Will Be Done*, 47.

<sup>27</sup> Lemopoulos, *Your Will Be Done*, 51.

<sup>28</sup> Lemopoulos, *Your Will Be Done*, 51.

<sup>29</sup> Lemopoulos, *Your Will Be Done*, 51.

When these remarks were first made public, they encountered heavy criticism for contradicting religious freedom. Today such remarks are commonplace in ecumenical circles. The Orthodox Churches were called, through the Neapolis statement, ‘to continue efforts to persuade the churches and agencies involved in proselytism not to engage in dubious missionary activities detrimental to God’s will for unity, and to seek the path of true Christian charity and unity’.<sup>30</sup>

### *The eucharist and mission*

Through mission, the Church makes people permanently aware of God’s saving presence and action in the world, and invites them to partake in a new life of communion with the Trinity. Because this new life develops through, and in relation to, God and other people, it decisively shapes their identity. Emmanuel Clapsis explains: ‘This kind of new life is sacramentally actualised and communally experienced in the Eucharist, which is the great mystery of our participation in the life of the Holy Trinity, the recapitulation of the entire history of salvation in Christ, and the foretaste of the Kingdom of God. In it, the faithful, by the invocation of the Holy Spirit, become the body of Christ, in which all respect one another for their unique gifts that the Holy Spirit has bestowed upon them for the building up of their unity, which is grounded in their baptism.’<sup>31</sup>

Clapsis further explains that the Church’s mission in relation to the Eucharist is to reveal:

... what we have already become in the risen Christ, and what we will fully experience in his kingdom. Thus Christians, as it becomes evident in the Eucharist, draw the being of their identity not from the values of this world but from the being of God and from that which we will be at the end of this age. Baptised Christians, therefore, in the Eucharist become a community of people who together unite prayer with action, praise with justice, adoration with transformation, and contemplation with social involvement. As they disperse in history for the proclamation of the Christian gospel, their missionary task is affected not only by their words but also by what they do and how they relate to each other as different members of the same Eucharistic body of Christ in the context of the fragmented world.<sup>32</sup>

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### *Mission and the whole creation*

The mission of the Church relates not only to human beings but also to the whole creation which ‘itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God’ (Romans

<sup>30</sup> Lemopoulos, *Your Will Be Done*, 51.

<sup>31</sup> Emmanuel Clapsis, ‘The Eucharist as Missionary Event in a Suffering World’, in Lemopoulos *Your Will be Done*, 165.

<sup>32</sup> Clapsis, ‘The Eucharist as Missionary Event’, 168.

8:21). Regarding the message of the Gospel as ‘God’s love and concern for the life of the whole world, the church cannot reduce its mission to the “salvation of souls”. The cosmic Christology implies that the mission of Christians in the world includes also their responsibility for the whole life of society and even their attitude towards nature and creation. In this sense, Christian mission includes the dimension of a global human responsibility for the life of the world’.<sup>33</sup>

It is well known that His All-Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew is very much committed to the protection of the environment, or to the integrity of the creation. For him, ‘all of our efforts to cultivate a sense of environmental responsibility and to promote genuine reconciliation among people comprise the immediate responsibility and initiative of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, which has served the truth of Christ for some seventeen centuries. Our Church regards the sensitisation of its faithful in relation to the natural environment, and in regard to the development of inter-religious dialogue, as a central and essential part of its ministry of solidarity and co-existence’.<sup>34</sup> The original privilege and calling as human beings lies, for the Ecumenical Patriarch, ‘precisely in our ability to appreciate the world as God’s gift to us. And *our original sin with regard to the natural environment lies – not in any legalistic transgression, but – precisely in our refusal to accept the world as a sacrament of communion with God and neighbour*’.<sup>35</sup>

### A New Resonance

Instead of a conclusion, we will simply quote His Beatitude Archbishop Christodoulos of Athens and of All Greece, who when addressing the latest World Conference on Mission and Evangelism, held for the first time in a majority Orthodox context (Athens, Greece, 9-16 May 2005), rightly appreciated ‘the holistic understanding of mission, being developed in recent years within WCC’. His Beatitude continued that his church ‘considered this conference important and providential among other world mission conferences of this kind, because of its new shift in mission paradigm, which makes it resonate with the theology, spirituality and contextual realities of our Orthodox Churches. We Orthodox do not only benefit from the ecumenical encounter and dialogue but also bring challenges coming from our long history of mission experience and our

<sup>33</sup> Ciobotea, *Confessing the Truth in Love*, 142.

<sup>34</sup> His All Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, ‘Address by His All Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew: Oslo Sophie Prize Ceremony’, The Sophie Foundation, 12 June 2002: [www.sofieprisen.no/Articles/48.html](http://www.sofieprisen.no/Articles/48.html) (accessed 20 August 2007).

<sup>35</sup> ‘Address by His All Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew: Oslo Sophie Prize Ceremony’.

mission theology with echoes from the time of the early Christian communities'.<sup>36</sup>

The World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910 opened up the process for a large ecumenical debate on the mission of the Church in the world of today. In preparing the centenary anniversary of this conference, we have to take into consideration the considerable ecumenical contribution towards a more comprehensive and more ecumenical approach of this issue during the last decades. In this perspective, the Orthodox contribution will appear as a specific one, which enriched in a special way the holistic ecumenical approach of mission and evangelism towards a common witness of all churches to faith in Jesus Christ; that the world may believe.

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<sup>36</sup> Archbishop Christodoulos of Athens and of All Greece, 'Conference on World Mission and Evangelism: Welcoming Address', World Council of Churches, 10 May 2005: [www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/other-meetings/mission-and-evangelism/plen-10-may-no-1-archbishop-christodoulos](http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/other-meetings/mission-and-evangelism/plen-10-may-no-1-archbishop-christodoulos).

# MISSION AS THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH IN ROMAN CATHOLIC CONTEXTS

Stephan Bevans, SVD

## Introduction

This chapter on the missionary nature of the church in Roman Catholic contexts is developed in several parts. Part I will survey the important thought of the Second Vatican Council on the church's nature as mission. Part II will reflect on the topic as it is developed in post-conciliar papal teaching, from Paul VI's 1975 *Evangelii Nuntiandi* to Pope Francis's 2013 *Evangelii Gaudium*. A third part will focus on the missionary ecclesiology of two Conferences of Roman Catholic Bishops – the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) and the Conference of Latin American Bishops (CELAM), and a final, fourth part will briefly examine representative ecclesiological developments of Roman Catholic theologians from 1965, immediately after Vatican II, until the present day. The missionary nature of the church is a reality that has not always been recognized in Catholic ecclesiological thinking. Nevertheless it is one that has begun to emerge with greater clarity in today's church, especially as the church has begun to realize that Christians are called to be, in the words of Pope Francis, 'missionary disciples'.<sup>1</sup>

## Mission as the Nature of the Church at the Second Vatican Council

Although the practice of mission was flourishing in Roman Catholic contexts in 1910 at the time of the Edinburgh Conference, there was little or no awareness among Catholics of the church's essential missionary nature. Roman Catholic ecclesiology at that time was a product of reaction to the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century, a certain centralization of papal and Roman curial power in the aftermath of the Council of Trent (1545-63), and a strong development of the institutional understanding of the church over against the politics and culture of the nineteenth century that was solidified at the First Vatican Council in 1870, and the reaction to 'Modernism' about 1907. The church, in official documents and approved textbooks of the time, saw itself as a 'perfect

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<sup>1</sup> Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (EG): [www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/francesco/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20131124\\_evangelii-gaudium\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/francesco/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium_en.html), 119-21.

society', essentially monarchical and hierarchical.<sup>2</sup> Ecclesiology, in the famous words of the great twentieth-century French ecclesiologist Yves Congar, was 'hierarchology'.<sup>3</sup>

The years from 1919 to 1959 saw the publication of five 'Mission Encyclicals' published by Popes Benedict XV, Pius XI, Pius XII and John XXIII.<sup>4</sup> These are important documents for understanding the development of missionary thinking in the Catholic Church, particularly in terms of appreciating the values of local cultures and the call for the establishment of an indigenous clergy. One might make the argument that these encyclicals presaged the Council's statement that the 'church is missionary by its very nature'.<sup>5</sup> However, it might be more exact to conclude that although mission was of supreme importance in the church, for its task was to establish or 'plant' the visible church with its hierarchy in all parts of the world, it was not yet seen as constitutive of the church itself.<sup>6</sup> Such a perspective would depend on the Council's more Biblical, patristic, and trinitarian perspective of ecclesiology, developed, in part at least, as a result of the church's growing ecumenical openness throughout the first half of the twentieth century. Yves Congar intimates, for example, that the pivotal statement on the church's missionary nature quoted above – that 'the pilgrim church is missionary by its very nature, since it is from the mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit that it draws its origin, in accordance with the decree of God the Father' (AG 2) – is influenced as much by the *Missio Dei* theology of Willingen as it is by more traditional Catholic theology.<sup>7</sup>

This powerful statement of the church's missionary nature as rooted in the Trinity appears in one of the last documents to be approved by the

<sup>2</sup> See Michael A. Fahey, 'Church', in Francis Schüssler Fiorenza and John Galvin (eds), *Systematic Theology: Roman Catholic Perspectives*, Volume 2 (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1991), 32. See also Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church* (New York: Doubleday Image Books, 1978), 39-50, and Yves Congar, *Lay People in the Church* (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1957), 36-48.

<sup>3</sup> Yves Congar, *Lay People in the Church*, 39.

<sup>4</sup> These encyclicals were *Maximum Illud* (1919, Benedict XV), *Rerum Ecclesiae* (1926, Pius XI), *Evangelii Praecones* (Pius XII, 1951), *Fidei Donum* (1957, Pius XII), and *Princeps Pastorum* (John XXIII, 1959). See also James Kroeger, MM, 'Papal Mission Wisdom: Five Mission Encyclicals 1919-1959', in Stephen B. Bevans (ed), *A Century of Catholic Mission* (Oxford: Regnum, 2013), 93-100.

<sup>5</sup> Vatican Council II, Decree on the Mission Activity of the Church, *Ad Gentes* (AG): [www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decree\\_19651207\\_ad-gentes\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651207_ad-gentes_en.html), 2. I follow the translation provided by the Vatican website, but use more inclusive language when appropriate.

<sup>6</sup> This is, I believe, Kroeger's point towards the end of his article, when he suggests that the Mission Encyclicals deal with 'the missionary nature of the church'. See Kroeger, 'Papal Mission Wisdom', 99.

<sup>7</sup> See Stephen B. Bevans and Jeffrey Gros, *Evangelization and Religious Freedom* (New York and Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2009), 33-34.

Council, its Decree on the Mission Activity of the Church, *Ad Gentes*.<sup>8</sup> It is, however, I believe, the fruit of the Council's deliberations and at the same time a lens through which its other documents can be read. A reading of the documents of the Council from a missiological/ecclesiological perspective, in fact, reveals just how central mission was to the Council, and its vision of the church.<sup>9</sup> We can see this perspective in the four major Constitutions, in some other documents, and in the new 'style' that the Council embraced.<sup>10</sup>

### The Four Constitutions

Each of the four Constitutions issued by the Council – documents that are recognized as the primary sources for interpreting the Council<sup>11</sup> – begin with a missionary statement of one sort or another. The opening statement of the first document approved by the Council, the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, articulates the four goals for the Council expressed by John XXIII in the years prior to the Council – goals that would enable the church 'to present the gospel message to the world and explain it to human beings with the same power and immediacy that marked the first Pentecost'.<sup>12</sup> The text reads: 'This sacred Council has several aims in view: it desires to impart an ever increasing vigor to the Christian life of the faithful; to adapt more suitably to the needs of our own times those institutions which are subject to change; to foster whatever can promote union among all who believe in Christ (a goal particularly relevant to this volume); to strengthen whatever can help to call the whole of mankind into the household of the

<sup>8</sup> The Decree was approved on 7 December 1965, the day before the Council concluded. See Stephen B. Bevans and Jeffrey Gros, *Evangelization and Religious Freedom* (New York and Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2009), 28.

<sup>9</sup> This is my argument in 'Revisiting Mission at Vatican II: Theology and Practice for Today's Missionary Church', in *Theological Studies* 74, 3 (June, 2013), 261-83. The next few pages are based on several sections of this article.

<sup>10</sup> Because of space, I am being quite sketchy with my evidence here. For more detail, see Bevans, 'Revisiting Mission at Vatican II', 263-73.

<sup>11</sup> See John W. O'Malley, 'Vatican II: Did Anything Happen?', in David G. Shultenover (ed), *Vatican II: Did Anything Happen?* (New York: Continuum, 2008), 84. O'Malley is using Avery Dulles's paraphrase of the Synod's hermeneutical principles in 'Vatican II: The Myth and the Reality', in *America* 188 (24 February 2003), 9.

<sup>12</sup> Giuseppe Alberigo, 'The Announcement of the Council: From the Security of the Fortress to the Lure of the Quest', in Giuseppe Alberigo and Joseph A. Komonchak (eds), *History of Vatican II: Volume 1: Announcing and Preparing Vatican Council II: Towards a New Era in Catholicism* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1995), 42.

Church. The Council therefore sees particularly cogent reasons for undertaking the reform and promotion of the liturgy.<sup>13</sup>

The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church is often interpreted as focusing on the internal, communion nature of the church, but in the light of *Ad Gentes 2* it presents also a thoroughly missionary ecclesiology. It opens with a missionary vision. By proclaiming the gospel to the ends of the earth, it says in its first paragraph, Christ's light will be shed on all peoples. The church is, as it were, a *sacrament* – not only a *sign* but also an *instrument* of the unity of God with humanity, and women and men with each other.<sup>14</sup>

The Council's Constitution on Divine Revelation opens by saying that it intends, like the Councils of Trent and Vatican I, to present a teaching on divine Revelation and Tradition, 'so that by hearing the message of salvation the whole world may believe; by believing it may hope; and by hoping it may love'.<sup>15</sup> The document presents in particular a more personal and dynamic understanding of God's revelation as God's call of humanity to friendship and relation. Australian theologian Ormond Rush notes that the change in the church's presentation of Revelation is one more step 'to renew and reform the Catholic Church ... for the sake of making the church a more effective sacrament of *God's mission* in the world'.<sup>16</sup> In the process, of course, it also makes Catholic theology more accessible to other Christian groups, thus linking a commitment to mission with a commitment to unity.

Finally, the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World opens with the oft-quoted statement that 'the joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ'.<sup>17</sup> This document is one of the crowning achievements of the Council. Like the document on mission it was one of the last documents to be approved, and is thoroughly imbued with an understanding of the church's missionary nature. In a dramatic turn from

<sup>13</sup> Vatican Council II, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (SC), [www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19631204\\_sacrosanctum-concilium\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html), 1.

<sup>14</sup> Vatican Council II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium* (LG), [www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19641121\\_lumen-gentium\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html), 1.

<sup>15</sup> Vatican Council II, Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum* (DV), [www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19651118\\_dei-verbum\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651118_dei-verbum_en.html), 1.

<sup>16</sup> Ormond Rush, 'Towards a Comprehensive Interpretation of the Council and Its Documents', in *Theological Studies* 73, 4 (December 2012), 568, emphasis in original.

<sup>17</sup> Vatican Council II, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes* (GS), [www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_cons\\_19651207\\_gaudium-et-spes\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_cons_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html), 1.

the stance of the church just a century before,<sup>18</sup> this Pastoral Constitution recognizes that to be church means to be engaged in dialogue with, and in the transformation of, the world in which it exists.

### **Decrees and Declarations**

We have already seen the most important statement from the Decree on the Mission Activity of the Church – that the church is missionary by its very nature because of its participation in the life of the Trinity. While this missionary nature is realized specifically by preaching and witnessing among those peoples who have not yet accepted the gospel, the Council nevertheless includes in the missionary task ‘undertakings aimed at restoring unity among Christians ... because the divisions among Christians damage the most holy cause of preaching the gospel to every creature’.<sup>19</sup> In the document on non-Christian religions, the Council acknowledges that even though the world’s religions ‘often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all peoples’, the church still ‘proclaims and ever must proclaim Christ ...’<sup>20</sup> – no doubt due to its essential missionary nature. To give one more example from the Council’s documents, the Declaration on Religious Freedom, while emphasizing that any religion, including Christianity, should not be imposed upon a people, nevertheless insists that ‘religious bodies ... have the right not to be hindered in their public teaching and witness to their faith ...’<sup>21</sup> For the church, this is of paramount importance, given its essential missionary nature. The church exists to evangelize.

### **A New Style**

Historian John W. O’Malley has insisted over the last several years that Vatican II adopted a new ‘style’ in its conduct and communications. Rather than the language that reflected the isolated, institutional vision of itself – language of pessimism, juridicism, and dismissal of peoples beyond the church – the Council chose to conduct and express itself in ways that reflected the more open, more persuasive, more dialogical, conciliatory

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<sup>18</sup> Perhaps the strongest statement in this regard is in Pius IX’s Syllabus of Errors in 1863, #80: ‘The Roman Pontiff can, and ought to, reconcile himself, and come to terms with progress, liberalism and modern civilization.’

[www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius09/p9syll.htm](http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius09/p9syll.htm).

<sup>19</sup> AG, 6.

<sup>20</sup> Vatican Council II, Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, *Nostra Aetate* (NA), [www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decl\\_19651028\\_nostra-aetate\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html), 2.

<sup>21</sup> Vatican Council II, Declaration on Religious Freedom, *Dignitatis Humanae* (DH), [www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decl\\_19651207\\_dignitatis-humanae\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651207_dignitatis-humanae_en.html), 4.

and, indeed, ecumenical vision it had discovered. The Council's documents, O'Malley points out, are filled with words like 'brothers/sisters, friendship, co-operation, collaboration, partnership ...'<sup>22</sup> Such a vision, I would suggest, is one that comes from its understanding of itself as essentially missionary. The church exists to really communicate the gospel, not just to offer the world haughty proclamations or decrees.

### **Mission as the Nature of the Church in Post-Conciliar Papal Documents**

#### *Evangelii Nuntiandi*

Ten years after the Council, on 8 December 1975, Paul VI published the Apostolic Exhortation on evangelization in the modern world, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*. Although this document does not root the church's missionary nature in its trinitarian life – the notion of *Missio Dei* had been used by some in the intervening years to downplay the church's role in mission<sup>23</sup> – what is strongly developed is a passage in *Lumen Gentium* that speaks of a distinction between the church and the Reign of God, which it serves.<sup>24</sup> The first chapter of the document is entitled 'From Christ the Evangelizer to Evangelizing Church', and the key idea in it is the passing on of the mission to preach, serve, and witness to the Reign of God from Jesus to the Christian community. Jesus 'first of all proclaims a kingdom ... and this is so important that by comparison, everything else becomes "the rest", which is "given in addition".' After Jesus' Resurrection, the 'little flock' 'gathers together in Jesus' name in order to seek together the Kingdom, build it up and live it'.<sup>25</sup> In this way, the church 'prolongs and continues'<sup>26</sup> Jesus mission of proclamation, sign, and witness. What this means is that 'evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, its deepest identity. It exists to evangelize'.<sup>27</sup> Mission, therefore, the church's service to the Reign of God, is what gives the church its identity. Its nature, in other words, is missionary to the very core.

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<sup>22</sup> John W. O'Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2008), 306.

<sup>23</sup> See Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2004), 290-91.

<sup>24</sup> LG, 5.

<sup>25</sup> Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (EN), [www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/paul\\_vi/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_exh\\_19751208\\_evangelii-nuntiandi\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19751208_evangelii-nuntiandi_en.html), 13.

<sup>26</sup> EN, 15.

<sup>27</sup> EN, 14.

### *Redemptoris Missio*

Fifteen years later, in 1990, Pope John Paul II issued his massive encyclical on the ‘permanent validity of the church’s missionary mandate’, *Redemptoris Missio*. Perhaps the most significant section for the theme of this chapter is found in Chapter 2, a chapter which focuses on ‘The Kingdom of God’. The Pope’s concern is to emphasize not only the *distinction* between the church and the Reign (or Kingdom) of God, as *Evangelii Nuntiandi* did, but the close *connection* between the two, and the connection of both with Christ. While the church is not a *separate* reality from God’s Reign, the church is nevertheless *distinct* from it as the ‘seed, sign and instrument’<sup>28</sup> of it. Nevertheless, the church ‘is not an end in itself’.<sup>29</sup> The church’s task, in other words, rather than focusing on its own extension, exists to announce and inaugurate God’s Reign among all peoples. While the Pope’s treatment is quite cautious, the fact that an entire chapter is dedicated to the relationship between the church and the Reign of God is immensely important for discerning in the document an ecclesiology that points in a definitely missional direction. The church’s existence is not for itself; it exists for another reason: to be the sacrament of God’s presence already revealed in Christ, and to continue Christ’s mission of preaching, serving and witnessing to the eschatological fullness of that presence in history. The church does not properly, therefore, have a mission. The mission – God’s mission of redeeming, healing, loving the world – has a church to serve it.

### *Evangelii Gaudium*

On 26 November, 2013 Pope Francis published his much-anticipated Apostolic Exhortation in the wake of the 2012 Synod of Bishops on the ‘New Evangelization’, *Evangelii Gaudium*. This is a long, wide-ranging document of some 150 pages, but one of its key teachings is the missionary nature of the church. Reflecting on Pope John Paul’s insistence on the centrality of mission for the church, Pope Francis says that if we would take his ideas seriously ‘we would realize that missionary outreach is *paradigmatic for all the Church’s activity*’.<sup>30</sup> Referring to John Paul II once again, Pope Francis makes the point that the church’s nature as a community is ‘profoundly interconnected’<sup>31</sup> with its outreach in mission.

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<sup>28</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio* (RM), [www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_07121990\\_redemptoris-missio\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_07121990_redemptoris-missio_en.html), 18.

<sup>29</sup> RM, 18.

<sup>30</sup> EG, 15, emphasis in original.

<sup>31</sup> EG, 23, quoting John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, [www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_exh\\_30121988\\_christifideles-laici\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_30121988_christifideles-laici_en.html), 32.

Indeed, he speaks of the church time and time again in the document as a ‘community of missionary disciples’,<sup>32</sup> with other references to the church as an ‘evangelizing community’ or a ‘missionary communion’.<sup>33</sup> He insists that we can no longer think of ourselves as ‘disciples’ and ‘missionaries’, but always together as ‘missionary disciples’.<sup>34</sup> He dreams, he says, ‘of a “missionary option”, that is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church’s customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures, can be suitably channelled for the evangelization of today’s world rather than for its preservation’.<sup>35</sup> Although the *Missio Dei* perspective is not fully articulated in the Apostolic Exhortation, it is certainly implicit in it. The Pope speaks of the church as evangelizing always as ‘an instrument of that divine grace which works unceasingly and inscrutably’, and insists that the ‘*primacy of grace* must be a beacon which constantly illuminates our reflections on evangelization’.<sup>36</sup>

What we see here in these three major papal statements in the fifty years since the conclusion of the landmark Second Vatican Council is a remarkable consistency in emphasizing the nature of the church as missionary. As the popes explain it, the church’s missionary nature is lived out in its witness and proclamation, in its public and private prayer life, in its commitment to justice, in its commitment to dialogue – interreligious, secular, and ecumenical – in work for inculturation, and in efforts of reconciliation.<sup>37</sup> Mission is indeed the church’s ‘deepest identity’.<sup>38</sup>

### **Mission as the Nature of the Church in Roman Catholic Episcopal Magisterium**

Roman Catholicism’s rich tradition of official, normative teaching is not confined to papal teaching. Since the Second Vatican Council there have emerged national conferences of bishops in many countries, and every area of the world has a kind of federation of these Episcopal conferences. This section will focus on the most recent gatherings of two of these larger bodies of bishops, the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences (FABC) and the Conference of Latin American Bishops (CELAM), both of which have distinguished themselves in the articulation of a missionary ecclesiology.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> EG, 24.

<sup>33</sup> EG, 24, 31.

<sup>34</sup> EG, 120.

<sup>35</sup> EG, 27.

<sup>36</sup> EG, 112.

<sup>37</sup> See Bevans and Schroeder, *Constants in Context*, 348-95.

<sup>38</sup> EN, 14.

<sup>39</sup> For a summary of the previous conferences of FABC and CELAM, see Stephen Bevans, ‘Ecclesiology Since Vatican II: From a Church with a Mission to a Missionary Church’, in *Verbum SVD* 46, 1 (2005), 35-39.

At its most recent assembly in Vietnam in December 2012, the FABC celebrated forty years of its existence with a document that both looked back on its work of four decades, and focused on the importance of the ‘New Evangelization’. The document spoke of itself as a ‘community-in-mission’, a ‘disciple community’,<sup>40</sup> rooted, as *Ad Gentes 2* proclaimed, in the trinitarian life of Father, Son and Spirit.<sup>41</sup>

The four General Conferences of the Latin American bishops at Medellín, Colombia (1968), Puebla de los Angeles, Mexico (1979), Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic (1992), and Aparecida, Brazil (2007), represent some of the most important moments, not only in Latin American ecclesial reflection but also throughout the whole world.

The most recent CELAM Conference in Aparecida, Brazil, in 2007, spoke with particular urgency for an understanding of the missionary nature of the church, and of Christians as ‘missionary disciples’. One of the principal authors of the long final document was Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio, the present Pope.<sup>42</sup> Like the Pope’s Apostolic Exhortation, there is great emphasis on the unity between communion and mission, or between being disciples and being missionaries. To be one is to be the other. The final document quotes Pope Benedict XVI’s Opening Address at the Conference, which spoke of discipleship and mission as ‘the two sides of a single coin’.<sup>43</sup> Quoting the foundational statement of missionary ecclesiology in *Ad Gentes 2*, the document adds that ‘the missionary impulse is a necessary fruit of the life that the Trinity communicates to the disciples’.<sup>44</sup> Or, from another perspective, the document quotes Puebla: ‘evangelization is a calling to participate, in the communion of the Trinity.’<sup>45</sup>

Should space permit, we could offer many more examples from the FABC and CELAM, as well as from other Episcopal Conferences and Federations throughout the world.<sup>46</sup> What is clear, however, is that in the

<sup>40</sup> Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences, ‘The FABC at Forty Years: Responding to the Challenges of Asia’, [www.fabc.org/fabc%20papers/FABC%20Paper%20138.pdf](http://www.fabc.org/fabc%20papers/FABC%20Paper%20138.pdf), 8.

<sup>41</sup> Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences, ‘The FABC at Forty Years’, 56.

<sup>42</sup> Ernesto Cavassa, ‘On the Trail of Aparecida’, <http://americamagazine.org/trail-aparecida>.

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<sup>43</sup> Episcopal Conference of Latin America, Concluding Document of the Aparecida Conference, [http://old.usccb.org/latinamerica/english/aparecida\\_Ingles.pdf](http://old.usccb.org/latinamerica/english/aparecida_Ingles.pdf), 146, quoting Benedict XVI’s Opening Address (same website address as above), 3.

<sup>44</sup> Episcopal Conference of Latin America, Concluding Document of the Aparecida Conference, 347.

<sup>45</sup> Episcopal Conference of Latin America, Concluding Document of the Aparecida Conference, 157, quoting Puebla Document (see Eagleson and Sharper), 218. I need to mention here that my friend Gioacchino Campese would probably disagree with my interpretation of Aparecida. See his (unpublished) article, ‘Modelli di missione e di chiesa nel documento della V conferenza generale dell’episcopato latinoamericano e dei caraibi.’

aftermath of Vatican II and *Ad Gentes*' important statement, 'to say "church"', as the United States Bishops put it in 1986, 'is to say "mission"'.<sup>46</sup>

### **Mission as the Nature of the Church in Post-Vatican II Ecclesiology**

Magisterial documents are important official statements of Catholic teaching, but they are by nature relatively sketchy and directional. They need further theological scholarship for their development, and are dependent as well on such scholarship for their original articulation – as Vatican II, for example, draws on an ecclesiological renaissance and ecumenical openness at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the early twentieth century, and ecclesialogists after Vatican II have offered more Biblical, patristic and theological perspectives on the missionary nature of the church. Both papal and episcopal teaching after Vatican II reflects these theological reflections and developments. Naturally, there have been tensions – some severe – between theologians and ecclesialogists and church leadership, but on the whole the tensions have been, on balance, creative.<sup>47</sup>

#### *Recent works of missionary ecclesiology*

Space does not permit much more than a mention of several important recent contributions to Roman Catholic understanding of the church as missionary.<sup>48</sup> German theologian John Fuellenbach's *Church: Community for the Kingdom* appeared in 2002, and British theologian Paul Lakeland takes a strong stand on a missionary church over against a preference for a communion-centred church in his 2003 work, *The Liberation of the Laity*. In 2007, Chicago pastor Patrick Brennan published *The Mission Driven Parish*, in which he tries to reflect practically and pastorally on the mission theology articulated in Roger Schroeder's and my *Constants in Context*.<sup>49</sup> Australian theologians Neil Ormerod and Ormond Rush both work out of a mission-centred understanding of church. Ormerod writes that 'a *missio* ecclesiology ... makes contact with Trinitarian theology, not in terms of

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<sup>46</sup> United States Catholic Bishops, *To the Ends of the Earth: A Pastoral Statement on World Mission* (New York: Propagation of the Faith, 1986), para 16.

<sup>47</sup> See the chapter 'Community as the Parameter of Theology: Theology and the Magisterium', in Stephen Bevans, *An Introduction to Theology in Global Perspective* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2009), 109-33.

<sup>48</sup> For a summary of works of missionary ecclesiology published just after the Council, see Bevans, 'Ecclesiology after Vatican II', 40-49.

<sup>49</sup> John Fuellenbach, *Church: Community for the Kingdom* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2002); Paul Lakeland, *The Liberation of the Laity: In Search of an Accountable Church* (New York: Continuum, 2003); Patrick Brennan, *The Mission Driven Parish* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2007).

communion and *perichoresis*, but in terms of *missio* and *processio*. Communion may be our eschatological end in the vision of God, but in the here and now of a pilgrim Church, mission captures our ongoing historical responsibility'. A major work of Ormerod on the church, entitled *Re-Visioning the Church*, was published in early 2014.<sup>50</sup>

Perhaps the finest work of ecclesiology to appear – at least in English – in the last several years is Richard R. Gaillardetz' *Ecclesiology for a Global Church: A People Called and Sent*. While it is not explicitly missiological in its basic direction, it is imbued with a missiological spirit. Unlike many ecclesiologies in which the mission of the church is the last aspect of the church that is treated, Gaillardetz reflects on the church's mission in the second chapter of this volume. The church is the community called, first, to carry on Jesus' mission,<sup>51</sup> and then sent into the world to be the sign of God's presence among the diversity of the world's cultures and religions.<sup>52</sup> Gaillardetz' ecclesiology is done in dialogue with representatives and movements of the global church: Bishop Samuel Ruiz in Mexico, the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, Bishop Francisco Claver of the Philippines.

### **The Roman Catholic Church in Collaboration with the World Council of Churches**

This brief survey of Roman Catholic missionary ecclesiology in this volume on Mission and Unity would not be complete without at least a short account of two important documents that are the fruit of Roman Catholic participation with Commissions of the World Council of Churches. These are the 2013 statements *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, issued by the Commission on Faith & Order, and *Together Towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes*, issued by the Commission on World Mission & Evangelism (CWME).

The document on the church is the result of a year-long effort by Faith & Order, beginning in 1993.<sup>53</sup> In 1998 a preliminary document was published entitled 'The Nature and Purpose of the Church', which was revised in 2006 as 'The Nature and Mission of the Church' after the earlier document

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<sup>50</sup> Neil Ormerod, 'The Structure of a Systematic Ecclesiology' in *Theological Studies* 63, 1 (March 2002), 29. Neil Ormerod, *Re-Visioning the Church: An Experiment in Systematic-Historical Ecclesiology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2014); Ormond Rush, 'Towards a Comprehensive Interpretation of the Council and Its Documents', in *Theological Studies*, 73:2 (September 2012), 547-69.

<sup>51</sup> Richard R. Gaillardetz, *Ecclesiology for a Global Church: A People Called and Sent* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2008), 19.

<sup>52</sup> See Gaillardetz, *Ecclesiology for a Global Church*, 35-84.

<sup>53</sup> See John Gibaut's chapter in this volume on 'The Church: Towards a Common Vision. The Role of "Faith and Order" in the Pursuit of Unity'.

was criticised for not paying enough attention to the church's mission. This document was then revised in the light of the criticism that 'the use of the two words – *nature* and *mission* – would obscure the fact that the Church is by its very nature missionary'.<sup>54</sup> Although the document could be criticized for not being totally consistent in its missionary vision, the document does root the church 'in the plan of God for humankind's salvation',<sup>55</sup> and describes the church as 'a divinely established communion' that 'does not exist for itself. It is by its very nature missionary, called and sent to witness in its own life to that communion which God intends for all humanity and for all creation in the kingdom'.<sup>56</sup> The church, the document insists, was intended by God 'not for its own sake, but to serve the divine plan for the transformation of the world'.<sup>57</sup>

*Together Towards Life* does not offer a full ecclesiology, but it does complement the Faith & Order statement by explaining what a missionary church should look like. It states unequivocally that mission 'begins in the heart of the Triune God' that 'overflows towards humanity and all of creation as well. The church is commissioned to serve this mission as a community of hope, celebration, resistance and transformation'.<sup>58</sup> Today's missionary church, the document insists, is one open to the work of the Holy Spirit who protects and heals all of creation, and who works through anyone or anything that is marginalized. Mission is about protecting creation; it is about justice; it is not from the centre to the periphery, but begins at the periphery to evangelize the privileged centre. This is what Jesus did, and this is how the church continues to proclaim and to witness to Jesus' message.

### A Personal Ambition

My own ambition is to write in the next several years a full-blown Roman Catholic ecclesiology that takes the church's missionary nature even more

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<sup>54</sup> Commission on Faith & Order, *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, Faith & Order Paper No. 214, 'Historical Note: The Process Leading to The Church: Towards a Common Vision', [www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-commissions/faith-and-order-commission/i-unity-the-church-and-its-mission/the-church-towards-a-common-vision?set\\_language=en](http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-commissions/faith-and-order-commission/i-unity-the-church-and-its-mission/the-church-towards-a-common-vision?set_language=en), 45.

<sup>55</sup> Commission on Faith & Order, *The Church*, 6, para 3, quoting *Confessing the One Faith: An Ecumenical Explication of the Apostolic Faith as It is Confessed in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (381)* (Geneva, WCC and Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2010), para 216.

<sup>56</sup> Commission on Faith & Order, *The Church*, 10, para 13.

<sup>57</sup> Commission on Faith & Order, *The Church*, paras 33 and 58.

<sup>58</sup> Jooseop Keum (ed), *Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes. A New WCC Affirmation on Mission and Evangelism, 2012* (Geneva: WCC, 2013), [www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-commissions/mission-and-evangelism/together-towards-life-mission-and-evangelism-in-changing-landscapes?set\\_language=en](http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-commissions/mission-and-evangelism/together-towards-life-mission-and-evangelism-in-changing-landscapes?set_language=en), para 2.

seriously than ecclesiologies written until now. I sketched the outline of my project in an article I published in the journal *Theological Studies* in 2013.<sup>59</sup> Ecclesiology, to my mind, should begin with the Mission of God, particularly the mission of the Spirit present from the first nanosecond of creation. The Spirit's persuading, creative power is ultimately incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth, whose mission concretizes what God has already been doing in the world from the very beginning. Jesus' mission meets with rejection but, as he was anointed by the Spirit at the beginning, so his disciples are anointed by the Spirit at Pentecost to carry on his work to the ends of the earth. Here we have the beginning of the church, God's People in Mission, Christ's Body in the World, God's Presence as the Temple of the Spirit. The church is first of all apostolic, missionary like the first disciples, and so works for the unity, unity-in-diversity and holiness of the world. Structure in the church – laity, clergy, papacy – serves the church's mission. My whole work aims to 'unpack' that lapidary phrase of Vatican II: 'the church is missionary by its very nature'.

### **Conclusion**

As I hope the reader of this chapter has come to see, the understanding of the nature of the church as mission is one that is flourishing in Roman Catholic contexts. Because of space constraints, I have been able to offer only a broad survey of developments in Roman Catholic official teaching and ecclesiology of the last fifty years. Much more could be said. I look to the future to see even more developments as all the Christian churches join together in unity, so that the world will believe (John 17:21).

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<sup>59</sup> Bevans, 'Revisiting Mission at Vatican II'.

# UNITED AND UNITING CHURCHES AS MODELS OF MISSION AND UNITY

Thomas F. Best

United Churches are classically those born from the integration of existing, divided churches within a single, new ecclesial body; Uniting Churches are those engaged in a process towards such union. Both United and Uniting Churches are driven by the testimony of John 17:21: 'that they all may be one ... so that the world may believe that you have sent me': *Christian unity is the Church's primal witness leading 'the world' to belief in Christ.* Thus United and Uniting Churches spring from two fundamental convictions: that unity is Christ's inexorable will, and that unity will lead to more effective Christian mission.

## The Identity and Diversity of United and Uniting Churches

To understand these very distinctive churches, it is essential to recall something of their history, development and very considerable diversity.<sup>1</sup> This is best understood in terms of the following patterns of development and features.<sup>2</sup> The *first wave* of unions involved Reformed and Lutheran churches in Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia, beginning with the Old Prussian Union (1817, now embodied in the Evangelische Kirche der Union, itself now within the Union of Evangelical (Protestant) Churches in the Evangelical Church in Germany). These are the forerunners of later Reformed/Lutheran unions such as the Protestant Church in the

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<sup>1</sup> In what follows, I draw particularly upon Thomas F. Best, 'United and Uniting Churches', in Erwin Fahlbusch, Jan Milic Lochman, John Mbiti, Jaroslav Pelikan and Lukas Vischer (eds), Geoffrey W. Bromiley (translator and English language edition), and David W. Barrett (statistical editor), *The Encyclopedia of Christianity* (5: Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, and Leiden: Brill, 2008), 605-10.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Best, 'United and Uniting Churches', 606-07, developed from Martin Cressey's widely accepted typology from 'Where and Whither? An Interpretive Survey of United and Uniting Churches, with a View to Their Contribution to the Fifth World Conference on Faith and Order, to be Held in 1993', in *Minutes of the Meeting of the Faith and Order Standing Commission, Rome, Italy, 1991* (Faith & Order Paper 157: Geneva: WCC Commission on Faith & Order, 1992), 59-61. See also David M. Thompson, 'Earthen Vessels or God's Building? The Identity of United and Uniting Churches', in Thomas F. Best (ed), '*With a Demonstration of the Spirit and of Power*': *Seventh International Consultation of United and Uniting Churches* (Faith & Order Paper 195: Geneva: WCC, 2004), 76-98.

Netherlands (2004) and the United Protestant Church of France (2013) and, more broadly, of the Leuvenberg Agreement in Europe (1974, since extended to some churches in Latin America).

A second group of unions (mainly in North America, the United Kingdom and Australia) begins with the United Church of Canada (1925) and involves various groupings of Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Methodists and Disciples of Christ. A recent example is the union of the Congregational Union of Scotland with the United Reformed Church (2000). A third group includes twentieth-century unions formed among missionary-founded churches of mainly these denominations in the southern hemisphere (the Church of Christ in Thailand, 1934, the United Church of Zambia, 1965), the Caribbean (the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands, 1992), and elsewhere.

A *fourth group* has included Anglican churches (the Church of South India (1947), the Church of North India – also including Baptists and Brethren (1970), and others in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka). The Communion of Churches in India (2003) seeks a yet broader vision through possible union with the Mar Thoma Church. Finally, a *fifth group* includes unions of churches within the same confessional tradition, such as the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (1988) and the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (1999).

These unions have involved Reformed, Congregational, Methodist, Disciples of Christ, Lutheran, and sometimes Baptist and Brethren churches, in various combinations, as well as churches already formed from previous unions. Those in the Indian subcontinent have been especially significant ecclesologically in incorporating episcopal structures of governance. Elsewhere, breaking the ‘bishop barrier’ has proved difficult, if not impossible, as seen, for example, in the United States in Churches Uniting in Christ (2002) and its predecessor the Consultation on Church Union (1960). As we shall see later, intra-confessional unions show that, even where churches share a common basic identity, union can offer a powerful witness in overcoming (so-called) ‘non’-theological divisions.

United churches are often seen as the fullest expression of ‘organic union’ as proposed by the Second World Conference on Faith & Order (Edinburgh, 1937).<sup>3</sup> In such unions,

The separate identities of the [constituent churches] have been brought together such that all members share an agreed basis of faith and form a single eucharistic fellowship; all have become responsible for one another within one ecclesial community; all members and ministers are recognized as members and ministers of that church with a defined place in its life of worship, mission and service; and decision-making bodies have been agreed upon to deliberate and act on behalf of the whole church. These features of

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<sup>3</sup> Leonard Hodgson (ed), *The Second World Conference on Faith and Order held at Edinburgh, August 3-18, 1937* (New York: Macmillan, 1938), 252.

united churches find expression in such direct, visible ways as the holding of property, control of funds, and exercise of church discipline.<sup>4</sup>

They have adopted a 'kenotic ecclesiology' in which divided churches have offered their own identities to the creation of a new church, one within which their own distinctive 'gifts' will be honoured and made available to all. They have echoed the vision of the World Council of Churches Third Assembly (New Delhi, 1961), that 'The achievement of unity will involve nothing less than a death and rebirth of many forms of church life as we have known them'.<sup>5</sup> And they express a radical vision of 'mutual accountability', one so complete that it cannot be expressed through mere partnerships or other forms of co-operation, among separate ecclesial bodies, but only within a single, united church.<sup>6</sup>

They have been at pains to point out that church union is fundamentally ecclesial, not merely bureaucratic: D. T. Niles famously thundered at the WCC's founding Assembly (Amsterdam, 1948): 'No schemes of union had come about: *the churches had united*.'<sup>7</sup> Perhaps Lesslie Newbigin captured the essence of the united and uniting churches movement most poignantly; returning to a late – and characteristically active – retirement in England in 1974, he wrote:

For twenty-seven years I had been a bishop in the Church of South India ... For all these years we had been living in a fellowship where the treasures of the Anglican, Methodist and Reformed traditions were all ours to share. Now we faced the painful necessity of choosing which slot to go into.<sup>8</sup>

Not wishing to add to division as simply another confessional family, the United and Uniting Churches have not formed a Christian World Communion.<sup>9</sup> Rather, they have maintained fellowship through a series of

<sup>4</sup> See Thomas F. Best, 'United and Uniting Churches', 605, and Best (ed), *Living Today Towards Visible Unity: the Fifth International Consultation of United and Uniting Churches* (Faith & Order Paper 142: Geneva: WCC, 1988), 13.

<sup>5</sup> W.A. Visser 't Hooft (ed), *New Delhi Report: the Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches, 1961* (London: SCM, 1962), 117.

<sup>6</sup> Thomas F. Best, 'A Tale of Two Edinburghs: Mission, Unity, and Mutual Accountability', in *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 46:3 (Summer 2011), 311-28, esp. 328; John A. Radano, 'Mutual Accountability: Building Together on the Achievements of the Ecumenical Movement', in *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 47:3 (Summer 2012), 333-54; and Olaf Fykse Tveit, *Mutual Accountability as Ecumenical Attitude: A Study in Ecumenical Ecclesiology Based on Faith and Order Texts 1948-1998* (Oslo: Norwegian School of Theology, 2001).

<sup>7</sup> W.A. Visser 't Hooft (ed), *The First Assembly of the World Council of Churches, held at Amsterdam, August 22<sup>nd</sup> to September 4<sup>th</sup>, 1948* (London: SCM, 1949), 62, emphasis mine.

<sup>8</sup> Lesslie Newbigin, *Unfinished Agenda: An updated Autobiography* (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 1993), 230.

<sup>9</sup> "Going the Second Mile": A Message of the 8<sup>th</sup> Consultation of United and Uniting Churches, Johannesburg, 29 October-5 November 2008', in *The Ecumenical Review*, 62:1 (March 2010), 67.

international consultations<sup>10</sup> and surveys of church union processes, in both cases working closely with the WCC's Faith & Order Commission.<sup>11</sup>

### **Born in the Crucible of Mission: The Witness of Two Edinburghs**

The Edinburgh Mission Conference in 1910 played a decisive role in the formation of many united churches. Although the planners of Edinburgh

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<sup>10</sup> Held in Bossey 1967: *Mid-Stream* 6:3 (1967), esp. 10-15 and 16-22; Limuru 1970: *Mid-Stream* 9:2 and 3 (1970), esp. 4-12 and 13-33; Toronto 1975: *Mid-Stream* 14:4 (1975), 541-63; Colombo 1981: *Growing Towards Consensus and Commitment: Report of the Fourth International Consultation of United and Uniting Churches, Colombo, Sri Lanka* (Faith & Order Paper 110: Geneva: WCC, 1981); Potsdam 1987: Thomas F. Best (ed), *Living Today Towards Visible Unity: the Fifth International Consultation of United and Uniting Churches* (Faith & Order Paper 142: Geneva: WCC, 1988); Ocho Rios, Jamaica, 1995: Thomas F. Best (ed), *Built Together: The Present Vocation of United and Uniting Churches (Ephesians 2:22). Sixth International Consultation of United and Uniting Churches, March 1995*; Ocho Rios, Jamaica, 1995 (Faith & Order Paper 174: Geneva: WCC, 1996); Driebergen 2002; Thomas F. Best (ed). 'With a Demonstration of the Spirit and of Power': *Seventh International Consultation of United and Uniting Churches* (Faith & Order Paper 195: Geneva: WCC, 2004); Johannesburg 2008: "'Going the Second Mile": A Message of the Eighth Consultation of United and Uniting Churches, Johannesburg, 29 October-5 November 2008', in *The Ecumenical Review*, 62:1 (March, 2010), 66-69.

<sup>11</sup> H. Paul Douglas, *A Decade of Objective Progress in Church Unity: 1927-1936* (New York: Harper, 1937); Stephen Neill, *Towards Church Union 1937-1952: A Survey of Approaches to Closer Union Among the Churches* (Faith & Order Paper 11: London: published on behalf of the Faith & Order Commission by SCM, 1952) – thereafter appearing at two to three-year intervals as Faith & Order Papers in *The Ecumenical Review* as follows: J. Robert Nelson, 11a, in 6:3 (April 1954), 300-15; J. Robert Nelson, 11b in 8:1 (October 1955), 76-93; J. Robert Nelson, 11c, in 9:3 (April 1957), 284-302; Keith R. Bridston, 28, in 12:2 (January 1960), 232-60; Lukas Vischer, 35, in 14:3 (April 1962), 351-79; Meredith Handspicker, 43, in 16:4 (July 1964), 406-43; Meredith Handspicker, 47, in 18:3 (July 1966), 345-85; 52, in 20:3 (July 1968), 263-92; 56, in 22:3 (July, 1970), 251-82; 64, in 24:3 (July 1972), 353-70; 68, in 26:2 (April 1974), 304-25; 78, in 28:3 (July 1976), 308-49; 87, in 30:3 (July 1978), 231-59; 101, in 32:3 (July 1980), 281-305; 115, in 34:4 (October 1982), 361-90; 122, in 36:4 (October 1984), 404-20; Thomas F. Best and National Correspondents, 133, in 38:4 (October 1986), 456-79; Thomas F. Best, 146, in 41:2 (April 1989), 281-302; Thomas F. Best and Union Correspondents, 154, in 44:1 (January 1992), 131-55; Thomas F. Best and Church Union Correspondents, 169, in 47:1 (January 1995), 72-103; Thomas F. Best and Church Union Correspondents, 176, in 49:2 (April 1997), 223-62; Thomas F. Best and Church Union Correspondents, 186, in 52:1 (January 2000), 3-45; Thomas F. Best and Union Correspondents, 192, in 54:3 (July 2002), 369-419; Thomas F. Best and Church Union Correspondents, 203, in 58:3 and 4 (July/October 2006), 297-385.

1910 excluded any discussion of ecclesiological divisive topics,<sup>12</sup> Edinburgh Commission VIII (on Co-operation and the Promotion of Unity) succeeded in bringing *the issue and principle* of unity to the fore: ‘once the mission consultation was underway, the challenge of unity was everywhere.’<sup>13</sup>

The gathering had been preceded by an unprecedented survey – not of missionary agencies or sending churches – but of the actual experiences of missionaries working in the mission field.<sup>14</sup> On this basis, in coming to Edinburgh, Commission VIII could already identify, besides numerous intra-confessional unions in Asia and Africa, ‘wider unions’ such as in that in India which offered ‘the first instance of a clear organic union between bodies having a different form of Church polity’.<sup>15</sup> Echoing these results, at Edinburgh ‘Missionary after missionary, from church after church, in country after country, said that unity was essential if mission was to be effective; they produced an astonishing number and range of examples of local co-operation and efforts towards some sort of local unity among churches’.<sup>16</sup>

These convictions came to a head in the remarkable plenary speech on the Commission VIII report by Chang Ching-Yi, then 28 years old, not yet ordained, Assistant Pastor of the Mi-shih Hutung church in Beijing:

Chinese Christians ... hope to see, in the near future, a united Christian Church without any denominational distinctions ... this may seem somewhat peculiar to some of you but, friends, do not forget to view us from *our* standpoint ... speaking generally, denominationalism has never interested the Chinese mind ... from the Chinese standpoint there is nothing impossible about such a union. Such difficulties as may be experienced will be due to our

<sup>12</sup> An extraordinary story. See Best, ‘A Tale of Two Edinburghs’, 313. Also excluded was any discussion of issues related to mission in predominantly Roman Catholic (or Orthodox) countries – Latin America and much of the Middle East removed at a stroke! See Brian Stanley, *The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910* (Studies in the History of Christian Missions: Grand Rapids, MI, and Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 2009), 55.

<sup>13</sup> Best, ‘A Tale of Two Edinburghs’, 314.

