



Churches' Commission
on Mission

CONNECTIONS

Resourcing ecumenism and mission

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Editorial

When one of CCOM's member bodies recently advertized a high executive post in its Africa Department, the advert spelt out in detail the many professional qualifications required for such a responsible function: relevant degree, language, personnel management and organizational skills, knowledge of the region etc. What struck me was that in the entire, rather long advert not a single word so much as hinted that this job would require close co-operation with, and work through churches and Christian organizations in the (predominantly Christian) region. Nor was it worth mentioning that the recruiting organization itself was one operating on a Christian platform, founded by and responsible to churches in Britain and Ireland. One wonders, though not a personal Christian adherence, but at least a knowledge sensitivity regarding others' faith was not a fundamental requirement for such a position. Would one recruit someone for work in the Middle East without requiring knowledge about Islam and its role in society?



At a recent WCC meeting of General Secretaries of National Councils of Churches a Latin American representative complained about a certain ongoing ideological indoctrination from overseas workers coming to his continent. Once Christians came with often a narrow-mindedness regarding other faiths and cultures, imposing what they thought was universally true in both respects on all others – a historical chapter of which most are now intensely and self-critically aware. By today the missionaries have been replaced by modern development aid workers without any faith at all. Far from being more tolerant than their fellow-European forerunners of earlier centuries they *can* work just as aggressively, functioning as de facto 'missionaries of secularism' and possibly even more harmful since their mission is an unconscious one. Most would deny coming with any intention of religious or cultural indoctrination and yet this is often their effect, particularly if they come under the heading of a Christian organization.

Far from being an exception, the example shows the dilemma of all Christian *diaconia* which simplified is: what matters more, professional quality or Christian orientation? How does the motivation of those running it or financing or evaluating it affect an assessment of a development project? What, if any, is the importance of the Western worker's personal humanist or religious belief? Many people working in large Christian development agencies dislike the very word 'mission' and abhor the notion that they themselves might be seen as 'missionaries'. The result is that, while mission agencies over the years became more and more aware of their unwitting culture-export the development agencies remained rather unselfconscious about it, taking their understanding of human rights, good social interaction, gender roles and personal belief systems (or lack thereof) to be the desirable universal norm for all, thus falling into the same trap as the missions – with a 150 year delay. In this issue Christian Aid director Daleep Mukarji takes a look at these questions and the intriguing and ever-challenging relationship between development and mission from the perspective of Christian Aid.

Philipp Hauenstein's paper explores the joys and pitfalls of intercultural learning. Anybody who ever lived abroad will easily recognize his or her experiences in this exploration. A similar theme is approached by Silvana Bunea, who looks at the attitude of Orthodoxy towards modern developments in culture and philosophy and challenges the widespread assumption in her own tradition that any encounter with *the Other* is a danger to one's own identity.

The Middle East is in the news every day at the moment and in the process attention is repeatedly drawn to the fact that a too simple perception of Muslim and Western worlds is wrong for several reasons, not least because the Arab world in fact is full of Christian churches, many of them older than Arabic Islam *and* European Christianity. Bernard Coyault draws our attention to an even more ignored 'minority within a minority', viz protestant Christians in Egypt.

Kai Funkschmidt

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Philipp Hauenstein

'Between Excitement and Culture Shock' - Some Remarks on Intercultural Learning

The 'encounter with the Other' is an everyday affair and yet a tricky thing, potentially prone to misunderstandings. It is not always easy to cope with the outcome of cross-cultural communication. Yet like others skills it is one where conscious learning and awareness are possible, as for example in the intercultural education programme of the Bavarian Church's mission board. The following paper was given in the context of an international, inter-cultural seminar for Germans and overseas Christians working in Germany.

Introduction: Where I come from

When I received the invitation to give a lecture on intercultural education I wondered if I would be the right person since primarily I am a pastor. As such I worked in Germany and in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea. Since 1992 I have been working with the Institute for the Study of World Mission of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria. So I am a pastor with some experience in missiology and the history of religion. But I am not a professional educator and I do not hold a degree in intercultural psychology or education. I have done some research on challenges and opportunities of a cross-cultural ministry. And of course we do have in Neuendettelsau a long experience in conducting international, intercultural seminars. Last year for instance we had a Summer School with participants from over 20 different countries. Today I would like to share with you some of my experiences and insights. My presentation is more an invitation to join the exciting journey of intercultural learning than to give a fundamental statement on the issue. Therefore I shall only present some 'remarks on intercultural learning'.