<sup>14</sup> The survey reports from the ‘mission fields’ fill eight very large, closely-typed volumes in the WCC archives. This process stands beside the ‘Community of Women and Men in the Church’ survey (ca. 1978-82), and the responses to the Faith & Order *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* document (1982-90), as the most extensive survey of church views in the modern ecumenical era.

<sup>15</sup> Best, ‘A Tale of Two Edinburghs’, 316, citing the *Report of Commission VIII: Co-operation and the Promotion of Unity with Supplement: Presentation and Discussion of the Report in the Conference on 21<sup>st</sup> June 1910, World Missionary Conference, 1910* (8: Edinburgh and London: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier; and New York, Chicago and Toronto: Fleming H. Revell, n.d.), 88-103 and 104-05.

<sup>16</sup> Best, ‘A Tale of Two Edinburghs’, 314.

western friends and not ourselves. These difficulties ... must not be allowed to overshadow the advantages of the union I speak of.<sup>17</sup>

Such experiences and testimonies from the mission field compelled Commission VIII to understand the ultimate goal of mission to be *a local united church*, and to see ‘such united churches as *the sign and symbol of future church union “at home”*’.<sup>18</sup> Almost incredibly from our perspective, Commission VIII was bold to say:

... the ideal object of missionary work is to plant in every non-Christian nation one united Church of Christ. The realisation of the idea may lie in the far distance: and the difficulties to be surmounted may be overwhelmingly great; but it is something to have felt the stirring of a hope so rich and so wonderful. The Church in western lands will reap a glorious reward from its missionary labours, if the Church in the mission field points the way to a healing of its divisions and to the attainment of that unity for which our Lord prayed.<sup>19</sup>

This vision was expressed no less strongly at the First World Conference on Faith & Order in Lausanne (1927). The Conference was inspired by its guiding genius Bishop Charles Brent, himself a distinguished missionary in the Philippines. Deeply marked by his experience at Edinburgh 1910,<sup>20</sup> he was convinced of the essential relationship between mission and unity, and ensured that Lausanne addressed precisely those divisive ecclesiological issues which had been excluded from Edinburgh 17 years before. In this very context, Timothy Tingfang Lew from China insisted that ‘denominationalism, instead of being a source of inspiration, has been and is a source of confusion, bewilderment, and inefficiency’;<sup>21</sup> and Bishop Azariah of Dornakal in India, speaking for many churches in the Global South, concluded with a note both poignant and ironic:

We do not ask anyone to deny its past spiritual heritage; we cannot demand the severance of fellowship of any of these Churches with the Churches in Europe or America that have planted them. But *we must have one Church*. We want a Church of India ... Be patient with us if we cannot very wholeheartedly enter into the controversies of either the sixth or the sixteenth centuries.<sup>22</sup>

The Edinburgh Mission Conference in 2010 confronted a radically different church – and global – situation. The theme of ‘Mission and Unity’ was again assigned to Theme Eight; the preparatory study document, based on a text from the WCC’s Council on World Mission & Evangelism (CWME), called for ‘a mission of healing and of reconciliation’, appealing

<sup>17</sup> *Report of Commission VIII*, 196.

<sup>18</sup> Best, ‘A Tale of Two Edinburghs’, 316-317, emphasis mine.

<sup>19</sup> *Report of Commission VIII*, 131.

<sup>20</sup> Best, ‘A Tale of Two Edinburghs’, 314.

<sup>21</sup> H.N. Bate, *Faith and Order: Proceedings of the World Conference, Lausanne, August 3-21, 1927* (New York: Doran, 1927), 496.

<sup>22</sup> Bate, *Faith and Order*, 494-95, emphasis in original.

for ‘an approach to mission that can both express the unity that is already present in the churches’ mission and also prepare the way for a greater unity to come’.<sup>23</sup> What kind of unity would this be? The ‘Common Call’ from Edinburgh 2010 understands the challenge of unity as a call to –

ongoing co-operation, to deal with controversial issues and to work towards a common vision. We are challenged to welcome one another in our diversity, affirm our membership through baptism in the One Body of Christ, and recognize our need for mutuality, partnership, collaboration and networking in mission, so that the world might believe.<sup>24</sup>

To be sure, Edinburgh 2010 included a far wider range of churches and Christian groups, particularly evangelicals and Pentecostals, than were present in 1910. This is commendable; but many of these have little interest in ‘unity’ as classically understood by the ecumenical movement in general, and the United and Uniting Churches in particular.<sup>25</sup> In this context, the mission discussion no longer inspires, and animates, aspirations for church union: church division is assumed to be the norm, and ‘unity’ is understood not as full organic union but rather in such terms (valuable as they are) as mutuality, partnership, collaboration and networking.

### **Mission and Unity: Testimonies and Insights from United and Uniting Churches**

But let us return to the witness to the link between mission and unity offered by the United and Uniting Churches themselves. Here I think that four cases are especially instructive. *First*, there are mission-founded churches which have united in order to foster mission. Here decisive impulses have come from churches in the global south. The Tranquebar conference of church leaders in India in 1919 declared:

We believe that the challenge of the present hour ... calls us to mourn our past divisions and turn to our Lord Jesus Christ to seek in Him the unity of the body expressed in one visible Church ... We find ourselves rendered weak and relatively impotent by our unhappy divisions – divisions for which we were not responsible, and which have been, as it were, imposed upon us from without.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> ‘Theme 8: Mission and Unity – Ecclesiology and Mission’, in Daryl Balia and Kirsteen Kim (eds), *Edinburgh 2010, Vol. 2: Witnessing to Christ Today* (Edinburgh 2010 Series: Oxford: Regnum, 2010), 218.

<sup>24</sup> ‘Edinburgh 2010: Common Call’, Statement from the Consultation, June 6, 2010, §8: [www.edinburgh2010.org/fileadmin/files/edinburgh2010/files/conference\\_docs/Common\\_Call\\_final.pdf](http://www.edinburgh2010.org/fileadmin/files/edinburgh2010/files/conference_docs/Common_Call_final.pdf)

<sup>25</sup> Best, ‘A Tale of Two Edinburghs’, 325, especially n. 71.

<sup>26</sup> See Stephen Charles Neill, ‘Plans of Union and Reunion, 1910-1948’, in Ruth Rouse and Stephen Charles Neill (eds), *A History of the Ecumenical Movement, 1, 1517-1948*, third edition (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1986), 473.

Thus Chang Ching-Yi's frustration at Edinburgh 1910, and Timothy Tingfang Lew and Bishop Azariah's irony at the first Faith & Order World Conference in 1927, was joined by Tranquebar's anger at imposed divisions which hinder local mission. Many of the church unions through the last two thirds of the twentieth century have fulfilled a gospel imperative to offer a locally-based, independent and autonomous witness to the gospel. From the (United) Church of Christ in Thailand (1934) to the Church of South India (1947) to the United Church of Zambia (1965) to the Church of North India (1970) to the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands (1965/1992): in each case divided, mission-founded (and to some extent dependent) churches have been replaced, through a series of church union processes, by a single new, indigenous and independent united church, united for the sake of mission. That is: *church union is itself an act of mission*.

In many such unions there is an element of liberation from the churches' and their country's colonial past. Nevertheless, virtually all churches have taken pains to remain in constructive contact with the several confessions from which they were formed. In most cases this has been positive (for example, bishops from united churches in the Indian subcontinent have been welcomed as full members at the Lambeth Conference of the Anglican Communion), but in others more difficult. Yet all reflect the conviction that a local united church is a stronger platform for mission than several divided churches, each based ultimately abroad.

The Evangelical Church of the River Plate (IERP, 1965/1998, United Lutheran and Reformed in Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay) offers an especially clear example of the link between mission and unity. As the first of its 'major challenges' the church identifies 'The proclamation of our Lord Jesus Christ's Lordship both inside and outside of our communities ...'<sup>27</sup> And it has linked this strongly to the broader ecumenical vision: 'Consistent with the reason for its existence – namely, the proclamation of the gospel ... the IERP understands itself as part of a much wider, larger whole ... it is "committed to seeking the union of the evangelical churches in the region of the Rio de la Plata".'<sup>28</sup> Beyond this, it understands that 'The universality of the Church is based on the fact of the IERP working on its mission locally in the three countries of the region of the Rio de la Plata, but projecting this mission worldwide.'<sup>29</sup>

*Second*, the united and uniting churches have been the first to ask: Does union actually lead to more effective mission? Here *The Uniting Church in*

<sup>27</sup> Pedro Kalmbach, 'Towards the Ecclesiology of United Churches': Evangelical Church of the River Plate: Challenges and Vision', in *Towards an Ecclesiology of United Churches*, *The Ecumenical Review* 62:1 (March, 2010), 42.

<sup>28</sup> Kalmbach, 'Towards the Ecclesiology of United Churches', 44, including nn. 4-7.

<sup>29</sup> Kalmbach, 'Towards the Ecclesiology of United Churches', 44, citing René Krueger, *La ecclesiologia de la IERP* (2001).

*Australia* (UCA, 1977, Congregational, Presbyterian and Methodist)<sup>30</sup> offers a paradigm. The church was formed in an explicit commitment to ‘the mission and unity of the whole church’<sup>31</sup> and the word ‘mission’ (and its link to unity) rings like a bell across the paragraphs of its Basis of Union:<sup>32</sup> we hear of unity in faith and mission (Section 2); of entering ‘more deeply into the faith and mission of the Church in Australia’ (Section 2); baptism ‘initiates people into Christ’s life and mission in the world’ (Section 7); Holy Communion strengthens the people of God for their ‘participation in the mission of Christ in the world’ (Section 8); it welcomes scholars and others who can ‘help it to understand its own nature and mission’ (Section 11); it ‘will order its life in response to God’s call to enter more fully into mission’ (Section 13); it sees the ‘commitment to Christ’s mission ...’ as a fundamental aspect of ministry (Section 14); church leaders must foster ‘a fuller participation in Christ’s mission in the world’ (Sections 15b, c, and e); existing church agencies are accountable for ‘their common commitment to the Church’s mission and their demonstration of its unity’ (Section 15e).

One analysis from within the church identifies – bluntly, as Aussies are wont to do – the difficulties encountered in the union process, but then ends on a hopeful note.<sup>33</sup> Union is, in itself, no guarantee of enhanced mission; energy may be absorbed in the bureaucratic needs of the union process itself. The church confronted other difficulties – not unique to United and Uniting Churches, but common to *all* church families in certain parts of the world – such as declining participation in church life, an ageing church membership, and fewer vocations for ministry. Yet the UCA affirms that ‘on their own – that is, had they remained separate – the uniting denominations would have been much more diminished than has been the case’.<sup>34</sup> And most importantly, ‘*The experience of uniting has laid a platform which places the UCA in a very strong position to adapt and respond to the new context in which the Christian community finds itself in Australia, in the early years of this century.*’<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> The church included the word ‘Uniting’ in its name to underscore its openness to further, future unions.

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<sup>31</sup> Gregor Henderson, General Secretary of the Assembly, ‘Introduction to the Basis of Union’, [www.uca.org.au/basisofunion.htm#the%20basis%20of%20union](http://www.uca.org.au/basisofunion.htm#the%20basis%20of%20union)

<sup>32</sup> ‘Basis of Union’, [www.uca.org.au/basisofunion.htm#the%20basis%20of%20union](http://www.uca.org.au/basisofunion.htm#the%20basis%20of%20union)

<sup>33</sup> Terence Corkin, ‘A Case Study on the Relationship between Mission and Unity: The Uniting Church in Australia’, in Thomas F. Best (ed), ‘*With a Demonstration of the Spirit and of Power: Seventh International Consultation of United and Uniting Churches*’, 69-75.

<sup>34</sup> Corkin, ‘A Case Study on the Relationship between Mission and Unity’, 72.

<sup>35</sup> Corkin, ‘A Case Study on the Relationship between Mission and Unity’, 72, emphasis mine.

*Third*, some united churches have stressed their movement from dependence upon mission agencies to independence for mission. Thus *the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands* (1965/1992, Presbyterian and Congregational, Disciples of Christ) has noted that its original union in 1965 was driven by issues of ‘efficiency’, not to say survival; the new church remained ‘economically dependent on external sources’, and its model ‘did not include self-management and did not promote self-reliance’.<sup>36</sup> Not surprisingly, ‘The union did not produce a new church that was missional in its focus.’<sup>37</sup>

This changed radically in 1985 as, after intense self-examination, the church made its ‘missional identity’ paramount, and ‘a fourfold plan of action emerged that defined the church’s priorities in mission’. The first priority was ‘equipping the church for ministry and mission’, placing new emphasis ‘on being a church for others’ and on the church’s identity as an independent ‘uniting church’.<sup>38</sup> This vision *unites mission, indigenization and inculturation*. It affirms that modelling new, authentic Christian life in the local congregation, embedded in its culture, is the most effective form of mission: ‘The fundamental missionary vocation of the United Church will emerge as we incarnate the good news within our culture, in the customs, music and language of the people.’<sup>39</sup>

*Fourth*, United and Uniting Churches have been in forefront of efforts to overcome church divisions based on race. This issue has special resonance in the United States, with its history of slavery; here a decisive witness was made by the intra-confessional union of the *Presbyterian Church (USA)* (1983, Presbyterian). This reunited Presbyterian churches in the north and the south which had divided on racial lines at the time of the Civil War in the United States, some 120 years earlier.

The spectre of racism continues to haunt church union efforts in the United States, as seen in the long history of the Consultation on Church Union (COCU, 1960, Protestant and Episcopalian churches) and its successor, Churches Uniting in Christ (CUIC, 2002, Protestant and

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<sup>36</sup> Norbert Stephens, ‘The Experience of the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands’, in ‘Towards an Ecclesiology of United Churches’, in *The Ecumenical Review*, 62:1 (March 2010), 50.

<sup>37</sup> Stephens, ‘The Experience of the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands’, 52, citing Roderick R. Hewitt, ‘A Present Vocation in Mission and Service: The Challenge to United and Uniting Churches’, in Thomas F. Best (ed), *Built Together: The Present Vocation of United and Uniting Churches (Ephesians 2:22). Sixth International Consultation of United and Uniting Churches, March 1995, Ocho Rios, Jamaica* (Faith & Order Paper 174: Geneva: Faith & Order Commission, WCC, 1996), 51-69.

<sup>38</sup> Stephens, ‘The Experience of the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands’, 52-53.

<sup>39</sup> Stephens, ‘A Case Study in Mission: The United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands’, in Thomas F. Best (ed), ‘*With a Demonstration of the Spirit and of Power*’: *Seventh International Consultation of United and Uniting Churches*, 67.

Episcopal churches). As proposed by Presbyterian leader Eugene Carson Blake – himself a missionary, having taught at Forman Christian College in Lahore, Pakistan, 1928-29 – COCU would witness to the unity of Christ’s church and thereby be a sign of mission to a society which was becoming increasingly secular, even indifferent to the gospel.<sup>40</sup>

The inclusion of three Afro-American churches has insured that issues of racism have been central to the continuing union agenda. For example, from its inception in 2002, CUIIC identified mission – understood broadly, and in close relation to combating racism – as one of the “marks” of Churches Uniting in Christ Participation’:

5. Engagement together in Christ’s mission on a regular and intentional basis, especially a shared mission to combat racism. The church engages in Christ’s mission through worship, proclamation of the gospel, evangelism, education and action that embodies God’s justice, peace and love ... The participating churches will also recognize, however, a particular and emphatic call to ‘erase racism’ by challenging the system of white privilege that has so distorted life in this society and in the churches themselves.<sup>41</sup>

The matter is complex indeed: issues of racism have hindered, if not hobbled, COCU/CUIIC’s parallel agenda of work towards mutual recognition and reconciliation of ministries.<sup>42</sup>

Even more significant has been the witness against racism of United and Uniting Churches in South Africa. Here two long and complicated union processes are crucial. The first led to *The Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa* (1999, Reformed churches). This brought together the predominantly white Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa and the black Reformed Presbyterian Church – churches which had been divided a century before precisely in order to ensure separation of the races: hence the union took place against ‘the background of three centuries of colonization, segregation and apartheid’.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>40</sup> For Blake’s seminal sermon in the Episcopal Cathedral in San Francisco, see ‘A Proposal Towards the Reunion of Christ’s Church’, [www.churchesunitinginchrist.org/what-you-can-do/speeches/46-blake-s-sermon-pike-s-response](http://www.churchesunitinginchrist.org/what-you-can-do/speeches/46-blake-s-sermon-pike-s-response). My thanks to Robert Welsh, Ecumenical Officer of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) for insights on this issue.

<sup>41</sup> For the full text see, [www.churchesunitinginchrist.org/what-you-can-do/resources/marks-of-commitment](http://www.churchesunitinginchrist.org/what-you-can-do/resources/marks-of-commitment)

<sup>42</sup> Rightly or wrongly – I believe wrongly – sacramental episcopal ministry has been identified with one side of the racial divide.

<sup>43</sup> Alastair Rodger, ‘Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa: Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa; Reformed Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa’, in Thomas F. Best (ed) and Church Union Correspondents, ‘Survey of Church Negotiations 1996-1999’, Faith & Order Paper 186, in *The Ecumenical Review* 52:1 (January 2000), 29. For an account of progress following the union events, see Alastair Rodger, ‘Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (UPCSA): the Union (1999) of the Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa and the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa’, in Thomas F. Best (ed) and Union

In South Africa in the late 1990s, it was clear to those who had eyes to see that partnership, common programming, and other forms of co-operation were not enough; only the *organic union* of these churches could witness fully to the power of the gospel to overcome racial and cultural divisions. As one of its architects wrote, ‘This union is a step in faith. It does not mean that the old divisions and all the hurts, suspicions and fear that go with them have suddenly been overcome, but it does demonstrate a willingness to allow God to take us a stage further in the healing process.’<sup>44</sup> The union offered this testimony to mission, understood broadly: ‘Church unions are not the end, but the beginning, of a process whose goal is to heal wounds, to witness to the justice and reconciliation effected by Christ (in both the church and in the world!), and to enable more effective witness and service to the world.’<sup>45</sup>

A second, equally significant union process has engaged churches stemming from the Dutch Reformed tradition. The Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA, 1994, Dutch Reformed churches) has sought union with the Dutch Reformed Church; this has hinged, in recent years, upon whether the Belhar Confession of 1986 should be included among the foundational documents of the future united church. Belhar makes the strongest possible anti-apartheid statement, rejecting ‘any doctrine which ... sanctions in the name of the gospel of the will of God the forced separation of people on the grounds of race and colour, and thereby in advance obstructs and weakens the ministry and experience of reconciliation in Christ’.<sup>46</sup>

In a major breakthrough, the churches – despite their past of intentional division on racial lines – committed themselves in 2013 to union, and reached the crucial agreement to include the Confession of Belhar ‘in the confessional basis of the reunited church’.<sup>47</sup> Thus the Memorandum of Agreement between the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA) and the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC):

We envision a new, organically united Reformed Church which lives missionally and is committed to the Biblical demands of love, reconciliation, justice and peace. At the same time we are committed to non-racialism,

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Correspondents, ‘Survey of Church Union Negotiations 1999-2002’, Faith & Order Paper No. 192, *The Ecumenical Review* 54:3 (July 2002), offprint, 12-15.

<sup>44</sup> Rodger, ‘Survey of Church Negotiations 1996-1999’, 29.

<sup>45</sup> Comments made in preparation for the Seventh International Consultation of United and Uniting Churches; see Thomas F. Best, ‘United and Uniting Churches’, 608.

<sup>46</sup> §3. For the full text see <http://images.rca.org/docs/aboutus/BelharConfession.pdf> – see also ‘Going the Second Mile’, 66, noting contributions to the Eighth International Consultation of United and Uniting Churches by Prof. Dirk Smit.

<sup>47</sup> Memorandum of Agreement, §4.1, See: [www.vgksa.org.za/documents/Memorandum%20of%20Agreement.pdf](http://www.vgksa.org.za/documents/Memorandum%20of%20Agreement.pdf)

inclusiveness and the acceptance and celebration of our multicultural composition. The different languages in our churches will be treasured.<sup>48</sup>

Significantly, the Memorandum of Agreement is at pains to relate union to mission: the churches ‘covenant to work together in concrete ways’, the first of these being ‘inviting people to life in fullness in Christ’.<sup>49</sup>

### **Conclusion:**

#### **United and Uniting Churches Witnessing to Unity and Mission**

These few examples must suffice to show how, in their unique identity, diversity and gifts, the United and Uniting Churches have embodied the relation between unity and mission. For all their healthy self-criticism, they believe they have a valuable witness to make to other churches and to the ecumenical movement. In this spirit, they are eager to share the following convictions.

*First:* church union is a response to God’s will, and Christ’s command, that the Church should be one. Church union is the most effective witness leading ‘the world’ to belief in Christ (John 17:21). It is not ‘for’ anything else (though it brings many benefits).

*Second,* church union forms a more effective platform for mission than church division. Church union lends authenticity and credibility to the church’s mission and service to the world.

*Third:* church union does not, in itself, guarantee more effective mission. Effective mission requires committed and creative work by a self-reliant church.

*Fourth:* church union can offer a unique witness to the power of the gospel to overcome racial, ethnic, cultural and historical divisions within the churches and the human community. Such witness does not happen automatically; it requires creative and committed work by a self-reliant church.

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<sup>48</sup> Memorandum of Agreement, §2.2.

<sup>49</sup> Memorandum of Agreement, §2.3.

# PARTNERSHIP IN MISSION – AN ANGLICAN PERSPECTIVE

John Kafwanka

## Introduction

The rapid growth of the church in Africa, Asia and Latin America, and the formation of new autonomous provinces [have] contributed to the multiplicity of mission experiences and the need to find ways to connect in order to provide mutual encouragement, support and challenge.<sup>1</sup>

This chapter is an exploration of the evolution and nature of mission relationships in the Anglican Communion, with a particular focus on *Companion Links* and how these relationships have been shaped by efforts aimed at fostering mutual interdependent and collaborative relationships.

The author argues that Christian mission relationships based on mutual interdependence are not only Biblical but are key to the Church's credibility and her effective participation in God's mission at local and global levels. The mission scene has changed markedly and continues to change both in form and practice. He explores the important steps taken to encourage and foster mutual interdependence in the Anglican Communion, pointing to the initiative known as Mutual Responsibility and Interdependence in the Body of Christ (MRI), which emerged from the 1963 Anglican Congress in Toronto, as the major step that still shapes the understanding of partnership in the Anglican Communion.<sup>2</sup> Although remarkable and positive results have emerged over the last fifty years, much is yet to be accomplished to attain credible outcomes in mission relationships.

There is a growing realisation among churches and Christian mission organisations that 'In the light of multifaceted challenges the world now

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<sup>1</sup> *Patterns of International Mission Structures in the Anglican Communion*: [www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/mission/commissions/missio/d\\_doc.cfm](http://www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/mission/commissions/missio/d_doc.cfm) (accessed 14 May 2014).

<sup>2</sup> It must be mentioned that seven years before the Toronto Congress, Max Warren, the then Church Missionary Society (CMS) General Secretary, published a book, *Partnerships: The Study of an Idea* (London: SCM, 1956), which was based on a series of lectures and in which he articulated a vision for 'partnership' that saw 'unity and mission' as central to its definition and application. No doubt the MRI vision benefited greatly from Warren's work and insights as he was also a key player in the Congress.

faces, a deeper level of collaboration between partners has become more common' and more important and urgent than ever before.<sup>3</sup>

This chapter benefits from and builds upon a paper by the same author: *Mutual Responsibility and Mission* presented at the Conference of Anglican Churches in the Americas, Costa Rica, 22-27 April 2009.<sup>4</sup>

### **The Anglican Communion in Context**

The Anglican Communion is a family of self-governed churches found in thirty-eight regions called provinces. Some of these provinces are nationally based, like the Anglican Church of Canada or the Anglican Church of Kenya, while others constitute a number of countries, such as the Anglican Church of Southern America, which includes Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay.<sup>5</sup>

Some of the churches in the Anglican Communion family are known as Episcopal, such as the Scottish Episcopal Church, the Episcopal Church of the Sudan and South Sudan, and the Episcopal Church in USA. Other members of the Anglican Communion are known as United Churches; these include the Church of Bangladesh, the Church of North India, the Church of Pakistan, and the Church of South India.<sup>6</sup>

This Anglican global family with over 85 million members is found in more than 165 countries in every continent of the world, and has 'over the years developed many and vibrant ways of relating to and enriching one another',<sup>7</sup> both through formal and informal structures.

Much of the present Anglican Communion has roots in the historical outgrowth of the Church of England over centuries of mission enterprise beyond its shores, mostly through historic and more recently established mission agencies. In the nineteenth century, much of this mission outreach happened hand-in-hand with colonial expansion and empire-building. It is widely acknowledged that the flag and the Bible often moved closely together, and were like two sides of the same coin.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> *Partnership* (Compassion's Ministry Philosophy Series) (Colorado Springs, CO: Compassion International, 2011), 29.

<sup>4</sup> John Kafwanka, 'Mutual Responsibility and Mission', paper presented at the Conference of Anglican Churches in the Americas, Costa Rica, 22-27 April 2009.

<sup>5</sup> Until 2014, the Anglican Church of Southern America was known as the Province of Southern Cone (Iglesia Anglicana del Cono Sur de America).

<sup>6</sup> The United Churches belong to another Christian family of churches because of their historical links before the union. See further details in the chapter I wrote under the subject, 'The Five Marks of Mission and the Anglican Communion', in Cathy Ross (ed), *Life-Widening Mission: Global Anglican Perspectives* (Regnum: Oxford, 2012), 143.

<sup>7</sup> Kafwanka, 'The Five Marks of Mission', 143.

<sup>8</sup> Kafwanka et al, *David Livingstone and Christian Mission & Ecumenism Today* (Glasgow, UK: Scottish Episcopal Church, Diocese of Glasgow and Galloway, 2014), 4.

The churches that were so planted were normally considered ‘missionary churches’ or simply ‘missions’ and remained under the leadership of the missionaries, whose support, financial and otherwise, came from the sending mission agencies and churches of their countries of origin. Often this situation prevailed until there was a significant number of trained local personnel to take up leadership roles, or the countries concerned gained political independence. The politics of independence required that both secular and religious leadership should be transferred to indigenous people.

Therefore, many missionary churches grew and became self-governing and self-supporting churches, and developed their own structures from the patterns they had inherited. What is of significance is that the newly autonomous churches ceased to be under direct or indirect control or influence from the mission agencies or supporting churches. This autonomy did not however mean that the churches cut their ties with the mission agencies and the churches that supported them; they in fact not only maintained these relationships, but also remained in ‘communion’ (in relationship) with the See (or Diocese) of Canterbury, recognising (and recognised by) the Archbishop of Canterbury as the spiritual head of the wider Communion of which they were a part. For the Church or province to be part of the Anglican Communion, it has to recognise and be recognised by or be in communion with the Archbishop of Canterbury, who is the *primus inter pares* (first among equals) and *focus of unity* in the Anglican Communion.<sup>9</sup>

As with the rest of world Christianity, the Anglican Communion has seen a shift in the Christian numerical presence in favour of what is referred to as the ‘global South’ or the ‘Majority World’.<sup>10</sup> The majority of Anglicans/Episcopalians are now found in countries that were once under British colonial influence, as British Protectorates, Colonies or Territories.

### **Mission Relationships in the Anglican Communion**

The Anglican Communion is profoundly enriched ‘through a web of relationships’, and through a variety of networks, both official and

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<sup>9</sup> Kafwanka, ‘The Five Marks of Mission’, 143.

<sup>10</sup> It is recognised that ‘global South’ is a much less appealing term, particularly in the context of the shift of church growth, since some countries in the south, such as Australia and New Zealand, have similar patterns as Western Europe and North America, and also that churches in Eastern European countries have not experienced decline similar to those in Western Europe. So, the terms ‘global South’ and ‘Majority World’ are interchangeably used to denote those countries previously referred to as ‘undeveloped’ or ‘Third World’ countries – and ‘Minority World’ to denote what has generally been referred to as ‘Developed World’ or ‘Western World’ respectively. Besides being the host to Majority World population, the Majority World also has the highest populations of Christian membership in the world – and that is also true of the Anglican Communion.

unofficial. Some of these relationships happen through ‘bishops, consultative bodies, companion dioceses, projects of common mission, engagement with ecumenical partners’ among others, and all of which ‘are the means and signs of common life’ in mission.<sup>11</sup> The official Anglican Communion Networks bring together people who are passionate about common themes, and these are endorsed by the Anglican Communion body, the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC).<sup>12</sup>

The Anglican Communion also ‘continues to flourish in a myriad of ways at the local as well as the national and international level’,<sup>13</sup> thereby giving ‘the Communion life and energy’ and ‘the connections and relationships that result from people meeting and engaging in mission in their local situations, supporting each other through prayer and presence’.<sup>14</sup>

Meanwhile, as a result of ‘the increase in travel and the growth of the Communion, there has been a remarkable multiplication in the web of relationships that contribute to the sharing of the Gospel and building of the kingdom’.<sup>15</sup> The coming of digital social networks has brought even more ways for people to connect, form relationships, and share experiences and resources for mission. Virtual communities have become not only common but significant in forging and sustaining mission relationships.

### **The Toronto Congress and the Emergence of Mutual Responsibility and Interdependence**

Anglican mission relationships have been significantly shaped by what emerged from an Anglican Communion gathering in Canada in 1963, the Toronto Congress, which effectively defined how relationships among churches of the Anglican Communion could advance mission through mutual interdependence.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Windsor Report.

<sup>12</sup> The official networks include Anglican Communion Environmental Network, Anglican Communion Health Network, Anglican Indigenous Network, Colleges and Universities of the Anglican Communion, Francophone Network, Anglican Peace and Justice Network, Refugee and Migrant Network, Safe Church Network, International Anglican Family Network, International Anglican Women’s Network, Network for Inter-Faith Concerns in the Anglican Communion, and Youth Network. [www.anglicancommunion.org/networks/index.cfm](http://www.anglicancommunion.org/networks/index.cfm) (accessed 13 May 2014).

<sup>13</sup> Windsor Report 2004 (London: Anglican Communion Office, 2004), 21.

<sup>14</sup> *Communion in Mission & Travelling together in God’s Mission* (London, Anglican Communion Office, 2006), Report of the Inter-Anglican Standing Commission on Mission and Evangelism 2001-05 to the 13<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council in Nottingham, including the interim report to ACC-12, *Travelling Together in God’s Mission*, 51.

<sup>15</sup> *Communion in Mission*, 51

<sup>16</sup> The Toronto Congress report articulates the vision of the Church as the body of Christ, where all parts are interdependent on one another, with no one part having a

The proposal from the Congress ‘was essentially to look at needs (for people, finance, skills and infrastructure) across the Communion and to gather and distribute resources to meet these needs’.<sup>17</sup> The emphasis was on Partnership in Mission and the need to pull together resources, thereby breaking down ‘the donor/recipient mindset of the colonial era and move into new relationships of equality and mutuality, not just in financial sharing but in personnel and other aspects of Christian discipleship’.<sup>18</sup>

Although the majority of those who attended the Toronto Congress were Euro-Americans,<sup>19</sup> the Toronto Congress was a gathering of the breadth of Anglicans – lay, clergy, and bishops from all continents of the world – and it took place at a most important time in the history of colonial politics, particularly in Africa. There was a tidal wave of nations pushing hard to break from colonial rule and determine their own social, economic and political futures as independent nations.

This had implications for the future of all forms of colonial leadership, as well as leadership in the Church which was mostly or even wholly western. The reality was dawning that the time had come for missionaries to hand over leadership to indigenous Christians. The desire for political self-rule, and the necessary consequent shift in leadership, had, I believe, a direct influence on the Anglican Communion’s self-awareness as expressed at the Toronto Congress.<sup>20</sup>

The Archbishop of York (later to become the Archbishop of Canterbury), Donald Coggan, presented a paper to the Congress, entitled ‘Mutual Responsibility and Interdependence in the Body of Christ: *A message from the Primates and Metropolitans of the Anglican Communion*’.<sup>21</sup> He said, ‘It is a platitude to say that in our time, areas of the

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sense of being indispensable or superior, but operating as equals, with the capacity to give as well as to receive. This was the vision the Anglican Communion articulated through the Toronto Congress.

<sup>17</sup> *Patterns of International Mission Structures in the Anglican Communion*.

<sup>18</sup> *Patterns of International Mission Structures in the Anglican Communion*.

<sup>19</sup> Although most Anglican Provinces were represented at the Toronto Congress, it is important to note that the majority of the Church leadership at the time, even in countries outside Europe and North America, were Euro-American. That has since changed and the opposite is now the case.

<sup>20</sup> The Bishop of Accra in 1963, himself a European, spoke of the ‘two words of reproach [“neo-colonialism” and “imperialism”] which echo around the new nations ... which have lately won their freedom from the bondage of their former colonial status’, and how he found himself in ‘that particular hazard ... exactly a year ago’. Anglican Congress, Report of the proceedings – August 13-23 (Toronto, Canada: Editorial Committee Anglican Congress, 1963) 126.

<sup>21</sup> Anglican Congress Report, Toronto, 1963, 117. The Archbishop of Canterbury at the time (the Most Rev. A.M. Ramsey) explained in his commentary speech to the Congress that the document ‘originates from the Advisory Council on Mission and Strategy and from a subsequent meeting the Primates and Metropolitans’ following a process of ‘much thought ... and prayer’ by the people involved who included the

world which have been thought of as dependent and secondary are suddenly striding to the centre of the stage, in a new and breathtaking independence and self reliance ... It is now irrelevant to talk “giving” and “receiving” churches. The keynotes of our time are equality, interdependence, mutual responsibility.’<sup>22</sup>

The communiqué from the Congress stated in part:

We thank God that he has made us a worldwide fellowship of many races, so that the riches and talents of one church may meet the needs of another. All receive from God: all are called to give to others. We can no longer think of some churches doing all the giving, and some doing all the receiving. We pray that our congregations may learn to give and to receive men, money and ideas, with true and sensitive Christian love ... *we welcome for serious study the plan presented to us by our church leaders, called ‘mutual responsibility and interdependent in the body of Christ.’*<sup>23</sup>

Toronto saw the emergence of the vision of mutual responsibility and interdependence in the Body of Christ, the vision which recognised that no one particular Church in the Anglican family (or any part of the Christian family) had everything or could accomplish Christ’s mission alone, but that the Church’s calling to participate in God’s mission was premised on the spirit of interdependence in the Body of Christ.<sup>24</sup>

This conviction meant that the challenges and opportunities for engagement in evangelism and evangelisation – church growth and social action – could only be faced and articulated by the whole body of Christ. Each part would have only a partial glimpse of the true reality of God’s vision for the world. The full picture could only adequately be conceived by the sum total of all its parts, and with the skills and resources each brought to the whole.

*Mutual Responsibility and Interdependent in the Body of Christ*, or MRI, as it came to be commonly known, was an important step in developing the language and understanding of partnership in the Anglican Communion, and continues to shape and affect mission relationships today.

Archbishop Coggan went on to say:

We must face maturely and without sentimentality the nature of the Anglican Communion, and its implications for us all of the one Lord whose mission holds us all together in one Body. To use the words ‘older’ or ‘younger’ or ‘sending’ or ‘receiving’ with respect to the churches is unreal and untrue in

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‘[laity] and the priests and bishops from every part of our widespread communion’ (Congress Report, 123).

<sup>22</sup> Anglican Congress Report, Toronto, 1963, 118. The document Archbishop Coggan presented, found on pages 117-22 of the Toronto Congress report, originated from ‘the Advisory Council on Missionary Strategy’, and was subsequently reflected on and endorsed by a ‘meeting of primates and metropolitans’, 123.

<sup>23</sup> Anglican Congress Report, Toronto, 1963, 264.

<sup>24</sup> 1 Corinthians 12: 12-31.

the world and in our Communion. Mission is not the kindness of the lucky to the unlucky; it is mutual, united obedience to the one God whose mission it is. The form of the Church must reflect that.<sup>25</sup>

The above statement reflects a strong conviction of the kind of mission relationships the Anglican Communion was to foster, and the rationale for fostering healthy relationships. The Archbishop of Canterbury, the Most Revd Michael Ramsey, in his own reflection at the Toronto Congress, pointed out that the aim of MRI was a new way of doing things, which meant ‘the sharing of common responsibility by all churches with one another’,<sup>26</sup> and therefore ‘the bearing of one another’s burdens’, because ‘A Church which lives to itself will die by itself’.<sup>27</sup>

It was thus recognised that the Anglican Communion could no longer see itself as a European Christianity extended into other parts of the world, but was instead a Communion of autonomous churches, firmly anchored in various traditions and cultures of the world.

At the time of the Toronto Congress (1963), several countries had become independent from Britain and many others were in the process of securing political emancipation. Seventeen churches or provinces (out of the current 38, including the Church of England) had already become self-governing. The changing reality of the Communion was clearly reflected in the choice of the theme of the conference, Mutual Responsibility and Interdependent in the Body of Christ (MRI).<sup>28</sup>

The Congress was keen to inculcate and communicate a vision for the Anglican family that was based on relationships of mutuality and interdependence rather than dependence and paternalism. This was no doubt a far-sighted vision and one which caught the imagination of the moment with lasting impact on the life of Anglican family. In this way ‘The Communion as a whole began its journey from paternalism to partnership in its mission relations’.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Anglican Congress Report, Toronto, 1963, 120-21.

<sup>26</sup> Anglican Congress Report, Toronto, 1963, 123. Archbishop Ramsey envisaged a process developing from this concept that would concern every part of the Communion in response to the challenges and opportunities in any context of the Communion.

<sup>27</sup> Anglican Congress Report, Toronto, 1963, 125. Archbishop Ramsey used a verse in Paul’s letter to the Romans to underscore how the Church should not live to itself – Romans 14:7.

<sup>28</sup> The then Bishop of Accra, the Rt Rev. Richard R. Roseveare, SSM, spoke of ‘nations which have lately won their freedom from the bondage of their former colonial status’. He also spoke about how ‘This new vision of mutual responsibility and interdependence in the Body of Christ utterly repudiates every suggestion of “ecclesiastical neo-colonialism”’, in reference to the language used by politicians in newly independent nations of possible ‘neo-colonialism’ and ‘imperialism’ by ‘rich powerful nations’, the former colonisers. Anglican Congress Report, Toronto, 1963, 126.

<sup>29</sup> *Patterns of International Mission Structures in the Anglican Communion*.

The then Bishop of Tokyo, the Rt Revd David M. Goto, spoke of MRI as an inauguration of ‘a new era in our common life’, and how ‘it stirs new and exciting ventures where we did not even dare to dream’.<sup>30</sup> Bishop Goto, who spoke ‘for one of the so-called “younger churches”’ also observed:

Formerly a giver and a receiver faced each other, each preoccupied with the reactions of each to the other, each ashamed, both with anxious eyes fastened on the gift. Now we are released from this, for we are to stand hand in hand facing one great missionary task. Our whole relationship in giving and receiving will be lifted to a new dimension. Where, before, some of us felt we had no gifts because we were confronting those who thought they had everything, now we shall discover that all have gifts that are needed and, in giving, shall receive.<sup>31</sup>

What made the MRI significant was its focus on mission, described as ‘the life-blood of the church’ by the then Bishop of Nagpur in India, the Rt Revd John W. Sadiq. He warned that if mission ‘weakens, anaemia sets in and the Church is in danger of serious sickness, if not of death’.<sup>32</sup>

Meanwhile, Bishop Goto pointed out that the MRI vision meant that the Anglican Communion needed to face the task (Christ’s mission) together as a Body of Christ.<sup>33</sup> In fact, the communiqué went even further by observing that Anglicans did not have monopoly of God’s truth’, and needed to learn from others, especially by attentive listening to what God had to say, because, among other things, God ‘speaks through [people] of other faiths and through those involved in this world’s affairs, whether or not they recognised him’.<sup>34</sup>

Interestingly, the MRI vision did not initially materialise in the spirit of the letter, as we shall see later, but it certainly led to very important steps which today have affected mission relationships in the Anglican Communion and beyond.

### **From Mutual Responsibility and Interdependence (MRI) to Partnership in Mission (PIM)**

When the MRI was reviewed by the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) about ten years later at its first and second meetings,<sup>35</sup> it became evident

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<sup>30</sup> Anglican Congress Report, Toronto, 1963, 125.

<sup>31</sup> Anglican Congress Report, Toronto, 1963, 125-26.

<sup>32</sup> Anglican Congress Report, Toronto, 1963, 127.

<sup>33</sup> Anglican Congress Report, Toronto, 1963, 125-26.

<sup>34</sup> Anglican Congress Report, Toronto, 1963, 164.

<sup>35</sup> The Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) is the only body in the Anglican Communion that is established by a constitution with representation from all 48 Anglican Provinces, and functions like a synodical body that brings together bishops, ordained clergy and lay members to consult. The ACC was established through a resolution by the meeting of bishops from the worldwide Anglican Communion, known as the Lambeth Conference, in 1968. The 1968 resolution was

that both the implementation and outcomes fell short of the success story initially envisaged at the Toronto Congress.

It also became clear that the implementation of MRI was flawed from the beginning. Part of the reason was that, no sooner had the Congress articulated the vision of *all* to be ‘givers and receivers’ than it endorsed a request for project proposals to be submitted from churches in the ‘economically poor’ countries, traditionally known as ‘receivers’; this was notwithstanding the call ‘that every church seek the way to receive as well as to give’.<sup>36</sup> These project proposals were later compiled in a directory called ‘The Directory of Projects’ which was kept at ‘the ACC office and circulated to all member-churches for support’.<sup>37</sup>

The problem with this approach was not simply the fact that a ‘projects directory’ existed at all (which certainly in itself was a recipe for failure), but it was aimed at assisting ‘new’ and ‘younger’ churches on the premise that they had nothing they could do for themselves.

A fund of £5 million (or US \$15million at the time) was set up to support the theological education of both lay and ordained, and the building of new churches and other infrastructure in new provinces.<sup>38</sup> But it was the financially affluent churches from Euro-America that contributed significantly to this enterprise, and the beneficiaries were the churches that had been previously described as no longer ‘younger churches’. Despite the good intentions behind this venture, it failed to instil a spirit of mutual responsibility and interdependence among the churches of the Anglican Communion.

It can be argued that the conditions were not right at the time to forge an MRI vision, when most of the emerging provinces were in nations that had recently become or were in the process of becoming politically independent from European colonial governments. These nations were trying to become economically independent, but had little or no support infrastructure in place for sustainability and growth. Therefore, recognising this reality, project support and funding were seen as the answer to building capacity in the newly established provinces. As such, the funding requests came from those countries which were already known as ‘recipients’ and ‘younger’ churches.

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to establish the ACC as an instrument of ‘common life’ and ‘common action’. See the report from the first meeting, *The Time is Now*, Anglican Consultative Council First Meeting, Limuru, Kenya, 23 February-5 March 1971 (London: SPCK, 1971), vii, and the report for the Second Meeting, *Partners in Mission*, Anglican Consultative Council Meeting, Dublin, 17-27 July 1973 (London: SPCK, 1973), 53. ACC meets every three years and passes resolutions which are commended to the churches of the Communion.

<sup>36</sup> Anglican Congress Report, Toronto, 1963, 121.

<sup>37</sup> *Partners in Mission*, AAC, Dublin, July 1973, 53.

<sup>38</sup> Anglican Congress Report, Toronto, 1963, 119.

The existing designation then of the new and emerging provinces as ‘younger’ churches did not instil confidence or encourage self-sustainability. Even after the challenge posed by MRI, the prospect of project funding meant that the churches reverted to the mindset and concept of ‘mother’ and ‘younger’ churches. Those which had more resources ought to give to those that did not have enough, without thinking through how those that gave financial resources would receive in return.

Then there was the reality that those churches that were to benefit from the Directory of Projects were still largely under the leadership and control of the European bishops and clergy, all of whom were drawing their salary and support from their sending churches and agencies in Europe, America and Australia. This connection could not be brought to an abrupt end since the missionaries lived in ‘receiving’ countries. One would assume therefore that it was in their own personal interest to keep the lines of foreign income sources open. It must however be pointed out that while the project funding was not used for salaries of expatriate missionaries, it certainly supported and enhanced their ministry.

The undue emphasis then (and now) on money as the major, if not the only, resource for mission meant (and still means) that those with money were seen as the ones who *had* resources to give or share, and those who did not have the money had no resources to give or share. Over-emphasis on money and projects created unhealthy dependence (if indeed there can be healthy dependence) to the extent that some of those who were receivers hardly appreciated the potential of local resources, and those who thought they were ‘rich’ could not appreciate how much they would gain even from those considered as their ‘daughter’ churches.

This wrong emphasis on money has continued to affect credible ways of developing meaningful partnerships within the Anglican Communion and in the wider body of Christ. The association of money with power meant that those who controlled the purse also controlled the relationships, and this balance of power did not shift an inch. The same can be said today, that, in spite of clear recognition of the ‘shift of Christian gravity from *north* to *south* in reference to the growth in membership and Church attendance in churches once referred to as ‘younger’ or daughter’, such ‘shift’ does not correspond with the ‘shift’ in power, influence and control of the affairs in world Christianity, this still remains in the hands of the minority Church of the north. Probably not surprisingly, the MRI dream of ‘the rebirth of the Anglican Communion, which means the death of many old things ... [and] the rebirth of entirely new relationships’<sup>39</sup> could not be realised.

This however was not the death of the spirit of MRI, but rather became an important learning curve and an opportunity for the Anglican Communion to reflect and ponder on the achievements and failures of the

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<sup>39</sup> Anglican Congress Report, Toronto, 1963, 122.

implementation of MRI. The second ACC meeting in Dublin in 1973 (also referred to as ACC-2), in its review of MRI, recognised the ineffective way the MRI was implemented, and stated that ‘the MRI concept has ... been too largely identified with the Directory of Projects, and this in turn has led to a “shopping list” mentality.’<sup>40</sup>

Such sharp self-assessment by the Anglican Communion was crucial in developing a better and more credible way forward for mission relationships. ACC-2 felt it was time ‘to develop and foster more effective patterns of consultation and working relationships between the member-churches of the Anglican Communion’,<sup>41</sup> and proposed an Anglican Communion-wide consultation process, known as *Partnership in Mission* (PIM). This was to replace the Directory of Projects as a better way of implementing MRI. The PIM consultation process was ‘based on the principle that the Church in each place took lead responsibility for mission in that place, but that the wider Communion could provide both insight and resources to assist with that mission’.<sup>42</sup> This was to underscore the autonomous nature of the local church in the Communion and the interdependent way churches were to relate to each other as the Body of Christ. This vision is vividly set out in the ACC-2 report:

The responsibility for mission in any place belongs *primarily* to the church in that place. However, the universality of the oneness of God’s mission means also that this mission must be shared in each and every place with fellow-Christians in each and every part of the world with their distinctive insights and contributions. If we once acted as though there were only givers who had nothing to receive and receivers who had nothing to give, the oneness of the missionary task must now make us all both givers and receivers.<sup>43</sup>

The PIM process was intended to be a means by which the local church would determine its own mission priorities but with input of Anglicans invited from other regions. It was meant to be a ‘Communion-wide programme to enable the sharing of people, funds, ideas, insights, experience, prayer and information across the churches of the Communion, with the intention of providing mutual support in engagement with the wider society in each locality where the Anglican Church was set’. In return, the invited churches and organisations would not only help ‘in identifying priorities for ... mission and ministry [of the local church]’ but would ‘take back lessons and insights to the churches from which they came’.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>40</sup> *Partners in Mission*, AAC, Dublin, July 1973, 53-54.

<sup>41</sup> *Partners in Mission*, AAC, Dublin, July 1973, 55.

<sup>42</sup> The journey so far: [www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/mission/commissions/iascome/app1.cfm](http://www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/mission/commissions/iascome/app1.cfm) (accessed 13 May 2014).

<sup>43</sup> *Partners in Mission*, AAC, Dublin, July 1973, 53.

<sup>44</sup> The journey so far.

Some 65 of these consultations took place between 1973 and 1989. The whole process has been acknowledged to be an important point in the life of the Anglican Communion with ‘far-reaching significance’.<sup>45</sup>

It is undeniable that the PIM consultations enabled the churches of the Anglican Communion to focus on mission and its priorities as the Church’s primary calling.<sup>46</sup> The process also produced a variety of mission relationships as Anglicans interacted and shared in one another’s experience. Thus, the process became a platform for those who had never been outside their local context to gain experience and take it back to their own local church. In this way, the consultations ‘provided a means of expressing’ the sense of ‘mutual partnership’ that had not been experienced before.<sup>47</sup>

Probably most significant is the fact that the consultations paved the way for the emergence of Companion Dioceses (also known as Companion Links), which were recommended to all churches of the Anglican Communion at the 1998 Lambeth Conference.<sup>48</sup> PIM ‘helped to get the language of partnership, receiving and giving, of mutuality more in the bloodstream of the Anglican Communion’.<sup>49</sup> It is therefore not surprising that the PIM consultation process was responsible for the Ten Principles of partnership, produced in 1992.<sup>50</sup>

### From PIM to Companion Link Partnership

The ten principles which the 1993 ACC meeting adopted were to act as ‘benchmarks’ against which to measure mission partnerships in the Anglican Communion, and they are summarised under the ten following headings: Local Initiative, Mutuality, Responsible Stewards, Interdependence, Cross fertilisation, Integrity, Transparency, Solidarity, Meeting together, and Acting Ecumenically.<sup>51</sup> These still remain very much the core values of the Anglican Communion’s mission relationships. What is questionable however is the level of adherence to these principles.

<sup>45</sup> *Patterns of International Mission Structures in the Anglican Communion.*

<sup>46</sup> *Patterns of International Mission Structures in the Anglican Communion.*

<sup>47</sup> *Patterns of International Mission Structures in the Anglican Communion.*

<sup>48</sup> The consultations lasted from 1973 to about 1989. See Resolution II.3, *Companion Dioceses* in The Official Report of the Lambeth Conference 1998: *Transformation and Renewal July 18-August 9, 1998* (Canterbury, UK: Lambeth Palace, and Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 1998), 389. or here: [www.lambethconference.org/resolutions/1998/1998-2-3.cfm](http://www.lambethconference.org/resolutions/1998/1998-2-3.cfm) (accessed 13 May 2014).

<sup>49</sup> *Patterns of International Mission Structures in the Anglican Communion.*

<sup>50</sup> *Patterns of International Mission Structures in the Anglican Communion.* List of the Ten Principles: there is no doubt that the current partnership principles need to be revised and updated, both in content and language: [www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/mission/companion/comprel.cfm](http://www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/mission/companion/comprel.cfm) (accessed 13 May 2014).

<sup>51</sup> *Patterns of International Mission Structures in the Anglican Communion.*

During the 1990s there was ‘a significant narrowing of the meaning [and use] of the term partnership’.<sup>52</sup> ‘Partnership’ had meant relationship between churches or between churches and agencies with roots in *koinonia*, and implied the ‘sharing found within the life of the Trinity, into which Christians are drawn into Christ and into God’s mission’; but during the 1980s and 90s partnership was broadened, as a ‘missionary’ became known as a ‘mission partner’, and the term started losing appeal among many Anglicans. The adopted and preferred term in place of partnership to describe relationships between churches in the Anglican Communion was ‘companion’. ‘Companion’ was found to communicate effectively what was implied in church-to-church relationships.

It has been pointed out that the word companionship ‘speaks of those who are equals taking part in a journey together, relating, supporting, encouraging, communicating, breaking bread and being together’, and also ‘speaks of values, trust, listening, generosity, encouragement, support and sharing’.<sup>53</sup> In companionship, no one is dominant. Instead, companionships imply solidarity or ‘standing with each other in times of struggle and suffering’.<sup>54</sup> It was concluded that, although the term partnership ‘should not be lost’, it was time to ‘speak more the language of companionship in order to encourage this breadth and depth of quality in mission relationships’.<sup>55</sup> Ultimately, the use of Companion Link language was seen as a way of giving new meaning to the PIM process.

It can be argued that a properly understood and articulated meaning of partnership would have all the elements mentioned above, and conversely a poorly understood or articulated companionship would have the same pitfalls as can be found in partnership. It is therefore more than just the use of right words, or getting the theology right; it has also to do with how those involved apply in practice the principles and theology.

In the Anglican Communion, Companion Link is understood as a mission relationship established between one or more dioceses (hence Diocesan Companion Link), in which all agree to journey together in the hope that the experience of each other would inform or impact on the work of all in their own local context. It also means that in such a relationship there would be mutual learning and sharing in struggles, prayer, and any other resources to enrich each other.

While some of these links started in the late 1960s as individual initiatives of a bishop, priest or lay person, Companion Links emerged initially from MRI, and then later the PIM consultations process from the early 1970s.<sup>56</sup> The PIM process was designed to get away from the practice

<sup>52</sup> *Patterns of International Mission Structures in the Anglican Communion.*

<sup>53</sup> *Patterns of International Mission Structures in the Anglican Communion.*

<sup>54</sup> *Patterns of International Mission Structures in the Anglican Communion.* See section on ‘Partnership to Companionship?’

<sup>55</sup> *Patterns of International Mission Structures in the Anglican Communion.*

<sup>56</sup> [www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/mission/companion/comprel.cfm](http://www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/mission/companion/comprel.cfm)

whereby mission agencies were doing local work, by encouraging the Church in each local context to take responsibility for mission. It left room for churches and agencies to share insights from local priorities and take lessons back to their own context. Companion Links became the natural outcome and vehicle to take forward the PIM vision, which had been built on the values of mutuality, accountability and transparency.

Companionship implies relationship; therefore, Companion Links are people-oriented with the emphasis on face-to-face mutual support. This often translates into the exchange of visits from those at leadership level and those at the grassroots, resulting in increased awareness of each other's mission context and priorities and discerning ways for mutual support 'and solidarity in the cause of Christ'.<sup>57</sup>

Companion Links can be formal or informal. Formal links tend to include the signing of a memorandum of agreement or a covenant. In some cases, this is for a fixed and renewable period of time, while in other cases it is an open-ended relationship, which can be reviewed from time to time.

Because of the significance of Companion Links among churches of the Anglican Communion, the 1998 Lambeth Conference, 'resolved that each diocese of the Communion should, by the time of the next Lambeth Conference [in 2008], have made a serious effort to identify one or more dioceses as a companion, in a formal and informal ways'.<sup>58</sup>

At the 2008 Lambeth Conference, a self-select workshop session on Companion Links was among the best attended sessions. Most of those bishops who attended came either from churches that had a Companion Link relationship already or were looking for the possibility of developing one. At a time of tension in the Communion over sexuality debates, which led to a significant number of bishops boycotting the conference, the attendance for this workshop was an important affirmation, not only of the commitment by many bishops to develop ties, but also their recognition of the value of the Companion Links in enhancing mission relationships in the life of the Communion.

Since then there have been many enquiries about Companion Links between dioceses, both from those interested in forming new ones and those in the process of reviewing existing ones. The growth of interest among Anglican dioceses (and parishes) in renewing and forming new

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(accessed 13 May 2014). The PIM process was commissioned by the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) at its meeting in Dublin, in 1973.

<sup>57</sup> Guideline for Companion Link Relationships [http://www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/mission/commissions/missio/d\\_doc.cfm#sthash.HI7jmVBX.dpuf](http://www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/mission/commissions/missio/d_doc.cfm#sthash.HI7jmVBX.dpuf) & <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/mission/companion/comprel.cfm>.

<sup>58</sup> The Lambeth Conference is a meeting of bishops in the Anglican Communion invited by the Archbishop of Canterbury normally once every ten years. See 'Resolution II.3' *Companion Dioceses* in the Official Report of the Lambeth Conference 1998: *Transformation and Renewal July 18-August 9, 1998 Lambeth Palace; Canterbury, England* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 1998), 389.

companion relationships has seen a trend of upward growth. Behind this growth are many success stories of Companion Links.

Many Companion Diocesan link relationships have existed for over forty years, and many of them tend to follow the patterns of historical colonial relationships.<sup>59</sup> As most of the churches in the Anglican Communion trace their roots to the Church of England, mostly through the mission agencies which were responsible for planting churches overseas, a lot of the Companion Links are between churches in England and those in former English colonies or protectorates. Even more interesting is the fact that some of these relationships follow the pattern of the mission agencies in England that were responsible for church plants overseas. For example, churches in England that supported the Church Mission Society (CMS) have established links with churches that were established or planted by CMS, while those that supported the United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (USPG now called Us) developed partnership links with churches established by USPG.<sup>60</sup> There are other links such as with the Scottish Episcopal Church, the Church of Ireland, the Church in Wales, the Episcopal Church, and the churches in South America, Asia, Pacific, and Africa.

There are other patterns of linking, but historically the one that stands out is where a church from an economically well-off place is linked to one from an ‘economically needy’ country. These are the most common and popular forms of linking, and it is important to understand this reality in order to appreciate both the nature and character of these relationships. There are Companion Links between churches within the same economic sphere but they are fewer. The dioceses in the Communion are encouraged to develop links in and with those churches in similar socio-economic experience – such as ‘south-south’ and ‘north-north’ – in order to break down the inherited historic attitudes and practices that ‘promote’ the paternalism and dependence of donor-receiver relationships – and also to encourage the spirit of sharing and learning of relevant experience and other resources.

Although much has been achieved and changed, the old attitudes of paternalism and dependence, especially in relationships among churches between the so-called ‘developed’ and ‘underdeveloped’ countries, still remain, and characterise a lot of companion relationships. It may require generations for a complete change of mindset on both sides.

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<sup>59</sup> A historic pattern of church planting by historic mission agencies partly explains today’s mission relationships among churches.

<sup>60</sup> The example of Winchester Diocese, a strong supporter of CMS with its links with East Africa, is a case in point. CMS and USPG (the latter now known as Us) are two of the main historic Church of England mission agencies that were responsible for much of the church planting during the colonial and missionary expansion of the Church of England.

A priest from the Anglican Church in Zambia has talked about how he, while visiting a partner church in England, proposed that his church undertook a joint funding of two mission projects, one in the UK and another one in his home country. Although his proposal created a positive possibility for mutuality in the companion relationship, it was turned down by his UK partner church because, as far as he understood, such a venture would make the Church in England appear to be receiving support from the partner they have always helped.

This example highlights two things. The first is that it illustrates the growing confidence and change in attitude among Christians in the Majority World and the determination to forge a more credible partnership that is characterised by mutual interdependence and collaboration. The second shows that there is still a lot to be done to transform paternalistic and superiority attitudes in companion relationships in order to attain mutuality.

Quite often Europeans are seen or present themselves as having no challenges of their own, and that money is what they have in abundance. It would help if a European or American visiting a partner church in the Majority World would talk about their own challenges and struggles, so that the host partner does not only have an appreciation of the shared challenges but may find common areas for joint mission action that takes into account the two contexts.

Sadly, the only picture of the Minority World most people in the Majority World have is that of material prosperity and, conversely, the common picture of the Majority World people in the Minority World have is that of poverty and hunger. Few seem to talk or see poverty in the 'materially rich' Minority World and few seem to see the richness in the 'poverty and hunger' Majority World. The growing number of people travelling across nations and cultures increases the awareness as well as the change in attitude of both self and others.

The *World Shaped Mission* report by the Church of England analysed 'world mission' relationships, and highlighted and questioned some of the attitudes in Companion Link relationships that have been characterised by paternalism and dependence. The report calls all those involved to commit themselves to forging relationships that are based on mutuality and interdependence.<sup>61</sup> This is an important document which, if followed up with robust self-assessment and the evaluation of existing companion relationships in the light of the partnership principles, could significantly impact on the nature and character of mission relationships in the coming decades between dioceses in the Church of England and those they are linked with from the Majority World.

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<sup>61</sup> Janice Price, *World-shaped Mission: Exploring new frameworks for the Church of England in world mission* (London, 2012: The Archbishops' Council). I contributed to this report as a member of the World Mission and Anglican Communion Panel.

The Anglican Church in Aotearoa/New Zealand and Polynesia has something to teach others from the lessons learnt in the process of dealing with the past mistakes, and in becoming a Church that values everyone, regardless of their ethnic or cultural background. One of those lessons, encapsulated in the 1992 Constitution which ‘provides for three partners [*Tikanga*] to order their affairs within their own cultural context’, is to treat each other as equals.<sup>62</sup> It is, for instance, acknowledged that no longer can white citizens look down upon others since they have realised that they can learn from those they previously thought had nothing to teach them. So the three *Tikanga* exist on the principle that they can learn from each other and are equal.<sup>63</sup>

Meanwhile, in spite of the potential which Companion Link relationships have, they generally tended to focus on money, especially fund-raising to support projects in the so-called poor areas by their counterparts in those dioceses considered to be economically rich. This practice has only contributed to a culture of dependence and paternalism, where money and projects have, as previously, taken the centre stage and have consequently, in many cases, dictated the nature and quality of relationships. The main difference is that, while previously a Directory of Projects was managed centrally from the Anglican Communion Office, projects now have been much more dispersed and managed by Companion Links themselves.

The old colonial attitudes of the ‘rich North’ providing solutions for the ‘poor South’ continue to mirror mission relationships in the Communion at various levels, most especially among Companion Links and among mission agencies, to the extent that instead of seeing mission relationships as an opportunity to ‘serve’ together with, it is often seen as a way of ‘providing’ or ‘receiving’ support.

The statement by the ACC-2 meeting in Dublin in 1973 that, ‘If we once acted as though there were only givers who had nothing to receive, and receivers who had nothing to give, the oneness of the missionary task must now make us all both givers and receivers’<sup>64</sup> can still be said and with the same meaning today as it was forty years ago.

The Communion’s desire for relationships of mutual interdependence as originally articulated by the Toronto Congress still remains largely an aspiration, as not much has changed in the past fifty years, and certainly a lot needs to be done. However, in the light of the changes in the global mission context in general, and within the Anglican Communion in particular, the future looks positive and promising.

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<sup>62</sup> [www.anglican.org.nz](http://www.anglican.org.nz) (accessed 10 November 2013)

<sup>63</sup> This became very clear in my conversation with Bishop John Paterson (former bishop of Auckland) during his visit to London in September 2012.

<sup>64</sup> Partners in Mission, Anglican Consultative Council Meeting Dublin, 17-27 July 1973 (London: SPCK, 1973), 53.

## Conclusion

The credibility and effectiveness of God's mission in the world are not disconnected from the nature and quality of mission relationships in the Church and among Christians; in fact, it largely depends on the interdependent nature of mission relationships. Jesus said the quality of the disciples' internal relationships would make people know that they are his disciples. So the way Christians relate to one another in public as well as in private is an important witness to Christ, and has the ability to draw people to Christ or even to repel them.

The inevitable reality of the interconnected world of today is such that relationships (and especially Christian relationships) must be characterised by collaboration that is based on a real sense of mutuality and respect.

The Anglican Communion has over many years been attempting to articulate and cultivate the importance of credible mission relationships – and the Toronto Congress in 1963, where the language of 'Mutual Responsibility and Interdependence (MRI)' emerged, produced the most significant message, whose implications and influence continues to challenge the Church today.<sup>65</sup>

The invitation for the Church, the Body of Christ, to participate in God's mission<sup>66</sup> is so that each Christian, each congregation or parish, each diocese, each province, each denomination, each Church tradition, will bring and use its gifts – the gifts endowed them by God – to benefit others, and also that it will benefit from the gifts of others, in honour, and to the glory of, God.

The invitation is to be in a right and flourishing relationship with God and with one another, and this is at the very core of the story of salvation, and indeed the core of the Gospel.<sup>67</sup>

The common thread in the 'Common Call' of the international Edinburgh 2010 centenary celebration conference was the importance of and the need to 'work together' as a calling. It stated that: 'In joy we hear the call to receive from one another in our witness by word and action,' and that: 'Because we are all made in the image of God, we will draw on one another's unique charisms, challenge each other to grow in faith and understanding, share resources equitably worldwide, and involve the entire human being and the whole family of God.'<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Anglican Congress Report, Toronto, 1963. The report articulates the vision of the Church as a body of Christ, where all parts are interdependent on one another, with no one part having a sense of indispensable or superiority, but with all operating as equals, with the capacity to give as well as to receive. This was the vision the Anglican Communion articulated through the Toronto Congress.

<sup>66</sup> Matthew 28:16-20; Mark 16:14-18; Acts 1:8; 2 Corinthians 5:18-19.

<sup>67</sup> Romans 3-8.

<sup>68</sup> See Points 6 and 7 of the 'Common Call': [www.oikoumene.org/fileadmin/files/.../Common\\_Call\\_final.pdf](http://www.oikoumene.org/fileadmin/files/.../Common_Call_final.pdf) (accessed 20 September 2013). The Edinburgh 2010 'Common Call' was the official statement from the centenary celebration of

Meanwhile, a better understanding of the stewardship of resources helps those in partnership to appreciate that, while through their energy and resourcefulness they have built up resources which they can bring to the disposal of others, they ought to realise that those resources are held in trust for the ‘benefit’ not just of themselves but others, and ultimately for enhancing God’s mission. For every resource comes from God.

There are a number of factors that make the ground much more fertile now than ever before to claim that ‘The Time is Now’<sup>69</sup> for the Anglican Communion, and indeed for the whole Body of Christ to embrace mission relationships that are characterised by collaboration and mutual interdependence – learning, sharing and supporting one another in mission in a way that recognises that ‘we need each other’, not only ‘to become fully human’ but in order to fully grasp and effectively communicate the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the world.

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the 1910 Edinburgh conference. The Anglican Communion was represented by nine delegates from seven Provinces, six of whom were young Anglican leaders.

<sup>69</sup> The twenty-one Anglican Churches of the Communion at the time passed a resolution at the 1968 Lambeth Conference to establish an Anglican Consultative Council to be an instrument of ‘common life’ and ‘common action’. *The Time is Now*, Anglican Consultative Council First Meeting, Limuru, Kenya, 23 February-5 March 1971 (London: SPCK, 1971), vii.

**ONE IN THE SPIRIT?  
PENTECOSTALS AND THE YEARNING FOR  
CHRISTIAN UNITY: A CASE STUDY OF THE  
SWISS PENTECOSTAL MISSION AND ITS INITIATIVES  
TOWARDS UNITY IN THE SPIRIT**

Jean-Daniel Pluess

**Introduction**

Many early Pentecostal leaders have repeatedly stated a desire to unite in the name of Christ, through the power of the Spirit and to the glory of God. After all, being ‘one in the Spirit’, as Paul states it in 1 Corinthians 6:17, Philippians 1:27 and 2:2, or Luke’s phrase in ‘one accord’ in the book of Acts, were the hallmark of the early church. Like a literary inclusion, being in one accord is mentioned at the beginning and at the end of the second chapter of Acts, as if it were an account of the quintessential Pentecostal church. Nineteen centuries later, and after the Reformation was largely responsible for bringing about a fragmentation of the Christian witness into many denominations, early Pentecostal leaders felt that the Holy Spirit would bring about a fresh unity so that the Good News could be preached in all parts of the world before the second coming of Christ would take place. The main reason was to present a credible witness to the Gospel ‘in these last days’ and the desire to allow the Holy Spirit to blow wherever God wished. Another reason for achieving unity was to enable co-operation across denominational lines. The task at hand was huge and co-operation was of the essence. A third reason for the quest towards unity was the often overlooked fact that the early Pentecostal leaders had a common experience in the Spirit, but at the same time they came from a variety of ecclesial traditions and cherished different theological convictions. Obviously, the question of unity was highly relevant.

This chapter<sup>1</sup> will take a look at how a small Pentecostal denomination has worked towards Christian unity over the past one hundred years. The *Swiss Pentecostal Mission* – or the *Pentecostal Assemblies of Switzerland*,

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<sup>1</sup> An earlier version of this paper was presented at a meeting of the World Alliance for Pentecostal Theological Education at the 23rd Pentecostal World Conference in Kuala Lumpur, 26-30 August 2013, as ‘In One Accord ... Pentecostals and the Yearning for Christian Unity: A Case Study of the Swiss Pentecostal Mission and Its Initiatives Towards Unity in the Spirit’.

as they now call themselves in English – provides valuable insight into the dynamics at hand: the perceived move of the Holy Spirit, the ambitions of leaders from involved denominations, as well as the historical circumstances that provided opportunities and drawbacks. We will basically follow the chronological developments and touch on the various expressions of working towards unity in the Spirit. In concluding, reasons will be given that motivated actions towards unity and co-operation.

### **The Beginnings**

The Pentecostal movement came to Switzerland in the summer of 1907 through two women missionaries from Norway that had previously brought the Pentecostal message to Kassel in Germany. The meetings there generated quite a stir. People began to experience the gifts of the Holy Spirit in very audible, visible and physical ways. After three weeks of revival, the meetings had to be closed because things got out of hand. Fortunately, however, the ladies travelled faster than the public reports of these events. In Zurich, Switzerland, they met a small group that was open to their message and, before long, a Pentecostal church was born there. Similar events took place in other European cities, and the respective leaders of the new Pentecostal congregations kept in touch with each other. This led to an interesting phenomenon.

The fact that the church in Zurich had visiting pastors from Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Great Britain and other nations meant that, on the one hand, they experienced unity through their common understanding of the Holy Spirit's move. They were in one accord, because they all had experienced the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, some of these pastors were Anglican, like C.E.D. de Labillière, the first Pastor of the Pentecostal church in Zurich, or A.A. Boddy, a key figure in English Pentecostalism. Others were Methodist, like T.B. Barratt, who visited the congregation in Zurich twice and almost decided to become their Pastor in 1909, Geritt Polman, the Pentecostal Pastor in Amsterdam, who had been an officer of the Salvation Army, and people like Jonathan Paul and Emil Humburg, who were Lutherans from Germany. These men visited the Zurich assembly repeatedly. To this one could add the Baptist influence of Lewi Pethrus of Sweden, and Reformed convictions that were in evidence in the following years. In other words, although there was unity in spiritual experience, there was also a wide variety with regard to ecclesial, sacramental and theological opinions that these leaders brought along.

It seemed natural to assume that, if the Holy Spirit had brought such diverse Christians together to experience an infilling with power and love, then God was calling all people into this movement, no matter from which church they had originally come. God would bring apostolic gifts in order to bring unity and equip the church with the power of the Gospel as the coming of the Lord was drawing near. In this vein, we read in the

November 1913 issue of *Die Verheissung des Vaters* (*The Promise of the Father*), that the Pentecostal assembly in Zurich had no intention of creating another denomination, that it was obvious that God had his children in all existing churches, and that God had called the whole Body of Christ to unity in the Spirit.<sup>2</sup>

A similarly ecumenical spirit was publically witnessed between 1908 and 1914 at the Sunderland Conferences in England.<sup>3</sup> Being together in one accord was not only desirable but also possible. However, World War I broke many of these international and inter-denominational ties. But even then, many early Pentecostals held pacifist and ecumenical convictions because they could not imagine fighting a fellow brother who had been graced with the same presence of the Holy Spirit, just because he was a citizen of another nation. For Swiss Pentecostals, whose government took a politically neutral stance, it was even harder to imagine what value there could be in fighting such a war. Yes, there was hope for a great movement of unity, but it was not expected to happen politically. Only God could bring it about. It had started with the wonderful outpouring of the Holy Spirit and was being carried to the historic churches too.<sup>4</sup>

Soon after the end of the Great War, international communications and travel were again possible. Contacts immediately resumed and Swiss Pentecostals started to engage in missionary activity in collaboration with churches in Norway, the Netherlands and Great Britain. Once in the field in Basutoland and the French Congo, Swiss missionaries were happy to associate with Baptists, Methodists and Anglicans. After all, they had done that before, at the beginning of it all.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> *Der Herr machte es uns jedoch von Anfang an klar, dass es nicht nach seinem Sinne wäre, wenn wir um der neuen Segnung willen die Zahl der schon bestehenden organisierten Kirchengemeinschaften wieder um eine neue vermehren würden. Sondern, wir sollten in unseren Versammlungen einfach die uns neu offenbarten Wahrheiten verkündigen und so allen Kindern Gottes aus den verschiedenen Denominationen, und der Welt, Gelegenheit bieten, zur Prüfung und zur Annahme der Wahrheiten, sowie zur Weiterverbreitung derselben in ihren Kreisen. Es war uns auch klar, dass unser Dienst im Besonderen den Verlorenen gehöre, die wir sollten zum hellen Licht des Evangeliums zu bringen suchen. Deshalb suchten wir auch nicht die gläubigen Kreise zu stören und in irgend einer Weise herrschenden Einfluss zu gewinnen, sondern, der Herr wies uns die Linie in klarer Weise, wir sollten in der Einigkeit des Geistes mit dem ganzen Leibe Christi bleiben, der Seine Glieder in allen Denominationen hat ...* Declaration by Richard P. Ruff and Anton Reuss in *Die Verheissung des Vaters*, November 1913, 1-2.

<sup>3</sup> *Confidence*, No. 3 June 1908, 9.

<sup>4</sup> *Die Verheissung des Vaters*, January 1918, 8f.

<sup>5</sup> When early Pentecostal missionaries arrived in the field it was customary to visit those missionaries that were already in that region and find arrangements in terms of their work. These would typically include agreement as to the areas of missionary activity open to them and practical aspects such as an introduction to important persons of the colonial government and influential indigenous leaders. A

### **The Great European Pentecostal Conference in Stockholm, 5-12 June 1939**

Up to that point, no conference had brought together so many Pentecostals in Europe. It was not just a gathering for fellowship and church services. Difficult issues were discussed. Donald Gee put it like this:

The deeper inward spiritual side was marked by one arresting, often amazing, fact – the unbroken unity of the Spirit. During the week that we were together, questions that had been sent in from all over Europe were discussed in the sessions. Some of them centred around admittedly delicate and controversial subjects. A variety of viewpoints and opinions was expressed, but always with unfaltering charity. Such unity in diversity was a miracle of grace. Only a genuine Pentecost could make it possible.<sup>6</sup>

The impact of the conference was so great that the Swiss Pentecostal periodical *Die Verheissung des Vaters* reported on the discussions for a time span of eleven months.<sup>7</sup> Two topics were given prime importance. First, there was a long discussion on varying views regarding the baptism in the Spirit. Could it be possible to be baptized in the Spirit with evidence other than speaking in tongues? The second main topic of discussion related to the issue whether there could be organizational unity among Pentecostals. English, Swiss and some East European representatives argued that an organizational unity was often desirable and sometimes even necessary, as for instance in the face of communist oppression. Whereas the Scandinavian Pentecostals emphasized that the centre of Christian activity resided in the local congregation, thus adopting a typically Baptist ecclesiology. They argued that, if they truly wanted the Holy Spirit to guide them, then they should not establish man-made organizations. The issue whether some form of organization was desirable or not was also widely discussed among Swiss Pentecostals because most churches that were in partnership with the *Swiss Pentecostal Mission Society* decided in 1935 to unite as an association, and thus became an independent denomination and called themselves *Schweizerische Pfingstmission*. Other Pentecostal churches initially adopted the Scandinavian argument, but joined the *Swiss Pentecostal Mission* a few years later. Thus, the establishment of this denomination was a direct result of a growing unity due to increased co-operation.

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later example of interdenominational co-operation was the Pentecostal involvement with the *World Missionary Aviation Fellowship*. *Pentecost*, September 1948, 3.

<sup>6</sup> Donald Gee in 'The Gospel Call', reproduced by: <http://webjournals.ac.edu.au/journals/AEGTM/1939-october/the-great-european-pentecostal-conference> (accessed 8 July 2013).

<sup>7</sup> *Die Verheissung des Vaters*, February–December 1940.

### The First Pentecostal World Conference, May 1947

Leonhard Steiner, who as an editor of the above-mentioned periodical, *Die Verheissung des Vaters*, attended the 1939 conference in Stockholm. The discussions he reported continued to be a matter of concern for him. Steiner was Pastor of the Pentecostal assembly in the town of Basel, right by the French and German border, and he maintained close contacts with Pentecostals in nearby Alsace and in Germany. He was also Missions Secretary of the *Swiss Pentecostal Mission Society* and, as such, well informed. He was, for all practical purposes, a global Pentecostal.

After World War II, Steiner noted that there was a new willingness in western societies to do things together.<sup>8</sup> There was a political will to organize. Winston Churchill, the wartime prime Minister of Great Britain, had visited the University of Zurich on 19 September 1946, and gave his famous speech concluding with the phrase 'Let Europe Arise!' After Europeans had witnessed two world wars with disastrous consequences for themselves, could it not be that Europe could unite in peace? Was it not possible to create a European commonwealth?<sup>9</sup> It is fair to assume that Leonhard Steiner translated these ideas into the question: Could there not be a Pentecostal commonwealth? Furthermore, other religious bodies began to form worldwide alliances. In addition, another fact brought great urgency to the matter. East European Pentecostals were suffering disproportionately from the consequences of war. They needed help from their brothers and sisters in the West. But this help could only be given effectively by a common and co-ordinated effort.

These ideas jelled into a concrete mandate during a prayer conference in Basel that was also attended by Gustav Kindermann, Assemblies of God representative for Europe, and Umberto Nello Goriotti, Chairman of the newly founded Assemblee di Dio in Italy. These men had discussed the need for Pentecostals to work together, and Leonhard Steiner felt the call to take responsibility. 'During the celebration of the Lord's Supper I felt the Hand of God upon me. I felt that it was the will of the Lord to impose the responsibility upon me to call God's people to a conference.'<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> L. Steiner in *Verheissung des Vaters*, January 1948, 3-6.

<sup>9</sup> 'We British have our own Commonwealth of Nations. These do not weaken; on the contrary, they strengthen, the world organization. They are in fact its main support. And why should there not be a European group which could give a sense of enlarged patriotism and common citizenship to the distracted peoples of this turbulent and mighty continent? And why should it not take its rightful place with other great groupings and help to shape the onward destinies of men? In order that this should be accomplished, there must be an act of faith in which millions of families speaking many languages must consciously take part.' Quoted from: [http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/AboutUs/zurich\\_e.htm](http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/AboutUs/zurich_e.htm) (accessed 11 July 2013).

<sup>10</sup> *Die Verheissung des Vaters*, January 1947, 5.

As a result, the first Pentecostal World Conference took place 4-9 May 1947 in Zurich, Switzerland. All expectations were exceeded as 260 guests from 23 countries gathered, representing seventy different Pentecostal bodies. Donald Gee was impressed:

‘Zurich’ was made possible because of what God hath wrought already: the further potentialities are immense. Our eyes are on the big things that unite, not on the smaller issues that divide ... Within the Pentecostal Revival itself, a profound, and indeed unique, unity of the Spirit has been given to us by Christ Jesus: it leaves nothing for us to ‘make’, but much that we must zealously endeavour to ‘keep’. The burning heart of Pentecostal Fellowship is not an idea, nor a form of government; nor even a ‘vision’, but a BAPTISM – in the Holy Ghost and Fire.<sup>11</sup>

As a consequence of this first Pentecostal World Conference, an office for the co-ordination of relief work in Europe was established in the church of the Pentecostal Mission in Basel. David du Plessis came from South Africa and joined Leonhard Steiner in his efforts to co-ordinate help for the Pentecostal churches in Eastern Europe. Donald Gee was designated to be editor of the new magazine *Pentecost* that would create an international platform on Pentecostal activities and missionary endeavours in order to avoid wasteful or irritating overlapping in missionary work.<sup>12</sup> And last but not least, the wish was expressed that another Pentecostal World Conference be organized in the not-too-distant future. Indeed, the Basel office relayed an invitation from France to Pentecostal leaders in different countries, with the result that the second Pentecostal World Conference would take place in Paris in 1949. Ever since, these global conferences have been taking place every three years.

### **The Stuttgart Conference, 10-13 August 1948**

After World War II, there was new life among Pentecostal churches in Germany. But the lack of resources, the division of the country in different occupation zones, and rudimentary transport, meant that communication and networking among Pentecostals was difficult. In addition, the Mülheim group that had its beginnings in 1907 had a different context and history from the newer independent Pentecostal groups like the Elim churches, the Church of God, or the assemblies of the Volksmission. There was simply no co-ordination among the various fellowships and no unity in communication. Groups that were against Pentecostal teachings used this situation to their advantage by pointing to the fragmentation among those

<sup>11</sup> *Pentecost*, No. 1, September 1947, 2 (capital letters in the original).

<sup>12</sup> ‘This magazine arose out of the all too brief discussion at the Zurich Conference of the possibilities of more co-operation in Pentecostal Missionary Work. Knowledge of what others are doing is rightly regarded as a first step towards avoiding wasteful and irritating overlapping; and arriving at some practical working together on the same Field.’ *Pentecost*, No. 1, September 1947, 17.

who considered themselves Spirit-filled, and they ridiculed them. It was in 1947 that two Swiss Pentecostals, Leonhard Steiner and Karl Schneider, visited several German Pentecostal congregations and noticed the diversity existing in the assemblies. The idea arose that the Swiss, as neutral observers, could broker a conference that would call the organized and independent German Pentecostals together. Steiner and Schneider did so by convening a conference in Stuttgart, Germany, with the argument that the common Pentecostal hymnal for the German-speaking areas of Europe be re-edited and made available to all Pentecostals. In August 1948, seven different Pentecostal groups and mission societies met under the auspices of the Swiss, the American Assemblies of God, and a group called the International Pentecostal Church.<sup>13</sup>

The result was a common declaration that included the following statement: 'We have noticed with sorrow and shame the lack of unity among the Pentecostal Movement, and we humbled ourselves in deep repentance over it. In prayer and meditating on the Word of God, and confirmed through the ministry of spiritual gifts, we were led to acknowledge that it is the will of the Lord of his Church that we belong together and form a unity; further, that we need one another for the completion of our ministry.'<sup>14</sup>

It was this meeting that brought about the creation of an official Pentecostal network in Germany (*Vereinigten Pfingstgemeinden in Deutschland*) that later developed into the *Bund Freikirchlicher Pfingstgemeinden*. Today, this association networks with more than 750 churches, runs a common theological seminary, and is a platform for missionary outreach and social action.

### The Pentecostal Unity Conferences in Switzerland

In the meantime, the *Swiss Pentecostal Mission* was no longer the sole Pentecostal denomination in Switzerland; in the 1930s, two other groups were experiencing revival and successfully beginning to plant churches. One met around the former Lutheran Pastor, Christoph Drollinger, and had its sphere of influence mainly in the Bernese Oberland, while another group under the leadership of Adolf Rutz had churches in the north-east of Switzerland. French-speaking Pentecostals in western Switzerland

<sup>13</sup> The Germans represented: Christlicher Gemeinschaftsverband Mülheim-Ruhr, the Elim-Gemeinden, the Deutsche Volksmission and the Internationale Volksmission, the Freien Christengemeinden, the Vereinigten Missionsfreunde as well as the Freie Pfingstverein. The Assemblies of God were represented by Gustav Kinderman and C.W. Loenser. David du Plessis was also present. For a full report, see: *Die Verheissung des Vaters*, September 1948, 18-21 and Chr. Krust, *50 Jahre Pfingstbewegung: Mülheimer Richtung* (Altdorf bei Nürnberg: Missionsbuchhandlung und Verlag, no date), 187-88.

<sup>14</sup> *Pentecost*, No. 6, December 1948, 1-11; Chr. Krust, *50 Jahre*, 188.

associated under the name *Eglise Evangélique de Réveil*.<sup>15</sup> The French-speaking Pentecostals nurtured regular contacts with the *Swiss Pentecostal Mission* and its mission society. They could provide missionaries to French-speaking Africa while the mainly German-speaking *Pfingstmission* had the administrative structure in place.

Unfortunately, a sense of co-operation did not exist among the different German-speaking groups who preferred to argue for the advantages of their own denomination to the detriment of others. Condescending remarks were common at that time. Whereas one group accused the other of having no sense of sobriety in the use of spiritual gifts, the other retorted that they were the ones growing in numbers and had church services where the work of the Holy Spirit was in evidence.<sup>16</sup> In the 1950s however, common evangelistic outreaches broke the ice, pastors from the different fellowships invited each other to special events, and slowly the question arose as to whether some sort of co-operation or even unity could be agreed. For the purposes of getting to know each other better and clarifying issues, annual unity conferences were established, starting in 1961. Guests at these meetings were well-known leaders like Donald Gee (England), Lewi Pethrus (Sweden), Charles Butterfield (USA) and Erwin Lorenz (Germany). Besides being spiritually refreshed, the participants discussed concerns and challenges in detail. A working group was established to work on co-operation issues throughout the year. One of the firstfruits of these unity conferences was the establishment of a common Bible School. Youth ministry was co-ordinated. In 1969, the three German-speaking Pentecostal denominations in Switzerland began to publish a common magazine called *Wort und Geist (Word and Spirit)*.

A fusion of the three denominations never took place. Although church members were largely in favour, the leadership could not overcome technical obstacles and vested interests. One participant put it somewhat bluntly when he said, ‘The sheep were willing but the mutton-heads not.’<sup>17</sup>

Nevertheless, co-operation between the groups was further organized, and in 1973, the Association of Pentecostal Free Churches (*Bund Pfingstlicher Freikirchen*) was established, an alliance that functioned until 2000. Furthermore, most congregations in the *Freie Christengemeinden* merged with the *Swiss Pentecostal Mission* in the mid-1990s after financial difficulties developed in connection with a large building project. The

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<sup>15</sup> Drollinger’s churches first associated under the name *Gemeinde für Urchristentum* and is now known under the name *BewegungPlus*. Adolf Rutz’s congregations were known as *Freie Christengemeinden*.

<sup>16</sup> Anreas Rossel (ed), *80 Jahre in Bewegung: Erinnerungen an die Zukunft, Das Buch zum 80. Geburtstag der BewegungPlus* (Bern, Switzerland: Berchtold Haller Verlag, 2007), 71.

<sup>17</sup> Quoted in the memoirs edited by the *BewegungPlus*, *Erinnerungen an die Zukunft*, 132.

merger was facilitated by the fact that the two denominations had benefited from official relations for a period of more than thirty years.

Looking back, we can see that Swiss Pentecostals were serious about the call to unity. Being one in the Spirit was both a motivation and an aspiration. There was more than a common spiritual experience and a shared Christological perspective. Co-operation was of the essence. Having 'everything in common', as it is described in the second chapter in the Acts of the Apostles, was perhaps too ambitious a goal. Achieving unity is not an easy task. It takes common effort or, as Paul has put it, 'Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.' (Eph. 4:3).

### **The Charismatic Renewal**

A different challenge to consensus came in the 1970s through the charismatic renewal. The boat of fairly traditional Pentecostalism in Switzerland had already been rocked with the sudden impact of the Jesus People movement. Long hair and jeans for men, women wearing jewellery and trousers were phenomena unthinkable just a decade earlier, when men always wore suit and tie for church. And now, these young people kept coming to church! They had a genuine faith and many were empowered by the experience of being baptized in the Spirit. It hardly took a year and the Pentecostal congregations in Switzerland adapted to freer expressions of Christian culture. The Pentecostal press was full of praise.<sup>18</sup> Why was this revolution possible, why was it benign? Three simple reasons may have played a role. First, the older generation recognized that these young folk had experienced a genuine conversion to Christ. Secondly, as these young Christians shared their experiences with God, it resonated with the stories the older generation could tell. There was not only agreement in principle; there was a perceived unity of the Spirit. An old sister advised her husband, 'Don't look at their hair, look into their eyes.' Thirdly, the Jesus People had a dynamic faith. They shared the Good News with an energy that made many older Pentecostals remember with nostalgia the early days of revival. The common experience of young and old at the level of the local congregation was the catalyst for reform.

At the same time, there was another phenomenon that challenged Pentecostal identity. News from North America was streaming in that revival had begun in the mainline churches. Episcopalians and Roman Catholics, Presbyterians and Methodists, had experienced the baptism in the Holy Spirit. These people began to worship God in languages unknown and minister with spiritual gifts. In 1971, Dennis Bennett was the keynote speaker at the Pentecostal summer conference in Nyhem, Sweden. And

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<sup>18</sup> The monthly magazine *Wort und Geist* regularly reported in 1972 on the activities of the Jesus People Movement, One Way Cafés and the programmes of Teen Challenge.

Lewi Pethrus, the Swedish Pentecostal leader, commented that this charismatic movement was the follow-up to the Pentecostal movement, through which God's Spirit was reaching out to the lost of the world. The Swiss Pentecostals were informed in detail, and their magazine continued to report favourably the stories their charismatic friends could tell.<sup>19</sup> The rapprochement was astonishing. Catholic priests invited Pentecostals to sing and testify during mass, and Pentecostal pastors invited nuns and priests to attend their Bible studies. Why was this possible? Were there not insurmountable dogmatic obstacles? Lewi Pethrus gave a pragmatic answer: 'We can spend a lot of time discussing doctrine, the church and congregational systems, and completely lose sight of the human being. This is incredibly tragic.'<sup>20</sup> In other words, in terms of spreading the Good News and seeking God's will through the move of the Holy Spirit, there was agreement.

As the impact of the Jesus People movement and the charismatic revival ebbed, Swiss Pentecostals began to focus again on questions of identity. They were concerned not to lose their core values. Consequently, questions of Christian unity were answered mostly critically. Doctrinal and ecclesial differences were emphasized.<sup>21</sup> Unfortunately, ecumenical fellowship in the Spirit was short-lived. Nevertheless, the memory of the 1970s lingers on as an example of experienced unity. The question arises: are there alternatives to unity in Christ, other than formal, structural and homogeneous unity?

### Recent Developments:

#### Seeking Unity beyond the Pentecostal Fellowships

There emerged new ways in which the phrase 'unity in the Spirit' became relevant. The rising influx of migrant workers in the urban centres of Switzerland meant that Pentecostals of different origins brought fresh expressions of faith and new opportunities to live Christian unity in practical terms. This was especially the case if a local congregation would not simply lend their facilities to some particular ethnic group, but would consciously decide to celebrate together. The main Pentecostal church in Zurich, for instance, has up to now made it a principle to worship cross-culturally and in a multilingual context. Each service is a testimony of togetherness and common purpose.

Parallel to this development has been the establishment of new independent churches. These do not call themselves Pentecostal or Charismatic but are in practical terms open and seeking a form of church life that is sensitive to the move of the Holy Spirit, and include ministry

<sup>19</sup> *Wort und Geist*, September 1971, 1-5; also in the October and November issues.

<sup>20</sup> *Wort und Geist*, September 1971, 4.

<sup>21</sup> Jakob Zopfi, *Auf alles Fleisch ... Geschichte und Auftrag der Pfingstbewegung*, Dynamis Verlag, Kreuzlingen, 1985, 147-61.

through spiritual gifts. Questions of unity do not arise since no merger between groups is envisaged. But on another level, a tacit agreement has been struck. There is a constant flux of membership between these churches. It is a sign of our post-modern age that people do not feel bound to be lifelong members of one particular church. This is especially the case if there do not seem to be doctrinally significant differences between certain churches. The issue of proselytism loses its doctrinal edge. It has turned into a social, psychological or economic consideration.<sup>22</sup> Questions of unity acquire a different meaning. A common purpose is more important than a common organization or a nuanced statement of faith.

Three examples may be given where Pentecostal churches have joined hands with other Christian denominations for the sake of a common witness. For instance, the yearly 'Love in Action' days in Zurich are a simple outreach to others in the city that may need a helping hand. Voluntary services are offered and no questions are asked, no propaganda is made. Neighbourly love is expressed. A common Christian witness is considered to be more important than attaching an action to a particular church.

Another example is the initiative started by Billy Wilson called 'Empowered 21'. The idea behind it is simple. If the Holy Spirit is working in and through different churches, especially with regard to Pentecostal and Charismatic groups, could these churches not unite in purpose? The mission statement stresses that the purpose of 'Empowered 21' is 'to unite the global Spirit-filled movement together intergenerationally for the purpose of seeking a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the twenty-first century', and 'to focus the energy and resources of the Spirit-empowered global church on the harvest and challenges that are before us'.<sup>23</sup> It seems to be a sign of the new twenty-first century attitude, that this campaign is not based on a common statement of belief, but rather on pragmatic reasoning. Its purpose is not to gain intellectual assent, but it is geared to action for the sake of the Gospel.

A third example of Christians joining forces was the recent Indonesian Christian Forum Rally in Jakarta on Pentecost 2013. The rally brought together people from seven different families of church traditions including Catholic, Evangelical, Orthodox, Pentecostal and Protestant for the sole

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<sup>22</sup> A transfer from one to another church may be facilitated from a sociological point of view because the new church community may be more at ease in a twenty-first-century setting than the old, more traditional, one. A psychological motive may be that the believer is happier in the new church, experiencing God's presence in a fresh way. An economic consideration for transfer could be if a church presented itself as dynamic, entrepreneurial and upwardly mobile. However, such a motive should not be mistaken with 'prosperity gospel' teachings that promise material gain based on financial offerings to the church.

<sup>23</sup> Quoted (incl. capitalization) from the website <http://empowered21.com/about/global-vision-statements> (accessed 12 July 2013).

purpose of expressing Christian solidarity. The Rev. Andreas Yewangoe, Chairperson of the Communion of Churches in Indonesia, reminded the crowd in the national sports stadium that ‘the unity of the churches is not because we declare it. No, the unity of the churches is only possible because Christians are called to love one another’.<sup>24</sup>

The above mentioned examples of unity are, in my opinion, symptomatic of our times. The emphasis is not primarily on establishing doctrinal consent, but on common outreach. Mission focuses on Christian core values; consequently ‘unity in the Spirit’ becomes tangible.

### Conclusion

The chronological walk through one hundred years, as seen through the lenses of Swiss Pentecostals, in search of Christian unity has revealed various dimensions in which the quest towards unity can be seen.

First, there were external circumstances. The political situation in Eastern Europe led some Pentecostals to seek stronger union with Pentecostals in the West. A minority group sought an alliance with others in order better to be able to stand its ground in view of hostile circumstances. This was an important reason for promoting some sort of organization among Pentecostals at the international conferences in 1939 and 1947. Other external circumstances opening the doors to unity could, for instance, be the persecution of Christians, the secularization of society or natural disasters. Such moves towards unity aim at making co-operation possible, visible and credible.

A second factor that has a bearing on the search for unity are financial realities. Larger common projects make co-operation feasible. A partnership among the three German-speaking Pentecostal denominations made the establishment of a common Bible school and the publication of a common magazine much easier. Similarly, French and German-speaking Pentecostals could mutually benefit from each other’s talents by co-ordinating their mission outreach. Financial realities were also instrumental in the merger of the *Freie Christengemeinden* with the *Swiss Pentecostal Mission* because the former group faced bankruptcy. One can also argue by looking at the other side of the coin. As long as the three German-speaking Pentecostal denominations were self-sustaining, and retaining interests in their cherished assets like church buildings, old people’s homes and hotels, a merger for the sake of unity was impeded. Obviously then, doctrinal agreement is, practically speaking, not a sufficient ground for Christian unity. Unity in the Spirit has to be realised in tangible ways.

The third factor facilitating unity is spiritual renewal. Whenever there is an overriding reality like the Pentecostal revival in the early days of the

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<sup>24</sup> [www.ecumenicalnews.com/article/big-crowd-celebrates-christian-unity-in-indonesia-22229](http://www.ecumenicalnews.com/article/big-crowd-celebrates-christian-unity-in-indonesia-22229) (accessed 13 July 2013).

twentieth century with its ecumenical dimension, the charismatic renewal in the late 1960s and 1970s, or the emergence of vibrant migrant communities impacting established churches, unity in the Spirit becomes a given. It manifests itself as grace. There is a fusion between experience and insight that expresses itself doxologically. Instead of a preoccupation with the self, there is a focus on God, on co-operation and on common witness. Most likely, this is the truest expression of unity in the Spirit.

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# NEW MOVEMENTS

## EXPERIMENTING WITH MISSION AND UNITY IN SECULAR EUROPE: NETWORKING FOR MISSION, CLIENT-BASED MISSION, AND ECUMENICAL MISSION

Stefan Paas

### Introduction

Paradoxically, when writing about the mission and unity of the church, one has to come to the task clear about one's own ecclesial and cultural background. Surely, there is no way that anyone can write about these things from a strictly neutral or universal point of view. My contribution to this discussion has been shaped in the Reformed sector of Dutch church life, in one of the most secular areas of the world. I belong to a denomination that separated from the Dutch Reformed Church in the nineteenth century, and I have been raised in a theological climate that can be characterized as broadly Calvinist, with a pietistic twist. During my lifetime (I was born in 1969), virtually all religious indicators in western Europe have plummeted dramatically, making this part of the world not only a graveyard for the hopes of many missionaries but also one of the most interesting laboratories of mission on the planet. I have been involved in mission in several ways: as a consultant in evangelism for several denominations, by teaching students in the only full-year Master's study of Missiology in the Netherlands,<sup>1</sup> by participating in the leadership of two church plants, and by organizing missionary activities such as Alpha Courses. Over the years I have been active in a number of interdenominational mission networks, and in 2010 I have received the huge privilege of taking one of the very few missiological chairs at a European university.<sup>2</sup> Through all these activities I have been given the opportunity to work together with many people from many churches and

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<sup>1</sup> The MA Missional Congregation at the Theological University of the Reformed Churches (Liberated) in Kampen, the Netherlands: [www.tukampen.nl/Education/Master\\_of\\_Theology/Master\\_Missional\\_Congregation.aspx?pgId=437](http://www.tukampen.nl/Education/Master_of_Theology/Master_Missional_Congregation.aspx?pgId=437)

<sup>2</sup> The J.H. Bavinck Chair for Church Planting and Church Renewal in a Secular Context at Free University, Amsterdam: [www.godgeleerdheid.vu.nl/nl/over-de-faculteit/medewerkers/wetenschappelijk-personeel-m-s/paas.asp](http://www.godgeleerdheid.vu.nl/nl/over-de-faculteit/medewerkers/wetenschappelijk-personeel-m-s/paas.asp)

denominations. Everything I write in this chapter will inevitably be determined (and limited!) by this particular western European background and experience.

In the following pages, I will first share some general views about mission and unity that have come true for me in the context where I live and work. Secondly, I will present three so-called ‘focal points’ for mission and unity in secular Europe: networks for missionary action, client-based mission, and ecumenical mission. They are also referred to in the sub-title of this chapter. Finally, I will draw some conclusions about mission and unity in Europe.

### Mission and Unity in Europe

Usually, the importance of connecting the mission of the church with its unity is defended in two ways: pragmatically and theologically. As for pragmatism, there is always a need for strategic co-operation in mission. This was, basically, the main impetus behind the question of unity in Edinburgh 1910. Sooner or later, most mission movements arrive at this stage where forces must be joined in order to prevent duplication and harmful competition. However, a more theological motive is usually part of the striving for unity in mission. For example, the WCC Commission on Faith & Order states that the unity and the mission of the church are ‘essentially related’.<sup>3</sup> The Lausanne Covenant (1974) says that ‘the church’s visible unity in truth is God’s purpose’, and that ‘our oneness strengthens our witness’.<sup>4</sup> Basically, what this motive says is that the church’s mission should not harm the church’s unity, or – more positively – that the mission of the church is strengthened by the visible unity of the church.

These motives are widely acknowledged in Europe today. Even from the traditionally separatist Free Church perspective, it is argued that ‘openness to all other churches is a formal identifying feature of catholicity’. Although the historic believers’ churches cannot express this openness by loyalty to a universal institution, it implies in any case that they commit themselves to constant ‘ecclesial communication’.<sup>5</sup> At the same time, this

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<sup>3</sup> *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, Faith & Order Paper, 214 (Geneva: WCC 2013), 2: ‘The Church is essentially missionary, and unity is essentially related to this mission.’