What is the purpose of this lecture?

Intercultural learning is an adventure: situated somewhere between excitement and culture shock.

As I said, intercultural learning is an exciting journey. But to be more precise it is an adventure: both exciting and frustrating, situated somewhere between excitement and culture shock. In this lecture I try to explore the basic conditions of intercultural learning and I try to say something about the obstacles and the opportunities of this enterprise. Last but not least I would like to give some theological observations.

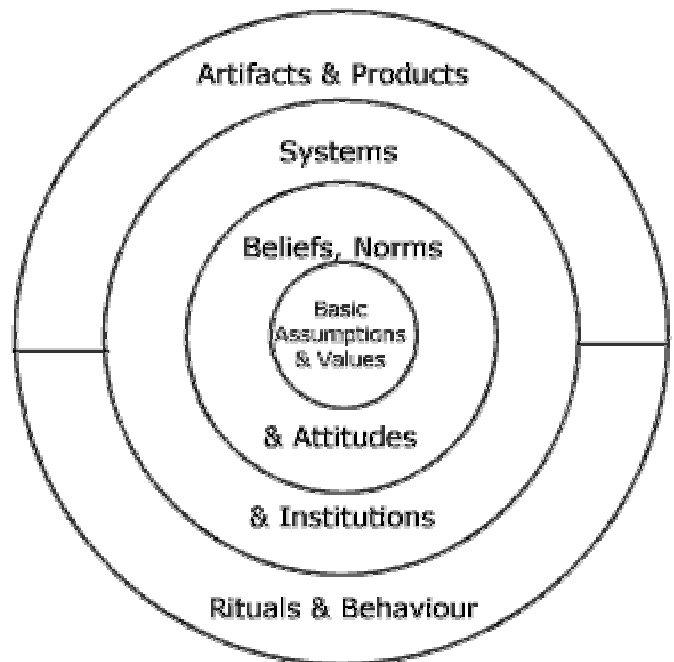
1. What is culture?

Before we can talk about intercultural learning we have to answer the question 'what is culture?'. This question is obviously quite complicated. There are hundreds of different definitions of culture. Therefore I don't want to add another abstract definition, but I will explain what I am thinking of when I speak about 'culture'. I will do by using different pictures. I am aware that pictures always explain to some extent but they also do have their limitations. Beyond the limitation they are misleading.

Culture is similar to an onion. An onion has different skins which belong to each other. What you first see is not

everything and not enough to understand the onion. The skins/layers are interdependent, affecting each other.

1st Skin: Here you will find the artefacts and products, rituals



and behaviour. To this layer belongs the food and the typical architecture of a country. This is it what you normally can see and notice while travelling in a foreign country.

2nd Skin: Here you can identify systems and institutions, systems like the law systems or political institutions but also the institution of marriage.

The 2nd skin or layer influences the first skin. Let me give you an example: In Germany we have a law which says you must not cross the road while the pedestrian traffic lights are red. It is enforced by law and the result is a certain behaviour. Foreigners may laugh at this behaviour, but quite often they do not know that you are committing a legal offence by not complying.

3rd Skin: Here you will find beliefs, norms and attitudes. For instance the opinion that democracy is the best political system. This opinion comes out of European and North American culture.

4th Skin: Finally you touch the basic assumptions and values. This is the most important part of culture because it influences everything. It is the core of culture or the heart which gives life to the whole body. Many aspects of religion are part of this core or heart of culture. But also human rights are part of these basic values.

All these different aspects together you could call culture. They are accepted by a certain group and help this group to organize their lives.

Normally we don't learn culture like we learn other things at school. We are born into it. Quite often we are not able to explain why we behave in a certain way. It just seems normal to us. You could even say whatever looks normal to us is most probably part of our culture. Culture is the medium we live in like a fish in water. It helps us to survive, to organize our lives. We are not able to live without culture, like a fish is not able to survive without water. I think it is necessary to point out that this picture – culture is the medium we live in like a fish in water – has its limitation as well. Culture is always created by human beings. It is the opposite to nature. A fish never will be able to create water. Knowing the problem of this picture I still believe that it underlines very well that without culture we are not able to survive.