<sup>4</sup> Available at [www.lausanne.org](http://www.lausanne.org)

<sup>5</sup> Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 275-76. There is a growing awareness of this among evangelical missiologists. See, for example, J.D. Payne, ‘Mission and Church Planting’, in Bruce Riley Ashford (ed), *Theology and Practice of Mission: God, the Church, and the Nations* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2011), 203: ‘Biblical church planting is not about transferring church members from one church to another church ... Biblical church planting has nothing to do with building a

shows that visible unity can be approached in different ways. To me it is not altogether clear, for example, that mission in Europe is really furthered by the kind of large-scale institutional unity that has characterized many European nations for centuries, and alienated multitudes of Europeans from their churches. Visible unity can be found in more than one way. In a secular, post-Christendom age we may have to learn all over again what it means to be united in mission.

Be that as it may, I believe that there is a third important reason to advocate unity in mission, especially in Europe. This reason is usually completely ignored, but it may give more urgency to the call for unity than any other reason. Unity in mission is extremely important, because the missionary challenge in Europe is so immensely complex. Co-operation, networking, and constant interaction are crucial to open up the hermeneutical space that we need for a better understanding of this challenge. The particular theological outlooks of the various traditional Christianities in Europe tend to highlight different aspects of the crisis of European Christianity that forms our missionary challenge today. This in itself is a gift that we can share with each other, since each particular perspective allows us to see the world through the eyes of another tradition. However, often the opposite is happening. Different Christian currents in Europe tend to present their own hermeneutical picture of the crisis as decisive, and subsequently they present their own tradition as the unique solution to the crisis thus constructed.

Those who have been inspired by Anabaptism, for example, seem to be particularly attracted to a ‘post-Christendom’ perspective on the crisis of European Christianity.<sup>6</sup> Other missionary thinkers – for example, those who feel comfortable in the ‘emerging church’ – tend to stress the ‘post-modern’ aspects of our culture rather than ‘post-Christendom’.<sup>7</sup> Often, their point of departure is frustration with older (evangelical) churches, which are believed to be deeply implicated in ‘modernity’. However, both neo-Anabaptists and emergers generally do not reflect very much on the ‘post-

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building, stealing another pastor’s sheep, or starting a church simply because my desired ‘brand’ of church is not present in a particular community.’ For similar remarks, see Craig Ott, Gene Wilson, *Global Church Planting: Biblical Principles and Best Practices for Multiplication* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 36.

<sup>6</sup> This perspective is explored by, for example, Stuart Murray, *Post-Christendom: Church and Mission in a Strange New World* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2004);, *Church after Christendom* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2004). For a general discussion of the use of ‘post-Christendom’ in the emerging and missional discussions, see Robert Doornenbal, *Crossroads: An Exploration of the Emerging-Missional Conversation with a Special Focus on ‘Missional Leadership’ and Its Challenges for Theological Education* (Delft, Netherlands: Eburon: 2012), 105-15.

<sup>7</sup> For a discussion of the use of ‘modernity’ and ‘post-modernity’ in the literature of Emerging Churches (EC), see Doornenbal, *Crossroads*, 89-104.

*Christian*' character of Europe.<sup>8</sup> This perspective underlines that Europe has changed very much in that anti-religious attitudes have become endemic among the masses rather than merely among cultural élites. This strong anti-Christian mood affects churchgoing Christians as well. For many active Christians it has become difficult to keep the faith. Most missionary proposals by evangelicals seem to underestimate this particular problem of being a Christian, let alone a missionary Christian, in a deeply secularized society. They major on post-Christendom, celebrating that the religious market is finally free (but without really escaping a Christendom mindset); or they focus on post-modernism, emphasizing that 'church' must be done differently now (thus revealing a strategic, 'modern' view of reality). But there is little reflection on the very crisis of faith itself, or on the decreasing demand for serious, 'world-formative'<sup>9</sup> religion among Europeans. This post-Christian dimension of western culture generally receives more attention from representatives of mainline churches.

Another source of complexity comes from the simple fact that not all European Christians are evangelicals. This means that the possible range of perspectives on the three 'post'-words is even larger than appears from evangelical missiological literature. For example, there are many European Christians who feel that something important is lost with the decline of Christendom. They believe that Europe, in order to have a future at all, must keep intact the ancient connection between its political culture and social institutions on the one hand, and its Christian tradition on the other. They find it a tragic loss that the majority of the rising generation now grows up without any functional understanding of Christianity (or even religion in general), due to the collapse of widespread religious education in a post-Christendom society. They refuse to believe that Christian faith (or any faith) can be carried by personal choice and informal friendships alone. They see that the institutional church has lost its power to shape the hearts and minds of Europeans, but they deny that this has resulted in more freedom. On the contrary, they point at new commercial and political powers that have filled the gap, exerting a far greater influence than the church has ever had. Therefore they would be inclined to reject post-Christendom. Most of these Christians would be found in the traditional churches of Europe. Only very few of them want a complete restoration of Christendom, but many advocate more moderate versions of (neo-

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<sup>8</sup> If the word is mentioned at all, it is rejected as reflecting a too optimistic view of the past (as if the majority of Europeans were churchgoing and believing Christians back then), and as being too implicated in a Christendom mindset. Cf. Stuart Murray: 'Post-Christendom, Post-Constantinian, Post-Christian ... Does the Label Matter?', in *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church*, 9.3 (2009), 205-07.

<sup>9</sup> The term 'world-formative Christianity' was coined by Nicholas Wolterstorff, and it refers to a religion that causes 'profound changes in the social order': *Until Justice & Peace Embrace* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983), 3.

)Christendom.<sup>10</sup> Rather than looking for Christendom's re-establishment, they present their churches as storehouses of religious language and rituals, and as places of cultural memory. They also sometimes address their secular governments with appeals for more justice and mercy in society or towards other parts of the world.

These few examples only serve to illustrate the bewildering variety of possible responses to the crisis of European Christianity. Apparently, our own theological background determines to a large extent our view of reality. Clearly, the full scope of the crisis can only be brought to light through the combined perspectives of many Christians from different backgrounds, who are willing to learn from each other. Also, I believe that genuine renewal will most likely be produced by unexpected combinations of these perspectives, resulting from co-operation and networking. This also suggests an ecumenical theological challenge: different approaches may be needed simultaneously, building on the variety of confessional and sociological versions that has characterized European Christianity for centuries. Also, in my opinion, this amounts to an argument for missionary action, since the vitality of solutions presented on paper, however inspiring they are, can only be experienced when they are applied in the streets and neighbourhoods of Europe.<sup>11</sup>

### Experiments in Mission and Unity

In what follows I will introduce three categories of working together in the European mission field: networking for missionary action, client-based mission, and ecumenical mission. In a sense, this is a rather traditional order, ascending from loose and incidental joint projects to initiatives towards full mutual recognition between churches. However, these categories may also be, each in its own way, points of departure for new forms of unity that differ from traditional ecumenical understandings, and that respond to the requirements of a late modern, consumer's age.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> On the Roman Catholic Church in Italy and Spain, cf. Enzo Pace, 'Religion as Communication: The Changing Shape of Catholicism in Europe', in Nancy T. Ammerman (ed), *Everyday Religion: Observing Modern Religious Lives* (Oxford: OUP, 2007), 43, 45, 47. On recurring Christendom themes in ecumenical and Catholic missionary views of Europe, see Friedemann Walldorf, *Die Neuevangelisierung Europas: Missionstheologien im Europäischen Kontext* (Brunnen, Germany: TVG), 2002.

<sup>11</sup> More on this in chapter 4 of my *Church Planting in Secular Europe: A Critical Analysis* (The Gospel and Our Culture Network, Second Series) (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans).

<sup>12</sup> My approach will be 'bottom-up' (an ecclesiology 'from below') rather than deductive. Therefore I present many examples of unity that do not meet the requirements of full ecclesial unity. On the other hand, I believe that talking about ecclesial unity without paying attention to real-life co-operation and networking is docetic. In this respect it is important not to let the best become the enemy of the

### A. Networking for mission

This may be the most basic form of pragmatic unity in mission. It certainly is the most popular and widespread form. In Europe there is a host of missionary initiatives with a wide variety of backgrounds, working together with others, and building networks in order to sustain and expand their mission. These networks can be local, regional, national, or even European. Networks are multi-focal in the sense that they usually consist of independent initiatives that are somehow linked together. Often they are coordinated from an organizational centre that deals with issues of common interest such as conferences or plans for action. Typically, this 'hub' does not interfere with the internal affairs of network partners, and its decision-making power is limited. Most networks do have a set of shared values, however, and sometimes they give birth to deeper forms of unity. Finally, virtually all these networks run websites where they provide resources and share stories.

Take, for example, the story of Fresh Expressions in the Church in England. At the 1988 Lambeth Conference, the Anglican Bishops declared the 1990s to be a Decade of Evangelism. This decision was echoed by all the mainline churches in the UK, together with 'new churches' (house churches, planted in the 1970s and 1980s), independent churches and parachurch organisations. The aim was to put evangelism firmly on the agenda for the 1990s. In this context, *Breaking New Ground* was published in 1994, the first 'official' Anglican document promoting church planting in its own heartland. A major factor in the further development of this initiative was a series of conferences held at Holy Trinity Church, Brompton, now famous as the birthplace of the Alpha Course. Other denominations, like Baptists and Methodists, developed an interest in church planting as well. After a preparatory stage, a large interdenominational congress was held in Birmingham in 1992. It was called *Challenge 2000*, and it generated widespread enthusiasm. Here British church leaders decided to set a goal of planting 20,000 new churches by the year 2000. Added to the 40,000 existing churches, this would amount to approximately one church for every 1,000 people in the United Kingdom.

Today, *Challenge 2000* is generally considered a failure, at least in terms of church growth. In fact, more churches were closed than opened during the Decade of Evangelism. Despite these disappointing results, that was not the end of it. Here and there, encouraging things had happened, while those things that had not worked as planned were considered as experiences one could learn from. In fact, the church planting experience of the 1990s has brought about in the United Kingdom 'a process of genuine missionary

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good, or in other words, to idealize full ecclesial unity at the expense of 'ordinary' forms of co-operation and networking.

reflection'.<sup>13</sup> Many leaders of the movement admitted that they had been focused too much on the 'how' part of church planting, but very little on the 'what' and 'why' issues. At the beginning of a new millennium, this started to change. The obsession with numerical growth moderated somewhat, and new questions appeared, reflecting on the growing gap between church and culture in Europe.

A landmark of this new approach in England was the introduction of the 'Fresh Expressions' initiative, a joint operation between the Church of England and the Methodist Church. This went together with the publication of a new report, *Mission Shaped Church* (MSC) in 2004. In the same year, the Archbishop of Canterbury described this as a 'principled and careful loosening of structures'.<sup>14</sup> In MSC, the term 'fresh expressions of church' was used as an umbrella term for twelve different types of activity: alternative worship congregations, base ecclesial communities, café churches, cell churches, churches arising out of community initiatives, multiple and midweek congregations, network-focused churches, school-based and school-linked congregations and churches, seeker churches, traditional church plants, traditional forms of church inspiring new interest, and youth congregations. Subsequently, a 'fresh expression' was defined as 'a form of church for our changing culture established primarily for the benefit of people who are not yet members of any church'.<sup>15</sup> This definition reveals a classic emphasis on evangelism, viz. reaching out to those who are outside the church. This approach has also gained some influence in other countries such as Germany.<sup>16</sup>

Although this may be the most impressive (and best-publicized) example of a missionary platform that has grown into a nationwide movement of change, there are other examples of networking for mission in Europe. Personally, I know many examples of local (often city-based) networks of co-operating churches and mission organizations. In Amsterdam, for instance, the network *Amsterdam in Beweging voor Jezus Christus* (Amsterdam on the Move for Jesus Christ) connects more than a dozen congregations from different denominations in the city, serving as a platform for co-ordination and inspiration in mission. From this network and from other networks in other cities, a nationwide platform has emerged, called *Kerklab* (Church Lab), in which an impressive array of Protestant denominations (extending from Pentecostals to Seventh-day Adventists to

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<sup>13</sup> Martin Robinson, *Planting Mission-Shaped Churches Today* (Oxford: Monarch Books, 2006), 29.

<sup>14</sup> Quoted in Steven Croft, 'Fresh Expressions in a mixed economy Church: A Perspective', in: Steven Croft (ed), *Mission-shaped Questions: Defining issues for today's Church* (London: Church House Publishing, 2008), 6.

<sup>15</sup> Croft, 'Fresh Expressions', 9.

<sup>16</sup> See Matthias Bartels, Martin Reppenhagen (Hrsg.), *Gemeindepflanzung: Ein Modell für die Kirche der Zukunft?* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, Germany: Neukirchener Verlag, 2006).

Reformed) have joined together to stimulate the cause of mission (especially new community formation) in the Netherlands.<sup>17</sup> In addition to the ecclesial partners, several institutions of theological education participate in the platform, as well as a large number of individual church planters, evangelists, mission workers and so on. On a European level, we may think of networks like Simple Church Europe (a ‘learning community’ for hundreds of small house churches all over Europe),<sup>18</sup> Eurochurch.net (a mainly free-church-based ‘platform for dialogue and sharing to facilitate missional thinking and church planting in Europe’),<sup>19</sup> and City to City Europe (‘a trans-denominational network of urban churches and church plants committed to fostering a movement of the gospel in the cities of Europe’).<sup>20</sup>

Networks do not emerge only from established churches or missionary organizations. They also form themselves around certain practices or methodologies of mission. In this way, missionary networks are quite similar to consumer’s networks, such as associations of house-owners or Apple-users. One of the most prominent examples is the huge network of those who are involved in one of the many versions of the Alpha Course. Started in the mid-1990s, the Alpha Course has spread all over the world; it has been used in prisons, hospitals, business meetings and churches; and it has been embraced by Protestants and Catholics alike. Stimulated by a constant stream of materials coming from the organizational centre in London, large user-networks have developed, organizing conferences, building websites, and sharing experiences. Other product-based networks are, for example, platforms around so-called ‘Mission-Shaped Communities’ or ‘Total Church’. Increasingly, these concepts (originating in England) have spread via books, videos and conferences throughout the European continent. Via modern media such as Skype, small coaching groups are established and joined with other small groups, forming a wide network of missionary ‘buzz’.

Wherever there are strong ecclesial and denominational patterns, networks usually remain complementary structures: they are platforms for common action between Christians from different churches, sharing experiences and ideas, and providing resources. However, in many places in Europe, such strong ecclesial structures are not in place, or local congregations do not have access to them. We may think, for example, of house churches in Greece, Pentecostal groups in France, or historic Free Churches in Germany. Often, national and supra-national networks for mission function more or less as denominations for such isolated Christian communities, providing them with a theological identity, and connecting them with other congregations of the same kin. Thus, networks contribute

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<sup>17</sup> [www.kerklab.nl](http://www.kerklab.nl)

<sup>18</sup> [www.simplechurch.eu](http://www.simplechurch.eu)

<sup>19</sup> <http://eurochurch.net>

<sup>20</sup> [www.citytocityeurope.com](http://www.citytocityeurope.com)

to uniting Christians from different nations and cultures by steeping them into the same theological values (usually Evangelical or Pentecostal). Moreover, networks based on shared materials (such as discipleship books) often exert a large spiritual influence through these materials. For example, the ‘charismatic revolution’ in some large European church bodies has certainly interacted with the massive use of the Alpha Course with its mildly charismatic theology.

### *B. Client-based mission*

As some commentators have noticed, religion in Europe has morphed from a largely monopolist, churchly, Christianity into a wealth of religious expressions and spiritual choices – Christian and other. In other words, we now have a religious market. This also affects the way people relate to religious institutions such as churches. Increasingly, consumption (choice) is becoming the default mode of religious participation in Europe.<sup>21</sup> This means that all the indicators of traditional religious involvement are in decline now. Europeans are less likely to become members of a church, or to be regular churchgoers, even though it seems that these indicators are levelling out in some of the most secular countries. However, some religious indicators are going up in a secular age. Among them are typically all those activities that ask little long-term commitment, apart from money that is needed to keep the activities going. Steve Hollinghurst has called this ‘client-based religion’, while I have written elsewhere about the church as a ‘restaurant’.<sup>22</sup> Such activities are run by a small staff of professionals or volunteers, they aim at a specific need, and they are usually not (much) into community-building. In short, they work with ‘clients’ rather than ‘members’. However, since they are almost exclusively focused on the delivery of certain spiritual ‘products’, they can be quite unconcerned about denominational or confessional boundaries. In fact, the effectiveness of such boundaries depends on the possibility of bringing people into a long-term commitment, or into ‘membership’, which implies respect for the duties that are connected with such membership. If membership structures become obsolete, however, new opportunities for (new forms of) unity appear, based on a shared interest in spiritual experiences or practices. In this sense, such activities can be magnets for a wide variety of people, offering them a shared spirituality, and bringing them together around common life goals. Unity, from this perspective, is not achieved by connecting separate organizations or churches through ecumenical efforts,

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Grace Davie, *The Sociology of Religion* (London: Sage 2007), 96.

<sup>22</sup> Steve Hollinghurst, *Mission Shaped Evangelism: The Gospel in Contemporary Culture* (London: Canterbury Press, 2010), 52-56, 221-23; Stefan Paas, ‘Mission among Individual Consumers’, in Ryan K. Bolger (ed), *The Gospel After Christendom: New Voices, New Cultures, New Expressions*: (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2012), 150-63.

but it is achieved by individuals (spiritual seekers) who recognize each other in their quest for certain experiences and meaningful practices. Thus, they can become soulmates or fellow travellers, regardless of their ecclesial backgrounds.

Historic people's churches may have an advantage in this type of religion, as they are more or less used to a rather loose connection of many of their members with the institution. Many Europeans have always participated in their churches by occasionally connecting with them, usually through baptisms, weddings, funerals and at major festivals. Even though these traditional indicators of religiosity (except for Christmas) are in decline in most European nations, other similar activities are drawing huge, growing and mixed crowds. Cathedral worship, for example, is thriving, especially because cathedrals are able to offer their visitors high-quality aesthetics in terms of building, music and preaching. There is also an increasing number of religious festivals, extending from Catholic World Youth Days to charismatic celebrations. People from all sorts of churches (and from no churches at all) visit those festivals.

Retreats and monasteries can also be a good example of client-based religion, sometimes providing intense experiences of unity for a brief period. Many people are looking for forms of community that do not suffer from the massive group pressures that characterized older communities, while also trying to avoid the hyper-individualism and indifferentism that can be the result of individualization. Retreats fill this gap: they provide community and a change of environment, but not permanently, and without many of the strings that are usually attached to such offers. From a missionary perspective, such monastic retreats are a promising pathway into a deeper understanding of Christianity, especially when they are embedded in a mystagogical vision, and combined with spiritual coaching.<sup>23</sup>

A traditional success formula in this category is the pilgrimage. All over Europe, places of pilgrimage are doing extremely well in terms of visitor numbers. Again, this can be observed all over the ecclesial spectrum, as for example in the ancient Catholic sites of Santiago de Compostella and Lourdes, on the one hand, and in the ecumenical communities of Taizé and Iona, on the other. Such places are focal points for encounters between Christians from many backgrounds, and non-Christians as well. Some people find their way (back) to Christianity, especially through the experience of massive unity during these festival-like gatherings. It should not be underestimated to what extent this kind of unity in itself amounts to a spiritual experience for many late modern European seekers.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> See for example, Eric Pickerill, *The Secular Mystique: Mysticism and the Future of Faith in the West* (MA thesis, Free University, Amsterdam, 2013), [www.kerklab.nl/resources](http://www.kerklab.nl/resources)

<sup>24</sup> For an exploration of largely non-rational dimensions in conversions to Christianity, see Miranda Klaver, *This Is My Desire: A Semiotic Perspective on*

Forms of a more solid unity may develop from these occasions. Of course, monasteries may welcome new participants now and then, while the so-called ‘new monasticism’ (basically a Protestant movement) offers a platform for reflection and action in building communities of mission.<sup>25</sup> But even more promising may be the increasing number of initiatives in European cities where social justice action is combined with worship. Traditionally, thinking about the church distinguishes three directions in which ecclesiality develops: worship (up), community (in), and mission (out). However, this balanced approach may neglect the fact that community more often than not grows out of common action and conversation (communion originates in communication). By accepting a shared challenge to, for instance, alleviate poverty in a city, and praying together, communion may grow spontaneously. Interestingly, initiatives such as Sant’Egidio seem to work like this. Sant’Egidio originated in Rome in 1968 as a lay movement within the Roman Catholic Church. Small groups of people join together, accepting four routines: praying, sharing the gospel, friendship with the poor, and service to peace. Of course, such initiatives begin with the commitment of small groups of friends, but they can develop into opportunities for spiritual seeking and involvement in social justice for many people. Even people who do not belong to a church are attracted to activities organized by Christians that focus on helping the poor or creating social justice. If these activities are combined with contextualized spirituality (simple liturgies, prayers, etc.), they may grow into much more than occasional encounters between strangers with a shared passion. Sant’Egidio gives ample witness to that.<sup>26</sup>

So, the shift towards more consumption-based types of religious involvement in Europe also renders it possible to entertain a new balance between strong and weak participation in Christianity. Especially when Christians offer certain ‘products’ that are generally considered as meaning-giving (pilgrimages, caring for the poor, working for peace, cathedral worship, etc.), they can draw quite a number of late modern seekers. Out of these occasions new types of community can sometimes

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*Conversion in an Evangelical Seeker Church and a Pentecostal Church in the Netherlands* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011).

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Graham Cray et al (eds), *New Monasticism as Fresh Expression of Church* (London: Canterbury Press: 2010).

<sup>26</sup> There are more examples of similar lay movements, originating in the Roman Catholic Church. The Focolare Movement (Trent, 1943) is inspired by John 17:21, and commits itself to unity among Roman Catholics, but also with Christians from other churches, believers from other religions, and with non-believers. The movement is active in over 180 countries, and includes some two million participants. Chemin Neuf (Lyons, 1973) builds ecumenical communities out of its conviction that Jesus Christ died to break down the walls of separation between people. This movement has about 2,000 members in about thirty countries.

grow, communities that are not based on formal membership but on friendship and shared passions.

### C. Ecumenical mission

The most intensive form of working together in mission (at least, from a traditional perspective) may be when separate churches try to find an ecumenical path in order to strengthen their mission to society. Usually, this is more difficult than other forms of unity, since differences in doctrine and practice must be addressed at a much more profound level. An interesting example, in my opinion at least, is the Ark Community in Italy.<sup>27</sup> This evangelical, house-church-type network of communities has asked for recognition by the Anglican Church in order to have its leader ordained as a bishop. This in turn makes the Community a more suitable conversation partner for the Catholic Church in Italy. As such a procedure is alien to the evangelical, Free Church roots of this type of Protestantism, it is a truly ecumenical step enabling more communion with Catholics. Another example, 'in reverse' so to speak, was shared with me by a Reformed pastor from Ghent, Belgium. He told me that the local Catholic priest strongly recommended the Christmas Eve service of his Protestant church, based on their long relationship of trust and respect.

Protestants in France, marginalized and fragmented as they are, often try to build networks or create new denominations out of shattered congregations. For example, there is a large number of small congregations, the greatest number of which have been planted by American missionaries between 1950 and 1990. Since the turn of the new century, many of these communities are going through a federating process of unification and shared vision, which in 2010 led to the setting up of the National Council of Evangelicals in France (CNEF). The CNEF groups together over 70% of all churches and organisations. CNEF has also unanimously adopted a vision for the planting of thousands of new churches.<sup>28</sup>

In a somewhat different frame, the merger of three Protestant denominations in the Netherlands may be mentioned. Together they now form the largest Protestant church in the country (*Protestantse Kerk in Nederland*). Even though their unification was motivated by more than just mission, a missionary agenda has been intrinsically connected with the whole process. Currently, this new church has made missionary pioneering a priority, as well as establishing relationships with immigrant churches.

The strongest attempts for unity in mission can be found where two or more denominations or congregation enter into full communion for mission. Take, for example, St Thomas', Crookes in Sheffield, UK, 'a

<sup>27</sup> [www.thearkcommunity.org/Quick%20Overview.htm#slide0017.htm](http://www.thearkcommunity.org/Quick%20Overview.htm#slide0017.htm)

<sup>28</sup> Courtesy of Daniel Liechti. Cf. <http://france-mission.org/files/content.cfm?PageMenuId=157>

partnership of Anglican/Baptist/Free Church'. This hybrid congregation came into being when the Anglican St Thomas' Parish Church started to use the nearby building of a Baptist church, when its own building was refurbished in the early 1980s. The two congregations decided to form a Local Enterprise Partnership. According to its website, the new Anglican-Baptist church 'grew significantly through the 1980s and became known for innovative strategies for growth and lively worship'. In the new millennium, a local independent house church joined them. The three-in-one church is well known for its missionary efforts and multiple church plants. Among other innovations, it has been the birthplace of the so-called Missional Communities and Lifeshapes, developed by the Rev. Mike Breen. It is also the mother church of The Order of Mission, 'a global covenant of Kingdom leaders' bound together by vows, a rule of life, and common practices.<sup>29</sup>

### Conclusion

For many centuries, Europe has been forced into unity by a monolithic and often violent Christendom. Then, for some more centuries, large parts of the continent were spiritually ripped apart by sectarian division. In our time, with the growing awareness that Europe has become at the same time a mission field and a mission base, new opportunities for co-operation in mission arise. Especially in the most secular parts of the continent, the established churches have lost something of their confidence, while many Free Churches have matured into a more 'catholic' consciousness. In a sense, every European church now functions as one denomination among others, regardless of its own ecclesial understanding. With the UK as its resourceful laboratory, new concepts of unity are developing in Europe. Action-oriented networks connect many separated congregations and initiatives. Client-based friendships create entirely new and largely non-institutional communities of spiritual seekers. And, even though they may sound a bit old-fashioned today, ecumenical attempts to find unity in mission are successful in healing old wounds and overcoming old conflicts.

At least three important challenges remain, however. First, even though there are encouraging signs of Protestants finding each other after so many years of separation, the gap with the Roman Catholic Church is still deep and wide. There are some small signs of change, however, as I have indicated above, and it seems that in some countries the first important

<sup>29</sup> Cf. [www.stthomaschurch.org.uk/our\\_history](http://www.stthomaschurch.org.uk/our_history); [www.missionorder.org/about](http://www.missionorder.org/about). On Lifeshapes and Missional Communities, see Mike Breen and Alex Absalom, *Launching Missional Communities: A Field Guide* (Pawleys Island, SC: 3D Ministries International, 2010); Mike Breen and Steve Cockram, *Building a Discipling Culture* (Pawleys Island, SC: 3D Ministries International, 2010). On the Order of Mission, see Diane Kershaw, 'The Order of Mission: Being a Sent People', in Cray, *New Monasticism*, 80-91.

steps have been taken towards rapprochement. Secondly, even though many denominations have made contact with immigrant Christians a priority in their official polity, there is still little joint mission ‘on the ground’, and frustrations on both sides are often very real. There are all sorts of reasons for this, but it should be clear that old and new European Christians have much to learn from each other. And finally, as Europe is and will remain a mission field for many Christians from other parts of the world, there is a continuing need to do mission in a non-sectarian way. Especially in an age of globalization, there is a very real risk of bitter clashes between highly transportable late modern forms of Christianity (e.g. evangelicalism, neo-Pentecostalism) and locally rooted pre-modern forms of Christianity (e.g. traditional People’s Churches – *Volkskirche*). Globalization connects worlds, but it divides cities. Those who come from abroad to Europe must develop careful and respectful missionary methods, offering their services to existing local churches before planting new ones. After all, the purpose of mission is the glorification of God and the salvation of people. Everything else is secondary.

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# ALL GOD'S CHILDREN: JOURNALISTIC OBSERVATIONS DURING ENCOUNTERS WITH CHRISTIAN GROUPS

Kåre Melhus

The worldwide body of Christ is a colourful community of believers. History and circumstances have shaped local culture in such a way that it might seem that more divides than unites its members. The purpose of this chapter is to describe some of the colourful diversity found among people who believe in Jesus Christ, at the same time as the 'tie that binds' is recognized. The phrase is of course taken from Dr John Fawcett's hymn *Blessed be the tie that binds*. Perhaps this song, more than any other, describes the commonality between people who profess the name of Jesus.

As a journalist I have travelled the world for some forty years. On occasions, I have visited churches and Christian groups to do stories on them. Some of my reporting has been broadcast by the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation where I worked for thirteen years. In other instances, I visited churches as Communications Officer with African Enterprise, an evangelistic organization focusing on urban Africa. Sometimes I have just used the opportunity to drop in on Christian groups while in the neighbourhood. Either way I always observed with the eye of a journalist what took place, and being of a curious mind, I always tried to understand why people behave and think the way they do.

Journalism may be defined as timely and truthful communication of facts and opinion, clearly presented by an independent medium or journalist.<sup>1</sup> As a journalist, I have basically three tools at my disposal for gathering information: interviews, research and observation. In this article I rely heavily on observation. Most of my working life, I have travelled on the Eurasian continent and Africa. Thus my encounters with Christians come from these areas. A selection of them is included in this chapter. But since the Christian church is truly global, we asked three friends to share their encounters with brothers and sisters in areas where my travels did not take me. The contributions from Knud Jørgensen, Paul Leer-Salvesen and Kjell Nordstokke appear at the end of this chapter.

Writing these lines and remembering people, I thank the Lord for giving me the opportunity to meet with his disciples around the world. Based on my observations, I think that heaven is going to be a very interesting place!

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<sup>1</sup> Svein Brurås, *Etikk for journalister* (Bergen: Fagbokforlaget, 2000), 10.

## Kampala, Uganda

The sound in the 500-seat rented theatre is overwhelming, especially for us in the front row. Collin, my interpreter, is yelling into my ear, but I can't hear what he is saying. Even the huge loudspeakers are in trouble, belching out distorted sound. Outside the theatre thousands of plastic chairs are slowly being occupied, as worshippers gather for the Sunday service at The House of Prayer Ministry. Loudspeakers and flat-screen TVs make it easy to follow what is happening inside the theatre. Assistant Pastor Habbat is encouraging the congregation to remember the visions they had written down at the beginning of the year, and to tick off the answers to prayer they have received by now (early December 2013). He also advises people to fast, and to beseech the Lord regarding the fulfilment of the remaining items on their lists before the end of the year.

Two hours into the service, Pastor Aloysius Bujingo arrives, driving a white Land Cruiser with PRAISE GOD on the licence plate. He gets out of the car and greets individuals in the congregation, which by now numbers between three and four thousand, seated all over the Bal Valley Primary School compound, situated below the imposing Old Kampala Mosque, initiated by Idi Amin and financed by Muammar Gaddafi.<sup>2</sup>

Pastor Bujingo picks up where his assistant pastor left off, and assures the congregation that there is power in prayer, and that God is love and is concerned with the well-being of the individual. After about six hours of singing, worship and preaching, the congregation leaves with their problems and prayer requests, some answered and some unanswered.

Reflecting on my experience and trying to understand the dynamics of what I have just witnessed, I turn to Allan Heaton Anderson and his book *To the Ends of the Earth: Pentecostalism and the Transformation of World Christianity*. Here he says that the growth of independent Pentecostal churches should be seen primarily as the result of proclamation of a message addressing communities' tangible needs, a local response to the Bible.<sup>3</sup>

He criticizes western missionaries whose message did not touch on many aspects of the life and struggle of Africans and answered questions the Africans were not asking. 'Salvation' was seen exclusively as the 'saving of souls' from moral sins, so that Christianity was perceived as a religion with a list of taboos. This inability to be relevant to the daily struggles of ordinary people left many profoundly disillusioned with the form of Christianity that people had embraced after being persuaded by missionaries to forsake their popular folk religions. This failure was especially acute in the area of sickness and healing, where the older missions' response was to simply provide medical facilities when they had

<sup>2</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uganda\\_National\\_Mosque](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uganda_National_Mosque)

<sup>3</sup> Allan Heaton Andersen, *To the Ends of the Earth, Pentecostalism and the Transformation of World Christianity* (New York: OUP, 2013) 38.

the resources. No religious solution was given to the problem of sickness, and even the advent of medical missions tended to secularize healing to the realm of western medical expertise and outside the sphere of religion. This created a vacuum that was later filled by the prophetic and Pentecostal movements. In these and most communities in the Majority World, religion could not be separated from the whole of life's experiences.<sup>4</sup>

The community to which the House of Prayer Ministry reaches out struggles with huge problems: according to the UNHCR statistics, Uganda now hosts 265,000 refugees. They have fled wars in Eastern Congo, South Sudan and even Somalia. The vast majority have come in the last five years.<sup>5</sup> The indigenous population struggles with the AIDS epidemic. UNAIDS reports that 1.5 million people are living with the disease. In 2012, 63,000 people died from the illness, and one million orphans aged 0-17 are trying to stay alive.<sup>6</sup>

### **Yerevan, Armenia**

Together with truck drivers and soldiers, I enter Etchmiadzim Cathedral in Yerevan one ice-cold January morning in 1994. Inside the candlelit sanctuary the air is filled with male voices chanting ancient Armenian hymns. On this site people have worshipped since Gregory the Illuminator initiated the construction of the church in AD 301. The men I am with get down to business. They are there to pray. They light candles and place them reverently in wrought-iron holders.

We are about to embark on a journey through the Caucasian mountains to the front line in Nagorno Karabakh, an Armenian enclave inside Azerbaijan where the ethnic Armenians want to rejoin Armenia. The Azerbaijanis are fighting back, supported by Mujahedin fighters fresh from Chechnya and Afghanistan. Both soldiers and civilians are suffering in the fighting, and we are about to bring in medical supplies in a convoy of trucks escorted by military vehicles. The trip is risky. Our cargo is coveted by both fighters and civilians, while pure bandits often attack such convoys in an effort to get hold of merchandise to re-sell. Simple road accidents are also common on the icy high-altitude roads hugging the steep mountainsides.

As the flickering light falls on their rough, unshaven faces, they close their eyes and pray for protection. As we leave the cathedral and take our seats in the convoy of trucks and armoured vehicles, they let me know that they count on God's protection just as much as on the weapons they are taking along. The wall builders described in the book of Nehemiah come to mind as one of the soldier places an armed grenade launcher across my lap.

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<sup>4</sup> Andersen, *To the Ends of the Earth*, 39.

<sup>5</sup> [www.unhcr.org/pages/49e483c06.html](http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e483c06.html)

<sup>6</sup> [www.unaids.org/en/regionscountries/countries/uganda](http://www.unaids.org/en/regionscountries/countries/uganda)

As we ease out of the cathedral compound in first gear, I think about the Israelites rebuilding the walls around Jerusalem: 'Those who carried materials did their work with one hand and held a weapon in the other, and each of the builders wore his sword at his side as he worked.'<sup>7</sup>

As the daylight fades in the late afternoon, our convoy pulls into Vayk, a small village near the front line. Dining on local beef and red wine, several of my fellow travellers stand up and give speeches. Through my interpreter, I understand that they give thanks to God for protection across the mountain pass. They also reflect on the importance of their present struggle, which they see as a conflict between Christianity and Islam.

They recall the history of Nagorno Karabakh, or Artsakh, as the province populated and governed by Armenians since Roman times, was called. To understand their deep-seated convictions, I later read up on the turbulent local history: around 180 BC, Artsakh became one of the fifteen provinces of the Armenian kingdom and remained so until the fourth century. While formerly having the status of a province, Artsakh possibly formed a principality on its own – like Armenia's province of Syunik. Other theories suggest that Artsakh was a royal fiefdom, belonging personally to the King of Armenia.<sup>8</sup> After Armenia became the first country in the world to accept Christianity as its state religion in AD 301, monasteries were established in all parts of the land, beginning with Amaras Monastery in AD 410.<sup>9</sup> Other monasteries were added, most importantly Gandzasar Cathedral, built in the period 1240-66 in memory of John the Baptist. From the late fourteenth century till 1836, the Gandzasar Monastery housed the easternmost sub-division of the Armenian Apostolic Church, known as the Holy See of Gandzasar. Gandzasar administered parishes not only in Artsakh and Utik but also in all the lands in the triangle formed by the eastern border of Armenia along the River Kura, the Caspian Sea and the Caucasus Mountains.<sup>10</sup>

In the early part of the sixteenth century, much of Armenia was absorbed into the Muslim Ottoman Empire. During and after World War I, the Ottomans carried out a series of massacres of the Armenian people. An estimated one to 1½ million people died.<sup>11</sup> Later, what was left of the Armenian civilization was swallowed up by the Russian Empire, and then the Soviet Union.<sup>12</sup>

The dinner speakers also recall how the Muslim Azerbaijanis had launched campaigns to destroy Armenian architectural monuments, and

<sup>7</sup> Nehemiah 4:17, 18 (NIV).

<sup>8</sup> Robert H Hewsen, 'The Kingdom of Artsakh', in T. Samuelian and M. Stone (eds), *Medieval Armenian Culture* (Chico, CA: University of Pennsylvania Armenian Text and Studies, 1983), 100-03.

<sup>9</sup> [www.amaras.org](http://www.amaras.org)

<sup>10</sup> [www.gandzasar.com](http://www.gandzasar.com)

<sup>11</sup> [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armenian\\_Genocide](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armenian_Genocide)

<sup>12</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History\\_of\\_Armenia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Armenia)

how the Azerbaijani Academy of Science aimed at purging Azerbaijani history of all traces of Armenian political and cultural presence. Azerbaijan had annexed Nagorno Karabakh in 1918.

In 1988 the regional parliament of Nagorno Karabakh officially appealed to the Azarbaijani authorities in Baku to consider the possibility of reunifying their homeland with the then Armenian Soviet Republic. Baku answered with a series of massacres and pogroms of Armenians, and the war was on. Two years before our trip, the Armenians re-established the Artsakh's statehood in the form of the Nagorno Karabakh Republic. Three months after our trip, a Russian-brokered ceasefire stopped the hostilities.<sup>13</sup> 'We are the last outpost of Christendom,' several of the speakers shout to their fellow convoyers as we conclude the evening and go to bed, in preparation for the final stretch of road into the war zone.

### Eastern Kosovo

The words of the Armenian truck drivers come back to me as I am guided around Decani Monastery in 2008. The monastery was established in a chestnut grove by the Serbian King Stefan Uroš III Dečanski in 1327. Its original founding charter is dated to 1330. The following year, the king died and was buried at the monastery, which thenceforth became his popular shrine.<sup>14</sup>

The monastic church, dedicated to Christ Pantocrator and built from blocks of red-purple, light-yellow and onyx marble, was constructed by builders working under a Franciscan friar, Vitus of Kotor, my guide tells me. He is one of the residing monks at Decani Monastery. The church is distinguished by its imposing size and Romanesque and early Gothic structure and design. Apart from the extensive and well preserved frescos, the interior features the original fourteenth-century stone templon, the barrier separating the nave from the sacraments at the altar, typical of Byzantine churches. The throne of the head of the religious community, known as the *hegumen*, and the carved wooden sarcophagus of the founder King Stefan are also important elements of this unique interior.

Visoki Dečani was declared a Monument of Culture of Exceptional Importance in 1990, and it is protected by the Republic of Serbia. In 2004, UNESCO listed the monastery on the World Heritage List, citing its frescoes as 'one of the most valued examples of the so-called Palaeologan renaissance in Byzantine painting', and 'a valuable record of the life in the fourteenth century'. In 2006, it was added to the List of World Heritage in Danger due to the potential for attacks by ethnic Albanians. It is protected by NATO troops belonging to Kosovo Force (KFOR).<sup>15</sup> Only days before

<sup>13</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History\\_of\\_Nagorno-Karabakh](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Nagorno-Karabakh)

<sup>14</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Visoki>

<sup>15</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Visoki>

my visit, the Muslim Kosovo Albanians had declared their independence from Serbia. Thousands of Kosovo Serbs had already fled north, to Serbia. 'We are not going anywhere,' my guide assures me. 'We are the last outpost of Christian Europe,' he adds.

### East London

The 4,000-seat converted warehouse communicates energy. The mostly West African audience is expecting something. Triumphant worship music from huge speakers sets the tone which has made the Kingsway International Christian Centre (KICC) famous. The KICC website states that they are the fastest-growing church in western Europe.<sup>16</sup> The Nigerian-born founder of the church, the Rev. Matthew Ashimolowo, started with 300 members in 1992, and I am curious to find out why all these Africans flock to hear him. He enters the stage like a rock star, communicating success. Dressed in a designer suit and matching haircut, he feeds the audience what they hunger for: how to succeed as an immigrant in British society. Pastor Ashimolowo bases his message on the Bible, but the focus of the sermon is not salvation and heavenly rewards. Neither is it the need for compassion and social justice. The focus is on the here and now, and how you can make it big in Britain using sound Biblical principles. His message is trustworthy. Pastor Ashimolowo knows what he is talking about. He has made it himself. Coming from nothing, he now has a salary of £125,000, nicely topped up with millions in revenue from his private companies, including the Mathew Ashimolowo Media Company, selling his books, and running his radio and TV show: *Winning Ways*.

His message is clear. If I can make it, so can you! Work hard, be smart but honest, take care of your family, then the Lord will bless you!

As we file out of the auditorium, eager young stewards hand us plastic bags filled with brochures with order forms for Ashimolowo's books and freshly produced audio recordings of today's message. One brochure features a front-page photo of a grinning Pastor Ashimolowo holding a huge gold cup in his arms.

'The teaching of the church is very much about self-development,' James McGlashan, a former oil executive who is now KICC's chief operating officer, says to *The Guardian*. 'If that is preaching wealth, then we are preaching wealth. Becoming financially independent, owning a house, getting a degree and a better job is good.'<sup>17</sup>

The Kingsway International Christian Centre is Pentecostal. Pastor Ashimolowo was sent to London by Foursquare Gospel Church in

<sup>16</sup> [www.kicc.org.uk/Home/tabid/36/Default.aspx](http://www.kicc.org.uk/Home/tabid/36/Default.aspx)

<sup>17</sup> [www.theguardian.com/world/2009/apr/11/kingsway-international-christian-centre](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/apr/11/kingsway-international-christian-centre)

Nigeria.<sup>18</sup> Thus the KICC is part of the Pentecostal tradition. Lamin Sanneh, professor of Missions and World Christianity at Yale Divinity School, says in his book, *Disciples of All Nations: Pillars of World Christianity*, that Pentecostalism becomes a local religion and takes on the context of its followers, not only in the way they understand the text, but also in their appropriation of language and cultural symbols in their worship – in fact, in the totality of their experience.<sup>19</sup> The Argentinean Catholic theologian Severino Croatto says in his book, *Biblical Hermeneutics*, that the Pentecostals' understanding of the Bible is conditioned by their presuppositions arising out of real-life situations and their perception of how the Bible speaks in these contexts, which inevitably enlarges its meaning for them.<sup>20</sup>

Thus, when West African immigrants, primarily Nigerians, see a living example of how Biblical principles actually work, the message has an enormous appeal. Since my visit in 1998, KICC has grown further and has established branches in eight British cities. KICC has also established thirteen chapels, which become branches when they grow beyond 100 adults.

Internationally, KICC has created an international network of churches in South Africa, Namibia, Ireland, Ghana and Nigeria. In Pastor Ashimolowo's home country, Nigeria, KICC has established thirteen churches.<sup>21</sup> Impressive indeed. But the question now is whether his positive image, which led to such tremendous growth, has been hurt by accusations of financial mismanagement, and whether this will lead to the unravelling of Pastor Ashimolowo's religious empire.

Between 2002 and 2005 the Charity Commission of England and Wales investigated The King's Ministries Trust, the charity behind KICC. The report concludes that there had been serious misconduct and mismanagement in the administration of the charity. Pastor Ashimolowo approved payments and benefits to himself and his wife Yemisi, totalling more than £384,000. He and his family received benefits from the charity including free accommodation, an £80,000 car, and personal purchases using the charity's Visa card, including the purchase of a timeshare apartment in Florida for £13,000.

Over half a million pounds was paid out to Ashimolowo's private companies which were operated from church property and had ill-defined business relationships with the charity. Ashimolowo acted as both a trustee and a paid employee of the charity. He was ordered to repay £200,000.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>18</sup> [www.forbes.com/sites/mfonobongnsehe/2011/06/07/the-five-richest-pastors-in-nigeria/2](http://www.forbes.com/sites/mfonobongnsehe/2011/06/07/the-five-richest-pastors-in-nigeria/2)

<sup>19</sup> Lamin Sanneh, *Disciples of All Nations: Pillars of World Christianity* (New York: Oxford Press, 2008) 25.

<sup>20</sup> Severino Croatto, *Biblical Hermeneutics* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1987), 1.

<sup>21</sup> [www.kicc.org.uk/Branches/Chapels/tabid/64/Default.aspx](http://www.kicc.org.uk/Branches/Chapels/tabid/64/Default.aspx)

<sup>22</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matthew\\_Ashimolowo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matthew_Ashimolowo)

### **Freetown, Sierra Leone**

A brass band and a church choir are filing into the 60,000-seat Shaka Stadium in Freetown, Sierra Leone. Evangelists from African Enterprise (AE) are also there, together with local counsellors. We had just concluded a parade through the city with the band at full volume, with ourselves taking up the rear. This exercise usually produces a crowd for the rally. But not this time. No one fills the bleachers as the sun set and darkness engulfs the empty sports venue. An evangelist gives a brief message to the local band and the choir, and then we retire to our rooms for the night.

A team of evangelists from AE, representing seven African countries, are in Freetown at the invitation of local Freetown churches. The idea was originally that AE would conduct a pastors' conference, since the church leaders did not deem the Freetown churches ready for an evangelistic campaign. 'We are not ready to receive new people into our congregations,' one of them said. He admits that the Freetown ecclesiastical scene is one of infighting, rivalry and envy. Walking the streets of the Sierra Leonean capital, one gets the feeling that much is wrong in wider society also. School-age children beg in the streets. They do not ask for money, but for pens and paper. As we pass dilapidated government buildings, we notice the latest and biggest models of BMWs and Mercedes parked outside.

Once the pastors' conference was well underway, and competing pastors had stood up and confessed their sins, the spiritual temperature rose, and the idea of an outreach to the city came up. Several churches were contacted and evening evangelistic meetings hastily organized. At the time, I served as a communications officer with AE and was assigned to a downtown Anglican church, together with Orpheus Hove from Zimbabwe. We took turns preaching there, three nights in a row. There was no electricity, so we put candles on the back of the pews. Not many candles were needed, as the congregation consisted of six women. As we greeted them the first night, we learned that none of them were from the church we met in. As we arrived for our last meeting a bit early, we saw to our pleasant surprise that the sanctuary was well lit, and organ music could be heard through the open doors. But our joy was short-lived. As it turned out, the church organist had been practising, and when he saw us, he hastily gathered his sheet music and managed to switch off the lights before running out through the back door! Orpheus and I tried unsuccessfully to find the light switches in the dark, so we were back to our few candles as we greeted the six women who came to fellowship with us and pray for their country. In the light of what was about to happen in Sierra Leone, a passage from the Sermon on the Mount comes to mind: 'You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.'<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Matthew 5:13 (NIV).

Less than six months later, in March 1991, an eleven-year civil war broke out as the Revolutionary United Front, with support from special forces loyal to Charles Taylor in neighbouring Liberia, attempted to overthrow President Joseph Momoh. An estimated 300,000 people died during the hostilities, financed largely by what has been known as blood diamonds. Thousands of people, including small children, were left maimed for life, since a normal punishment during the war was to have one's hands cut off.<sup>24</sup>

### **Cape Town, South Africa**

The year is 1988 and I find myself in a private home in Cape Town. I have been invited to a group of Christians who are meeting for a foot-washing ceremony where the main purpose is to minister to each other. The group is made up of people from various congregations in the Cape Town area to take care of the families of people imprisoned for anti-apartheid activities. The South African police are frequently arresting male breadwinning members of black families, and the courts are following up with harsh sentences. Part of the punishment is that no one is allowed to help the families left behind as the prison gates slam shut behind husbands and fathers. Such assistance is in itself a crime.

So, I am meeting with criminals and enemies of the state, as far as the South African authorities are concerned. The atmosphere is filled with a mixture of exhaustion, fear, bravery, concern, love and trust in God. The handful of group members report to the others on their activities of the past week. The group focuses especially on the needs of a woman with four children, whose husband has been in jail for several months without a trial. He is accused of firebombing a filling station. The group does not think he did this. They know that the secret police keep an eye on the house where the family lives, and to go there is risky for people trying to bring them food and other supplies. The woman assigned to care for this family admits she is exhausted and afraid, but willing to continue. A man in the group suggests that he takes over for a while, so the woman can take a rest. The group supports the idea, and hears reports on the other families they are ministering to. They also evaluate the risk to themselves in terms of police harassment or possible arrest. The risk is judged to be moderate, given the prevailing security situation in Cape Town.

The group goes into earnest prayer for each other and for the families of the prisoners. Hands are laid on heads and shoulders, shaking in silent crying. They pray for a long time.

The leader of the group stands up and reads from John 13 about the Last Supper and how Jesus washed his disciples' feet. He reminds the group of their mission: to carry the ministry of Jesus to people in desperate need.

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<sup>24</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sierra\\_Leone\\_Civil\\_War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sierra_Leone_Civil_War)

Then a washbasin is brought in, together with a pitcher with warm water and towels. The members of the group take turns washing each other's feet. Warm water is poured over bare feet, massaged with loving hands and dried with clean, white towels. Peace fills the room and settles on the members of the little group. In the end they turn to me, and ask for permission to wash my feet and give me the opportunity to wash the feet of one in the group. 'We want you to see Jesus,' the group leader says. 'I have seen him clearer here than at any other time in my life,' I answer quietly.

As I drove away in the warm South African night, I thought about heaven. It is going to be a place filled with love for the Lord and for each other.

Reflecting on my encounters with God's children, I recognize the varied circumstances they find themselves in. These are shaped partly by history, partly by the people themselves. But through it all they and I are sustained by a common belief in a sovereign, triune God who will welcome us into the heavenly realm when the earthly passage is over. Dr Fawcett captured this sentiment in the last verse of his hymn:

From sorrow, toil and pain,  
And sin, we shall be free,  
And perfect love and friendship reign  
Through all eternity.

### **Knud Jørgensen, Missiologist and Former Journalist**

#### *Xian, China*

It was a grey early morning in an old stone building. It was my first visit to China (1987) after having been fed stories and anecdotes from pre-Mao China as a child after World War II. I was there in Xian with my wife – and with friends from Norway, Uganda and the US: experienced ecumenical globetrotters – two bishops and a church president. It was bitterly cold at six o'clock in the morning. I dreamt of some hot tea. We had been invited to a prayer meeting. The huge room was filled with 700-800 people, mostly women in white shawls. The Ugandan Bishop Festo Kivengere had been asked to bring a greeting before the prayers began. So he did, but as he prepared to step down, the pastor asked him back in the pulpit: 'It was too short. Please preach one more sermon.' And Festo got up again. I think he told about balloons – how balloons may bounce back and forth when they touch one another. 'The reason is all the hot air inside,' Festo said. 'You need a needle to prick a hole first so that the hot air can get out.' We are often like balloons filled with hot air. Therefore we bounce and do not love one another; until the cross of Christ has pricked holes in us. And the women responded with Amen, Amen, Amen.

Now the scene was set for the prayer meeting. I thought I knew the ‘liturgy’ of prayer meetings where one prays at a time, and the more we are the less we hear – it becomes mumbo-jumbo or spiritual sighing. But here it was different: All the 700-800 people prayed at the same time – lifting their voices to the Lord. It was like waves in the ocean; I was taken up into heaven and placed among the great white flock that John tells about in Revelation chapter 7: those who had washed their clothes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb and who had now gathered around the throne to give praise to Jesus. I wept, my wife wept, we all wept like small children. There was absolutely no hot air in the balloons.

Since then I have been privileged to be present at similar prayer meetings in both registered Three-Self churches and house churches in China. And I have come to understand a little better why churches in China grow. Unity is a precious gift to those whose lives have been pricked with the cross of the Lord.

### *Borana, on the Ethiopia-Kenya Border*

It was back in 1977. I remember the year because later that same year we were told to leave Ethiopia by the Communist regime, the *derg*, under the leadership of Mengistu Haile Mariam. Mengistu and his soldiers came to the radio station, Radio Voice of the Gospel, where I worked, early one morning in March, and they confiscated the entire installation with its 300-400 employees and renamed it ‘Radio Voice of Revolutionary Ethiopia’.

Earlier that same year, we were on an official visit to churches and congregations in the southern provinces of Sidamo and Borana. Our family was part of the entourage of the official representative in Ethiopia of the Norwegian Lutheran Mission. This mission is rather anti-clerical so we laughed about touring the provinces in the company of the mission’s ‘bishop’. One Sunday morning we left the town of Mega terribly early to visit a tiny congregation on the plains of Borana, in a border area where no one knew where Ethiopia ended and Kenya began. We had visited the wells where the Borana people drew water for their cattle – an exercise which is accompanied by singing to make sure that air is circulating in the deep wells. The singing we had heard were indigenous Borana hymns about the Great Shepherd of the cattle. And now we were sitting in a small church hut filled with families and small children. My wife and I were surrounded by our three children – two ‘home-made’ Scandinavian boys and one small adopted Ethiopian daughter, Elisabeth Almaz (meaning ‘diamond’). I was asked to bring a greeting, and my daughter wanted to remain on my arm as I spoke. ‘We are God’s children’, I said, ‘but only by adoption. Like Elisabeth, on my arm.’ Then an elderly Borana woman interrupted me, ‘Why adopted?’ But another woman replied, ‘Cannot you see that this man loves his adopted daughter even more? That is why she is called “Almaz”.’

All God’s children are adopted children. God loves adopted children.

**Paul Leer-Salvesen, Professor at Agder University, Kristiansand,  
Author and Former Journalist**

*The Monastery, Monte Casino, Italy, AD 1014*

It is warm. The incline up to the monastery sucks the strength out of them. Every half-hour they have to take a break and drink water from their leather skins. It takes three hours to walk from the bottom of the valley to the top where Monte Casino Monastery is situated. St Benedict founded the monastery in AD 529. Lucas is twelve years old and skinny. He and his father have travelled for two days. They come from the village of Terracina, where Via Appia meets the sea 100 kilometres south of Rome. Here Lucas' father has a boat and a few fishing nets. Marco and Angello, the older brothers, will inherit the boat. Lucas is not cut out for this kind of work. He has no strength in his one arm and hand, the result of a serious fever attack when he was a baby. But, according to the village priest, Lucas is very smart. He taught Lucas to read and write. The same priest had suggested that the family send Lucas to the monastery. 'Lucas will make a good monk,' he said. The Novice Master meets them at the monastery gate. Lucas hears singing from the church: 300 men sing one of the Psalms of David.

*Maria Lach, Germany, AD 2014*

It is cold. A gauge on the dashboard warns of low temperatures and difficult driving conditions. I drive carefully up the narrow road to Maria Lach, the Benedictines' main monastery in Germany. For a week I will be their guest, and will write, think and pray. For a thousand years they have received guests of all kinds. Some have been refugees; some have come in search of silence, of God, of meaning. Men have been given the chance of breaking bread with the brethren in the *clausura*, the closed section of the monastery. It is said that no women have set foot there in 900 years. Women – mothers, sisters and female friends of the brethren – are welcomed in the guest wing. Both sexes congregate in the church five times a day for mass and prayers (mass in the morning, four prayer times during the day).

The brethren alternate between practical and intellectual work. Some write and study; others work on the farm and in the greenhouse. All have to do kitchen duty and attend to the elderly brethren a few days a month. Two evenings a week, they are allowed to talk freely with each other for one hour. The brethren eat in silence, while a monk reads to them from the Bible, Christian texts, newspapers, or perhaps a novel.

Christian monasteries have made an impact over a period of more than 1,500 years. Many people, such as Lucas, have received an education and a sheltered life in a monastery. He probably stayed in the monastery for the

remainder of his life. First as a novice, then as a monk, after having taken the ‘eternal vow’, concerning obedience, poverty and chastity. Today’s brethren take the same vows. Most of them remain in the monastery for life, while some leave and become parish priests. Others take up secular vocations.

How do we describe a modern Catholic monastery? How would a monk or a nun describe it? There is a difference between contemplative and more open monasteries, while much is the same. I think they would answer: ‘We will pray for the people who live out in the world. We will serve God and our neighbours through a simple and disciplined life.’

**Kjell Nordstokke, Professor Emeritus at Diakonhjemmet  
University College, Oslo**

*A basic Christian community in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil*

Some thirty people are gathered a Sunday morning in an urban centre outside Rio de Janeiro. They belong to what is called a Basic Christian Community, and their meeting place is a classroom in a local school. Chairs have been placed in a circle; a cross is placed on a table, together with a vase of fresh flowers.

The participants, slightly more women than men, are workers, and most of them are poor. They have to struggle to get their children to school, to ensure that food is provided every day. Among their main concerns are health and daily work so that they can earn enough to survive. They are people of faith, most of them Catholics, and they are convinced that whatever happens, it can be brought to God.

Practically all of them bring with them their personal Bible. Not all of them are well trained in reading, nor do they know where to find the passage that is to be reflected upon in today’s service. But with some help from the one sitting next to them, all get ready for what takes most time and engages them the most: the sharing of the Biblical text and its interpretation in their daily life.

But first they have sung and shared a liturgy. A lay person, as all of them are, has had to get sheets with today’s liturgy from a Catholic church downtown. They could have attended mass there, but it would take time and money to travel, and they would feel anonymous in that big church. So they prefer the local community, although no priest will officiate mass with them there; instead, they will themselves be in charge of what happens during their service.

The Biblical text for the day is read in the circle, each participant reading one verse. So many different voices, and even translations as some have a Protestant Bible, others a more popular version. When the text is read, they

are silent for some moments, and then they read it again, perhaps even a third time.

Sometimes a leader has been appointed to facilitate or animate the reflection on the text. He or she may ask: Do we recognize people or experiences in the Biblical passage in our own reality? If it is a narrative about a sick person, do we see similar situations in our own community? The point is not to start with the religious glasses focusing, for instance, on what Jesus said and did; before that, we search for points of similarity between the Biblical reality and our reality. Then, as some would say, the Bible would reveal itself as a 'window' through which we would see our own daily life, and discover matters of injustice, suffering and sinfulness, similar to the way we find this in the Holy Book. Only then, when we have read the text as a 'mirror' where we recognize our failures, but also our faith, are we prepared to let the Word be a 'light' that orients us where to go. The outcome of the Biblical reflection will therefore often be quite practical, pointing at common tasks in the service of God and one's neighbour.

This short presentation hints at some fundamental traits of the Basic Christian Communities, and the movement they represent in many countries, especially in Latin America.

- Their way of being church is from below, they are organized by ordinary people, and to a certain degree they represent an alternative, or even an opposition, to the institutional church and its organization from above.
- Their way of reading the Bible is as a collective effort of discovering its meaning in their social context, and a unique source for empowering people to struggle for a dignified life.

# EMERGING MODELS OF MISSION

Mark Oxbrow

It was a warm Sunday morning when Hung Ling collected me from the dusty city roadside and drove me out into the green hinterland of Yangon, and then escorted me hastily (to avoid prying eyes, as this was a region closed to foreigners) around his house to the bamboo lattice church in his back yard. After worshipping together, we shared a bowl of fish soup while this young pastor told me of his vision for a mission to the Burmese people and way beyond into the provinces of neighbouring China. In the afternoon, I visited his embryonic Bible college (one of dozens springing up around this Asian city) and met two of his missionaries, already deployed in the western provinces of Myanmar. Since that Sunday in November 2012, the network I serve, Faith2Share,<sup>1</sup> has brought together a small group of likeminded emerging mission leaders in Myanmar, and is exploring with them what part they might play in God's emerging global mission, and how best they can do this.

I begin this chapter with this story because it represents what is happening today in so many different corners of the world – a movement which at first sight can appear chaotic and random, but which on closer examination exhibits an amazing unity of purpose and direction, bound together by a new sensitivity to the Spirit of God. Nigerians are planting churches in Togo and Chad, Costa Rican missionaries share the gospel with families in Algeria, and Bhutanese Christians ask where they can serve in mission. In 1989 Larry D. Pate produced what I believe was the first directory of 'Two-third world missions'.<sup>2</sup> In his analysis, Pate projected that by the year 2000 there would be 83,697 Asian missionaries,<sup>3</sup> but my own estimate would suggest that by that date there were that number from India alone, with Korea, the Philippines and now China adding many thousands more. To produce an equivalent directory today would be an almost impossible task because of the multiplication of these movements. My purpose in this chapter, however, is not to produce statistics, many of which are available elsewhere,<sup>4</sup> nor to provide an account of the amazing

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<sup>1</sup> [www.faith2share.net](http://www.faith2share.net) (accessed 3 March 2014).

<sup>2</sup> Larry D. Pate, *From Every People: A Handbook of Two-Thirds World Missions with directory/history/analysis* (Marc and OC Ministries, 1989).

<sup>3</sup> Pate, 46.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Todd Johnson and Kenneth Ross, *Atlas of Global Christianity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009).

work and commitment of this new wave of mission,<sup>5</sup> but rather to provide some analysis. I wish to examine some of the difficulties (perhaps even mistakes) of these new movements, how they relate to the traditional ‘sending’ churches and agencies, and then to suggest a few pointers for a way forward together.

### Edinburgh 2010, David Bosch and the Lausanne Movement

In their report on Edinburgh 2010, Kirsteen Kim and Andrew Anderson record that, amongst the 300 delegates gathered in this historic city, 75 nationalities were represented, and 115 denominations or national churches.<sup>6</sup> Scanning the list of delegates,<sup>7</sup> rich cultural diversity is evident, but on closer inspection it becomes clear (as it did during the conference itself) that the mission leaders with whom we are concerned in this chapter, those from emerging mission movements, were largely absent from Edinburgh 2010 and their voice was silent. This is not to criticise Edinburgh 2010, which was never intended to address this particular issue, but rather to illustrate the significant gap in contact, and often understanding, between the ‘mainstream’, often denominationally linked, mission movements and those with whom this chapter will deal. To put some flesh on this assertion, there are at least three major networks representing these emerging mission movements at a continental level and, as far as I can see, none of these (MANI – the Movement of African National Initiatives; COMIBAM – Congreso Misionero Iberoamericano; and IMA – Indian Missions Association), nor their members, were represented at Edinburgh 2010.

The changing face of world mission, however, was very much embraced by Edinburgh 2010. The very significant presentation by the Korean delegates and the Rev. Lee Young-Hoon<sup>8</sup> in particular, and Dr Fidon Miwombeki’s powerful paper on mission to the global North,<sup>9</sup> left delegates with no misapprehensions about, not only the changes that had taken place since 1990, but also the changes that lay ahead. It is the nature of those changes that concern us in this chapter.

Almost ten years before the Edinburgh conference, the South African missiologist, David Bosch, in his seminal text *Transforming Mission*, outlined what he called ‘the elements of an emerging ecumenical

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<sup>5</sup> A very good descriptive account is proved by Enoch Wan and Michael Pocock, *Missions from the Majority World: Progress, Challenges and Case Studies* (William Carey Library, 2009), also Miriam Adeney, *Kingdom without borders: The untold story of Global Christianity* (IVP Books, 2009).

<sup>6</sup> Kirsteen Kim and Andrew Anderson, *Edinburgh 2010: Mission Today and Tomorrow* (Oxford: Regnum, 2001), 4.

<sup>7</sup> Kim and Anderson, *Edinburgh 2010*, 425-42.

<sup>8</sup> Kim and Anderson, *Edinburgh 2010*, 85-97.

<sup>9</sup> Kim and Anderson, *Edinburgh 2010*, 113-17.

missionary paradigm'.<sup>10</sup> In one sense, the thirteen elements he identifies and explores have been very significant for those of us trying to find our way forward in mission, but at another level they remain just what he called them – 'elements' of an 'emerging' missionary paradigm. His insertion of the word 'ecumenical' was perhaps a hopeful attempt to bind together these diverse elements. In this one respect I believe he failed. Although most of those who gathered under the banner of Edinburgh 2010, or who, four years later, endorsed the World Council of Churches' *Together Towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes*<sup>11</sup> in Busan, South Korea, would see themselves standing in the legacy of Bosch, few leaders of the growing emerging missions movements will have even heard of him. Their formation in mission has followed a very different route. There is however, one short section in Bosch's treatise that is of deep relevance here. In looking to the future of mission, Bosch saw what Roland Allen<sup>12</sup> had understood half a century earlier, that the laity don't just have a rightful place to play in mission, but rather that the Mission of God makes no sense unless it is embraced by every born-again child of God. He writes:

If it is true ... that the entire life of the church is missionary, it follows that we desperately need a theology of the laity ... A theology of the laity does not mean that the laity should be trained to become 'mini-pastors'. Their ministry is offered in the form of the ongoing life of the Christian community 'in shops, villages, farms, cities, classrooms, homes, law offices, in counselling, politics, stagecraft, and recreation'.<sup>13</sup>

As an example of lay mission, Bosch cites the Base Christian Communities of Latin America, calling them, 'a development of momentous significance'. If he had been writing twenty-three years later, I believe Bosch would have used the same description of the Emerging Mission Movements that we find today on every continent – almost always lay-led, spontaneous, a response to the outpouring of God's Spirit upon his people.

Three months after Edinburgh 2010, four and a half thousand church and mission leaders, representing over two hundred nations met in Cape Town, South Africa, called together by the Lausanne Movement. Although the platform was often dominated by the 'usual suspects', participating in Bible Studies, sharing coffee, sleeping on the same floor together, there were

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<sup>10</sup> David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991), 368-510.

<sup>11</sup> [www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-commissions/mission-and-evangelism/together-towards-life-mission-and-evangelism-in-changing-landscapes](http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-commissions/mission-and-evangelism/together-towards-life-mission-and-evangelism-in-changing-landscapes) (accessed 3 March 2014).

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, Roland Allen, *The spontaneous expansion of the church, and the causes which hinder it* (London: World Dominion Press, 1927), and Roland Allen, *Voluntary clergy* (London: SPCK, 1923).

<sup>13</sup> David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991), 472-473.

hundreds of lay mission leaders, many of whom hardly knew they *were* mission leaders. Amongst the thousands these hundreds were few, but they represented something new that God is doing in our world. Without denominational sanction, without much training, without a missionary stipend, Christian women and men are engaged day-by-day in the Mission of God.

In using the term ‘ecumenical’ to describe his emerging missionary paradigm, David Bosch was searching for unity in mission. Sadly, the ecumenical enthusiasm of the mid-twentieth century has long ago dissipated and ecumenical mission bodies struggle to survive.<sup>14</sup> However, in the ironic ways in which God often works, it is the Emerging Mission Movements, knowing little of Councils of Churches, who today bring renewed hope for unity in mission. Often led by women and men with no concern for denominational status and untutored in ecumenical politics, these movements naturally seek partners and collaborators who will walk with them in the Spirit and share the burden of mission.

### What makes for an Emerging Mission Movement?

It is important here to clarify that we are not talking about individuals or even a small group of people within a church who get a new vision for mission and begin a local evangelistic outreach, a legal advice centre or a support link with a church in another continent. We are talking about whole movements of people, often crossing national boundaries, knowing that they have been called by God to be his witnesses in a broken world. There has also been some debate about the use of the term ‘emerging’<sup>15</sup> and when movements cease to be ‘emerging’. For the purposes of this chapter, however, I will continue to use this term, as it encompasses such a wide variety of new movements, suggesting that it is generally relevant to those movements less than thirty years old. Perhaps a few examples, drawn from those we work with in *Faith2Share*, would be helpful.

**Isa-e-Jamat** began in Dhaka, Bangladesh, when a local Bangladeshi businessman began to share the gospel with his Muslim customers. As more and more responded to the person of Isa (Jesus) but were unwilling to

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<sup>14</sup> The ecumenical mission body in the British Isles (originally called the Churches Commission on Mission) declined during the 1990s and eventually died around 2009. Similar processes have taken place in other nations.

<sup>15</sup> The term ‘emerging’ has also been used by the likes of Eddie Gibbs, Ryan Bolger and D.A. Carson to describe a new wave of churches within post-modern Western contexts. See Eddie Gibbs and Ryan Bolger, *Emerging Churches: Creating Christian Community in Postmodern Cultures* (Baker Academic, 2005), and D.A. Carson, *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church: Understanding a Movement and Its Implications* (Zondervan, 2005). In this chapter the term is used mainly of mission movements rather than churches (although such movements do often create churches) and in a much broader context than post-modernity.

attend a Christian church, this businessman found himself discipling Muslim followers of Jesus who wanted to reach out to other Muslims. Supported by a number of small business ventures, this mission movement has now grown into a community of thousands of Jesus followers (all from Muslim backgrounds) who understand mission to be a natural part of their daily discipleship.

Across the border in the Indian state of Orissa, in the mid-twentieth century, **Indian Gospel Outreach and Social Action** (IGOSA – spoken as ‘I go, Sir’!) brought together a group of Christians who saw that a positive Christian witness might be the best response to increased persecution. Although they began with a focus on evangelism and church planting, the poverty they encountered led them into a holistic approach which now includes education, child care and emergency relief. In just a few years, IGOSA has grown to support fifty missionaries.

Further north, in a small hidden nation, there was no visible church before the end of the last millennium. In 2012 *Faith2Share* ran a consultation for mission leaders in a neighbouring country, and was asked whether eight leaders from that new Christian community could attend. Supported by the **Himalayan Mission Network** (another emerging mission movement) those leaders from the hidden country are not only training for church leadership, but for mission within their own country and on into China and elsewhere.

When the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear accident brought distress and suffering to the people of Japan, a small mission movement in Burundi felt called to respond. **Christian Community Development Burundi** (CCDB) is an indigenous mission movement at the heart of Africa that understands the vital importance of holistic mission – holding together proclamation with Christian service and the struggle for justice. More used to feeding hungry children and training community leaders, in March 2011, CCDB put together a small team to go immediately to Japan to minister to the spiritual needs of people there.

Sustaining the life of the church in Kyrgyzstan is not easy, with women often left to lead communities, whilst men work abroad. This however has not prevented the formation of **Chabaman**, an indigenous Kyrgyz mission, led by a local woman, which now has work in China and Afghanistan, and is helping churches in other Central Asian states to establish their own mission movements. The vision of **Chabaman** is that every Central Asian republic should have its own indigenous mission movement mobilising church members for cross-cultural mission.

Across the other side of the world, in Guatemala, a local mission, **Nueva Esperanza**, was first established to minister to the needs of addicts. It was not long, however, before they discovered that recovering addicts were attracted to Jesus but not to the church. This led to discipleship work and

church planting, a pattern which we have seen right across the world in addiction ministries, many now co-ordinated by ISAAC.<sup>16</sup>

These few examples give a glimpse of the thousands of such movements that now exist, and also begin to suggest some of the challenges. It is to these challenges that we now turn.

### **Spirit-led Movements in a Real World**

Many, but not all, of these mission movements have their roots in revival or prayer movements. As God has brought a fresh wind of the Spirit into his church, so his people have responded, not just with a renewal of their own Christian discipleship, but also with a deep desire to call others into obedience to Jesus Christ. Historically, this has been the case with many of the great European mission movements (the Moravian brethren, the Basel Mission, the Baptist Missionary Society, the Church Mission Society and the London Missionary Society, to name but a few), springing out of pietistic revival and a renewal of the church's commitment to prayer, justice and service.<sup>17</sup> Two of the best recent examples of this come from India.

During the 1980s in the north-east Indian state of Mizoram, ninety years after the first churches were planted there, a revival spread throughout the church. Almost immediately, Mizo Christians (mainly Baptist and Presbyterian) began to offer themselves for mission service, and the whole church backed them with prayer and giving. Today, from what is economically one of the poorest states in India, missionaries go out right across India and to many other parts of the world, supported by the sacrificial giving of thousands of church members.<sup>18</sup> Thirty years earlier, in South India in 1957, a prayer movement began specifically to pray for the nation of India. For ten years this movement continued as a network of hundreds and then thousands of prayer cells. Then, in 1967, the Friends Missionary Prayer Band commissioned and sent out its first missionaries with the clear policy that the movement would use only Indians and Indian resources to reach India. This indigenous movement of prayer and mission has grown exponentially over recent decades, and now trains and supports over one thousand missionaries and almost as many local evangelists. Most of their missionaries are working cross-culturally in different language and

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<sup>16</sup> ISAAC is the International Substance Abuse and Addictions Coalition, a Christian network of agencies ministering to people who have problems with drugs, alcohol, gambling, and other addictive practices. See [www.isaac-international.org](http://www.isaac-international.org) (accessed 3 March 2014).

<sup>17</sup> See, for example, Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the transmission of faith* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1996), 79-101.

<sup>18</sup> See, for example, Lorry Lutz, *The Mizos, God's hidden people: The miracle of missions in Mizoram* (Islington, Canada: Christian Nationals' Evangelism Commission, 1980).

cultural groups in India.<sup>19</sup> Both of these movements are now fully ‘emerged’ and act as mentors and guides to others. Similar stories could be told from Brazil,<sup>20</sup> where the Antioquia Mission<sup>21</sup> is now one of their oldest indigenous missions, or Nigeria and Kenya which both have well established indigenous missions, not to mention China and elsewhere. Prayer and spiritual renewal have been foundational.

But we live in a real world. Alongside prayer and spiritual ardour, these movements need leaders, resources, recruits, training and much more, and this has been where many of the challenges have arisen. In this section, I want to comment on some of these challenges but leave the most crucial, what I term the ‘temptation to imitate’, to the next section.

**Leadership** is always culturally and contextually shaped. Movements also require very different leadership gifts at different stages of their development. Founding entrepreneurs do not often make good leaders for large and complex organisations. The most significant gift a founder can sometimes make to his movement is to move on, to hand over the baton to others whom God raises up for the continuing task. The temptation for any founder of a movement is to want to take that movement with them to the grave and, sadly, this sometimes happens quite literally. Surveying the Emerging Mission Movements with which we have worked, I see many good examples of leaders who have known when to step down. Theodore Williams, the founder of the Indian Evangelical Mission, and more recently S.D. Ponraj, founder of the Bihar Outreach Network (BORN), both stepped aside, allowing others to lead their movement into the next stage of growth. On the other hand, we have recently seen the demise of a flourishing Chinese ministry, which suffered in large part because its leader was unable to let go of the reins and allow another, very able, leader to take ‘his’ multinational movement forward.

It is also clear that some cultural models of leadership adapt more easily to serve Christian mission movements than others. In ‘big man’ cultures it can be difficult for a multi-skilled leadership team to develop, and whilst too much direction-setting rests with one man (and it normally *is* a man), then growth of the movement can be stifled. In contexts where there is a strong cultural respect for elders, with its many positive aspects, this can make it difficult for younger leaders to contribute fully to the growth of a movement. In far too many cultures, women face even greater barriers but there are a few good examples of Emerging Mission Movements where women have taken a striking lead to great positive effect. I think of some

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<sup>19</sup> See Samuel Devadason, *Friends Missionary Prayer Band India: A study of its origin, growth, achievements, and future strategy* (Fuller Theological Seminary, School of World Mission, 1977).

<sup>20</sup> See, for example, Edward L. Smither, *Brazilian Evangelical Missions in the Arab World: History, Culture, Practice, and Theology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2012).

<sup>21</sup> See [www.missaoantioquia.com](http://www.missaoantioquia.com) (accessed 3 March 14).

key women working amongst Muslim-background communities in East Africa, and of a Nigerian woman serving as a pioneer missionary in Niger. In each case, the indigenous movement needs to discover which Biblical leadership model is appropriate for their specific context.

**Resources** are required for any mission undertaking, but not always the resources we at first imagine. As I write, I am working with an indigenous leader who has what I believe to be a God-given desire to provide theological training for church and mission leaders within a particular ethno-linguistic group which has been largely neglected by churches in the surrounding tribal areas. Seeing the relatively well equipped theological colleges, with their libraries and visiting international staff in neighbouring cities, he has already raised funds and laid the foundations for his college. But then ‘God closed the doors of his storehouses’. The concrete foundations are being consumed by weeds and the leaders remain untrained. The question, which cannot be answered by those of us outside the context, is whether a college might in fact be the wrong resource. Leaders can be helped to think theologically in many different ways – a college is only one, rather expensive, option.

Many of us jump to the conclusion that, for cross-cultural mission to be effective, you need full-time, trained missionaries who have financial support from their church or Christian network. Again this is, and has been, a very effective option, but it is not the only option. With the support of the Philippines Missions Association,<sup>22</sup> many mission movements have now grown up in the Philippines that capitalise on the fact that over 100,000 Christians from that country serve as migrant workers abroad. With training offered in their churches before they depart, resources provided on the Internet, and pastoral support in situ, thousands of these Christians now live a life of active cross-cultural mission in the countries where they find work, including some of the most ‘closed’ countries where traditional missionaries are denied access. The growing Business as Mission movement<sup>23</sup> also opens us a whole new way of looking at the human resources needed for mission.

There is no one way in which the plethora of Emerging Mission Movements is resourcing their mission. Some rely entirely on voluntary labour, others have significant fund-raising departments, while still others build partnerships with resource-rich Christians elsewhere, but in general

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<sup>22</sup> See, for example, Bob Lopez’s article at [www.ethne.net/tag/bob-lopez](http://www.ethne.net/tag/bob-lopez) and the Philippine Missions Association website at <http://philippinemissionsassociation.com> (both accessed 3 March 2014).

<sup>23</sup> There is a rapidly growing literature on Business as Mission with an amplified bibliography at [www.businessasmission.com/books.html](http://www.businessasmission.com/books.html) (accessed 3 March 2014). Two key texts are Tom Steffen and Mike Barnett (eds), *Business as Mission: From impoverished to empowered* (Evangelical Missiological Society, 2006), and C. Neal Johnson, *Business as Mission: A Comprehensive Guide to Theory and Practice* (IVP, 2010).

those movements that are growing are those that achieve sustainability within their own cultural context.

**Unity** can be a positive outcome amongst new movements that lack resources and trained leadership but also a major challenge where competition and rivalry are allowed to develop. In the early stages, there is often duplication of effort and an unnecessary dissipation of resources, but in many parts of the world we are now seeing major moves towards collaboration and unity in mission. Around the city of Yangon in Myanmar there are numerous Bible Schools, some with less than ten students, but gradually leaders learn to work together. At a trans-national level we have seen, in recent years, some very positive moves towards unity in mission. Of particular note are the continent-wide bodies that have provided structures for collaboration, training and mentoring of mission leaders. The most significant of these are MANI (the Movement of African National Initiatives)<sup>24</sup> in Africa, COMIBAM (Congreso Misionero Iberoamericano)<sup>25</sup> in Latin America, IMA (the India Missions Association),<sup>26</sup> SEALink in South East Asia,<sup>27</sup> and CAC (Central Asia Consultation), whose leaders increasingly work with each other enabling resource-sharing trans-continently. The challenge is to ensure that these networks of unity in mission remain deeply relational, prayerful, Spirit-directed, focused on equipping local mission, and light on resource-hungry institutional structures.

**Training** has become quite an issue for many Emerging Mission Movements. It is not uncommon for the first wave of missionaries in a new movement to set off with no training at all. Called by God, empowered by the Spirit, and challenged by the needs of the communities to which they go, they see no sense in being delayed by training. The reality of the mission context normally changes this perspective. Missionaries quickly become aware of so many things they do not understand, and a movement is faced by a demand for training. As *Faith2Share* works with the leaders of Emerging Mission Movements, we are constantly aware of the hunger for training. But what sort of training is required? The leaders, and missionaries, of these new movements are often not well served by formal training in a remote location. What they need is locally provided, participatory, training, often with a mentor or guide who will work with them over a number of years. I first met the leader of IGOSA (see above) when, a few years ago, the leader of another growing movement in Odisha (formerly Orissa), New Life for India, said to me, ‘I want to introduce you

<sup>24</sup> [www.maniafrica.com](http://www.maniafrica.com) (accessed 14 March 2014).

<sup>25</sup> [www.comibam.org](http://www.comibam.org) (accessed 14 March 2014). See also W. Douglas Smith, ‘COMIBAM: Takeoff towards AD2007’, in *International Journal of Frontier Missions*, Vol. 15:1 (Jan-Mar 1998), 53-55.

<sup>26</sup> [www.imaindia.org](http://www.imaindia.org) (accessed 14 March 2014).

<sup>27</sup> [www.linkingglobalvoices.com/geographic/regional/sealink](http://www.linkingglobalvoices.com/geographic/regional/sealink) (accessed 14 March 2014).

to my mentor.’ Here was an example of an experienced leader mentoring a younger man as he established yet another mission movement. The international movement, Samaritan Strategy,<sup>28</sup> has operated in a similar way, by providing mentors who draw together potential new mission leaders through ‘Vision Conferences’, and then support them as they establish ‘Seed Projects’ and go on to explore where God will call them to serve in mission. This movement, which started in Africa, recently sent leaders to Pakistan to begin the mentoring and training movement amongst new mission movements there.

**Churches** and mission agencies do not always work easily together. Whilst most movements would agree that, theologically, it is the church which carries the primary responsibility for mission,<sup>29</sup> there is nevertheless a temptation to look to the church to provide the resources so that the agency can do its mission. Emerging Mission Movements face the same issues. On the macro-level, Latin-America provides a lesson that others need to learn from. The 1980s and 90s saw almost a rush by evangelical churches across the continent to send out missionaries,<sup>30</sup> some to neighbouring countries, many to the Arab world, and others to the former Soviet Union and elsewhere. With great excitement, prayer and enough finances to fly them to their destination and sustain them for the first few months, these churches dedicated their members to mission. But that excitement was short-lived. With the young missionaries thousands of miles away, reports infrequent, and pressing issues in the home church, support – prayer, pastoral and financial – dried up. I have vivid memories of meeting a Brazilian missionary just outside Moscow in the late 1990s. His church had equipped him with a van full of Christian books to sell or give out across the recently opened mission field of Russia. He spoke no Russian, most of his books were in English which he could hardly read, and his van had broken down. His finances were low and he did not even have the airfare back to Sao Paulo. He was in tears as he explained how little his church seemed to care. The emergence of mission agencies within Latin

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<sup>28</sup> For a description of the Samaritan Strategy process, see *Wholistic Discipleship Training – Samaritan Strategy Africa* at: [www.breakthroughpartners.org/media/1654/Wholistic%20Discipleship%20Training%20and%20SSA.pdf](http://www.breakthroughpartners.org/media/1654/Wholistic%20Discipleship%20Training%20and%20SSA.pdf) (accessed 3 March 2014).

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<sup>29</sup> In 1973 the Anglican Consultative Council meeting in Dublin declared that: ‘The responsibility for mission in any place belongs primarily to the church of that place. However, the universality of the gospel and the oneness of God’s mission means also that this mission must be shared in each and every place with fellow-Christians from each and every part of the world, with their distinctive insights and contributions.’ See *Partners in Mission: Anglican Consultative Council: Second Meeting, Dublin, 1973* (London: SPCK, 1973), 53.

<sup>30</sup> The rise of the Latin American missions movement is described by Rodolfo Giron in *The Latin-American Missionary Movement: A New Paradigm in Missions*, a plenary address given at the December 2000 conference: [www.ad2000.org/celebrate/giron.htm](http://www.ad2000.org/celebrate/giron.htm) (accessed 3 March 2014).

America brought improved pastoral care, training, mission planning and financial management, but not always better relationships with the churches who could see the agencies as ‘taking from them their best people’ – as rivals in mission.

At a more local level, the question is more about how mission movements relate to existing ecclesial structures. When new churches are planted, do they become a new denomination, and when a medical facility is provided in a community, what role is the church invited to play in its ministry? There appear to be no universally correct relationships here but the relationship always needs to be managed, otherwise witness to the gospel is destroyed by factionalism and division within the Body of Christ. One approach adopted by several indigenous missions in India has been to plant churches in an area, support them for a number of years, and then discuss with the emerging church leaders which ecclesial community they wish to approach for oversight. In this way, hundreds of churches at a time have been handed over to local denominational bodies. In other situations, such as North Africa, the political context makes it impractical, or even dangerous, for new groups of believers to join the existing churches, and they must find their own ways forward, expressing the catholicity of their faith in more covert ways.

Other challenges faced by Emerging Mission Movements which I do not have space to deal with here would include a lack of access to the data and information they need to develop their movement (especially for those who operate entirely in a local language); duplication of effort where many small movements seek to work amongst the same people group; discerning the dividing line between contextualisation and syncretistic practices;<sup>31</sup> and moving beyond evangelism and church planting to whole-life discipleship<sup>32</sup> and holistic mission. Now, however, I want to move on to what I believe to be the most critical issue for many Emerging Mission Movements.

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<sup>31</sup> At a recent consultation with leaders from Emerging Mission Movements in West Africa, the critical issues which they were dealing with and wanted to discuss included how a church deals with bigamous converts; how Christians give honour to the ancestors, and whether they can participate in cultic ceremonies which honour them; exorcism and the role of traditional healers; and syncretistic theology being taught in local churches.

<sup>32</sup> In 2012, the leaders of *Faith2Share* member-movements confessed their ability to evangelise, plant churches and train leaders, but their failure to bring about the character transformation which leads to whole-life discipleship. In response, *Faith2Share*, with *The Hinchley Charitable Trust*, now sponsors an international series of ‘Depth Discipleship’ consultations dealing with issues of Christian discipleship in marriage, the family, the workplace, politics, the arts, inter-faith relations and in community transformation.

### The Temptation to Imitate

In a powerful paper in which he questions who is calling the dance tune in world mission and who is attempting to dance to whose tune, Duncan Olumbe, Director of the Kenyan mission movement, Mission Together Africa, wrote:

Given the apparently successful western mission enterprise, African mission leaders are often tempted to imitate the western dance by invoking the name of Jesus 'whom the western mission enterprise preaches'. Examples include direct importation of theological college curricula, church planting models, discipleship programs and even mission personnel from the global North, without due contextualization. What is the result? Africa is littered with many wounded and humiliated dancers! But even more tragic is the fact that, instead of these wounded dancers recognizing their folly, they go ahead and mistake God's grace (in using their humiliation to cause his name to be glorified) as God's stamp of approval! Small wonder they go on repeating the same mistakes and in the process perfecting the art of imitation.<sup>33</sup>

In the wake of more than two centuries of the global expansion of the church, driven in large part by the missionary endeavour of Christians from Europe and North America, it should not be too surprising that those leading Emerging Mission Movements out of Africa, Asia and Latin America today might look to that model as 'the' way to do mission. That however is a big mistake and, to adopt Duncan's language, is to invite Africans who know everything about rhythm to make fools of themselves in a Viennese waltz. Duncan is not the only one to have seen 'carnage on the dance floor' as Asian or African mission leaders try to impose totally unsustainable models on the Spirit-inspired movements they lead.

With historical perspective, we see that the western Protestant model of fully-resourced, full-time 'professional' missionaries as the primary agents of global mission was only the dominant model for around 200 years. For the other 1,800 years of the Christian era, mission has taken place in many other ways. Refugees fleeing Roman persecution took the gospel to North Africa, Nestorian traders took it with them along the silk routes to Central Asia and China, monks wandered across Europe or took to the sea to spread the news of salvation to barbarian lands, but most significantly of all, women (and sometimes men) gossiped the gospel from market place to nursery, from hospice to the courts of royalty. There are many 'mission dances' and Emerging Mission leaders make a grave mistake when they see only one, and very likely one that will very soon trip up the 'dancers' and the movement itself.

There are, of course, a few contexts where it is absolutely right for new mission movements to adopt a pattern similar to that of a European, Australian or American agency, but this should only happen when the

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<sup>33</sup> Duncan Olumbe, 'Dancing a Different Dance', in *Connections* (journal of the World Evangelical Alliance Mission Commission), December 2006, 15-17.

context demands it. Movements that have no full-time ‘professional’ missionaries, that use informal education in their training, and discover novel ways of building up communities of Jesus followers who might not even want to be called ‘church’, should not be considered second-class movements. In fact, in many contexts it is these innovative, creative and unorthodox mission movements which have sustainability and which will in the long run contribute more to the extension of the reign of God. Looking at some Emerging Mission Movements, struggling with inappropriate structures and heavily dependent on western finances, I can think only of David in Saul’s armour. I want to shout out, ‘Throw away the armour, use your sling.’

### The Temptation to Control

But the blame for broken legs on the dance floor does not all rest on African, Latin American or Asian shoulders. It seems that one way in which we Europeans deal with the bereavement of the decline in interest in ballroom dancing in Europe is to pay for the building of ballrooms in Africa and dance lessons for our African sisters and brothers. That way, we can be reassured that, when we stop dancing in Europe, the dance (ballroom, of course) will go on in Africa. With the power of economic wealth, access to information, and an extravagant dose of self-assurance, too many global North mission agencies seek to control what happens in the global South. Money has strings, partnership implies the right to direct, and patronage endows status and position in the local community. In their book, *When helping hurts: How to alleviate poverty without hurting the poor and yourself*, Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert<sup>34</sup> explore in some depth the complexities of these economic power relationships.<sup>35</sup>

There are many pitfalls here but the encouraging news is that a growing number of Emerging Mission Movements have turned their back on the easy resourcing that might have come from global North partners and look instead to local resources, contextually relevant, sustainable and able to carry the movement forward unencumbered by controlling partners. There are also global North churches and mission agencies that continue to hear

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<sup>34</sup> Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert, *When helping hurts: How to alleviate poverty without hurting the poor and yourself* (Moody Publishers, 2012).

<sup>35</sup> On this topic, see also John Rowell, *To give or not to give? Rethinking dependency, restoring generosity and redefining sustainability* (Authentic Publishing, 2006); Johnathan J. Bonk, *Missions and Money: Affluence as a Western Missionary Problem* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991); Robert Reese, *Roots and remedies of the dependency syndrome in world missions* (William Carey Library Publishers, 2010); Glen J. Schwartz, *When charity destroys dignity: Overcoming unhealthy dependency in the Christian movement* (Lancaster, PA: World Mission Associates, 2007); and Dambisa Moyo, *Dead Aid: Why aid is not working and how there is another way for Africa* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 2010).

Bishop Azariah's plea, 'Give us friends'<sup>36</sup> relinquish power, handle money cautiously, and come alongside their global South friends to listen, to pray with, to learn together and to be inspired by the new thing that God is doing in our time.

### **Relationships of Mutual Understanding, Respect and Trust**

Many Emerging Mission Movements are birthed in contexts of socio-political unrest and community strife which can have significant psychological implications for the relationships they are able to foster. In Latin America, the poor history of relationships between Roman Catholic authorities and many Pentecostal churches makes it very difficult for them to trust each other, let alone work together, even when they have similar missional objectives in a community. Across Eastern Europe and into Central Asia, the former socialist regimes created an atmosphere of distrust which, even twenty-five years later, makes it difficult for mission leaders, even within the same denomination, to work together. Resources are wasted as each small group tries to do its own thing, suspecting the motives of others. In parts of Africa, it is tribalism that divides – as was demonstrated far too painfully in Kenya by the post-election violence at the start of 2008. Leaders of different tribes may appear to be working together but at a deep psychological level there are unresolved issues that hold back the mission of God. In India, it can be caste that divides, and in China ethnicity.

If we look closely at those places where Emerging Mission Movements have grown rapidly and been effective in their community, it is often where there has been a deep work of reconciliation between leaders, leaders laying aside their tribal, caste or denominational identities to find a common place in Christ, learning to respect the other, and taking time to understand and to pray together. In some parts of Latin America, there have been city-wide movements of reconciliation and prayer which have brought together leaders who hardly spoke to each other before, and which have then led to the transformation of communities in miraculous ways.<sup>37</sup> In other places, movements of reconciliation have been much more local or personal.

At an international level, one encouraging movement of reconciliation which is seeking to build relationships of understanding, respect and trust,

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<sup>36</sup> Samuel Azariah (later Bishop) made this plea at the end of his evening address on 20 June 1910 at the 1910 Edinburgh World Mission Conference. The full record of the address is in *History and records of the conference*, 306-15, but this final section is quoted in Brian Stanley, *The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 125.

<sup>37</sup> See, for example, George Otis Jr, 'Community transformation through united and persevering prayer', in *International Journal of Frontier Missions*, Vol. 15:4, Oct-Dec, 1998, 211-17.

is the Lausanne-Orthodox Initiative (LOI)<sup>38</sup>. Emerging out of the Lausanne Congress in Cape Town in 2010, the LOI has drawn together mission and church leaders from within the Oriental and Orthodox Churches and Evangelical Churches to explore together God's call to holistic mission. Leaders who previously had little contact, and often eyed each other with suspicion, are discovering that their different theological understanding of salvation, conversion, sanctification, theosis<sup>39</sup> and ecclesiology can be an enrichment as well as a source of tension.

We live in a world where we meet much more often, whether we want to or not. A new mission movement in Cambodia will encounter church leaders from Australia who want to help. Long established churches in Britain or Norway will be challenged by vibrant migrant mission movements from Nigeria or Korea. Russian Orthodox missionaries working in Mongolia will do so alongside Evangelicals from India and Pentecostals from Brazil. There is a growing sense of the unity of the whole People of God,<sup>40</sup> and a desire, particularly amongst a younger generation, to transcend denominational and geographical boundaries for the sake of a united witness. Emerging Mission Movements meet each other in many different contexts, and the challenge now is to discover how we can build those levels of mutual understanding, respect and trust that will facilitate the resource-sharing and collaboration that will carry forward the undivided mission of God, rather than dishonour his name through competition, rivalry and dispute.

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<sup>38</sup> See [www.loimission.net](http://www.loimission.net) (accessed 1 March 2014).

<sup>39</sup> 'Theosis' is the Orthodox theological concept based on 2 Peter 1:4 (and other scriptures) and summarised in St Athanasius' statement: 'The Son of God became man, that we might become God'. Theosis assumes that humans from the beginning are made to share in the life or nature (but not the substance) of God the Trinity, a process which begins on earth but is only completed at the bodily resurrection.

<sup>40</sup> Something we interestingly see also in the Muslim world, with its increased emphasis on the Ummah (أمة المؤمنین *ummat al-mu'minīn*), the 'House of Islam'.

# PERSPECTIVES

## UNITY IN MISSION EVANGELISM AND DIAKONIA TOWARDS FULNESS OF LIFE

Carlos Ham

### Introduction

Mission is the proclamation of the good news of the gospel. It comes from the God of life who sent the Son to share this abundant life with all the creation. God's mission involves a holistic understanding in such a way that each and every activity and ministry of the church is called to collaborate with this purpose.

Over the centuries, diverse churches have experienced and lived this holistic mission. Nevertheless, there has been a tendency in the churches to generate false dichotomies, separating and even prioritizing the different aspects of God's mission. This article will argue for the importance of acknowledging this all-inclusive character of God's mission, which embraces all aspects of the churches' role in society. It will emphasize particularly and explicitly the importance of sharing the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ in words (focusing on evangelism) and in deed (concentrating on *diakonia*), stressing their complementary role in this endeavour. This will be done looking specifically at the churches' participation in the ecumenical movement in general, and particularly in the World Council of Churches (WCC),<sup>1</sup> since one of its historic purposes has been to promote common witness or mission in unity among its member-churches.

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<sup>1</sup> The WCC was founded in 1948 and brings together 345 churches, denominations and church fellowships in more than 110 countries and territories throughout the world, representing over 500 million Christians. It includes most of the world's Orthodox churches, as well as Anglican, Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist, Reformed, United and Independent churches. For more information, visit the WCC website: [www.oikoumene.org/en/about-us](http://www.oikoumene.org/en/about-us)

### What Do We Mean by Mission?

The WCC has issued many statements with the purpose of defining the meaning of God's mission (*missio Dei*).<sup>2</sup> I will quote here some portions of the three main ones published in the last thirty years, namely, the 1982 *Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation*; the 2000 *Mission and Evangelism in Unity Today*;<sup>3</sup> and the 2012 *Together Towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes*.<sup>4</sup>

In the final part of the 1982 *Ecumenical Affirmation* under the section *Looking Towards the Future*, we read:

Whether among the secularized masses of industrial societies, the emerging new ideologies around which societies are organized, the resurging religions which people embrace, the movements of workers and political refugees, the people's search for liberation and justice, the uncertain pilgrimage of the younger generation into a future both full of promise and overshadowed by nuclear confrontation – the church is called to be present and to articulate the meaning of God's love in Jesus Christ for every person and for every situation.<sup>5</sup>

Later, God's mission was defined by the Commission on World Mission & Evangelism (CWME) in its study document *Mission and Evangelism in Unity Today* (2000), as one that

... carries a holistic understanding: the proclamation and sharing of the good news of the gospel by word (*kerygma*), deed (*diakonia*), prayer and worship (*Leitourgia*), and everyday witness of Christian life (*marturia*); teaching as a means of building up and strengthening people's relationship with God and with each other, and healing as wholeness and reconciliation into *koinonia* – communion with God, communion with people and communion with creation as a whole.<sup>6</sup>

More recently, the 2012 Affirmation *Together Towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes* begins with a confession of faith:

We believe in the Triune God who is the creator, redeemer, and sustainer of all life. God created the whole *oikoumene* in God's image and constantly

<sup>2</sup> David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, 16th edn (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2001), 587. David Bosch points out that it was in the 1952 Willingen Conference of the International Mission Council where the idea (not the exact term) *missio Dei* surfaced clearly. 'Mission was understood as being derived from the very nature of God,' Bosch said.

<sup>3</sup> These two documents are published in the book: *You are the Light of the World. Statements on Mission by the World Council of Churches, 1980-2005*, Jacques Matthey (ed) (Geneva: WCC, 2005). The book can be found at: [www.mission2005.org/fileadmin/files/mission\\_statements\\_web.pdf](http://www.mission2005.org/fileadmin/files/mission_statements_web.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> This 2012 document can be found at: [www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-commissions/mission-and-evangelism/together-towards-life-mission-and-evangelism-in-changing-landscapes](http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-commissions/mission-and-evangelism/together-towards-life-mission-and-evangelism-in-changing-landscapes)

<sup>5</sup> Matthey, *You Are the Light of the World*, 30.

<sup>6</sup> Matthey, *You Are the Light of the World*, 64.

works in the world to affirm and safeguard life. We believe in Jesus Christ, the Life of the world, the incarnation of God's love for the world (John 3:16). Affirming life in all its fullness is Jesus Christ's ultimate concern and mission (John 10:10). We believe in God, the Holy Spirit, the Life-giver, who sustains and empowers life and renews the whole creation (Genesis 2:7; John 3:8). A denial of life is a rejection of the God of life. God invites us into the life-giving mission of the Triune God, and empowers us to bear witness to the vision of abundant life for all in the new heaven and earth...<sup>7</sup>

Reading these three documents, particularly the sections quoted, the following observations can be made with regard to mission, from the perspective of the ecumenical movement:

1. The importance for the church to take into serious consideration the social, political, economic, ecological and religious context to carry out God's mission.
2. The role of the church is to articulate and to translate into these various contexts the good news of the gospel and the meaning of God's love in Jesus Christ for each and every person.
3. Therefore mission belongs to the Triune God, creator, liberator and sustainer of all life, incarnated in Jesus Christ, the giver of life in all its fullness and supported by the Holy Spirit, the sustainer of life.
4. God's mission entrusted to the church is holistic and is therefore carried out through its various ministries and efforts, such as the proclamation of the word, prayer, worship, witness and formation. Two relevant and complementary components of God's mission are this sharing of the gospel through evangelism and social service.
5. The purpose of God's mission is to build communion (*koinonia*) by strengthening relationships and seeking reconciliation with God, with each other and with the whole creation. Therefore, 'the churches are called to discern the work of the life-giving Spirit sent into the world and to join with the Holy Spirit in bringing about God's reign of justice (Acts 1:6-8)'.<sup>8</sup>

God's mission is not just about filling churches with people (or having to sell them if they are empty). The French Roman Catholic priest Alfred F. Loisy (1857-1940) made the observation that 'Jesus came preaching the kingdom, and what arrived was the church!'<sup>9</sup> Hence, the church is not placed in the world as an end in itself; rather it is sent by God to serve and to proclaim God's Kingdom of '... righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit' (Romans 14:17).