Let me use a last picture to explain some important aspects of culture. We are all wearing 'glasses'. Our 'glasses' are shaped by our culture and the background we come from. Through our 'cultural glasses' we interpret the world. Without our 'glasses' we would not find our way around. If I am going to live in a foreign culture I also have to learn to use the 'cultural glasses' of my host country. Otherwise I won't be able to understand the people. Of course most probably I will never be able to live without my own 'glasses' but I might be able use a second 'pair of glasses' in certain situations.

2. Crossing the border - between excitement and culture shock

The next question to be answered is what is going to happen if somebody crosses the border from one culture to the other. And what does this mean to a group of people coming together from different cultural backgrounds for a learning situation?

The first problem is that very often you don't know where the border-line might be. As you normally can see the world only through your own cultural glasses, you might believe you are still on known territory but in reality you may have crossed the border already. You may speak the same language - normally this is English - and you may use the same words, but what people understand is very different. Let me illustrate this with a joke:

A Saudi, a Russian, a North Korean, and a Frenchman are approached by a journalist. 'Excuse me, what is your opinion about the meat shortage?'

Saudi: 'What is a shortage?'

Russian: 'What is meat?'

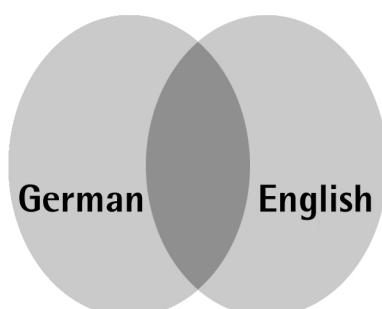
North Korean: 'What is an opinion?'

Frenchman: 'Excuse me?? What is "excuse me?"'

Let me give you another more serious example.

If we use the same words we still don't

have the same understanding of what we are talking about.



For instance if I use the word 'house' we all have a certain image of a house in our mind. This image is a product of our cultural background and of our natural environment. If, for example, you ask somebody in Papua New Guinea to draw a picture of a house most probably it won't have a chimney. In Germany the chimney belongs to the very idea of a house. In English we talk about snail's shell. In German the same thing is called 'Schneckenhaus' – 'snail's house'. This means if a German is brain-storming all the words related to house he will also think of a 'snail's house'. An English speaker would never do this. The same thing is related to a shell. The reason could be that Britain is an island and Germany is not.

In general this means we always share only part of our concepts and values. This makes communication sometimes difficult and can cause puzzlement.

All human beings experience the same feelings when they live or travel in a foreign country and culture

The reaction to this difficult situation is described very often as culture shock. For our purpose I follow Kalvero Oberg who almost forty years ago identified five distinct stages of culture shock. He found that all human beings experience the same feelings when they live or travel in a foreign country and culture. To him culture shock is almost like a disease with certain symptoms (feeling tired and weak, headaches etc.). And of course it is curable. Of course not everybody experiences it the same way. Some people show stronger reactions than others and it is different if you cross a border for the first time or if you are a frequent border crosser. But at any rate it is helpful to know that this can happen.

a) Honeymoon phase

In this first stage everything is new and exciting. The people you meet are friendly. You enjoy new sights, smells and tastes etc.

After a while things seem to become more complicated. You start looking behind the scenes. There is a lot you do not understand and which makes you feel uncomfortable. It may start to seem as if people do not care any longer about your problems. They tell you quite often: 'No problem'. But it is obvious there is a problem at least for yourself and they do not understand you at all.

b) Rejection phase

You start to complain about your host culture. Many things seem to be typical. 'This behaviour is typically German.' You can even develop a form of aggressiveness. You reject your host culture. You definitely feel superior to your host culture. This feeling brings you close to the next stage of culture shock.

c) Regression phase

Regression means you go back to your own culture. If possible you try to speak only in your first language. You become seriously homesick. Your memory says almost everything was better in your homeland. And you wonder why are you wasting your time in this strange place.

d) Recovery phase

In this stage you have decided to learn more about your host culture and to learn the strange language they speak. You have decided to be patient with yourself and patient with others. After a while you notice many things still seem strange but you can cope with it and start to love the things as they are.

e) Adjustment phase

This would be the last stage where you are really adjusted. You have learned to see life through the glasses of your host country.