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<sup>7</sup> Jooseop Keum (ed), *Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes. A New WCC Affirmation on Mission and Evangelism, 2012* (Geneva: WCC, 2013), 4.

<sup>8</sup> Keum, *Together towards Life*, 25.

<sup>9</sup> [www.mythicistpapers.com/2012/10/01/alfred-loisy](http://www.mythicistpapers.com/2012/10/01/alfred-loisy)

To put it in Faith & Order<sup>10</sup> language, ‘The church, as the body of Christ, acts by the power of the Holy Spirit to continue his life-giving mission in prophetic and compassionate ministry, and so participates in God’s work of healing a broken world. Communion, whose source is the very life of the Holy Trinity, is both the gift by which the church lives and, at the same time, the gift that God calls the church to offer to a wounded and divided humanity in hope of reconciliation and healing.’<sup>11</sup>

### Mission as Evangelism

The 2000 document *Mission and Evangelism in Unity Today*, after defining the meaning of mission, goes on to say: ‘Evangelism, while not excluding the different dimensions of mission, focuses on the explicit and intentional voicing of the gospel, including the invitation to personal conversion to a new life in Christ and to discipleship.’<sup>12</sup> In other words, evangelism seeks to enable a personal encounter and experience with Jesus Christ, engendering a response from the interlocutor, in terms of *metanoia*, of repentance, that leads to a radical change of mind and life (2 Corinthians 7:9) and to discipleship.

In the same way, it was mentioned by the participants at a WCC Orthodox-Evangelical consultation held in Egypt in 1995, the ‘Proclamation of Jesus Christ requires a personal response. The Living Word of God is never external, un-relational, disconnected, but always calling for personal conversion and relational communion. Such a conversion is more than appropriation of a message: it is a commitment to Jesus Christ, imitating his death and resurrection in a very visible and tangible way. That which begins with a personal commitment must, however, immediately lead into a relationship with other members of the body of Christ, the local witnessing community’.<sup>13</sup>

Reading these two quotes, acknowledgement can be made that the announcing of Jesus’ story includes three basic elements, namely: (a) an

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<sup>10</sup> ‘The Faith & Order movement is integral to the WCC. Its aim has always been, and still is, “to proclaim the oneness of the church of Jesus Christ and to call the churches to the goal of visible unity”. The chief means of achieving this goal is through study programmes dealing with theological questions that divide the churches’: [www.oikoumene.org/en/what-we-do/faith-and-order](http://www.oikoumene.org/en/what-we-do/faith-and-order)

<sup>11</sup> *The Church Towards a Common Vision*, Faith & Order Paper No 214 (Geneva: WCC, 2013), para 1: [www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-commissions/faith-and-order-commission/i-unity-the-church-and-its-mission/the-church-towards-a-common-vision](http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-commissions/faith-and-order-commission/i-unity-the-church-and-its-mission/the-church-towards-a-common-vision)

<sup>12</sup> Matthey, *You Are the Light of the World*, 64.

<sup>13</sup> Hubert van Beek and Georges Lemopoulos, *Proclaiming Christ Today, Report of an Orthodox-Evangelical Consultation, Alexandria, Egypt* (Geneva: WCC, 1995), 13.

invitation to believe in the triune God; (b) an invitation to become a disciple of Christ; and (c) an invitation to join the community of an existing local church. These three elements reflect the text in Revelation 3:20: 'Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me.' This *Message to Laodicea* concludes with these challenging words: 'Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches' (v. 22).

*a) Challenges and opportunities for sharing the good news today*

In the proclamation of the good news, one of the first realities encountered is the rich diversity in theologies and practices of evangelism. The Pentecostal and the evangelical churches, and the churches in the global South, challenge not only the well-established churches in North America and western Europe, but the ones in the global South as well (e.g. African independent churches). We also observe how many ethnic churches in the global North tend to *re-evangelize* the established churches, bringing fresh meaning to the gospel, experiencing a renewed spirituality and forms of being church.

Another challenge is to rescue the holistic and liberating meaning of the gospel, which reminds me of a famous song in Latin America, *Misa Popular Salvadoreña*, written in 1986. It goes like this: 'Blessed those who in the Lord's name, announce the Holy Gospel, the good and great news of liberating power!' It is not enough to recognize its holistic character, e.g. exploitation may also be pervasive! The good news is subversive; it seeks social justice, as Jesus said at the beginning of his ministry: 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor ...' (Luke 4:18).

*b) Sharing the good news in the contexts of bad news*

The *good news* is good because there is *bad news* as well. The proclamation of the *good news*, which ultimately seeks the advancement of humankind and of creation, comes in contrast with situations of *bad news*, in a culture of neo-liberal globalization, which often produces impoverishment, fragmentation, exclusion, injustice, terrorism, migration, violence and degradation of the environment, and which ultimately threatens the web of life.

Consequently, Jürgen Moltmann said that mission requires a re-reading and a re-orientation of Christian history on the basis of an ethic of life and of dialogue among the religions. Mission, he said, has proceeded in three stages. The first culminated with the creation of an *imperium*; the second involved the spread of churches. Now, the third involves participation in the evangelization of humanity – not its absorption into 'church', but

dialogue and action aimed at disclosing the basis of salvation. ‘Christ came to bring life, not Christianity,’ he has pointed out.<sup>14</sup>

An important element to take into consideration when sharing the good news is to observe and understand the context where the churches are serving. In his book, *A Passion for Unity*, Emilio Castro, former General Secretary of WCC, notes in his essay *Evangelism: Ecumenical Frontiers Today*:

This is the only valid theological method for evangelism: conscious participation in the whole human life and its problems. When all is said and done, for the great mass of the people, evangelism is not a question of apologetics, but of life. Gustavo Gutiérrez once said that in Latin America, people are ‘poor and believing’. Much the same could be said of the vast deprived masses of the world as a whole ... We are called to bear witness to the God of justice, hope, consolation and reconciliation, seeking to identify with the poor and the marginal.<sup>15</sup>

This call becomes increasingly urgent when listening to the words of Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who said the following on the 20 May 2008 at the Ecumenical Centre in Geneva: ‘When life is rough, you really understand the meaning of the gospel.’ Another prophet of the twentieth century, Dom Hélder Câmara (Brazil, 1909-99), once said: ‘When I feed the poor, I am called a saint, but when I ask why the poor are poor, I am called a communist.’ So the question is how to deconstruct a mission that is in complicity with the neo-liberal *status quo*, and reconstruct God’s mission. The church is called to promote an evangelistic mission devoted not so much to *feeding the poor*, but to raise prophetically the tough questions: asking why they are poor, marginalized, oppressed, and to do something about it.

Jesus’ ministry was in Galilee – the land of the excluded and marginalized; likewise, his church is urged to recover the values of God’s kingdom and rebuild hope, through prophetic witness in the social and political arena. The Latin American churches say, ‘A different world is needed and, by the grace of the Holy Spirit of God, it is possible.’<sup>16</sup>

### c) *Evangelism in Post-Christian contexts*

In an extremely secular culture – which many even call *post-Christian*, like contemporary western European culture – what is the meaning of the gospel today? How can the good news be shared with the rich as well? How do traditional church structures respond to the challenge of empty churches, of people *believing* but not *belonging*? What are the core values

<sup>14</sup> Simon Barrow, *Christian Mission in Western Society* (London: 2001), 249.

<sup>15</sup> Emilio Castro, *A Passion for Unity: Essays on Ecumenical Hopes and Challenges* (Geneva: WCC, 1992), 37.

<sup>16</sup> 2001 Letter from Porto Alegre: *A Different World is Possible* (January 2011). See also: [www.commondreams.org/views01/0129-05.htm](http://www.commondreams.org/views01/0129-05.htm)

of the gospel for Europe today, such as community sharing, solidarity, love, hope, reconciliation and healing, and how can they be shared for transformation?

How can evangelism be re-thought both in terms of form and content in a situation where Christian culture no longer plays such a vital part in civil society? Is the church for a *soft* or *user-friendly gospel*, an *aspirin gospel*, an *opium gospel*, one that just makes people happy and forget their troubles and pains, or for a gospel that challenges and brings us a *creative tension* (and therefore, which is not popular), to face prophetically the current state of affairs?

In societies with a high regard for privacy, private matters and private properties, the church is called to live and to share a gospel in a renewed sense that is inclusive, social, communitarian and giving meaning for the lives of the people, particularly for those who feel lonely, even with all their material wealth.

#### d) *Evangelism in multicultural and multi-religious contexts*

Again, the document *Mission and Evangelism in Unity Today* refers to the challenges arising for the churches trying to be faithful to the proclamation of the gospel in multi-religious contexts. And it goes on to say:

... such challenges inevitably raise theological questions concerning the nature of witness among people of other religious convictions, in relation to the nature of salvation itself. There is little consensus on this in the broader ecumenical movement. In the San Antonio, Texas (1989), and Salvador, Brazil (1996), Mission Conferences, the situation was summarized through the following affirmations: 'We cannot point to any other way of salvation than Jesus Christ; at the same time; we cannot set limits to the saving power of God.' And the document recognizes that 'there is a tension between these two statements which has not yet been resolved'.<sup>17</sup>

With reference to the encounter with people of other religions, Emilio Castro has said: 'This encounter is witness. In view of the missionary nature of God's message in Jesus Christ, Christians should approach others in the same spirit of love, sharing and communication that ruled the life of the man from Nazareth. Thus, the attitude is not only one of respect but of acceptance of the other.'<sup>18</sup>

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The evangelistic mission in multi-religious situations consists of encountering and bridge-building towards sharing in Christ's witness with humility and compassion and loving service. This understanding of mission leads to respect and acceptance of the other, working in harmony to overcome barriers but also co-operating for the well-being of creation. As the document *Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World*:

<sup>17</sup> Matthey, *You Are the Light of the World*, 81.

<sup>18</sup> Emilio Castro, 'Evangelism', in *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, Nicholas Lossky et al (eds), 2nd edn (Geneva: WCC, 2002), 445.

*Recommendations for Conduct* states: ‘Christians should continue to build relationships of respect and trust with people of different religions so as to facilitate deeper mutual understanding, reconciliation and co-operation for the common good.’<sup>19</sup>

As it was mentioned at the WCC Tenth Assembly in the Republic of Korea in 2013, during the Ecumenical Conversation No. 8 on *Evangelism Today: New Ways for Authentic Discipleship*, ‘How can we make evangelism holistic? It should not be a mere proclamation of the good news alone, but it should also bring about transformation in the individual, communal and social levels ... We are called to become neighbors to those in need. How do we become neighbors and not strangers to one another?’<sup>20</sup>

Having said that, particularly from the perspective of the people in need, how is it possible to separate words from deeds in sharing the good news, even in multi-religious contexts? In the following section, the task of *diakonia* and its complementary role with *kerygma* will be addressed.

### Mission as *Diakonia*

The ecumenical movement in general, and the WCC in particular, have dealt profusely with both the notion and the practice of *diakonia* throughout the years. Willem Adolf Visser ’t Hooft in 1938 accepted the position of General Secretary on the condition of the readiness of the Council to become active in the field of service, ‘for there could be no healthy Ecumenical fellowship without practical solidarity’,<sup>21</sup> he said.

Therefore, for the WCC it has been a concern, not only to bring the churches together in order to reach the goal of visible unity, but also to deal holistically with the issues of witness and service so critical for their life and ministry in their respective contexts.

*Diakonia* has been defined in different ways, e.g. in the 1960s as the ‘responsible service of the gospel by deeds and by words performed by Christians in response to the needs of people’,<sup>22</sup> focusing more on charity. In the 1980s, with an emphasis on reciprocity, it was said: ‘Our *diakonia* now and for the future must be based on mutual trust and genuine sharing.

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<sup>19</sup> World Council of Churches (WCC), Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID), and World Evangelical Alliance (WEA): *Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World: Recommendations for Conduct* (Geneva: WCC, 2011), 79. It can be found at: [www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/interreligious-dialogue-and-cooperation/christian-identity-in-pluralistic-societies/christian-witness-in-a-multi-religious-world](http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/interreligious-dialogue-and-cooperation/christian-identity-in-pluralistic-societies/christian-witness-in-a-multi-religious-world)

<sup>20</sup> [www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/assembly/2013-busan/ecumenical-conversations-report](http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/assembly/2013-busan/ecumenical-conversations-report), 58, paras 5 and 6.

<sup>21</sup> Kenneth Slack, *Hope in the Desert* (Geneva: WCC, 1986), 9.

<sup>22</sup> Teresa Joan White, ‘Diakonia’, in *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, Nicholas Lossky et al (eds), 2nd edn (Geneva: WCC, 2002): [www.oikoumene.org](http://www.oikoumene.org), 305.

We recognize that people and churches on all continents have needs and that our *diakonia* must reach out to all those who suffer.<sup>23</sup>

Later, in the twenty-first century, more weight has been given to the so-called *objects* of diaconal engagement in order for them to increasingly become subjects of their own lives and of their own history, e.g. those living on the margins of society. On this note, a WCC consultation on *Theological Perspectives on Diakonia in the Twenty-First Century*, in Colombo, Sri Lanka, in 2012, stressed in its final statement the importance of an inclusive diaconal engagement, since ‘Marginalized people, through their yearnings for life with dignity and justice, and through their participation in movements, are offering alternative visions of a world free of forces that deny justice, dignity and life for many ...’<sup>24</sup>

This Colombo statement begins by expressing that ‘God’s mission is about the realization of God’s vision for the world, a world in which “God rejoices ... where the aggressors are transformed so that all shall live in peace” (Isaiah 65:17-25) ... This mission of God is dynamic and inclusive of all people and forces that uphold the sanctity and integrity of God’s creation’<sup>25</sup>

The document advocates a foundational ecclesiology that interrelates service with God’s mission: ‘The church, as a community called into being through baptism and led by the Holy Spirit, participates in this mission through its very being, proclamation and service. Commonly understood as service, *diakonia* is a way of living out faith and hope as a community, witnessing to what God has done in Jesus Christ.’<sup>26</sup> This quote urges the church to be a serving community, pursuing a witnessing service, by assisting, caring for and supporting people in need, in collaboration with God’s mission.

This and other documents of the ecumenical movement recognize the fact that diaconal mission is rooted in Scriptures; the concept of *diakonia*, as it is understood today, has been developed by the church mainly in the past 200 years, but its roots, images, understanding and motivation go back to Scripture and the early church. The diaconal ministry of the churches has grown and developed further, up to our day, inspired by the Christian faith and spirituality, helping to make more visible the signs of God’s kingdom in today’s world.

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<sup>23</sup> Klaus Poser, *Diakonia 2000 – Called to Be Neighbors. Official Report of the WCC World Consultation on Inter-Church Aid, Refugee and World Service, Larnaca, Cyprus, November 1986* (Geneva: WCC, 1987), 125.

<sup>24</sup> WCC, *Theological Perspectives on Diakonia*, WCC consultation on Theological Perspectives on Diakonia in the Twenty-First Century, in Colombo, Sri Lanka, in 2012; [www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/unity-mission-evangelism-and-spirituality/just-and-inclusive-communities/theological-perspectives-on-diakonia-in-21st-century](http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/unity-mission-evangelism-and-spirituality/just-and-inclusive-communities/theological-perspectives-on-diakonia-in-21st-century), 108, para 15.

<sup>25</sup> WCC, *Theological Perspectives on Diakonia*, 104, para 1.

<sup>26</sup> WCC, *Theological Perspectives on Diakonia*, 105, para 2.

a) *Evangelism and diakonia as part the missio Dei*

The WCC's understanding of *diakonia* is one that reaches out to all people, particularly the impoverished, the 'least of these' (Matthew 25:44) and the oppressed, to comfort them and also to confront the root causes of injustice. This portion of the Gospel of Mathew, called *The Judgment of the Nations*, is considered pivotal since taking care of 'the least of these' by feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, welcoming strangers, providing clothing for the naked, helping the sick or visiting those in prison, is equated with doing it to the 'Son of Man'. This logic is driven by the fact that serving those in need is linked with the service to Christ himself and vice versa, as a precondition for sharing the *euangelion*. Hence, in this endeavour of sharing the good news of God's kingdom, the so-called *Great Commission*, of 'making disciples of all nations' (Matthew 28:19) is complemented by Matthew 25.

According to Pablo A. Deiros, 'in Jesus' ministry, *kerygma* and *diakonia* go together, hand-in-hand; they complemented each other since his words explained his works and his works dramatized his words. Words and deeds were expressions of his compassion for people, and must be ours. These words and actions arise from the Lordship of Jesus, because he sends us into the world to preach and serve. If we proclaim the good news of God's love, we must express this love in caring for the needy. Indeed, so close is the relationship between the proclamation and service that they actually overlap'.<sup>27</sup>

An example of this *ethos* is Matthews 4:23: 'Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness among the people.'

It is helpful to look at the immediate context. We find that Jesus was already baptized, he was tempted by the devil in the wilderness, and now he begins his ministry in Galilee, calling his first disciples. So this verse is a summary of Jesus' holistic ministry to the people! As he proclaims the good news, he also serves the people by curing their sickness. Even when the Greek word *διακονία* (service) does not appear in the original text of this verse, we can take the word *therapeuōn* (therapy) as a way of service, a healing service. In this regard, it is interesting that the *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains* provides two meanings for this word *θεραπεύω* (*therapeuō*), namely as a verb: 1. To heal, cure; (passive) to be healed, be cured (Matthew 4:23; Luke 6:18; 9:2); and 2. To serve (Acts 17:25, etc.).<sup>28</sup>

To accomplish mission as evangelism on the one hand – separated from mission as *diakonia*, development, emergency aid and advocacy for justice,

<sup>27</sup> Pablo A Deiros, 'Prefacio a La Edición Electrónica', in *Diccionario Hispano-Americano de La Misión*, Nueva edic (Logos Research Systems, 2006).

<sup>28</sup> James Swanson, 'Therapeuō', in *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek New Testament*, electronic (Logos Research Systems, Inc, 1997).

peace and integrity of creation, on the other – is a transgression against the integrity of the *missio Dei* as practised by Jesus. Consequently, there is a need to acknowledge the unity and complementarity between *diakonia* and evangelism as a concrete manifestation of holistic mission as it is conceived and practised by churches in the global South.

b) *The 'liturgy after the liturgy'*

An important concept that helps us understand further the meaning of both evangelism and *diakonia*, and their interrelationship, can be found in the notion of the '*liturgy after the liturgy*' since, for many people, spirituality in general and liturgy in particular are experienced in a space divorced from our daily lives, reflecting a dichotomy which tends to separate body from soul, and material life from spiritual life. The Orthodox theologian Ion Bria corrects this notion and points out that 'Eucharistic liturgy is not an escape into an inner realm of prayer, a pious turning away from social realities; rather, it calls and sends the faithful to celebrate "the sacrament of the brother" outside the temple in the public market place, where the cries of the poor and marginalized are heard'.<sup>29</sup>

Influenced by Orthodox spirituality and theology, the WCC has addressed this concept creatively and has encouraged its member-churches to pursue their mission inspired by it. To mention one example, the 1983 Vancouver Assembly highlighted this tradition of relating liturgy particularly with *diakonia*. In the Official Report, under the section *Worship: the perspective and the power with which we witness*, it is expressed: 'For the sake of the witnessing vocation of the church, we need to find a true rhythm of Christian involvement in the world. The church is gathered for worship and scattered for everyday life. Whilst in some situations in the witnessing dimension of worship, there must be a *liturgy after the liturgy*, service to the world as praise to God, in other contexts it must be stressed that there is no Christian service to the world unless it is rooted in the service of worship.'<sup>30</sup>

This quote refers to a couple of key words, namely *gathering* and *scattering*. The whole church, not just a few prominent members, gathers for worship, and it is nourished spiritually in the liturgy in order to be scattered into the world to bear witness to Jesus Christ and to serve. As Pedro Carrasco underlines, 'The liturgy is one of the few descriptive formulas of the church that contains the concept of work. *Diakonia* is the *liturgy after the liturgy* as the Christian Orthodox tradition reminds us. It comes from *ergon*, *ergo* (work). Hence, you cannot do *diakonia* in the

<sup>29</sup> Ion Bria, *The Liturgy after the Liturgy: Mission and Witness from an Orthodox Perspective* (Geneva: WCC, 1996), 20.

<sup>30</sup> David Gill, *Gathered for Life: Official Report, Sixth Assembly of the WCC, Vancouver, Canada, 1983* (Geneva: WCC, 1983), 35.

absence of the liturgy. *Diakonia* is the way the church praises and serves God in creation.<sup>31</sup>

‘This concept of *liturgy after the liturgy* is an extension of the Holy Eucharist and an expression of the unity of the church as the body of Christ. Such an approach does not separate the vertical from the horizontal dimension, love of God from love of neighbour, the micro- from the macro-level of diaconal service.’<sup>32</sup> This vision urges the church to *look out* from the four walls of the sanctuaries and to find God out in the world, horizontally – not just on Sundays, but the rest of the week – to continue worshipping, proclaiming and serving God in society, particularly among ‘the least of these’. It is an inspiration to share in the world the bread that was broken at the altar.

As Chris Ferguson and Ofelia Ortega put it:

This view of Christian service does not separate love of God from love of neighbour. Here, the basis for *diakonia* is the self-emptying love (kenosis) of Christ. Thus, the Orthodox contribution of the theological understanding of the inalienable call to service and sharing can be summarized as follows: It is a direct consequence of Christ's service ... It flows from the Divine Liturgy ... It is an expression of the unity of the church as the body of Christ ... It is not an optional extra but an indispensable expression of that community which has its source in the liturgy ... It is the ‘liturgy after the liturgy’ ... It is an offering in the form of alms and collections ... and it liberates humanity from poverty, oppression and penury.<sup>33</sup>

This concept was reaffirmed at the Ecumenical Conversation on Evangelism at the Busan Assembly where the participants pointed out that: ‘Effective evangelism is the outcome of bridging the gap between worship and daily life ... worship needs to equip us in our discipleship to translate our faith in our day-to-day lives.’<sup>34</sup>

Consequently, the church is invited to follow God's mission in Christ's way, empowered by the liturgy, through witnessing service in the world both in word and in deed, holistically. From the very beginning of the church's history, *diakonia* has been a result of spirituality. The meaning and the inspiration for service were part of the liturgical celebration. An important requirement to become a member of the Body of Christ was to bear witness to Jesus Christ in concrete expressions of love. All this was

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<sup>31</sup> Interview with the author on 18 September 2012.

<sup>32</sup> Esther Hookway et al, *From Inter-Church Aid to Jubilee. A Brief History of Ecumenical Diakonia in the World Council of Churches*, Alex Belopopsky (ed) (Geneva: WCC Diakonia & Solidarity, 2002), 13: [www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/europe/diakoniahistorybook.pdf](http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/europe/diakoniahistorybook.pdf)

<sup>33</sup> Chris Ferguson and Ofelia Ortega, ‘Ecumenical Diakonia’ (WCC Regional Relations Team, 2002), 10.

<sup>34</sup> Report from Session 1, 53: [www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/assembly/2013-busan/ecumenical-conversations-report](http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/assembly/2013-busan/ecumenical-conversations-report)

integrated in the liturgy of the Christian community and the liturgy of daily life, and this rich heritage urges the church to do the same today.

### c) False dichotomies

Reflecting on false dichotomies in the churches' work, the former Moderator of the WCC's Central Committee, Walter Altmann, in his address to this body in Geneva, 2009, after mentioning what he called 'false dichotomies', expressed:

I would like to reflect a little more on the importance of the diaconal ministry in the life of the church, because another false dichotomy which exists, considers *diakonia* of lower value than mission, rather than seeing mission in a holistic way and *diakonia* as an essential dimension of mission itself. Mission without *diakonia* would easily turn into an arrogant and violent enterprise, not respectful of the culture, values and identity of the addressees of the Christian message. It would try to impose one's own faith upon others, instead of giving reasons for the hope that is within us (1 Peter 3:15) and respecting the others' own faith decision.<sup>35</sup>

Altmann is here referring to mission in general, but historically false dichotomies have also been drawn, more specifically, between evangelism and *diakonia*. And the same arguments can be used regarding both. In other words, *diakonia* is an essential dimension of mission, just as evangelism is, both bringing dignity and hope to the human being. Evangelism without *diakonia* may become 'a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal' (1 Corinthians 13:1), and in similar terms, *diakonia* without evangelism can become technocratic, mechanical, empty, sterile charity.

Evangelism is the proclamation of the church's faith in Jesus Christ, while *diakonia* is the praxis of that faith, it is faith in action; both embody communion between word and action of the church, as she is called and sent to both preach and to live the gospel. As it was stated at the WCC 1987 World Consultation on Koinonia, held in El Escorial, Spain, '... All activities of the Christian community in evangelism, *diakonia*, the struggle for human dignity, healing, peace and justice belong together in the one mission of God'.<sup>36</sup> Consequently, the *missio Dei* can be understood as witnessing service in creation.

The statement *Together Towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes* also addressed this issue by asserting that 'The church in every geo-political and socio-economic context is called to service (*diakonia*) – to live out to the world the faith and hope of the community of God's people, witnessing to what God has done in Jesus

<sup>35</sup> [www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/central-committee/2009/moderators-address](http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/central-committee/2009/moderators-address) – para 13.

<sup>36</sup> Hubert van Beek, *Sharing Life in a World Community: Official Report of the WCC World Consultation on Koinonia, El Escorial, Spain, 1987* (Geneva: WCC, 1989), 45.

Christ. Through service, the church participates in God's mission, following the way of its Servant Lord. The church is called to be a diaconal community manifesting the power of service over the power of domination, enabling and nurturing possibilities for life, and witnessing to God's transforming grace through acts of service that hold forth the promise of God's reign'.<sup>37</sup> It is important here for the church as a diaconal community to observe the example of Jesus Christ, both by witnessing to him (evangelism) as well as following his way as a Servant (*diakonia*).

#### d) Evangelism, *diakonia* and conversion

Another sensitive issue dealing with the relationship between evangelism and *diakonia* has to do with conversion, since it may imply taking advantage of the needs of the people to *gain souls for Christ*. On this note, and coming back to the statement *Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World: Recommendations for Conduct*, Principle No. 4 on *Acts of service and justice*, mentions the following: '... The exploitation of situations of poverty and need has no place in Christian outreach. Christians should denounce and refrain from offering all forms of allurements, including financial incentives and rewards, in their acts of service.'<sup>38</sup> This is such a delicate issue that some humanitarian organizations, even when they are *faith-based*, avoid using the word 'mission' in the sense described here, and even more so the term 'evangelism', when they care for the people in situations of crisis.

But taking advantage of the needs of the people to force them to convert to a particular religion is, indeed, a distorted understanding of what evangelism and *diakonia* are all about. As the Lutheran World Federation's *Diakonia in Context* booklet clearly underlines: '*Diakonia* is seen to be an integral part of mission in its bold action to address the root causes of human suffering and injustice',<sup>39</sup> which is inspired in 'Jesus' *diakonia* [whose] authority to invite people, even sinners, to be included in the messianic fellowship that he establishes, and to empower them to participate in his mission'.<sup>40</sup>

### Unity in Mission

In the 1982 document *Mission and Evangelism. An Ecumenical Affirmation* the following sentence can be found: 'The present ecumenical movement

<sup>37</sup> Keum, *Together towards Life*, 13.

<sup>38</sup> PCIRD, WEA, *Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World: Recommendations for Conduct*, 78-79.

<sup>39</sup> *Diakonia in Context. Transformation, Reconciliation, Empowerment* (Lutheran World Federation), 9.

<sup>40</sup> *Diakonia in Context*, 26.

came into being out of the conviction of the churches that the division of Christians is a scandal and an impediment to the witness of the church. There is a growing awareness among the churches today of the inextricable relationship between Christian unity and missionary calling, between ecumenism and evangelization.<sup>41</sup>

The document *Mission and Evangelism in Unity Today* also acknowledges the important historical fact that ‘the ecumenical movement has its origins in the missionary movement’. It goes on to mention, ‘The missionaries were among the first to look for ways and styles of witness in unity, recognizing that the scandal of Christian divisions and denominational rivalries hindered greatly the impact of their message.’<sup>42</sup> This is a clear reference to the first Conference on World Mission & Evangelism in Edinburgh, 1910, called because of the urgency to identify a vision, namely, ‘the evangelization of the world in this generation’. The ecumenical movement, including all Christian churches, celebrated in 2010 the centenary of this historic event, and this publication is an important follow-up of this event.<sup>43</sup>

God’s mission entrusted to the church has been, from the very beginning, mission in unity. Many Biblical texts account for this, e.g. the classic Ephesians 4:1-16 and John 17:21. The latter is often quoted to stress the *visible unity* of the churches as being an end in itself, but Jesus prays to the Father for unity in mission, i.e. ‘that the world may believe’. This Biblical paradigm reminds the church time and again of the urgent call to proclaim ecumenically the good news of the gospel, to announce it in collaboration among the churches and not in competition against each other.

The divisions among the churches are a disgrace, sinful and counter-productive to the mission endeavour. The unity of the church has a purpose, namely to bear *common witness* to the Risen Lord today. The above text of John is an invitation to confess, a call to reorient the mission of the church and its evangelism journey, to affirm the richness of its diversities and, at the same time, to repent of its divisions.

The statement *Together Towards Life* also has a section devoted to unity in mission called *God’s Mission and the church’s Unity*. Here it points out that ‘... there is a need to open up our reflections on church and unity to an even wider understanding of unity: the unity of humanity and even the cosmic unity of the whole of God’s creation’.<sup>44</sup> In this way, unity is not limited to the church herself but she has the mission to work towards the ‘cosmic unity’ where the whole creation can enjoy the fulness of life in Jesus Christ.

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<sup>41</sup> Matthey, *You Are the Light of the World*, 5.

<sup>42</sup> Matthey, *You Are the Light of the World*, 62.

<sup>43</sup> [www.edinburgh2010.org](http://www.edinburgh2010.org)

<sup>44</sup> Keum, *Together towards Life*, 23.

Some churches have established other dichotomies, like a division between *ecumenical churches* (perceived as more interested to unite around justice issues) and *evangelical churches* (seeming to have a stronger passion to preach the gospel). Somehow, there is a feeling that the churches tend to unite better to serve others (*diakonia*) than to evangelize. Since evangelism has a more denominational connotation for some churches, i.e. to produce more Presbyterians, Methodists, Anglicans, Roman-Catholics, perhaps this is one of the reasons why the former General Secretary of the WCC, Phillip A. Potter, in a speech to the Roman Catholic Synod of Bishops, Rome, 1974, expressed, ‘Evangelization is the test of our ecumenical vocation.’<sup>45</sup>

*Unity in Mission* is costly. To mention just some examples, the charismatic and Pentecostal movements represent a creative challenge for the so-called *historic churches*, which have not always continued to be reformed, and which are stagnating by sacralizing their ways and formulae, and losing the capacity to adjust to changing situations and giving an effective response to the needs of the population. In this sense, it is important, without renouncing Biblical and theological precepts in the name of reaching new people, that the spiritual needs of our peoples, which are related to symbols, emotions and feelings rather than to elaborate rational processes, should be taken into account. At the same time, many churches that consider themselves *apolitical* are challenged by the *historic churches* to address the material needs of the people as well.

### Towards Fulness of Life

*Koinonia* is the source and ultimate goal of God’s mission, which marks the presence of the church in the world. Evangelism and *diakonia*, therefore, are not ends in themselves, but rather instruments used by God, together with others, to build an inclusive and just community, an *oikos*, a household in which the entire creation is included, enjoying the fulness of life intended for all.<sup>46</sup>

Our world today is one of neo-liberal globalization, of increasing poverty, and fragmentation by violence and ideologically-based terrorism. This is why the WCC launched the Decade to Overcome Violence (DOV,

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<sup>45</sup> Matthey, *You Are the Light of the World*. Quote from ‘Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation’, 5.

<sup>46</sup> David Gill, *Gathered for Life. Official Report, VI Assembly of the WCC, Vancouver, Canada, 1983* (Geneva, 1983), 197. This thought is elaborated based on the report of the WCC General Secretary at the time, Philip Potter, to its Sixth Assembly, held in Vancouver, Canada, in 1983. He said: ‘The ecumenical movement is, therefore, the means by which the churches which form the house, the *oikos* of God, are seeking so to live and witness before all peoples that the whole *oikoumene* may become the *oikos* of God through the crucified and risen Christ in the power of the life-giving Spirit.’

2001-10), and why its Commission on World Mission & Evangelism chose the mission paradigm of Healing and Reconciliation for its 2005 Athens Mission Conference – e.g. the conference’s Preparatory Paper No. 3 analyzed this world’s situation and acknowledged ‘... the mission of the church is to receive, celebrate, proclaim and work for reconciliation, healing and fullness of life in Christ’.<sup>47</sup>

So, in the midst of a culture of death, destruction and violence, God is calling the church to a new ecumenical effort, the task of announcing and working for fullness of life in Jesus Christ for all creation. There is a bigger problem than the church down the road, which is the *culture of death*. Hence the church is urged to promote a *culture of peace* and non-violence with a strong prophetic voice. This is why the ecumenical movement held the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation (IEPC) as a harvest festival of the DOV, and at the same time a planting season for fresh initiatives. The IEPC took place in Kingston, Jamaica, in 2011, under the theme: *Glory to God and Peace on Earth*.<sup>48</sup>

The task to which the God of life is calling the church today is to work in a united way towards this fullness of life for all creation, ‘allowing people to have a life with dignity’, as was highlighted in the Assembly’s Ecumenical Conversation No. 21 entitled *Compelled to Serve: Diakonia and Development in a Rapidly Changing World*.<sup>49</sup>

### Final Remarks

The God of life is urging the church, in increasingly multi-religious and multicultural settings, to celebrate and share experiences of healing, compassion, forgiveness, hope, solidarity and reconciliation, which are already taking place in our world but not always portrayed in the media. The phrase ‘no news is good news’ is often being heard. When lives today are dominated by media which consider the *good news* to be no news, one of the greatest challenges of the disciples of Christ is to make the *good news* relevant news to transform the lives of the people today. Hence, God is calling the church to be a missional and evangelizing community, one which proclaims the good news of the gospel in word and in deed, and as Timothy said, ‘... willingly, even if it isn’t the popular thing to do’ (2 Timothy 4:2).

As Archbishop Tutu said in his speech at the Ecumenical Centre referred to earlier: ‘Evil, injustice, oppression, all of those awful things, they are not

<sup>47</sup> Jacques Matthey, ‘Come Holy Spirit, Heal and Reconcile!’ Report of the WCC Conference on World Mission and Evangelism, Athens, Greece, May 2005 (Geneva: WCC, 2005), 23.

<sup>48</sup> [www.overcomingviolence.org/index.php?id=2913](http://www.overcomingviolence.org/index.php?id=2913)

<sup>49</sup> [www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/assembly/2013-busan/ecumenical-conversations-report](http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/assembly/2013-busan/ecumenical-conversations-report), 158, para 4.

going to have the last word. Goodness, laughter, joy, caring, compassion, the things that you do and you help others to do, those are going to prevail.’

The *Unity in Mission* vision reaffirms spirituality and is founded on allegiance to the God of life that empowers to defeat the unjust powers and to transform the world towards the values of God’s kingdom. The church of Jesus Christ is urged to fulfil God’s mission, to be a united and inclusive diaconal community, empowered by the Holy Spirit with life-affirming values, to share the power of service over the power of domination. It addresses the needs of the people at the margins with their own participation, as subjects, since they experience the power of God manifested in their daily struggle and lives.

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# THAT THEY ALL MAY BELIEVE: WHAT SORT OF 'UNITY' IS REQUIRED? AN EVANGELICAL CONTEXT

Grace Mathews

Ever since Edinburgh 1910, 'unity' in the context of world missions has been a topic of discussion and study. Divisions among Christians were viewed as a 'scandal' and 'an obstacle to the witness of the church'. The multiplicity of denominations, missionary societies and agencies; the major church divisions of Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant, with many shades within each: differences in doctrinal stances, ecclesiology, approach to conversions, proselytization – all gave rise to concern. How would these divisions bear on those 'unbelievers' to whom the message of love, forgiveness and reconciliation was being preached? For if Christians could not put into practice the message of love and reconciliation among themselves, how could they hope to convince unbelievers of the power of the gospel in the lives and communities of unbelievers?

This problem and the search for a solution around the theme of 'unity' began to be manifest in the mid-1900s, and became more acute as colonialism gave way to national independence, where the Church was often seen as integral to the interests of the colonial regimes. Christians in these emerging independent nations began to question the need for the multiplicity of church denominations; they seemed like a vestige of historic western divisions, and appeared to have little relevance in the new environment. So, in India, principally after independence, several Protestant denominations and missionary societies united under the banner of the 'Church of South India' and the 'Church of North India'. Continuing fragmentation had become especially acute in India after 1400, with the coming of colonial powers and missionary work from Portugal, Holland, France and England.

The concern for 'unity' from Edinburgh 1910 arose principally from its understanding of the Lord Jesus Christ's prayer in the Gospel of John:

My prayer is not for them alone; I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, 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. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one, I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me (John 17:20-23 NIV).

The unity for which Jesus prayed was seen as unity across denominational barriers; this ultimately followed, in the eyes of many, as

the visible unity of the church under the ‘ecumenical’ banner. Sadly, it led only to further fragmentation between the World Council of Churches (WCC), the Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization (LCWE), and the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA), where a distinction was made between ‘ecumenical’ and ‘evangelical’. Not surprisingly, the major focus in ecumenical mission was around the Christian North and West (the global North), bringing the gospel to the unbelieving South and East (the global South). It must be noted that this is a general observation; there were many within the evangelical fold and many within the Lausanne Movement that worked within ecumenical and established churches to bring about greater co-operation and unity among the churches. The focus within evangelical circles appeared to be on unity around core truths of the faith, a Biblical engagement in social involvement, and a common critique of communism, Cold War alliances, civil rights, gender equality, liberation and oppression.

With the end of the Cold War and the stagnation of the church (both numerically and spiritually) in the global North, and the explosion of the Church in the global South over the past few decades, the issue of ‘unity’ has again come to the fore. With the increasing influence of the churches in the global South, there has been a call to revisit the notion of unity. The impact of globalization, multiculturalism, pluralism, consumerism, secularism, urbanization, resurgent Hinduism, Islam and Buddhism, the Christian charismatic movement, people displacement due to wars, etc. have done much to drive this.

To quote from Theme Eight, Mission and Unity – Ecclesiology and Mission:

The new landscape of world Christianity is even more colourful when the very diverse world of the non-western Christian churches is taken into account. African and Asian-initiated churches, the Christ Bhakti movement in India, the home churches and cultural Christians in China – these and others are challenging traditional ecclesiological and musicological concepts, even as they make a new approach to ecumenical dialogue necessary. At the same time, new forms of Christianity are emerging in the West. Non-denominational communities, the so-called ‘emergent church’, ‘mega-churches’, networks of ‘house churches’, approaches like the Alpha course, the Neo-catechumenate movement and Cursillo are all expressions of a search for a renewed understanding and experience of Christianity. And forms of an anonymous ‘cathedral Christianity’, reviving pilgrimage experiences (El Camino de Santiago de Compostela), the Taizé Community, and the presence of Christianity in ‘cyberspace’, are other examples of new, sometimes experimental forms of living as followers of Jesus Christ in the post-modern context of global western civilization.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> ‘The changing landscape of global Christianity today: Report on Theme 8: Mission and Unity – Ecclesiology and Mission’, in Daryl Balia and Kirsten Kim (eds), *Edinburgh 2010 Witnessing to Christ Today* (Oxford: Regnum 2010).

### Revisiting the Biblical Basis

Dynamic changes in the way people live and think require that all traditions revisit the Biblical basis and understanding of unity and missions. We should do so in the light of Christ's words in John 17:20-23.

In this section of the gospel, Jesus prays to the Father on behalf of his disciples in the context of his 'sending' (*aposteilas*) them in to the world (*kosmos*). The purpose of the sending is so that those who hear their word (*tou logou*) may believe (*pisteun*) that Jesus is sent (*aposteilas*) by the Father. Jesus continues to pray that the disciples who proclaim the word, and those who will believe their word in the future, will be 'one', just as the Father and the Son are 'one'. In verse 23, Jesus expands this to pray that the disciples may be 'perfected in oneness' just as the Father and Son are one, as the Son is in the disciples, and as the Father is in the Son. Jesus sees the perfecting in oneness of the disciples as proof that the Father has sent the Son, and that the Father loves the disciples in the same manner as the Father loves the Son.

In the use of the word 'they', it is possible that Jesus includes both the present and all future disciples. The words 'one' and 'in' translate the same underlying Greek word so that the emphasis of being 'one' is tied closely to being 'in'. In the Gospel of John, 'believing' is closely tied to 'faith in Jesus' as the divine Son of God who is one with the Father from the 'beginning' and, as such, is the only one who knows the Father and so the only one who can make the Father known. This faith is the essence of salvation that comes from believing in the words and works (most importantly, his death and resurrection) of Jesus.

The late Dr Raymond Brown, in his commentary on the Gospel of John, writes:

Any approach that places the essence of unity in the solidarity of human endeavour is not really faithful to John's insistence that unity has its origins in divine action.

The Johannine statements about unity imply both a horizontal and a vertical dimension. The unity involves the relation of the believers to the Father and the Son (vertical), and the relation of the believers among themselves (horizontal).

Some type of vital, organic unity seems to be demanded by the fact that the relationship of Father and Son is held up as the model of unity.

The fact that the unity has to be visible enough to challenge the world to believe in Jesus (21, 23) seems to militate against a purely spiritual union. If we interpret 17:21-23 in the light of 10:16 with its stress on one sheep herd, one shepherd, then it becomes plausible that unity involves community ... the notion of unity with John involves community (15:5-6).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Raymond E. Brown, *Commentary on the Gospel According to John* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. The Anchor Bible Series, 1966, Volume 2), 776.

Dr Brown goes on to cite evidence from the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Qumran community:

The sectarians spoke of themselves as the *yahad* or ‘unity’ ... From the Qumran documents we get the impression that the *yahad* is a communion of men living the same way of life, united by their common acceptance and observance of a particular interpretation of the Law. The organization of the community flows from the union of the members, not vice versa. Their union has an eschatological dimension ...<sup>3</sup>

That which is the essence of the ‘oneness’ between the triune Godhead and the believing community in the Gospel of John is love (*agape*), which manifests itself in the ultimate expression of love – the sacrificial, reconciling death of Jesus on behalf of those who believe. Thus, the oneness/unity witnessed to by the believing community is the presence of the reconciling, redemptive love of Jesus, which forms the heart of the ‘sending’ of the Son by the Father. Belief (faith) in the Son (manifested by his indwelling in the believer/believing community), must encompass the recognition of the divinity of the Son, who is one with the Father who initiates and sends Jesus, on the mission of reconciliation between the believer/believing community and the Father. The Apostle Paul summarizes this understanding well in 2 Corinthians 6:17-21 (NIV):

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation, the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.<sup>4</sup>

From this vantage-point, we may venture that organizational, ecclesiastical or denominational unity is not what is being considered in this passage. Rather, the emphasis is on the divine activity (love/*agape*) of the Father through the Son to make known the Father’s will and purpose to be achieved through the redemptive, reconciling death and resurrection work of the Son. This ‘work’ in turn spurs on redeemed, reconciled believers to show forth the love of God in community and to proclaim Jesus as Lord (God). This is exemplified when the Apostle Thomas confesses, ‘My Lord and My God’ when confronted by the risen Lord! (John 20:28). The response of our Lord to Thomas, ‘Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed’ (John 20:29), shows the emphasis on belief and proclamation. So the unity envisaged is one of commonality in *agape* love of the community (the believing sent ones) that proclaims the Lordship of Jesus the Christ.

<sup>3</sup> Brown, *Commentary on the Gospel According to John*, 778.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Corinthians 6:17-21 (NIV).

Thus, believing communities that exemplify and commit to this dual dimension of love, and who confess and proclaim the triune God, form the basis of the ‘unity’ that our Lord prayed for.

### Unity in the Cape Town Commitment

If the twin emphasis of Love (both vertical and horizontal) and proclamation is the proper understanding of the text, let us see how this is addressed from the evangelical perspective. I quote from the *Cape Town Commitment – A Confession of Faith and Call to Action*, a document that blossomed out of the Third Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization (Cape Town 2010), held under the auspices of the Lausanne Movement and in collaboration with the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA). Arguably, these two entities (the Lausanne Movement and WEA) best embody the understanding of evangelicals. The Lausanne Covenant and the Manila Manifesto look at mission and unity as well, as several WEA documents are important sources for an understanding of the evangelical perspective.

The Cape Town Commitment Preamble, states:

The Statement is framed in the language of love. Love is the language of covenant. The Biblical covenants, old and new, are the expression of God’s redeeming love and grace reaching out to lost humanity and spoiled creation. They call for our love in return. Our love shows itself in trust, obedience and passionate commitment to our covenant Lord. The Lausanne Covenant defined evangelization as ‘the whole Church taking the whole Gospel to the whole World’. That is still our passion. So we renew that covenant by affirming again:

- Our love for the whole gospel, as God’s glorious good news in Christ, for every dimension of his creation, for all that it has been ravaged by sin and evil;
- Our love for the whole Church, as God’s people redeemed by Christ from every nation on earth and every age of history, to share God’s mission in this age and glorify him for ever in the age to come;
- Our love for the whole world, so far from God but so close to his heart, the world that God so loved that he gave his only Son for its salvation.<sup>5</sup>

The Cape Town Commitment goes on in Part I to articulate its Confession of Faith under the headings, ‘We love because God first loved us’, ‘We love the living God’, ‘We love God the Father’, ‘We love God the Son’, ‘We love God the Holy Spirit’, ‘We love God’s Word’, ‘We love

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<sup>5</sup> *The Cape Town Commitment: A Confession of Faith and a Call to Action* (The Lausanne Movement, 2011), 8.

God's World, 'We love the Gospel of God', 'We love the People of God', and 'We love the Mission of God'.<sup>6</sup>

From the above, it is clear that Evangelicals understand and confess the centrality of 'love' in both its vertical and horizontal dimensions and see this as the key to unity. They see the divinity of the Son as part of the divine, triune Godhead and the 'work' of the Son as the quintessential expression of God's redemptive, reconciling love for his creation.

Are these the only qualifications for unity that Evangelicals espouse? Again, the Cape Town Commitment addresses this in the Foreword:

We distinguish what is at the heart of the Christian gospel, i.e. primary truths on which we must have unity, from secondary issues, where sincere Christians disagree in their interpretation of what the Bible teaches or requires. We have worked here to model Lausanne's principle of 'breadth within boundaries', and in Part I those boundaries are clearly defined.<sup>7</sup>

The Foreword continues:

While we speak and write from the evangelical tradition in the Lausanne Movement, we affirm the oneness of the Body of Christ, and gladly recognize that there are many followers of the Lord Jesus Christ within other traditions. We welcome senior representatives from several historic churches of other traditions as observers in Cape Town.<sup>8</sup>

This embodies a recognition and respect by Evangelicals of other organizations, entities, churches, parachurch organizations, etc. in their work to spread the gospel message and to make disciples (evangelization). The priorities identified by Part II of the Cape Town Commitment – the priorities identified for its own focus over the next several years – include the workplace, globalized media, the arts, emerging technologies, the public arena, ethnic conflict, the poor and oppressed, people with disabilities, people living with HIV, suffering creation, people of other faiths, scattered peoples, religious freedom, etc.

In the Conclusion of the Cape Town Commitment, we read:

Discipleship and reconciliation are indispensable to our mission. We lament the scandal of our shallowness and lack of discipleship, and the scandal of our disunity and lack of love. For both seriously damage our witness to the gospel.

We discern the voice of the Lord Jesus Christ in these two challenges because they correspond to two of Christ's most emphatic words to the Church as recorded in the gospels. In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus gave us our primary mandate – to make disciples among all nations. In John's Gospel, Jesus gave us our primary method – to love one another so that the world will know we are disciples of Jesus.

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<sup>6</sup> 'Confession of Faith', in *The Cape Town Commitment*, 9.

<sup>7</sup> 'Foreword', in *The Cape Town Commitment*, 5.

<sup>8</sup> 'Foreword', in *The Cape Town Commitment*, 5.

When Christians live in the reconciled unity of love by the power of the Holy Spirit, the world will come to know Jesus, whose disciples we are, and come to know the Father who sent him.<sup>9</sup>

### Initiatives towards Unity

Out of Cape Town 2010, and the expression of this sentiment and perspective of 'unity', came many initiatives which emphasize a broad sense of unity and partnership. Two of them are described below:

*'Building Bridges'*: This is an initiative between Palestinian Christians and Messianic Jewish believers. The goal is to provide a secure environment for conversation between the two groups and the development of Biblical and godly relationships between them. Under the auspices of the Lausanne Movement, the aim is to encourage a model of gospel-based Christ-centred reconciliation that will have a prophetic potential in relation to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The group met twice in 2013, and a gathering of practitioners and reflective theologians from both groups was planned for January 2015.