It is important to stress this is a model which can help us to understand what happens when we cross borders. Real life is more complicated. We are so deeply rooted in our own culture that some people say as adults we can grasp only up to 50% of a foreign culture. This means if you think you have reached stage 4 it might be that a few days later you are again in stage 2. You can find other models, which include so-called moderating factors like 'characteristics of the individual' (personality, language fluency, training and experience, acculturation strategies) and 'characteristics of the situation' (length of cultural contact, amount of contact, cultural distance, amount of life changes).

The special rule is 'learning by puzzlement'

For us it is important to notice that not only people travelling or living in a foreign country may go through these different stages of culture shock but also people coming together for an international seminar. The excitement and the stress other cultures may cause are an important precondition for intercultural learning.

For intercultural learning the situation is even more complicated than for a person living in a foreign country. Very often you have participants coming from more than two cultures. Which means they have to struggle with the culture of the host country and the different cultures of the other participants. You won't experience this just by listening to a lecture but when you start working in groups it becomes serious.

3. Learning by puzzlement

a) What is *special* about inter-cultural learning?

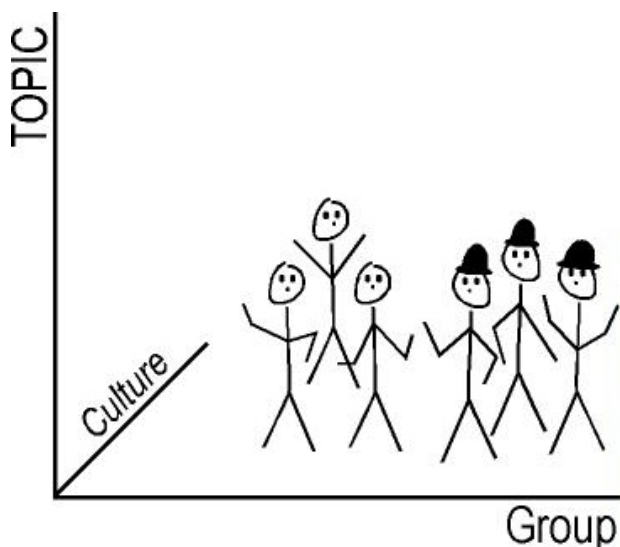
You may well ask if under these circumstances intercultural learning is possible at all? Isn't the risk of misunderstanding too high? If you are comparing intercultural learning to a normal learning situation, what would be special?

My answer to this question is: Yes, there is the risk of misunderstanding. And you have to be aware of the problems that might come up. Besides the normal rules which apply for the normal classical learning situation the special rule is 'learning by puzzlement'. Some people also say that intercultural learning is education by means of 'confrontation'. I prefer to speak of puzzlement rather than confrontation because confrontation has a very negative sound to it. What does 'learning by puzzlement' mean? In an intercultural situation it is unavoidable that people are puzzled or embarrassed. This is not only a disadvantage but also an

opportunity. You just have to help people to use their own puzzlement or embarrassment in a positive way. The intercultural situation provides you with different approaches, cultural views on one issue. What might be a taboo because of cultural reasons for yourself isn't a taboo for a participant from a different culture. Learning by puzzlement would mean to accept that things can also be seen in a different way. Vice versa, it would mean also to accept that people might be embarrassed by my point of view. To give you an example: In this seminar we are going to talk about HIV/AIDS and what can be done to fight this plague. In our respective cultures there might be different attitudes towards talking about sex in public. For some of us this is not a problem at all. For others it may be almost impossible. Most probably both groups will feel embarrassed to some extent. Learning by puzzlement – to use this puzzlement in a positive, constructive, manner would mean to try to understand the other side even if I feel embarrassed. The puzzlement can make me sensitive for my own cultural blind spots and this is the precondition for me to find ways and means to overcome them. This is a learning process on both sides. In my example it would mean I try to understand why and how people can talk about sexuality in public and what this is helping. The other side tries to understand why it might be a problem to talk about sexuality and that talking about it in public might not solve all the problems. Both sides might discover blind spots in their point of view. It is not helpful at all to look where the others have their blind spots but it is very important to discover your own blind spots by means of puzzlement.

b) Consequences

If we are working with an intercultural group and if we want to make use of 'puzzlement' in a constructive way we have to talk about the cultural factor. In addition to the topic and group-related issues of a meeting we have to be aware of the cultural issues. This is the third dimension of the whole process of the group. These three dimensions make up the



'room' the group is using.

The process of learning has to be monitored very carefully at all three dimensions and levels. And to use another picture, like the pearls of a necklace, they are connected.