*The Lausanne Orthodox initiative*: After much planning and prayer, a consultation was held in Albania in 2013 hosted by His Grace Archbishop Anastasios. Forty-six senior Orthodox and Evangelical leaders from around the world met to consult on partnering in missions. The consultation looked at the Biblical understanding of mission; differing theologies of justification, salvation and Theosis; the place of scripture and tradition in the churches; the challenging issues of proselytism and canonical territory; as well as practical examples of where co-operation in mission has been possible. Priority was given to fellowship, relationship-building, prayer and the study of the scriptures, and the fostering of understanding and trust.

The late Rev. John Stott held a series of consultations between Evangelical and Roman Catholic leaders. These were essentially private discussions, by invitation only, for better mutual understanding. It is in this same tradition that the above meetings have taken place.

In general, Lausanne has provided the infrastructure and framework necessary for dialogue and engagement. The relationships forged in these initiatives serve as the foundation for ongoing plans to achieve specific goals. While groups may work largely within their own traditions, it will be with the greater understanding of others, and with an openness for others to observe, and to learn. It is hoped that, through these interactions and forums, brothers and sisters in Christ will desire to experience the reality of the fellowship and unity that the gospel demands. The time of worship, prayer, Bible study, discussion and debate in the initiatives above has served to sharpen insight into hurts and concerns, leading to forgiveness

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<sup>9</sup> 'Conclusion', in *The Cape Town Commitment*, 70.

and reconciliation. Essential to the discussion remains the code of ethical behaviour based on mutual respect and Biblical commands.

Relationships are built on the strong spiritual foundation of common faith in Jesus. This still allows for freedom to discuss differences, including theological perspectives. Participants are asked to come with an expectation and a willingness to work and pray towards a better understanding of others.

In India, several initiatives have brought together many church leaders of diverse denominations. One such is the National Prayer Day organized by church leaders to pray for the nation. The unity demonstrated by the Church in India was visible during the National Prayer Day when mass prayers were held in over 1,000 venues including most state capitals. In Delhi alone, more than 70,000 gathered, some travelling from neighbouring states in buses. A large group of these were Hindus who wanted to join Christians in prayer for the nation. It was an opportunity for them to hear the gospel, and to witness praise and worship of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Another initiative started by a few Indian businessmen in 2010 and supported by Lausanne, is 'Operation Nehemiah – Salt and Light in a Corrupt Society'. The idea for this was shared by Manfred Kohl and financially supported by Santosh Shetty and a business group called Transition Networks. The objective was to address the problem of corruption in the churches and society in India. Several meetings have taken place and the group has released a position paper on corruption, which the diverse leadership has committed to take to their respective churches and organizations for discussion and implementation. It is a beginning and the hope is that this will serve to unite churches, Christian organizations and believers to raise awareness of the various forms of corruption prevalent in the church and Christian organizations, and help to initiate reform.<sup>10</sup>

The above are but early examples of what 'unity' may look like. We may not be able to achieve the total unity we desire while diverse theological perspectives persist, even with respect to the Scriptures' teaching on 'unity'. However, just as 'Unity in Christ' represented the heart of Paul's Christian worldview and the heartbeat of his preaching, we as believers must prayerfully strive to live in the reconciled unity of love and be ambassadors of this message. It is the transforming power of the Spirit that will bring together the fellowship of faith in loving communities that transcends boundaries and differences – the fellowship that the gospel demands. May we rediscover the gospel of reconciliation so that we embrace all those 'in Messiah' in order that we may be effective witnesses for Him, and our mission be credible before the world.

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<sup>10</sup> [www.operation-nehemiah.in](http://www.operation-nehemiah.in)

# ASIAN PERSPECTIVES ON MISSION AND UNITY

Hong Eyoul Hwang

## 1. Introduction

We live on a very unstable globe in terms of political, economic, societal, cultural and ecological systems. On this globe, Christianity exhibits regressive traits from the perspective of mission and unity. According to recent statistics,<sup>1</sup> the total number of Christians as a percentage of the world was 34.5% in 1900, 32.4% in mid-2000, 33.0% in mid-2014, and is forecast to be 33.7% in 2025. The number of Christian denominations was 1,600 in 1900, 34,200 in mid-2000, 45,000 in mid-2014, and is predicted to be 55,000 in 2025. These statistics show that even though the church is continuously and rapidly dividing, up to now Christian mission has not been able to recover the high point of the year 1900. In other words, even during the period of decrease of church membership, the church has been dividing rapidly. That is the reason why 'mission and unity' is one of the most urgent tasks of the global church.

This paper takes two approaches: an ecumenical approach and a holistic one. Through the ecumenical approach, the writer understands the ecumenical movement as the churches' movement towards unity of humankind, and towards unity of humankind and creation, through the unity of the church, based upon the loving *koinonia* of the Triune God. A holistic approach means that mission and unity are interdependent; the context is to be incorporated into the discussion of mission and unity; and in the Asian context, the religio-cultural aspect cannot be separated from the socio-political one.

## 2. Characteristics and the Context of Asia

Three main characteristics of Asia are its poverty, its religious plurality and its cultural diversity. In Asia, mission and unity cannot be discussed without mentioning these three characteristics. So it is reasonable to say, 'The church's evangelizing mission in Asia is carried out in the context of a triple dialogue with the poor, with people of other religions, and with different cultures.'<sup>2</sup> Asian people have suffered under forced poverty

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<sup>1</sup> 'Status of Global Mission, 2014 in the Context of AD 1800-2025', in *International Bulletin of Missionary Research Issue*, 38.1 (January 2014), 29.

<sup>2</sup> Jojo M. Fung, 'Making a Forward Leap: Understanding Proclamation, Church and Unity', Felix Wilfred, 'Drawing a Deep Breath: Roman Catholic Mission

caused ‘by centuries of colonialism and more recent neo-colonialism’, and nowadays by globalization in general and neo-liberal global capitalism in particular. Most countries in Asia show ‘a picture of wanton affluence side by side with abject poverty’.<sup>3</sup> Worse still, the gap between rich and poor countries has widened. Religion and culture, however, are ambiguous in themselves. On the one hand, they can contribute to sustaining political oppression, economic exploitation and social disorganization. On the other hand, they can be essential resources for the liberation of people. In Asia there are, roughly speaking, two kinds of churches: one is on the side of the existing power; the other is in solidarity with people suffering for the sake of their liberation. Before the historic fiftieth anniversary of the 1955 Asian-African Conference in Bandung, Indonesia, ecumenical leaders, church leaders and leaders of peoples’ movements from Asia, Africa and the Middle East came together in Colombo in 2003 with the theme ‘Building Spirituality and a Culture of Peace Beyond Globalization’. One ecumenical leader identified the spirit of Bandung as follows: solidarity is the core of this spirit, which seeks liberation from poverty for the majority of humanity, and denounces colonialism as evil. If we follow the spirit of Bandung, ‘the task of religion in Asia is ... (to) bring peace and justice in a non-violent way’ rather than to ‘divide people of Asia in the globalized world’.<sup>4</sup>

### 2.1. *The changing landscape of global Christianity and its implications for Asian churches’ mission and unity*

When the twentieth century started, 81% of all Christians belonged to the western church, but at the start of the twenty-first century, 60% of all Christians belonged to the global North church.<sup>5</sup> The Pentecostal Church was formed in the early twentieth century, and by the end of the century it had become one of the four major Christian denominations (besides Roman Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant). With such rapid growth of the Pentecostal Church, the demographic change in Christianity is a global event which has enormous implications for mission and unity. Even though

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Perspectives and the Asian Experience Since Vatican II’, in Philip L. Wickeri (ed), *The People of God Among All God’s Peoples: Frontiers in Christian Mission* (Hong Kong: CCA, CWM, 2000), 217, 254.

<sup>3</sup> ‘The Final Statement of the Asian Theological Conference’, Virginia Fabella (ed), *Asia’s Struggle for Full Humanity: Towards a Relevant Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1980), 152.

<sup>4</sup> Josef Purnama Widyatmadja, ‘Revitalising the Spirit of Bandung in the Context of a Globalised World – Towards A Spirituality of Common Future’, in Josef Purnama Widyatmadja (ed), *Building Spirituality and Culture of Peace* (Hong Kong: CCA, 2004), 14-19.

<sup>5</sup> Wilbert R. Shenk (ed), *Enlarging the Story: Perspectives on Writing World Christian History* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2002), Introduction, xii.

Asia is not a continent that is fast-growing in the Christian faith, the Asian church should seek unity with African and Latin American churches for the sake of mission. In other words, global South-South co-operation for unity and mission is one of the most urgent and important missionary tasks of the world churches in the twenty-first century. So it is not entirely correct to say that 'mission is multi-directional – from anywhere to anywhere'.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, however, this does not mean that the hegemony of global North Christianity should be replaced by that of the global South. The Bangkok Assembly in 1972 was critical of the fact that "partnership in mission" remains an empty slogan'. 'Our basic problem is how to break free from the frustrating cycle of repeated statements which are received, filed and not acted upon.'<sup>7</sup> It seems that such a trend has not yet been overcome. One hundred years after the World Missionary Council at Edinburgh in 1910, 'we continue to struggle with friendships strained by post-colonialism, dependency, paternalism and poverty'. Even though the global South church has achieved rapid growth and shown missionary zeal, 'the (global North) churches and mission agencies retain hegemony in mission leadership'.<sup>8</sup> This can be interpreted to mean that the global North church is not prepared to renounce its privileges, for it is the main fundraiser for the ecumenical and missionary movement. This is not the logic of the Gospel but that of capitalism. It is regrettable that the attitude of mega-churches of the global South, including the Korean church, is similar to that of the global North church.

Global South-South co-operation for mission in Asia can be expressed as follows: 'Christian missions from Asia, by Asians, in Asia, and around the world'. As the Indian missiologist Lalsangkima Pachuau pointed out, some Korean missionaries to Thailand are easily accepted by Thai people because they understand Thai culture more deeply than western missionaries do.<sup>9</sup> According to the results of a survey of the 76 delegates participating in the General Assembly of the Evangelical Fellowship of Thailand, however, his assertion cannot be true for all Korean missionaries.

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<sup>6</sup> Cathy Ross, 'Great Commission Christians', in Johnson and Ross, *Atlas of Global Christianity*, 291. Quoted from Todd M. Johnson and Kenneth R. Ross, *Atlas of Global Christianity: Its Findings*, in Kirsteen Kim and Andrew Anderson (eds), *Edinburgh 2010 Mission Today and Tomorrow* (Oxford: Regnum, 2011), 196.

<sup>7</sup> Commission on World Mission & Evangelism of the World Council of Churches, *Bangkok Assembly 1973, Minutes of Report of the Assembly of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches, December 31, 1972 and January 9-19, 1973* (New York: WCC), 104.

<sup>8</sup> Daryl Balia and Kirsteen Kim (eds), *Edinburgh 2010 Witnessing to Christ Today* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2010), 133.

<sup>9</sup> Lalsangkima Pachuau, 'Missionaries Sent and Received, Worldwide, 1910-2010', in Johnson and Ross, *Atlas of Global Christianity*, 268, quoted from Todd M. Johnson and Kenneth R. Ross, *Atlas of Global Christianity: Its Findings*, in Kirsteen Kim and Andrew Anderson (eds), *Edinburgh 2010 Mission Today and Tomorrow*, 198.

According to that survey, western missionaries understand Thai culture more deeply than their Korean counterparts (36:13 in number).<sup>10</sup> Until now, many global South theologians understand the people of Asia through the eyes of the global North (mass media, scholars and art). This is the reason why global South-South encounter and co-operation are urgent, and why the formation of post-colonial theological education is one of the most important and urgent prerequisites for global South-South co-operation for mission and unity.

Migrants are an important group in the dimension of mission, as international migrants have increased and almost half of them are Christians. In 1960 the total number of international migrants was about 80 million. In 2010 it was about 214 million. ‘Christians constitute nearly half (49%) of the world’s 214 million migrants, whereas Muslims make up the second largest share, at 27 % ... even though they (Christians and Muslims) represent only 55 % of the world’s population’.<sup>11</sup> For the sake of mission and unity, new mission strategies for world mission need to be explored by global South-South co-operation in Asia and in the world, and global South-North co-operation in the West.

## 2.2. *The signs of the times*

For western Europeans the twenty-first century seemed to begin after the dismantling of the Berlin Wall in 1989. For Americans, it began after September 11 in 2001. The tsunami of 2004 which killed about 300,000 might be the starting-point of the twenty-first century for Asian people. In 1997 East Asian people suffered from the economic crisis. In 2008 people all over the world, including the USA, suffered from the financial crisis caused by Wall Street. At first glance, there is no connection between these events, but if we scrutinize them from the ecumenical perspective, we will find their interconnectedness. It is interesting that the words ‘ecumenism’, ‘economy’ and ‘ecology’ have the common root of the Greek words *oikeo* (to inhabit) or *oikos* (household). And ‘economy’ comes from the Greek word *oikonomia* which consists of *oikos* (house) and *nomos* (law), meaning to take care (e.g. of a household). We can interpret these events from this perspective as follows. After the end of the Cold War, humankind expected a more peaceful and more prosperous life than before. In reality, it had to experience various kinds of conflicts among nations, races and peoples, in non-western countries and in the West as well. The root cause of these conflicts was the economy. That the target of September 11 was the World

<sup>10</sup> Moon-Su Kim, ‘Discussion on the presentation of Merits and Faults of Korean Missionaries in Thailand’, in Society of Korean Missionaries in Thailand (ed), *Thai Mission Strategy Forum* in Korean (Chiang Mai, Thailand: Harvest Press, 2011), 107-08.

<sup>11</sup> ‘Christianity 2013: Renewalists and Faith and Migration’, in *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, Vol. 37, No. 1, 32.

Trade Center tells us that the issue raised by the terrorists was not world politics or religion but the global economy. During the economic crisis in the East Asian countries, the International Monetary Fund domesticated the government-initiated economy of those countries. The financial crisis starting from the heart of world finance, Wall Street, proved that the root causes of the economic crisis were neo-liberal global capitalism in general, and International Monetary Fund, World Trade Organization, Wall Street and transnational financial institutions in particular. Rather than dealing with the global financial and economic systems, the ruling group carried out their business as usual, such as invading Afghanistan and Iraq, and declaring 'the war on terror'. Not only the financial and economic systems, but current civilization in general, cannot claim any ethical foundation. Some may claim that this civilizational crisis has resulted in general climate change and the tsunami of 2004 in particular. The survival of humankind and creation is one of the most urgent tasks for mission and unity.

### 3. Trinity as the Biblical and Theological Foundation of Unity and Mission

Since the World Mission Conference held at Willingen in 1952, *missio Dei* has provided the authentic understanding of mission in the ecumenical movement. According to *missio Dei*, the subject of mission is the Trinity, its aim is the reign of God, and its method is mission in Christ's way. 'The Trinity may be understood as a community in God, God's own "missionary society"' – Father, Son and Holy Spirit at work in the creation, redemption and sustaining of our world.<sup>12</sup> The 'inner communion of the Holy Trinity is the ultimate source of the unity of the church and the aim of God's mission ... The aim of God's mission is uniting all things in God as new creation so that God may be all in all (Ephesians 4:6)'.<sup>13</sup> In the concept of *missio Dei*, the role of the Holy Spirit has been reinforced. 'A Trinitarian missiology, with emphasis on the Holy Spirit ... opens new possibilities for missiology in a religiously and culturally plural world.' These new possibilities still need the discernment of the Spirit to identify the activities of the Spirit in a religiously plural world.<sup>14</sup>

As mentioned above, the survival of humankind and of creation is one of the most urgent missionary tasks. Climate change, the ecological crisis and catastrophes from the explosion of nuclear bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and nuclear power plants in Chernobyl in 1986 to Fukushima in

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<sup>12</sup> 'The People of God Among All God's Peoples: Frontiers in Christian Mission'. Report from a Theological Roundtable, in Wickeri, *The People of God Among All God's Peoples*, 23.

<sup>13</sup> Balia and Kim (eds), *Edinburgh 2010*, 208.

<sup>14</sup> Wickeri, *The People of God*, 23-24.

2011,<sup>15</sup> are not only theological and missiological issues but also moral, cultural, spiritual and civilizational issues. As the creation is broken, ‘theology must begin with creation’. To this, we can add that ‘mission must begin with creation’. From these perspectives we need to ‘integrate the concerns of history and nature, of the poor and the earth (“the new poor”) into an interwoven framework of creation missiology<sup>16</sup> and the concept of *missio Dei*. ‘The major focus of *missio Dei* (placed on humanity) underestimates the value of God’s creation.’ Now ‘the mission of the Creator brings “the good news of liberation or salvation for all creation”’.<sup>17</sup> In other words, the concept of *missio Dei* should include *missio Creator Dei*. This cannot be achieved without *missio Spiritus* participating in creation, redemption and eschatological salvation.<sup>18</sup> In order to challenge the civilizational crisis, *missio Dei* needs to focus on the life-giving mission with the spirit of *Ubuntu* (human relations lived in harmony with the whole creation) and *Sangsaeng* (living interdependently).<sup>19</sup> The Holy Trinity, and the enlarged concept of *missio Dei* with *missio Creator* and *missio Spiritus*, are Biblical and theological foundations for unity and mission. In times of civilizational crisis, the survival of humankind and creation requires the wisdom of religions and people’s wisdom, which can be regarded as gifts from God.

#### 4. Ecclesiology and Mission

##### 4.1 *The church as the suffering and struggling people of God, and mission as liberation*

Israel as the people of God was the role model for the early church. The two thousand-year history of the church shows us that in reality the church

<sup>15</sup> See Hong Jung Lee, ‘A Nuclear-Suffering God in Making of Humans’ Death-Dealing Nuclear Footprint: From Hiroshima to Fukushima – Journey of Cognitive Dissonance’, in *CTC Bulletin*, Vol. XXVIII, No. 2 (December 2012), 18-26. Rev. Dr Chang Yoon Jae, ‘Exodus to a Nuclear-free World: A Proposal for Solidarity for Life and Peace without Nuclear Weapons and Nuclear Power Plants’, in *CTC Bulletin*, Vol. XXIX, No. 1 (August 2013), 57-71.

<sup>16</sup> Metropolitan Geevarghese Mor Coorilos, ‘Towards a Missiology That Begins with Creation’, 312, 318.

<sup>17</sup> Kapya John Kaoma, ‘Missio Dei or Missio Creator Dei? Witnessing to Christ in the Face of the Current Ecological Crisis’, in Kirsteen Kim and Andrew Anderson (eds), *Edinburgh 2010 Mission Today and Tomorrow* (Oxford: Regnum, 2011), 297.

<sup>18</sup> Amos Yong, ‘Primed for the Spirit: Creation, Redemption and the *Missio Spiritus*’, in *International Review of Mission*, Vol. 100, No. 2 (November 2011), 355-66.

<sup>19</sup> Park Seong-Won, *Celebrate Life-Giving Oikos – An Ecumenical Vision* (Gyeongsan-shi, Korea: Life in Beauty Press, 2011), 32-37.

has been far from such a role model, as Christendom existed for a long time. From Vatican II, the Roman Catholic Church recovered its understanding of the church as the people of God. 'Christ instituted this new covenant, that is to say, the New Testament, in His blood (cf. 1 Corinthians 11:25), by calling together a people made up of Jew and Gentile, making them one.'<sup>20</sup> The Roman Catholics' attitude towards non-Catholic Christians and non-Christians opened a new dimension for the ecumenical movement and contributed to the unity of church and humankind.<sup>21</sup>

In the Asian context, the church is the suffering people of God. The majority of Asian people, however, are poor and at the same time non-Christian believers. They suffer from a double injustice: 'They are victims of the oppression of an unjust economic order or an unjust political distribution of power, and at the same time they are deprived of the knowledge of God's special care for them.'<sup>22</sup> Asian people are suffering and struggling for justice, peace and life. In other words, they are not only recipients of the Good News of the reign of God but are also agents for the reign of God through their participation in *missio Dei*. 'The peoples in Asia move and have their being in their suffering, their struggle, their hopes and aspirations as God moves and has being in their history.'<sup>23</sup> Most global North churches, however, have been on the side of the ruling power during the colonial and post-colonial periods. Most global South churches used the gospel 'as an agency for a softening of national resistance to the plunder by the foreigners and a domestication of the minds and cultures of the dominated converts'. After political independence, these churches contributed to 'the formation of the local élites that were to be the subsequent collaborators in the ongoing exploitation of the masses of the people'.<sup>24</sup> These churches could not regard the preaching of the Good News to the poor as mission. Their understanding of mission was mission to foreigners. 'Paradoxically ... this command (the Great Commission, Matthew 28:18-20) could be so exteriorized by the agents of mission as to

<sup>20</sup> 'Dogmatic Constitution on the Church', in Walter M. Abbot (ed), *The Documents of Vatican II: With Notes and Comments by Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox Authorities* (America Press, 1966), paras 9, 25.

<sup>21</sup> 'Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church', in Walter M. Abbot (ed), *The Documents of Vatican II: With Notes and Comments by Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox Authorities*, paras 10, 15, 16.

<sup>22</sup> WCC Central Committee, 'Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation' para 32. Published in Jacques Matthey (ed), "You Are the Light of the World" (Geneva: WCC, 2005), 21.

<sup>23</sup> Kim Yong-Bock, *Messiah and Minjung: Christ's Solidarity with the People for New Life* (Hong Kong: CCA URM, 1992), 329.

<sup>24</sup> "'Final Statement", Ecumenical Dialogue of Third World Theologians, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, August 5-12, 1976', in Sergio Torres and Virginia Fabella (eds), *The Emergent Gospel: Theology from the Underside of History* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1978), 266-67.

empty the very spirit of the gospel they preach.’<sup>25</sup> Asian churches cannot be light and salt in Asia unless their leaders and theologians are on the side of suffering and struggling people. Authentic mission in unity in Asia can be guaranteed by the churches’ participation in the *missio Dei* through their being in solidarity with the people’s struggle for justice, peace and life. So repentance and a new understanding of mission as liberation are the preconditions for mission in unity.

If we understand the church as the suffering and struggling people of God, then our concept of mission is liberation. ‘The “core” of any religion is the *liberative* experience that gave birth to that religion and continues to be available to successive generations of humankind.’<sup>26</sup> Israel was formed as the people of God in the Exodus. The crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ can be interpreted as a new Exodus for humankind and creation, for the transfigured Jesus talked about exodus (departure) with Moses and Elijah on the mountain (Luke 9:31). At the heart of the reign of God is exodus. This is true for Dalits. ‘Our (Dalits’) exodus from Hinduism ... to Christianity, or rather to Jesus Christ, is a valuable experience – a liberating experience.’<sup>27</sup> The new mission statement of the World Council of Churches suggests the spirit of liberation as mission from the margins. Mission from the margins is to achieve liberation through mission as struggle and resistance, and mission seeking justice and inclusivity. It identifies the marginalized as agents of mission, for ‘through struggles in and for life, marginalized people are reservoirs of the active hope, collective resistance, and perseverance that are needed to remain faithful to the promised reign of God’. Mission as struggle and resistance includes ‘discerning and unmasking the demons that exploit and enslave’ and ‘deconstructing patriarchal ideologies, upholding the right to self-determination for indigenous peoples, and challenging the social embeddedness of racism and casteism’. Mission seeking justice and inclusivity aims at ‘a just and inclusive world’ through ‘rejecting values and practices which lead to the destruction of community’, acknowledging ‘the sinful nature of all forms of discrimination’, transforming ‘unjust structures’, and building ‘a counter-cultural community’.<sup>28</sup>

The marginalized, however, have their own faces, such as coloured people, women, peasants, irregular workers, fired workers, youth, children, urban poor, differently abled, slum-dwellers, jobless, homeless, immigrants, refugees, people with HIV/AIDS, Native American, Dalits in

<sup>25</sup> Wilfred, ‘Drawing a Deep Breath’, 250.

<sup>26</sup> Aloysius Pieris, ‘The Buddha and the Christ: Mediators of Liberation’, in R.S. Sugirtharajah (ed), *Asian Faces of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1993), 46.

<sup>27</sup> Arvind P. Nirmal, ‘Towards a Christian Dalit Theology’, in R.S. Sugirtharajah (ed), *Frontiers in Asian Christian Theology: Emerging Trends* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis: 1994), 34.

<sup>28</sup> Jooseop Keum (ed), *Together Towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes* (Geneva: WCC, 2013), paras 39, 43, 46, 49.

India, Minjung in Korea, Burakumin in Japan, and so on. In some cases, the marginalized are the majority. For example, 'if judged by members, Christianity is predominantly a women's movement'.<sup>29</sup> The issues of mission and unity include the problems of minorities, including gender justice. The respective groups of these minorities challenge our understanding of the church. For example, through encounter with immigrants we are called to re-read the Bible and find that 'it is by its very nature multicultural'. Migrant churches and multicultural churches recognize 'the call to God's multicultural vision for the whole church, not just for minority ethnic peoples'.<sup>30</sup> Mission from the margins challenges our ecclesiology like a boomerang. We have to accept the church as the house of prayer for all people, which implies that 'the people of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds are God's instrument of bringing God's heavenly reign on earth'.<sup>31</sup> But there are not many churches participating in multicultural ministry or/and migrant mission, for 'The organizational structures of the church have become obstacles in dealing with poverty, oppression, injustice and issues of marginalization'.<sup>32</sup> In other words, from the perspective of minorities or the margins, the relationship between unity and mission needs to overcome its instrumental dimension – unity for the sake of mission – so ecclesiology needs to be continuously corrected by missiology based on mission from the margins.

The structure of the church, however, is not the only obstacle to the church's participation in mission from the margins or mission as liberation. Christian witnesses themselves matter, for there is a gap between their lives and the contents of their witness. This is not just our weakness but also an enabling condition for mission. As 'in Christ God makes Godself vulnerable' on the cross, Christian witnesses are 'called to be wounded for the sake of the world. We are marked with the sign of the cross which identifies us as having been placed in the world to be wounded'.<sup>33</sup> From Asian perspectives, 'spirituality in Asia must be a liberating spirituality'. Its determining factors are context and culture. Though our wounds and suffering are necessary, 'suffering becomes a constructive element in liberation spirituality only if it strengthens the character and the spirit of the one who suffers, and at the same time transforms the forces that cause the

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<sup>29</sup> Dana L. Robert, *Christian Mission: How Christianity became a World Religion* (Wiley-Blackwell, Malden, MA: 2009), 139, 141, quoted from Atola Longkumer, 'Not without Women: Mission in the Third Millennium', in *International Review of Mission*, Vol. 100, No. 2 (November 2011), 299.

<sup>30</sup> Katalina Tahaafe-Williams, 'Multicultural Ministry: A Call to Act Justly!', in *International Review of Mission*, Vol. 100, No. 1 (April 2011), 21, 23.

<sup>31</sup> Raafat Girgis, 'House of Prayer for All People: A Biblical Foundation for Multicultural Ministry', in *International Review of Mission*, Vol. 100, No. 1 (April 2011), 73.

<sup>32</sup> Balia and Kim (eds), *Edinburgh 2010*, 179.

<sup>33</sup> Balia and Kim (eds), *Edinburgh 2010*, 122-23.

pain'.<sup>34</sup> Mutual transformation through building bridges of relationships on the borderlines is in the heart of transformative spirituality.<sup>35</sup> Jooseop Keum suggests 'a new ecumenism by bringing transformative spirituality and mission to the heart of the ecumenical movement in the new century'.<sup>36</sup> This transformative spirituality is necessary for Christians seeking unity of the church, for the division of the church sometimes originates from non-theological factors. This spirituality is necessary for Christians participating in the *missio Dei*, for they need to be liberated from activism. Not only the rich but also the poor need to be liberated from greed, so no human being can be free without transformative spirituality. Therefore mission as liberation has to be accompanied by liberating spirituality and transformative spirituality. Mission as liberation should go hand-in-hand with mission in vulnerability.

#### 4.2. *The church as the people of God among all God's peoples and mission among other faiths*

Christians in Asia live with family, friends and neighbours of other faiths. In most Asian countries, Christians belong to a religious minority. Sometimes they suffer from persecution by other religious groups. 'This kind of fundamentalism, mixed with political factors, misuse of power and hostile or negligent attitudes of the majority towards minority groups, indeed widens the rift between communities of different faith traditions.' Under these circumstances it is inevitable that 'To be a Christian in Asia is to be in dialogue with our neighbors of other faiths'.<sup>37</sup> The attitude of western missionaries towards Asian religions, however, has been exclusivism. Many Christians in Asia still have the same attitude towards other faiths. A change in the attitude of the church towards other religions was seen for the first time in the documents of the Second Vatican Council. The Catholic Church now regards other religions 'as a preparation for the gospel'<sup>38</sup> and as 'treasures', and therefore tries to 'illumine these treasures with the light of the gospel, to set them free, and to bring them under the

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<sup>34</sup> Virginia Fabella, Peter K.H. Lee and David Kwang-sun Suh (eds), *Asian Christian Spirituality: Reclaiming Traditions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1992), Introduction, 2, 4, 8.

<sup>35</sup> Maria Aránzazu Aguado, 'Transformative Spirituality and Mission: An Ecumenical Project' in *International Review of Mission*, Vol. 98, No. 2 (November 2009), 225.

<sup>36</sup> Jooseop Keum, Editorial, *International Review of Mission*, Vol. 97, No. 384/385 (January-April, 2008), 5.

<sup>37</sup> Hope S. Antone, 'Living with Our Pluralities: A Case for Religious Pluralism (in the New Millennium)', in Raúl Fernández-Calienes (ed), *The Asian Church in the New Millennium* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2000), 18.

<sup>38</sup> 'Dogmatic Constitution on the Church', para 16.

dominion of God their Saviour'.<sup>39</sup> The Roman Catholic Church accepted post-colonial Asian people with other faiths as co-pilgrims rather than as objects of mission. The World Council of Churches presented the document entitled 'Guidelines on Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies' in 1979. 'In dialogue Christians actively respond to the command to "love God and your neighbour as yourself"'. The 'Guidelines' suggested appropriate approaches towards other faiths such as repentance, humility, joy and integrity.<sup>40</sup> Principles recommended by the joint document 'Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World' of the World Council of Churches, the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, and the World Evangelical Alliance in 2011, include acting in God's love, imitating Jesus Christ, Christian virtues, acts of service and justice, discernment in ministries of healing, rejection of violence, freedom of religion and belief, mutual respect and solidarity, respect for all people, renouncing false witness, ensuring personal discernment and building interreligious relationships.<sup>41</sup>

In the new statement on mission and evangelism, the World Council of Churches acknowledges that 'there is inherent value and wisdom in diverse life-giving spiritualities'. In dialogue 'our task is not to bring God along, but to witness to the God who is already there'. 'Evangelism and dialogue are distinct but interrelated.' Though 'evangelism is not the purpose of dialogue', 'authentic evangelism takes place in the context of the dialogue of life and action'. 'Evangelism entails not only proclamation of our deepest convictions, but also listening to others, and being challenged and enriched by others (Acts 10).'<sup>42</sup> It is not easy for us to confirm the relationship between mission and dialogue.

However, we need to identify some points for an authentic dialogue with people of other faiths and mission among other faiths. First, one of those points emphasizes the need for a people-centred approach. Dialogue cannot be carried out between Christianity and Islam but it can between a Christian and a Muslim. Secondly, authentic dialogue is oriented towards justice, peace and liberation. When the idolatry of Mammon and the market ideology are so powerful, and the survival of people and creation is in danger, authentic dialogue can only be oriented towards resistance, protest, advocacy and solidarity with the marginalized.<sup>43</sup> In 2003, just before the USA's invasion of Iraq, representatives of Buddhism, Won-Buddhism and Christianity, both Roman Catholic and Protestant, held a joint prayer

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<sup>39</sup> 'Decree on the Missionary Activity', para 11, 598.

<sup>40</sup> World Council of Churches, 'Guidelines on Dialogue with people of Living Faiths and Ideologies' (Geneva: WCC, 1979), para 21.

<sup>41</sup> World Council of Churches, Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, and World Evangelical Alliance, 'Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World'.

<sup>42</sup> Keum, *Together towards Life*, paras 93-95.

<sup>43</sup> Wickeri, *The People of God*, 56.

meeting together in front of the US Embassy in Seoul, South Korea, appealing for peace in Iraq.

Thirdly, for an authentic dialogue/mission among faiths, we should accept the sense of the mystery of religion. ‘This emphasis on mystery is not meant as an escape from the need for rational inquiry, but it does insist that the rational is not the only way to do theology; the mystical and the aesthetic also have their necessary contributions to theology.’<sup>44</sup> Though the documents of the Second Vatican Council, and the new statement on mission and evangelism of the World Council of Churches, accept that there are gifts from God in other religions, they cannot identify how and to what extent the Holy Spirit works in those religions. The San Antonio report made a similar confession: ‘We cannot point to any other way of salvation than Jesus Christ; at the same time we cannot set limits to the saving power of God ... we appreciate this tension, and do not attempt to resolve it.’<sup>45</sup> Because our knowledge of God is always partial (1 Corinthians 13:12), it is legitimate for us not to have the last word on the salvation of people of other faiths or no faith. Like an Oriental painting, Christians should leave a space in the area of salvation of people with different faiths or no faith. About 145 years of mission history in China ended with the expulsion of all missionaries in 1952. After enduring the Cultural Revolution, the church in China grew miraculously, without missionaries, pastors or even seminaries. Mission historians have been asked to answer the question of how this church growth without missionaries took place.

Fourthly, a pneumatological approach to mission among primal religions is to be explored. The spread of African Christianity, contrary to the prediction of participants of Edinburgh 1910, was due to the witness of Pentecostal Christians from the global South, and to its being well adapted to its base of primal religion.<sup>46</sup> Fifthly, participants in dialogue/mission among faiths must distinguish the truth itself from claims to the truth. ‘Theology is authentic and helpful when it acknowledges that our grasp of the truth is not identical with the ultimate truth itself ... We see the truth only “in part” now (1 Corinthians 13:9; cf. 4:5) ... Truth grasps us, not the other way round.’<sup>47</sup> Koyama criticized the way exclusivists interpreted Acts 4:12 (‘There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved’). Taken literally, this verse would exclude from salvation not only Confucius and Buddha, but also Abraham, Moses, David and Isaiah. However, the Name of ‘no

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<sup>44</sup> Stanley J. Samartha, ‘The Cross and the Rainbow: Christ in a Multireligious Culture’, in R.S. Sugirtharajah (ed), *Asian Faces of Jesus*, 111.

<sup>45</sup> Frederick R. Wilson (ed), *The San Antonio Report: Your Will be Done Mission in Christ’s Way* (Geneva: WCC, 1990), paras 26, 29.

<sup>46</sup> Balia and Kim (eds), *Edinburgh 2010*, 52.

<sup>47</sup> Kosuke Koyama, ‘A Theological Reflection on Religious Pluralism’, in *The Ecumenical Review* Vol. 50, Issue 2 (April 1999), 162.

other name' is the name of the one who is full of compassion and forgiveness. In his parable of the labourers in the vineyard (Matthew 20:1-16) Jesus asks the question, 'Are you envious because I am generous?' 'God's generosity creates a stumbling block.'<sup>48</sup> After attending Edinburgh 1910, Elizabeth Northup wrote that 'Until the whole world can come together and interpret Christ, we shall never know him in his fullness'.<sup>49</sup>

In the context of religious plurality, the church in Asia exists in 'being God's people among all God's people'. As our church is far from this claim, 'we confess our shortcomings and ask God's forgiveness'. 'We also recognize that the Holy Spirit continues to create Christian communities outside the historic Christian traditions.' Our vision of unity is directed towards 'the sharing of spiritual resources, concrete collaboration in serving humanity, seeking new structures to promote Christian unity and, most of all, the recognition of one another as being faithful communities of Christ's disciples'.<sup>50</sup>

#### 4.3. *The church as the body of Christ, and mission in Christ's way*

In the New Testament, one of the images of the church is the body of Christ. The image of the body of Christ includes two dimensions, one for reconciliation (Ephesians 2:13-18), the other for unity (Romans 12:5; 1 Corinthians 12:12).<sup>51</sup> 'But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility' (Ephesians 2:13-14). From this perspective, the church is a reconciled reconciler. 'In Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others' (Romans 12:5). The church is one body of Christ with many members. Unity of the church is possible only when all members are in Christ. 'The Holy Spirit confers manifold gifts upon the members and brings forth their unity for the building up of the body'.<sup>52</sup>

If the church is the body of Christ, then mission is following him in his way. We have already mentioned reconciliation above. As the Korean theologian Kim Yong-Bock has suggested, unity can be interpreted as solidarity. If Christ is in solidarity with suffering and struggling people, the

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<sup>48</sup> Koyama, 'A Theological Reflection', 167-70.

<sup>49</sup> Elizabeth C. Northup, 'Impressions of the World Missionary Conference – June 14 to 23', in *Woman's Missionary Friend*, August 1910, 274, quoted from Dana L. Robert, 'Plenary 1: Mission in Long Perspective', in Kirsteen Kim and Andrew Anderson (eds), *Edinburgh 2010 Mission Today and Tomorrow*, 66.

<sup>50</sup> Wickeri, *The People of God*, 50-52.

<sup>51</sup> World Council of Churches, 'The Nature and Mission of the Church: A Statement on the Way to a Common Statement', Faith & Order Paper 198. para 20.

<sup>52</sup> World Council of Churches, 'The Church: towards a Common Vision', Faith & Order Commission, 2012, para 21.

church must follow him by being in solidarity with them also. There is a similarity between the image of Messiah as the Suffering Servant and that of the suffering people of God. Jesus regards himself as the good shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep (John 10:11). This is the true solidarity of Christ with suffering and struggling people.<sup>53</sup>

Mission in Christ's way is incarnational mission. This has two dimensions: mission in kenotic love, and mission as inculturation. As Jesus made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant (Philippians 2:7), mission must be done in kenotic love. 'A community of believers cannot be conceived without the sharing of love, in Christ's way', and communities in mission are 'to be in continuous repentance and in continuous nurturing through the grace of God ... visible unity is the work of humans, living in love, despite different ecclesiologies'.<sup>54</sup> Incarnational mission must deal with inculturation, for culture is not the background of mission but its constituent element. 'It is not simply that God became a human being, but that God became a poor and enslaved Jew.'<sup>55</sup> So it is inevitable that incarnational mission wrestles with inculturation. In relation to inculturation, there are three points. First of all, inculturation must go hand-in-hand with the evangelization of cultures. As inculturation aims to root the gospel in the soil, evangelization of cultures is to purify and transform the cultures.<sup>56</sup>

Secondly, inculturation cannot be separated from liberation in the Asian context. So 'there can be no truly indigenized theology that is not liberal. Involvement in the history and struggle of the oppressed is the guarantee that our theology is both liberating and indigenous'.<sup>57</sup> One of the main reasons for the failure of Christian mission in Asia is 'its association with Mammon (commercial and colonial exploitation) and its refusal to enter into the monastic spirit of non-Christian soteriologies'.<sup>58</sup> Another name for Jesus is Emmanuel, God among suffering and struggling people. 'Dwelling among the people is to have a common house (*oikos*)' so that 'Christ is the *oikonomia* of God among people ... the solidarity of Christ with the people is in the form of the political economy of God. In God's household, there is justice and *shalom* for the people, and protection of their life'.<sup>59</sup>

The third point is that the religio-cultural and socio-political aspects cannot be separated in the Asian context. The Sri Lankan theologian

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<sup>53</sup> Kim, *Messiah and Minjung*, 359-60.

<sup>54</sup> Balia and Kim (eds), *Edinburgh 2010*, 209-10.

<sup>55</sup> Wickeri, *The People of God*, 24.

<sup>56</sup> Wilfred, 'Drawing a Deep Breath', 268.

<sup>57</sup> 'The Final Statement of the Asian Theological Conference', in Virginia Fabella (ed), *Asia's Struggle for Full Humanity: Towards a Relevant Theology*, 157.

<sup>58</sup> Aloysius Pieris, 'Towards an Asian Theology of Liberation: Some Religio-Cultural Guidelines', in Virginia Fabella (ed), *Asia's Struggle for Full Humanity: Towards a Relevant Theology*, 82.

<sup>59</sup> Kim, *Messiah and Minjung*, 360.

Aloysius Pieris regarded western missionaries' "baptizing" Asian cultures' and "baptizing" Asian religiosity' as 'theological vandalism'. Instead, he calls for the Asian church 'to be baptized in the Jordan of Asian religiosity', and to be 'bold enough to be baptized on the cross of Asian poverty'.<sup>60</sup> In 1919, the March First Independence Movement, initiated by Korean church leaders, was carried out in collaboration with other religious leaders for national liberation from Japanese colonialism. Before that event, Christianity had been regarded as a western religion by the Korean people. From that time on, Christianity was a Korean religion. Furthermore, the Asian context calls for integration of liturgy, spirituality and secular involvement,<sup>61</sup> and of ecclesiology, missiology and ethics.

### . Conclusion

For mission and unity, the main points suggested by this paper can be summarized as follows: the characteristics and contexts of Asia and the signs of the times must be incorporated into mission and unity. The instrumental relationship between mission and unity expressed as 'unity for the sake of mission' needs to be overcome by a circular relationship: ecclesiology suggests orientation for missiology, while mission as liberation/mission from the margins challenges the existing ecclesiology. Church unity in the twenty-first century has to strengthen global South-South co-operation and global South-North co-operation towards justice, peace and life in its fulness. Among the important resources for church unity we need to include mission as liberation, and liberating/transformational spirituality. Mission among other faiths has to accept the sense of the mystery of religion, and the pneumatological approach to mission among other faiths needs to be explored. Mission as inculturation must go hand-in-hand with mission as liberation. In the Asian religious-cultural context, the religio-cultural aspect cannot be separated from the socio-political one. The core of mission and unity for the people of God and all God's peoples is to choose, not Mammon and its collaborators such as death-giving religio-cultural and socio-political instruments and systems, but the life-giving God. Asian missiology is not only a triple dialogue with the poor, with people of other religions, and with different cultures, but also a triple conversation with ecclesiology, missiology and ethics.

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<sup>60</sup> Pieris, 'Towards an Asian Theology', 92-94.

<sup>61</sup> Aloysius Pieris, *An Asian Theology of Liberation* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988), 3-14.

# YOIDO FULL GOSPEL CHURCH: A CASE STUDY IN EXPANDING MISSION AND FELLOWSHIP

Younghoon Lee

## I. Introduction

The Holy Spirit movement is characterized by a communal enthusiasm for the salvation of souls, loving service for the world, and a sense of 'being united in the Holy Spirit' (Ephesians 4:3). As recorded in the book of Acts, the early Christian community was praised by all people because they had experienced signs and wonders, worshipped God with one heart, met each other's needs, and done good things since they were filled by the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2:42-47). Likewise, the Holy Spirit movement forms a united community in the Spirit and motivates the community to go beyond itself and practise love for the whole world. Jesus' high priestly prayer in John 17 also shows that believers should not be separated from the world, but go into the world and accomplish their God-given mission of sharing the gospel and serving others.<sup>1</sup>

In Pentecostalism, 'the fulness of the Holy Spirit' is a spiritual experience not only for individuals, but also for Christian communities where Christians are united and given power to become witnesses to the gospel (Acts 1:8). The baptism in the Holy Spirit is surely an empowering experience for Christians who are evangelizing. Spirit baptism also unites Christians from different backgrounds to become one in the Spirit. The experience of Spirit baptism creates a vision of a community in believers in Christ, transforms people, and produces communal cultural values.<sup>2</sup> The Holy Spirit enables believers to love and serve their neighbours through various spiritual gifts.<sup>3</sup>

The contribution of Yoido Full Gospel Church (hereafter YFGC) to the Holy Spirit movement in Korea and the rest of the world has been

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<sup>1</sup> Jerry Horner, 'Sanctification and the Social Responsibilities of the Spirit-Filled Christian in the New Testament', in International Theological Institute, ed., *Sanctification of a Christian in the Work of the Holy Spirit* (Seoul: International Theological Institute, 1997), 205.

<sup>2</sup> Shane Clifton, 'Ecumenism from the Bottom Up: A Pentecostal Perspective', in *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 47 (2012), 578.

<sup>3</sup> Jeffrey T. Snell, 'Beyond the Individual and into the World', in *PNEUMA: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 14 (1992), 44.

monumental in the past, and it continues to be active in the movement today. The Holy Spirit movement of YFGC is a continuation of the broader characteristics of Korean revival movements.<sup>4</sup> This feature of Korean churches, which was started by the revivals of 1903 and 1907, established a tradition of going beyond denominations and doctrines to become one as Christians and engage in social issues. From the beginning, the Holy Spirit movement in Korean churches included not only the salvation of individuals, but also a communal heart for all people, as well as a spirit of social service as an important way for Christians to practise the love of Christ. Inheriting the legacies of these movements, YFGC remains enthusiastic about evangelism, active in the ministries of loving and sharing, and continues to mature in both the individual and social dimensions. I shall describe how YFGC's Holy Spirit movement has developed so far and its current situation. Then I shall explain how the spirit of unity, which is an integral part of this movement, acts in the foundation of evangelical social engagement, i.e. in serving and sharing. By doing so, I shall describe how the Holy Spirit movement of YFGC has contributed to the unity of churches in Korea and abroad, as well as to their social ministries.

## II. Unity as the Characteristic of the Holy Spirit Movement of Yoido Full Gospel Church

### 1. The tradition of unity and service in Korean revivals

The Holy Spirit movement was started in Korea when the Wonsan Great Revival (1903) broke out and developed into a nationwide evangelism and church growth movement.<sup>5</sup> Revivals like this led Korean churches to experience unity and co-operative mission work in the Spirit. The Wonsan Great Revival of 1903 was a Holy Spirit movement through the unity between missionaries and local Koreans, and the unity amongst different denominations. Korean churches also transcended denominational barriers to co-operate with each other in the 1907 Pyongyang Great Revival.<sup>6</sup> The experience of spiritual gifts comes with the experience of unity in the Spirit in any given community. The revival movement in 1907 gained great missionary impact, as the communities involved experienced unity in the

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<sup>4</sup> Younghoon Lee, *The Holy Spirit Movement in Korea: Its Historical and Theological Development* (Oxford: Regnum, 2009).

<sup>5</sup> About the Pentecostal natures of Wonsan Great Revival (1903) and Pyongyang Great Revival (1907), see Gil Seop Song, *History of Korean Theological Thoughts* [in Korean] (Seoul: Korean Christianity Publishing, 1987), 150-52.

<sup>6</sup> International Theological Institute, *Understanding of the Holy Spirit Movement of Yoido Full Gospel Church* [in Korean] (Seoul: Seoul Logos, 2001), 45.

Spirit regardless of their members' gender or social status.<sup>7</sup> In spite of the social caste system of that time, believers caught up in the revival had a communal experience of God's grace that went beyond social status, gender or race (Galatians 3:28), and experienced God as Father through the work of the Holy Spirit.<sup>8</sup> The spirit of unity continued to influence Korean churches, and there was active co-operation between different denominations in the mass crusades of the 1970s, which opened the door to rapid church growth.<sup>9</sup> These mass crusades were important occasions where Korean churches became one, transcending denominational barriers.<sup>10</sup>

Revival movements in the 1900s, which originated from the Wonsan Great Revival, promoted a new lifestyle and mindset, both in individual and communal lives. Great revival movements enhanced the integrity of Korean churches. Christians experienced great renewal in their own lifestyle and behaviour.<sup>11</sup> This renewal led to social and national movements such as anti-superstition, abstinence, quitting of smoking, reformation in marriage and funeral ceremonies, respect for Korean alphabets, and Korean self-awareness.<sup>12</sup> During the Japanese colonization, Korean churches actively carried out economic and social movements against colonial exploitation. In the final years of the old Korean empire, churches participated in a national debt repayment movement by having prayer meetings and raising funds for their repayment.<sup>13</sup> In the 1920s, churches, along with the YMCA, participated in rural village movements and took a lead in the economic independence of rural villages and their enlightenment. In the 1930s, Korean churches released their 'social statements', announcing their determination to solve problems in Korean society from a Christian perspective.<sup>14</sup> In this way, revival in Korean churches was grounded in the experience of unity in the Spirit, and facilitated by personal spiritual renewal and a spirit of social service that included mission works, loving service of society, and evangelical social engagement.

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<sup>7</sup> Jong Cheon Park, 'The Matrix of the Theology of the Holy Spirit in Korean Context', in International Theological Institute, ed., *The Theology of the Holy Spirit for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* [in Korean] (Seoul: Seoul Logos, 2002), 77.

<sup>8</sup> Park, 'The Matrix of the Theology of the Holy Spirit in Korean Context', 82.

<sup>9</sup> International Theological Institute, *Understanding of the Holy Spirit Movement of Yoido Full Gospel Church* [in Korean], 45.

<sup>10</sup> Jin Whan Kim, *The Revival Movement of the Korean Church* [in Korean] (Seoul: Seoul Publishing, 1994), 267-69.

<sup>11</sup> Younghoon Lee, 'Korean Pentecost: The Great Revival of 1907', in *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 4 (2001), 82.

<sup>12</sup> Kim, *The Revival Movement of the Korean Church* [in Korean], 112-15.

<sup>13</sup> Man Yeol Lee, 'The Social Movement of Korean Christianity: Historical Consideration', in Lee (ed), *Korean Church and Society* [in Korean] (Seoul: Nadan Publishing, 1989), 167.

<sup>14</sup> Lee, 'The Social Movement of Korean Christianity: Historical Consideration', 170-71, 177.

## 2. Development and characters of the Holy Spirit Movement of YFGC

### A) THE BEGINNINGS AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT MOVEMENT (1950S AND 1960S)

Even in its initial phases (1950s and 1960s), the message from YFGC included the cross-centred message of holistic salvation and the Pentecostal emphasis on the baptism and healing in the Holy Spirit. The main targets of evangelism and ministry were people in the slum area.<sup>15</sup> The Christian gospel of salvation gained momentum among economically and socially isolated people, as it was accompanied by the experience of the Holy Spirit and his power. The Holy Spirit movement of YFGC was inspired by the incarnation of the Son of God, and attempted to focus on both the spiritual needs and the desperate physical needs of the people. In addition, the understanding of the Holy Spirit, on which the movement's cell groups operated, also generated enthusiasm for evangelism. As the church moved from the Daejo-dong to the Sudaemun area, there came even greater works of the Holy Spirit which led to the explosive growth of YFGC.<sup>16</sup>

### B) THE HOLY SPIRIT MOVEMENT IN ITS MATURITY (1970S)

YFGC continued its explosive growth after moving to Yoido in September 1973. In the 1970s, it also made an earnest effort to evangelize the rest of Korea and the world. The Holy Spirit movement of YFGC took root by contextualizing the gospel in the 1950s, facilitated the expansion from personal spiritual experiences to communal faith in the 1960s, and developed into a nationwide and even a worldwide Holy Spirit movement by concentrating its energies on mission work in Korea and abroad.<sup>17</sup> As a model of the Korean Holy Spirit movement, the Holy Spirit movement of YFGC set a course for church growth through the Holy Spirit, the Word of God and prayer, as well as actively engaging in the evangelization of Korea and the world. For this, YFGC took the lead in forming partnerships with mainline denominations and their leaders for the preparation of mass crusades and, in doing so, contributed to church growth generally.

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<sup>15</sup> International Theological Institute, *Understanding of the Holy Spirit Movement of Yoido Full Gospel Church* [in Korean], 49.

<sup>16</sup> Institute for Church Growth. *The Growth Engines of Yoido Full Gospel Church* [in Korean] (Seoul: Institute for Church Growth, 2008), 130-33.

<sup>17</sup> Publishing Committee of the History of Yoido Full Gospel Church for 50 Years, *Great Calling: Hope Ministry 50 Years* [in Korean] (Seoul: Yoido Full Gospel Church, 2008), 136-37.

C) THE CONTINUOUS HOLY SPIRIT MOVEMENT AND EXPANDED SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT (FROM 1980S TO THE PRESENT)

In the 1980s, the Holy Spirit movement of YFGC began to aim at inward maturity in addition to outward growth, with increased interest in practising Christian love in the social dimension. To obey the command of Christ to preach the gospel and love one's neighbour, YFGC established and developed organizations and social programmes to share the love of Christ with isolated neighbours.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, in obedience to Christ's command to become the light and salt of the world, YFGC took a major initiative in setting a Christian social agenda by founding a daily newspaper, the *Kukmin Ilbo*.<sup>19</sup>

Since I was installed as the second Senior Pastor of YFGC in 2008, the church has even more vigorously engaged in evangelical ministries for social welfare and charity works both in and outside the country. It has also made efforts for church unity to further evangelism and mission. The Holy Spirit movement of YFGC is not driven by personal or emotional forces. It is never complete until it reaches social service and social sanctification through individuals and communities that have gone through deep renewal and transformation in the Spirit. For this goal, YFGC continuously seeks harmony between the Word movement and the Prayer movement, and spiritual maturity and renewal among its members. YFGC also practises *diakonia* through the various mission organizations under its wing, and through Good People, a Yoido-founded and UN-registered international NGO.

From 2013, YFGC has spent one third of its annual budget on helping the underprivileged and in mission work. Adding social services, social sanctification and unity amongst churches to its direct evangelistic efforts is characteristic of the Holy Spirit movement of YFGC. To ensure such an outcome, YFGC sought membership of NCKK (National Council of Churches, Korea) and, as a result, the Assemblies of God of Korea became its official member in 1996. YFGC also co-operated with various denominations in and outside the country for the success of the Tenth Assembly of WCC in Busan, Korea (2013).

In sum, the Holy Spirit movement of YFGC has developed the tradition of social service and engagement, and faithfully preserved the characteristics of Korean revival movements such as the focus on the Word of God, the Holy Spirit, and prayer in a communal spirituality. This has been possible because YFGC's Holy Spirit movement has preached a message of holistic salvation, which includes the salvation of social relationships and communities as well as the salvation of individuals.

<sup>18</sup> International Theological Institute, *Understanding of the Holy Spirit Movement of Yoido Full Gospel Church* [in Korean], 63.

<sup>19</sup> Younghoon Lee, *The Cross: The Root of Full Gospel Faith* [in Korean] (Seoul: Institute for Church Growth, 2011), 259-63.

YFGC has attempted not to ignore any of these dimensions of salvation but to strike a balance between them. It also has met the demands of the times by comforting, serving and leading Koreans in the midst of suffering during the Japanese colonization and Korean War. Furthermore, YFGC has given hope and spiritual life, as well as courage to live and the 'frontier spirit', to Korean people who were in despair and disappointment after the Korean War. The church has introduced one of the most remarkable and important cases of the Holy Spirit movement to Korean and worldwide churches in its monumental growth through enthusiastic and continuous evangelism and mission works.

### III. Social and Church Unity Brought by Revival

Yoido Full Gospel Church, which has initiated the Holy Spirit movement in Korea and the rest of the world, has co-operated with the churches in and outside the country in performing national and world evangelization and to practise the love of Christ. This section will describe how social and church unity has been linked with the revival of YFGC by categorizing evangelical social participation and the work of church unity into two parts.

#### 1. *Service ministries (evangelical social participation)*

##### A) THE WORKS OF 'GOOD PEOPLE'

YFGC has actively performed works of service through NGO Good People. 'Good People' is an organization that YFGC established in July 1999 as an NGO for international development, an arm of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. 'Good People' not only lets all the people know about the situation of their neighbours in global villages, but also provides help to them in a systematic and professional way. Moreover, it implements various services such as child protection, education, prevention of disease, emergency relief, one-to-one overseas child sponsorship, and fighting poverty in areas shunned by civilization and government protection.

The works of Good People at home is for North Korean migrants, multicultural families, and foreigners staying in the country. Furthermore, by despatching emergency relief aid when natural disasters such as typhoons, droughts, earthquakes, tsunamis and so on occur anywhere in the world, it rescues human lives copes with the aftermath of disasters, and provides medical services and anti-epidemic measures.<sup>20</sup> Also, through follow-up services like well purification and the construction and operation of child care centres, it helps in the rapid rehabilitation of disaster areas.

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<sup>20</sup> Good People emergency relief agency began with relief activity for refugees in Kosovo and Turkey in 1999, and is the highest mobile relief agency nationally.

Good People took a lead role in the rehabilitation of areas damaged by the Indonesia tsunami in 2004, by the strong earthquake in Pakistan in 2005, and by the breakdown of the nuclear plant following the major earthquake in Japan in 2010.

In addition, the work of Good People overseas includes educational work, medical service, community development and overseas child support. Its educational work is mainly concentrated in south-east Asian countries which lag behind economically and culturally. For instance, Good People held a building dedication ceremony at a senior secondary school capable of accommodating 1,700 students in Lan Xang, Laos, in May 2012.<sup>21</sup> It constructed a kindergarten in Vietnam in September that same year,<sup>22</sup> and also built ‘Good People Yeon-shim Lim’s Mission School’ in Turkana, northern Kenya, following the wish of the missionary Yeon-shim Lim who devoted her whole life to her work there.<sup>23</sup>

Good People implements medical work too. It completed the ‘Capas municipal hospital’ for the ITA minority ethnic group in the Philippines in October 2009. It constructed a treatment centre for cholera patients in Haiti in November 2010, and sent medical devices to the Mombasa health care centre in Kenya in July 2012.<sup>24</sup> It performed free cataract surgeries for 1,619 patients who were in danger of blindness in nine different countries, including Vietnam, Mongolia and Tajikistan. Furthermore, it has conducted surgery for children suffering from heart disease in other countries. It established an IT education centre as a rehabilitation project in Iran after it was badly damaged by an earthquake. It has built and operated an orphanage in Sri Lanka, and reconstructed a school destroyed in Jakarta, Indonesia. In January 2012, it constructed seventy modern houses and seven septic tanks, and installed a solar power system for the ITA people in the Philippines.<sup>25</sup> It launched a well-drilling project for local residents in Ilmarba, Kenya, in April, 2010.<sup>26</sup> In this way, YFGC carries out the practice of love of Christ beyond the border and region through Good People. Through such practices, YFGC has been fulfilling the vision of unity in the

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<sup>21</sup> ‘Good People built a senior secondary school in a remote area of Laos ... completion of a modern two-storey building in Lan Xang, which is far from civilization’, in *The Kukmin Daily*, 2012.

<sup>22</sup> ‘Never give up dreams due to poverty ... Good People completed a kindergarten building in Vietnam’, in *The Kukmin Daily*, 27 September 2012.

<sup>23</sup> Missionary Yeon Shim Lim devoted her life to planting a church, establishing an orphanage, kindergarten and schools for children and illiterates in Turkana, northern Kenya, for 28 years. She was called ‘Mom of Turkana’ and died of an endemic disease.

<sup>24</sup> ‘Good People opened Mombasa Health Center’, in *News Power* [in Korean], 19 December 2012.

<sup>25</sup> ‘Good People and KOICA’s co-operative project – seventy new homes were built in Manibac area, Philippines’, in *The Kukmin Daily* [in Korean], 1 March 2012.

<sup>26</sup> ‘Good People had a dedicational ceremony for the project to dig wells in Ilmarba, southern Kenya’, *Newsis* [in Korean], 5 April 2010.

love of Christ, overcoming discrimination, jealousy and enmity between the haves and the have-nots.

#### B) SOCIAL WELFARE ACTIVITY

YFGC has been carrying out various social welfare activities for their neighbours troubled by poverty and disease. First, since 1992, the church has conducted 'sharing the bread of grace', which is a lay-initiated service led by the 'Senior Deacons Fellowship'. They distribute a little bread-shaped coin bank to the people in the church to participate in the work of sharing the bread of grace. These little coin banks can each hold three hundred 100-Won coins. 30,000 Won provides food for a month for a child in Africa. The little coin bank conveys the love of Christ to many African children who are troubled by poverty, disease or warfare.

Since 1984, YFGC has conducted a free surgery for children with heart disease. It was first started by the church raising the full amount for a surgery fee for a child dying from heart disease, who could not be treated because of poverty. Since then, all church members have participated in by collecting waste paper, milk cartons and old clothes to raise the surgery fees for children with heart disease. Since the year 2000, this service was expanded to children in foreign countries including China, Cambodia, Mongolia, the Philippines, Iraq and Malaysia. By January 2014, 4,532 heart disease children were given new lives through this free surgery service.<sup>27</sup>

In December 1985, YFGC decided to implement social welfare for needy youths and elderly people who had no other resources. The church launched the 'Elim Welfare Directorate' in January 1986 and started to construct the 'Elim Welfare Town'. In July 1988, the town was completed, which included a senior citizen centre, an Elim vocational training institute, hall, welfare centre, faculty apartments and so on. Since then, by opening a mission centre in 1994 and a nursing centre in 1997, it has developed to become the biggest welfare centre in the Asian world. The Elim vocational training institute gives youth technical training, providing board and lodging for them while simultaneously inculcating the vision and realistic goals for them to aspire to in faith. Educational and boarding expenses at the Elim institute are totally free. Those who complete the whole course obtain the second level national technical qualification certificate and receive help to find jobs.

The Full Gospel Hospice, begun in January 2001, carries out fourteen-term hospice regular education. Up to 1,272 volunteers have received hospice training education, and 612 volunteers are in active service. Now expert volunteers care for patients in Sem Mool Hospice, Korea Cancer Center Hospital, Ewha Women's University, Mokdong Hospital, Soodong Senior Hospital, Elim Welfare Town, as well as fifty home cancer patients

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<sup>27</sup> *Full Gospel Family Newspaper*, 2 February 2014.

directly entrusted by the Junggu District office and the Yeongdeungpogu office. The Good People Welfare Center opened in November 2012, and includes a patients' room, nursing room, leisure hall, laundry room and bathroom. In addition, with skilled facilities like ambulance and medical devices, it care for the patients with a medical team, social workers, nurses and pastors.

### C) HELPING NORTH KOREANS

YFGC has been involved in helping North Korean people suffering from starvation in a country where there are no human rights, which is all part of an attempt to prepare for a North Korean mission and unification. As a part of this, the church has implemented support in the form of seed-corn and fertilizer, in the construction and operation of a soya bean oil factory, in feeding North Korean children facing starvation, and in the provision of an anti-TB drug. It has also supplied ground cereals to many schools in North Korea to promote healthy growth in children.

In December 2007, YFGC began construction of the Pyongyang Cho Yonggi Heart Hospital, which specializes in heart disease as a part of its medical services to help North Koreans.<sup>28</sup> The hospital, built in the city of Pyongyang at a total cost of 200 billion Won has a gross area of 20,000m<sup>2</sup> and has 260 beds. YFGC provided all supplies for its construction except sand and labour, while a Pyongyang construction company undertook the work. In caring for and treating heart disease patients from North Korea with the love of Christ, the hospital aims to facilitate some private contact between South and North Korea, to prepare for their eventual unification in a Christian spirit. Now, because of the tense political situation, construction has been temporarily suspended, although seven stories of frame construction are complete. However, when it is finished, this hospital will be a channel for the love of God and will play a key role in maintaining long-term peaceful co-existence before unification takes place.

Good People established the 'Free Citizen Education Center' to help the settlement of North Korean migrants.<sup>29</sup> The Center has various programmes geared to the financial independence of North Korean migrants who do not find it easy to adjust to the social system of the Republic of Korea, which is a liberal democracy with a free economy, because they are accustomed to the communist system. YFGC helps them to adjust to their new surroundings through a customized educational system at the Free Citizen Education Center. at the time of writing, the Center has completed twelve terms of education and 520 graduates have been produced. On completing

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<sup>28</sup> See *Full Gospel Family Newspaper*, 2 December 2007 and 30 December 2007, for more detailed information about Pyong Yang Cho Yonggi Hospital.

<sup>29</sup> See the homepage of Good People and of Free Citizen Education Center for more detailed information about Free Citizen Education Center.

the whole course, the migrants are more able to settle down. The period of instruction at the Center is eight months – consisting of six months' basic education to help them adapt, and a two months' advanced education to prepare for employment and start a private business. The educational goals of the Center are to help North Korean migrants become Christians with a holistic faith, to help them stand on their own feet, and to nurture future leaders after unification. For their financial independence, Good People operates a project to start private businesses called 'Good People Family Mart'. Since the first Mart was launched, eighteen more have been founded.

#### D) MULTICULTURAL MINISTRY

The active multicultural ministry of YFGC illustrates that revival is linked with unity and co-operation. Diversity can be harnessed for the power of the gospel.

According to data from the National Statistical Office, in 2010 the total number of households in Korea was 17½ million, including 387,000 multi-ethnic households. There are nearly a million legally registered foreigners in Korea. Considering the number of unregistered people and the increased number of foreigners in the country, we predict that Korea will soon become a fully-fledged multi-ethnic society.<sup>30</sup> The number of international students studying in Korea exceeds 100,000, and the number of North Korean migrants continues to increase. This shows that Korean society is moving from a racially homogeneous nation to a multiracial and multicultural society. So, the ministries that Korean churches need to undertake for multicultural families and foreigners in the country are expected to increase. The International Ministry Department and the University and Youth Department of YFGC jointly held the first International Students' Camp. A hundred and twenty young people, including 55 international students, gathered together in the Camp to worship and had fellowship.<sup>31</sup> The International Students' Camp has grown every year and functioned as a revival retreat to quench their spiritual thirst.

Eighty percent of international students in Korea come from China. The International Ministry Department of YFGC carries out a gospel ministry to Chinese students, headed by the Chinese worship team. YFGC held 'the medical service of love' for Chinese students at Joong Ang University in April 2012. After finishing the medical service, they had a service in Chinese with 100 Chinese students, at which 35 received Jesus as their

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<sup>30</sup> Homepage of National Statistical Office: [http://kostat.go.kr/portal/korea/kor\\_nw/2/2/2/index.board?bmode=read&aSeq=249070](http://kostat.go.kr/portal/korea/kor_nw/2/2/2/index.board?bmode=read&aSeq=249070) enclosed material. National Statistical Portal Internet site, <http://kosis.kr/nsikor/view/stat10.do>

<sup>31</sup> 'CAM held the 1<sup>st</sup> International Students Camp', *Full Gospel Family Newspaper*, 4 January 2009.

personal saviour.<sup>32</sup> In January 2012, an international students' meeting was organized for students from Africa. As this meeting continued, international students and believers who were once international students gathered at the church and studied the Bible, held a seminar, and had fellowship.

Further, YFGC opened the 'Ansan Multicultural Center' to serve foreigners in Ansan, which is the largest multicultural city in Korea, and offers services in languages including English, Chinese, Indonesian, Mongolian, Spanish and Russian.

## *2. Evangelism and exhibition of spiritual leadership through church co-operation*

### A) CHURCH UNITY FOR NATIONAL EVANGELIZATION

Since the 1970s, Korean churches have grown rapidly. At the time of independence from Japan in 1945, there were only about 350,000 Korean Christians. This number rose somewhat after the Korean War to about 600,000 in 1955. Since the 1960s, Korean Christianity grew by 200% every ten years.<sup>33</sup> In 1972, there were about 10,000 churches in Korea. In 1978, however, there were 22,000 churches. In 1974, there were approximately three million Christians but in 1978 their number had become seven million, with six new churches being planted every day.<sup>34</sup> During this period, many non-denominational crusades were held throughout the country; for instance, a Billy Graham Crusade (1973), Explo 74 (1974), and the Holy Assembly of the Nation (1977).<sup>35</sup>

In 1988 and 1992, mega-crusades with about one million Christians were held in the Yoido Plaza to pray for the nation.<sup>36</sup>

YFGC has played a leading role in these crusades for Korean Christianity, and its unity. Through them, Korean churches and leaders unite and co-operate for the revival and the spiritual growth of Korean Christians.

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<sup>32</sup> 'The International Ministry Department focuses on evangelism to Chinese international students', in *Full Gospel Family Newspaper*, 6 May 2012.

<sup>33</sup> David J. Cho, 'The Growth of Korean Missions and Its Contribution to World Evangelism', in Bong-Rin Ro and Marlin L. Nelson (eds), *Korean Church Growth Explosion* (Seoul: Word of Life Press, 1983), 114.

<sup>34</sup> Younghoon Lee, *The Holy Spirit Movement in Korea: Its Historical and Theological Development* (Oxford: Regnum, 2009), 84.

<sup>35</sup> Young Hoon Lee, *The Holy Spirit and the Church* [in Korean] (Seoul: Institute for Church Growth, 2013), 73.

<sup>36</sup> International Theological Institute, *The Church History of the Assemblies of God* [in Korean], 279.

## B) ECUMENICAL MINISTRIES THROUGH OSANRI CHOI JA-SHIL MEMORIAL FASTING PRAYER MOUNTAIN

In 1973, YFGC founded Osanri Choi Ja-shil Memorial Fasting Prayer Mountain for all nations. On the prayer mountain, where people can have a service together, there are twelve small sanctuaries that cumulatively house 12,000 while the main sanctuary has another 10,000 seats. There is also accommodation named the 'House of Agape' and the 'House of Hope,' 214 prayer grottos, a restaurant, bookstore and additional facilities. There are four daily services, conducted throughout the year by 1,512 preachers from different denominations. Approximately 3,500 people visit the prayer mountain each day, with 20,000 foreign visitors.

YFGC holds the Holy Assembly of Asian Christians in order to invigorate mission, especially for Chinese-speaking people in the prayer mountain every year. This annual assembly was begun in 1983, and about 4,500 people have come and experienced baptism in the Holy Spirit.<sup>37</sup>

Furthermore, there is a special prayer meeting of military personnel in the prayer mountain every year in memory of the Korean War. In June 2013, 13,500 soldiers from over a thousand military churches gathered and prayed for the nation and for evangelism among the armed forces. This shows that the prayer mountain helps youth of different denominational backgrounds to co-operate with each other for the Kingdom of God. This also proves that YFGC contributes to the unity and union of the church through the ministries of this Prayer Mountain.

## C) MINISTRIES OF CGI AND DCEM

In November 1976, YFGC started Church Growth International (hereafter CGI). CGI was established to help churches in Korea and the rest of the world to grow, based on Biblical principles. The board of directors of CGI is composed of 64 pastors from 25 countries, along with well-known scholars in the field of church growth. The purpose of CGI is to help churches grow by giving examples of successful churches and pastors all over the world. CGI holds seminars and conferences for church growth every year or every other year in Seoul and in other countries. Since CGI was established, about 600 seminars have been held in one hundred different countries. The magazine of CGI, *Church Growth*, has a wide range of readership, with 18,000 readers from 181 countries. In 1981, CGI started the CGI-TV programme in the US for broadcasting mission, and this still continues.

In March 2000, YFGC founded the David Cho Evangelistic Mission (hereafter DCEM). DCEM is a mission organization that supports the Rev. David Cho's ministries both at home and abroad. It has established a global

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<sup>37</sup> '24th revival meeting of Asian Christians visited to Korea', in *The Full Gospel Family Newspaper* (22 July 2012).

network for mission and has conducted many revival meetings. As a result, tens of thousands could hear the gospel. DCEM collects qualitative data for missions and analyzes it for world mission and church growth. The ministries of CGI and DCEM are examples of how YFGC shares its experience and know-how of church growth with other churches in the world to expand the Kingdom of God.

### 3. Work for Church Unity

#### A) COLLABORATIVE ACTIVITY FOR DOMESTIC CHURCHES

YFGC has been interested in the movement of church unity for a long time. During the mission conference for the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Korean Church (15-19 August 1984), the Rev. Yonggi Cho gave a sermon to Korean Christians representing all the denominations. Furthermore, he was actively involved in evangelism and led many crusades throughout the country, including the ‘Chuncheon Evangelization Crusade’ and the ‘Busan Evangelization Crusade’ (1993), the ‘Kwangju Evangelization Crusade’ (1995), ‘The 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Mokpo Christian Mission’ (1997), and the ‘United Northern Kyoung Buk Area Crusade’ (1997).

As noted above, the Korea Assemblies of God became a member of NCKK in November 1996. During the Easter service, which was hosted by NCKK at Seoul Plaza on 4 April 2010, I preached a sermon with the title ‘Jesus Christ, the hope of all humankind’. In January 2011, I was installed as the Moderator of NCKK. This event was seen as a positive indication that progressive and conservative Korean Christians worked together serving the churches of Korea. Through collaboration with NCKK, YFGC is in the forefront of church unity and co-operation, evangelism and mission, together with relief work for the homeless and the marginalized in our society.<sup>38</sup>

In 2002, YFGC began to share the pulpit with SaRang Church, affiliated with the Korean Presbyterian Churches. Through this, YFGC and the Rev. David J. Cho developed good relations with the Korean Presbyterian Churches, although some of these had considered the Rev. Cho and YFGC as Christian heretics in the past.<sup>39</sup> In December 1988, YFGC founded the *Kukmin Daily*, a national Christian newspaper dealing with both domestic and international issues – in society, culture, politics and economics – and furthermore spreading the gospel through its religious section.

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<sup>38</sup> Publishing Committee for the Yearbook of The Korea Assemblies of God, *1997 Year of the Korea Assemblies of God* [in Korean], 131-32.

<sup>39</sup> *Monthly Full Gospel*, May 2002.

## B) COLLABORATIVE ACTIVITY FOR OVERSEAS CHURCHES

In 1969, YFGC organized the Asian Fellowship, composed of Korean and Asian Pentecostals from thirteen countries. In 1973, the Korea Assemblies of God and YFGC held the 10<sup>th</sup> Pentecostal World Conference (hereafter PWC), in which 2,000 Pentecostals from around the world took part.<sup>40</sup> In 2010, I was invited as a main speaker for the PWC held in Stockholm, Sweden. YFGC is not a member of WCC, but the church is involved in missions for international church unity through co-operation with WCC. In October 2013, the church took part in the Busan WCC conference and introduced the spirituality of Korean Pentecostalism to the world churches. During the WCC conference, there was a Pentecostal Prayer Night with a Pentecostal service with the opportunity with Christians who did not know about Pentecostalism to pray together. I delivered a message entitled, 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?' In this way, YFGC made the effort, through the Holy Spirit movement, to strengthen church unity and collaboration, and to prepare for the reunification of North and South Korea.

## C) THEOLOGICAL DIALOGUES

YFGC had academic concerns for the Holy Spirit even when the Holy Spirit was not under active discussion in domestic and international academic circles. In May 1980, the Full Gospel Educational Institute (now the International Theological Institute) held the First International Theological Seminar on the topic 'Spirit and Church' at the Sejong Center for the Performing Arts. During the seminar, Dr Robert L. Lindsey from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem gave a presentation entitled 'The Holy Spirit and the Early Ministry of Jesus', and Dr Wesley H. Brown presented a paper on the topic of 'The Holy Spirit and Christian Ethics'. The seminar was interdenominational and very successful. About two hundred pastors and thirty domestic and international scholars, such as Dr Jong Yoon Park (Presbyterian), Dr Jong Sung Lee (Presbyterian), Dr Sang Hoon Lee (Holiness), Dr Young Jin Min (Methodist), and Dr Il Sun Jang (Presbyterian), took part in it. Since then, the International Theological Seminar has been held continuously to discuss various theological topics on the Holy Spirit.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Publishing Committee of the History of Yoido Full Gospel Church for 50 Years, *Great Calling: Hope Ministry 50 Years* [in Korean], 105.

<sup>41</sup> The topics of the International Theological Seminar are 'The Holy Spirit and Faithful Life' (1981), 'The Ministries of the Holy Spirit in Modern Churches' (1994), 'The Works of the Holy Spirit Throughout the Church History' (1995), 'The Holy Spirit and Church Renewal' (1996), and 'The Holy Spirit and Prayer' (1994).

In addition to Pentecostal scholars, the seminars have been for interdenominational and international scholars,<sup>42</sup> and have served to introduce the Korean Pentecostal movement to the world, and contributed to international academic exchanges as they have invited many scholars, such as Dr J. Rodman Williams, Dr Vinson Synan, Dr Harvey Cox, and Dr Jürgen Moltmann, who are well known throughout the world.

Furthermore, Hansei University, one of the affiliated organizations of YFGC, founded the ‘Pentecostal Theological Institute’ in 1991, which changed its name to the ‘Youngsan Theological Institute’ in 2003. The Institute has been actively involved in academic work. Since 2002, Youngsan Theological Institute has held the ‘Youngsan International Theological Symposium’. Well-known scholars in these symposiums included Dr Allan Anderson (Birmingham University, UK), Dr Donald W. Dayton (Drew University, USA), Dr Frank D. Macchia (President of the Society of Pentecostal Studies), Dr Vinson Synan (Regent University, USA), Dr Konrad Stock (University of Bonn, Germany), Dr Christoph Schwöbel (University of Tübingen, Germany), and others. These academic seminars have offered opportunities to research the theology of the Rev. Yonggi Cho from various perspectives. YFGC has helped with international and interdenominational studies on the Holy Spirit and the theology of the Rev. Yonggi Cho.

#### IV. Conclusion

On the day of Pentecost, the early church was started with the descent of the Holy Spirit, and became a role model of evangelism, missions and the love of the church.

Since the Wonsan Revival (1903) and the Pyongyang Revival (1907) broke out, Korean Christianity and YFGC have grown rapidly through the work of the Holy Spirit. In the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit, people could experience freedom from sin and the love of God. They also were able to join in experiencing the unity of Christians in the Spirit. Among them, those who experienced true spiritual change practised serving others with God’s love, and began to spread the gospel to non-believers. In this sense, from the beginning, the Korean church revival movement took part in social concerns and practised the love of God for others. The spiritualities of serving, collaboration with other Christians and revivalism are the characteristics of the Holy Spirit movement of YFGC, and have

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<sup>42</sup> Korean scholars who participated in the first to the third International Theological Seminars are Duck Kwhan Goo (Methodist Theological University), Suck Jong Park (Methodist Theological University), Gyoung Bae Min (Yeon Sei University), Goen Jin Kim (Yeonsei University), Joon Gon Kim (CCC), Sang Hoon Lee (Seoul Theological University), Jong Nam Jo (Seoul Theological University), Goon Won Jang (Hansei University), Young Bae Cha (Chongshin University), Yong Goon Won (Anyang University), and others.

influenced other churches throughout the world. The revival of YFGC was the spiritual catalyst for the pouring out of a passion for evangelism and God's love to church members through the power of the Holy Spirit. As a result, YFGC could produce remarkable church growth and personal testimonies to salvation, promote the spiritual growth of church members, and stimulate them to bear spiritual fruit by serving and sharing with others.

YFGC has contributed to church unity and co-operation, and practised the love of God through social relief work and welfare activities in Korea and the rest of the world. The church continues the work of the Holy Spirit to change the world, individuals and societies, as well as evangelizing the world through unity and collaboration with other denominations.

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## CONCLUDING CHAPTER: A CREDIBLE WITNESS

Knud Jørgensen

Lastly, we have to confess that *the loss of ecclesial unity is not just a vexation but a sin*. Unity is not an optional extra. It is, in Christ, already a fact, a given. At the same time it is a command: 'Be one!' We are called to be one as the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are one, and we should never tire of striving towards that day when Christians in every place may gather to share the One bread and the One cup.<sup>1</sup>

The title of this volume is 'Called to Unity – for the Sake of Mission'. The title reflects that it is impossible to say 'church' without at the same time saying 'mission' – and it is impossible to say church and mission without at the same time talking about the *one* mission of the *one* church. David Bosch called this 'a paradigm shift of momentous proportions'.<sup>2</sup> The chapters in this volume have reflected and illustrated this paradigm shift. We believe the authors have brought to public attention a broad overview of the history, development and perspectives on the role of mission in the pursuit of unity, and the central Biblical focus on unity as a prerequisite for an authentic and credible witness in mission.

### Contours of the Paradigm Shift

The new paradigm shift came about because of a new self-understanding. Edinburgh 1910 was central in this process. The conference was not supposed to talk about doctrine and ecclesiology, but once the conference was underway, the challenge of unity emerged strongly, simply because both missionaries and church leaders in the global South viewed disunity as the major hindrance to mission. This unfolding process has been the overriding focus of the first section of this volume, on 'Historical and Missiological Perspectives'. Both this and the following sections demonstrate that the paradigm shift found expression in a new grasp of what being Christians in the world implies. In that perspective, we view the emergence of united and uniting churches, the creation of councils of churches, and the emerging new mission movements as deliberate steps towards living and working together. In the process, there have been

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<sup>1</sup> David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991), 467.

<sup>2</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 464.

various streams; the two most important have focused on *koinonia* and *missio Dei*.<sup>3</sup> Today these two streams have merged into a common stream. In our view, this merger or convergence sets the stage for a common witness and a credible witness.

My own missio-ecclesiological journey may illustrate the paradigm shift. I grew up in a context of mission and evangelism where the high-priestly prayer in John 17:20-23 was understood as pointing to a *spiritual* form of unity. In that perspective, I was told, we are already in communion, that is, with those in whose heart the Holy Spirit dwells. In my Lutheran and Pietistic context, the understanding of *communio sanctorum* through the bonding of the Spirit of Pentecost was central. Any call to work for some form of visible unity was not on the agenda. Even crossing denominational boundaries was frowned upon. My first ecumenical encounter, as a young missionary in Ethiopia, with Anglicans and Baptists, was therefore a theological and personal challenge, and the beginning of my paradigm shift. The next step on my journey came when one of my new ecumenical friends wondered whether my spiritual reading of Jesus' prayer really did justice to Jesus' concern. If the purpose of the unity for which Jesus prayed was that the world might believe, would not a literal meaning of the text be more relevant? Spiritual unity is not very visible and will not be sufficient to convince the world that God loves them.<sup>4</sup> Unity is the will of Christ for his church and God's gift to the church, in response to Jesus' prayer 'that they may all be one'. We are as his disciples and as members of his body, the church, 'to pursue together or enter together into the fulfilment of that will or to participate together in that will. This understanding suggests that primary responsibility for our unity rests with God, but that all Christians are called to participate together in that call in an active way'.<sup>5</sup>

The reason why the pursuit of visible unity is so important is 'for the sake of mission': Unity between the followers of Jesus is essential to the overall 'effectiveness' or, better, the 'credibility' of their witness. The world's belief that the Father has sent the Son is in some manner dependent on our *being* one. So the focus seems to be less on preaching and joint action than on simply *being one*. Yes, the doing part is essential, but probably as it flows out of being. Several of the contributions to this

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<sup>3</sup> John Gibaut, 'From unity and mission to koinonia and missio Dei. Convergences in WCC ecclesiology and missiology towards Edinburgh 2010'. This is one of the chapters in this volume. *When in the following I refer only to author and title, I am referring to a chapter in this volume. Such reference in the footnotes will only be made the first time I refer to the author.*

<sup>4</sup> Cecil M. Robeck, Jr, 'Christian Unity and Pentecostal Mission: A Contradiction?', in Wonsuk Ma, Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen and J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu (eds), *Pentecostal Mission and Global Christianity* (Oxford: Regnum, 2014), 182-206.

<sup>5</sup> Robeck, 'Christian Unity and Pentecostal Mission: A Contradiction?', 187.

volume underline this: the challenge towards visible unity, but first and foremost by being one.<sup>6</sup>

So Jesus prays that the consequence of our oneness will convey a credible witness that ‘you have loved them just as you have loved me’ (John 17:23). The text seems to suggest that it would be possible to assess the effectiveness of mission in the light of the unity or division that we may find among the followers of Jesus. Maybe this should be added to our many tools of measuring church growth? Let me hasten to add that I fully acknowledge that my interpretation of the text leaves several questions open: How may unity be a witness to the truth? What form should the visible unity take? Are we talking about institutions? A conciliar fellowship? A Christian forum? And what about theological uniformity? And as regards spiritual unity, is membership a matter of personal conversion and/or baptism? So maybe the suggestion to measure ‘effectiveness’ is not such a good idea after all, but the challenge towards credibility still remains.

Bosch draws the following contours of the new paradigm:

- The mutual co-ordination of mission and unity is *non-negotiable*. It is derived from God’s gift of unity in the one Body of Christ. We should therefore not play truth out against unity either.
- Holding on to both – and to truth and unity – *presupposes tension*. It does not presume uniformity. Our differences are genuine – whether these conflicts are doctrinal, social, cultural or due to different contexts. This tension calls us to repentance and to a self-critical attitude. There can be no unity in mission or credible witness without the forgiving, transforming power of the Triune God. The goal is reconciled diversity, with Jesus Christ as the centre. He is the point of orientation which enables us to engage in joint service and united witness: ‘Unity in mission is no lost cause as long as the Bible, which witnesses to this Christ, is opened, read and proclaimed in all Christian churches. Listening to God’s word and listening to each other belong together.’<sup>7</sup>
- A united church-in-mission is essential in the light of the fact that the church’s mission *will never come to an end*. We shall never reach the stage where we can say ‘mission accomplished!’ Everywhere the church is in diaspora, in a situation of mission.
- Mission in unity means an end to *the distinction between ‘sending’ and ‘receiving’ churches*. Mark Laing tells in his article in this

<sup>6</sup> E.g. Jean-Daniel Pluess, ‘One in the Spirit? Pentecostals and the Yearning for Christian Unity: A Case Study of the Swiss Pentecostal Mission and Its Initiatives towards Unity in the Spirit’; Stefan Paas, ‘Experimenting with Mission and Unity in Secular Europe: Networking for Mission, Client-Based Mission, and Ecumenical Mission’; Hong Eyoul Hwang, ‘Asian Perspectives on Mission and Unity’.

<sup>7</sup> David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 465.

volume about how this issue was raised both at the Jerusalem Conference in 1928 and at the Tambaram Conference in 1938.<sup>8</sup> Later in Whitby in 1947 the slogan ‘partnership in obedience’ was formulated. Some important steps have been taken to forge new relationships and create mutual responsibility, accountability and interdependence, but this remains an essential issue on the unity-mission agenda. The group working on Theme Eight (*Mission and Unity – Ecclesiology and Mission*) at the Edinburgh 2010 Conference expressed it in this way:

Contemporary discussions of mission, unity and ecclesiology continue to give inadequate attention to issues of equal partnership and sharing of power. Institutional centres of mission power are still in the North despite contemporary mission activity being predominantly an activity of the churches of the global South.<sup>9</sup>

- If we accept the validity of mission-in-unity, we must take a stand against the *proliferation of new churches*. Particularly among us Protestants this is a widespread virus. Many seem to subscribe to a sectarianism which seeks unity in uniformity rather than unity in diversity, and expecting other Christians to comply fully with my view before I can have genuine fellowship with them.<sup>10</sup>
- Unity in mission and mission in unity will ultimately stand in the service of not just the church, but of *humankind* and seek to manifest the *cosmic rule of Christ*. The church is to be a prophetic sign and foretaste of the unity of the human family.
- And then lastly, as already quoted above: *the loss of ecclesial unity is not just a vexation but a sin*. John H. Armstrong is ‘convinced that Satan hates a unified church and will do his best to oppose all who work and pray for unity. He will use aggressive tactics, defame our character, and subject us to vicious gossip – whatever he can do to discourage and dissuade us from following Christ in mission with other Christians.’<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Mark Laing, ‘From Edinburgh 1910 to New Delhi 1961: Called to unity for the Sake of Mission’.

<sup>9</sup> Kirsteen Kim and Andrew Anderson (eds), *Edinburgh 2010. Mission Today and Tomorrow* (Oxford: Regnum, 2011), 176.

<sup>10</sup> John H. Armstrong, *Your Church Is too Small* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 92.

<sup>11</sup> Armstrong, *Your Church is Too Small*, 84.

### Challenges towards Credibility<sup>12</sup>

Lack of Christian unity in the church destroys our credibility in the world. This was an issue where Lesslie Newbigin already had strong opinions in the 1950s:

The disunity of the Church is a denial of the promise and a contradiction of the purpose for which the Church is sent into the world. How can the church give to the world the message that Jesus is able to draw all men to Himself, while it continues to say, 'Nevertheless, Jesus is not able to draw us who bear His name together'? How will the world believe a message which we do not appear to believe ourselves? The divisions of the Church are a public denial of the sufficiency of the atonement.<sup>13</sup>

As a bishop in the Church of South India, Lesslie Newbigin was committed to mission and unity, and he saw the 'success' of the mission – the proclamation of the Good News – being linked to the unity of the followers of Jesus Christ. Unity as a basic fact of life has its foundation in the very atonement made possible through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Unity and mission are therefore not just an ecclesiological issue, but a *soteriological* matter: 'The divisions of the Church are a public denial of the sufficiency of the atonement.' In other words: The church's unity is the sign and the instrument of the salvation which Christ has wrought and whose final fruition is the summing up of all things in Christ. So a disunited church is a direct and public contradiction of the gospel. Because the secret of the church's being is life-through-death in Christ. And the mystery of the church's true fellowship is found in the life of Christ. By dying, he lived, and when the church dies to its scandalous disunity, it will live by the power of the Holy Spirit.

I have come to realize more and more that mission is *ministry of reconciliation*; in the course of 2012 I used several months in co-editing a major volume on this topic.<sup>14</sup> In the process I could not help wondering whether the divisions among Christians deny the efficacy of the reconciling work of Jesus Christ. Have we found in Jesus a centre of unity deep enough and strong enough to overcome our natural divisions and bring us together as one family? Or is it the old story of the discrepancy between what we say and who we are? The divisions 'between Christians are sufficient to raise doubts among those for whom the message of reconciliation is intended to be *Good News*. From the perspective of missions, our divided state is a scandal of the highest magnitude that needs to be overcome.'<sup>15</sup>

<sup>12</sup> The following is inspired by the section on 'The Unanswered Challenges of Lesslie Newbigin' in Robeck, 'Christian Unity and Pentecostal Mission: A Contradiction?'

<sup>13</sup> Lesslie Newbigin, *Is Christ Divided? A Plea for Christian Unity in a Revolutionary Age* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1961), 9.

<sup>14</sup> Robert Schreiter and Knud Jørgensen, *Mission as Ministry of Reconciliation* (Oxford: Regnum, 2013).

<sup>15</sup> Robeck, 'Christian Unity and Pentecostal Mission: A Contradiction?', 190.

I love to preach on 2 Corinthians 5:17f, about God who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, but how can I implore others on Christ's behalf to be reconciled to God, when I am part of a local and global community in which we are unable to be reconciled to one another? The church to which I belong (Church of Norway) has been undergoing a major crisis because of serious theological, ethical (same-sex marriage) and ecclesiological disagreements. The result may be a divided church. The same danger of a schism looms large in several other churches. There is no easy way out; sometimes I am tempted to say that it is better to face a square and uncompromising split than to try to 'compromise'; are we not wasting our strength on staying together? A couple of years ago my wife and I asked our bishop for advice. His advice was crystal-clear: 'We must carry the cross together!' Some people may ask me: 'But is there not a limit, a dividing line where faithfulness to the truth will force us to divide?' I am not so sure. Is the cross the dividing line – the cross which also means 'crossing over', to God and to my sisters and brothers? How may I credibly invite people in the periphery to be reconciled with God, if God's reconciling power is not tangible in my own life and context? Martin Luther refused to leave the Church of Rome; it was the Church of Rome that expelled him. I agree with John Armstrong when he says:

Many Christians, especially evangelical Christians, have accepted the idea that a deeply divided church is normative. Some even believe mission is best advanced through this divided church. To challenge this mindset is not easy, but I believe it is time for Christians to reconsider the ecumenical implications of believing that there is 'one holy catholic and apostolic church'.<sup>16</sup>

The church father Origen has said, 'Ubi peccata sunt, ibi est multitudo' – 'Where there are sins, there are divisions.' The church is at one and the same time *communio sanctorum et peccatorum* (a communion of saints and sinners). If the dividing line is the cross in the centre, I refuse to give in. As an evangelical-ecumenical, I shall continue to live in the tension of diversity and put my efforts into seeing a 'missional church' come into being.<sup>17</sup> Being missional means asking: How can this community of believers become the incarnational expression of the love of Christ in this place?<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Armstrong, *Your Church is Too Small*, 192.

<sup>17</sup> See Knud Jørgensen, 'Biblical and Theological Foundations: The Triune God and the Missional Church'.

<sup>18</sup> Armstrong, *Your Church is Too Small*, 196.

### Unity for the Sake of Mission

As a committed Lutheran and Protestant, I place major emphasis on the (verbal) proclamation of the gospel. I believe that where the gospel is communicated – and where the sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion are performed – there also will the church be. Along the way, the inspiration from the East African Revival and the charismatic movement within the Lutheran Church in Ethiopia (the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus – EECMY) have, however, convinced me that the Christian life is also a matter of the experienced power and presence of the Holy Spirit today.<sup>19</sup> In other words, we need the vitality of the Holy Spirit to restore the unity for which Christ prayed. The church is a *koinonia*,<sup>20</sup> a fellowship of human beings, and a fellowship sharing in the Holy Spirit. *Missio Dei* includes not only being sent but receiving the Holy Spirit (John 20:20-21). And it is as being anointed with the Holy Spirit that we are bearers of the Lord's commission, and made credible witnesses of what we have seen and heard and what our hands have touched, the word of life (1 John 1:1-2).

Highlighting the *missio Dei* perspective and the pneumatological dimension will, I believe, strengthen our mission focus. Christian unity is not to be viewed as an end in itself. What is at stake is unity *for the sake of mission*. The engine in the pursuit of unity is mission, 'so that the world may believe that you have sent me' (John 17:21). Mel Robeck<sup>21</sup> tells about Lesslie Newbigin's admonition to the World Council of Churches at the CWME conference in Salvador in 1996. Newbigin was pleased to hear about new attempts to build relationships, but he added: 'I do not think that the desire here expressed will be fulfilled unless the WCC gives much more evidence of being filled with a longing to bring the Gospel to all peoples.' If we lose the missionary passion, we lose the engine for unity. This admonition is still valid. As I attend conferences and read statements from ecclesial consultations, I hear and read much about peace and justice, concern for creation, and the fight against ethnicity. But I long to hear more about the concern to share the Good News about what God has done for the world – 'for the sake of mission'.

It is against this background that I warmly welcome both the new ecumenical mission affirmation *Together Towards Life*<sup>22</sup> and the *Cape Town Commitment*.<sup>23</sup> Both documents emphasise discipleship, disciple-

<sup>19</sup> See Newbigin, *The Household of God* (London: SCM, 1953), 87.

<sup>20</sup> See John Gibaut, 'From unity and mission to koinonia and missio Dei. Convergences in WCC ecclesiology and missiology towards Edinburgh 2010'.

<sup>21</sup> Robeck, 'Christian Unity and Pentecostal Mission: A Contradiction?', 194-95.

<sup>22</sup> Jooseop Keum (ed), *Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes* (Geneva: WCC, 2013).

<sup>23</sup> *The Cape Town Commitment: A Confession of Faith and a Call to Action* (The Lausanne Movement, 2011).

making and evangelism: ‘To fail in discipleship and disciple-making, is to fail at the most basic level of our mission.’<sup>24</sup>

At the same time, both documents point to the close relationship between evangelism and unity: ‘The love for one another is a demonstration of the gospel we proclaim (John 13:34-35) while disunity is an embarrassment to the gospel (1 Corinthians 1).’<sup>25</sup> ‘A divided Church has no message for a divided world. Our failure to live in reconciled unity is a major obstacle to authenticity and effectiveness in mission.’<sup>26</sup>

### Conclusion

As we close this volume on mission and unity, it is appropriate once again to quote the ‘Common Call’ from Edinburgh 2010:

Recalling Christ, the host at the banquet, and committed to that unity for which he lived and prayed, we are called to ongoing co-operation, to deal with controversial issues and to work towards a common vision. We are challenged to welcome one another in our diversity, affirm our membership through baptism in the One Body of Christ, and recognise our need for mutuality, partnership, collaboration and networking in mission, so that the world might believe.<sup>27</sup>

May I propose some steps that follow from the Edinburgh 2010 process as a whole?

If the churches can agree on unity for mission, then does this visible unity go any further than the ‘mutuality, partnership, collaboration and networking’ of the Edinburgh 2010 ‘Common Call’?

In particular, does the call to unity or communion imply common touch stones, structures or ministries to serve the communion of churches in mission?

Might the Holy Spirit be prompting a fresh mission to the churches to promote unity?

While these questions may well be the agenda of a future Edinburgh conference, the reflection in unity and mission before, during and after 2010 already calls us to ponder renewed ways of being Church for the sake of the *missio Dei*.

This volume provides ample evidence that the dialogue on *missional ecclesiology* is alive and well underway; significant contributions to this dialogue are found in the Vatican II documents *Lumen Gentium* (1964) and *Ad Gentes* (1965), in the *Cape Town Commitment* (The Lausanne Movement, 2011), in the document *The Church: Towards a Common*

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<sup>24</sup> *The Cape Town Commitment*, 71.

<sup>25</sup> Keum, *Together towards Life*, 31.

<sup>26</sup> *The Cape Town Commitment*, 65.

<sup>27</sup> Kirsteen Kim and Andrew Anderson (eds), *Edinburgh 2010. Mission Today and Tomorrow* (Oxford: Regnum, 2011), 1.

*Vision* (World Council of Churches, 2013), and in *Together Towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes* (CWME, 2012). *There is for all of us an obligation to carry on this dialogue, for the sake of mission.*

We are aware that large-scale institutional unity may not further mission. We acknowledge that visible unity can be found and accomplished in more than one way. We note with joy the many new movements in mission that spring out of revivals and bring hope for unity. We challenge one another to explore a ‘kenotic ecclesiology’ where the death and rebirth of some forms of church life are called for.<sup>28</sup> We affirm that the engine towards unity is the desire to share the Good News, ‘for the sake of mission’.

May we conclude with Martin Luther’s prayer for the unity of the Church:

Eternal and merciful God, the God of peace, love and unity, we beseech you, holy Father:

Let your Holy Spirit gather all that is spread, and unite and re-create all that is divided.

May you grant that we be converted to your unity, that we seek your only and eternal truth, and renounce all strife so that we become one heart, one will, one knowledge, one spirit and one understanding.

And let us then in all openness towards the face of Jesus Christ, praise and thank you with one mouth, through him, our Lord Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Thomas Best, ‘United and Uniting Churches as Models of Mission and Unity’.

<sup>29</sup> *Norsk Salmebok* (Stavanger: Eide forlag, 2013), 1207. My translation from the Norwegian.

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Orthodox Perspectives on Mission is both a humble tribute to some great Orthodox theologians, who in the past have provided substantial contribution to contemporary missiological and ecumenical discussions, and an Orthodox input to the upcoming 2013 Busan WCC General Assembly. The collected volume is divided into two parts: Part I: The Orthodox Heritage consists of Orthodox missiological contributions of the past, whereas Part II includes all the papers presented in the Plenary of the recent Edinburgh 2010 conference, as well as the short studies and contributions prepared, during the Edinburgh 2010 on going study process.

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Bill Mitchell & Knud Jørgensen, Editors  
***Bible in Mission***  
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To the authors of Bible in Mission, the Bible is the book of life, and mission is life in the Word. This core reality cuts across the diversity of contexts and hermeneutical strategies represented in these essays. The authors are committed to the boundary-crossings that characterize contemporary mission – and each sees the Bible as foundational to the missio Dei, to God's work in the world.

Wonsuk Ma, Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen  
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Peniel Jesudason Rufus Rajkumar, Joseph Prabhakar Dayam  
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Philippe Ouedraogo  
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Haw Yung  
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Daniel Taichoul Yang  
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Rosemary Dowsett, lecturer, co-leading Global Missiology Task Force, World Evangelical Alliance

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John Gibaut is Director of the Commission on Faith and Order, World Council of Churches.

Knud Jørgensen is Adjunct Professor in Missiology at the MF Norwegian School of Theology .



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