As far as I can see this has important practical consequences:

- The first consequence would be your group leaders have to know the dynamics of intercultural communication.

Otherwise they won't be able to assist in the learning process or even worse they might become a hindrance to the whole group.

- At some stage of your seminar you have to talk about cultural issues or factors with the whole group. You can not assume the cultural factor does not exist. The cultural dynamics will be at work in your group if you like it or not.
- The process of learning by puzzlement is a process which each cultural group has to do on its own. The first goal to reach would be to be able to look through different cultural glasses. Now each group or participant has to decide for her- or himself if the different view is helpful or not. The other group has to accept this and respect vice versa the possible different point of view and that their own glasses might be rejected.
- An intercultural seminar can only produce raw material. The raw material has to be taken back to the home country and culture. The transformation into one's own context has to be done by the individual participant. It cannot be provided by the group as a whole.
- We have to be aware that intercultural learning is a stressful enterprise. Which means there must be enough space for leisure time and for the experience that despite all the differences we belong together. This has its effect in the planning of the programme.

4. Intercultural Learning and the Global Church

It is one of the great miracles that the gospel of Jesus Christ does not belong only to one culture. The gospel is always rooted in the specific respective cultures if it really becomes Good News for the people. But from the very beginning when the gospel crossed the border between Judaic and Greek culture the gospel has had a strong tendency to cross borders. As a result the Church is global, which means it belongs to and is rooted in many different cultures around the globe. From the apostle Paul we learn that we all belong to the body of Christ since 'we are baptized into the one body by the same spirit' (1 Cor 12:13). But of course we are not yet in heaven. Because of this, and at the same time taking seriously what Paul says about the one body of Christ,

we have to learn more about the cultural factors of communication and do what we can to make intercultural learning successful. It would be a mistake to say we as church don't need this.

But at the same time we can celebrate that the gospel, the Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ, brings together people from different cultures. We do have him in common. We are all baptized into this one body of Christ. And he invites us to his table. We join together in adoring and glorifying him. He invites us to remember each other in prayer and to join hands in his mission for the people of the world and for his whole creation. Compared with other intercultural learning situations this is a great advantage we have. Across cultural boundaries we are able to recognize each other as brothers and sisters in Christ ('You are all one in union with Christ Jesus', Gal 3:28).

The practical consequence would be that the celebration of our faith in devotions, Bible studies, prayer meetings and Holy Communion must be an integral part of our intercultural learning in the Church. In any intercultural seminar I know, the sharing of the faith is one of the highlights for the participants even if some expressions of faith might be new or strange to them. By this way new motivation for intercultural learning comes from the very centre of Christian spirituality.

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Bernard Coyault

Protestantism in Egypt Today (part I)

Bernard Coyault is Africa Desk Secretary of the Département Français d'Action Apostolique (DEFAP) in Paris, i.e. the French equivalent to CCOM. He was pastor of the francophone Protestant church in Cairo and Alexandria from 1997 to 2001, sent by Action Chrétienne en Orient (ACO). He here introduces us to a little known element of Middle Eastern Christianity. The second part of this article (on social work, Muslim-Christian relations and Christian ecumenism) will appear in the next issue. The original French and the English versions are available on the web www.ccom.org.uk.

Egyptian Protestantism is widely ignored in Europe, even within our internal church scene. In the culture of well-intentioned people of good faith it is the great Coptic Orthodox Church which monopolizes our perception of

Egyptian Christianity through its spiritual and liturgical heritage, its spiritual leader, Pope Shenouda, the immense cathedral of St Marc in Cairo, the desert monasteries. There is much surprise when one mentions a large minority of

some 300,000 to 400,000 members, an Egyptian Protestant Federation, a Protestant theological faculty in Cairo, a social service and development organization, the CEOSS (*Coptic Evangelical Organization for Social Services*), one of the largest NGOs in Egypt, a Bible Society that radiates far beyond the national borders.

I Some historical landmarks

At first Protestantism and the Arabic world seem hard to bring together in our Western minds. An Egyptian pastor friend of mine likes to mention his 'search for the Holy Grail', i.e. a 16th century Arabic translation of Calvin's *Institutio Christianae Religionis*! With more historical reliability one might mention the intense contacts of Moravian missionaries with the Coptic patriarch in 1752 and the presence of Church Mission Society (CMS) missionaries in Egypt between 1815 and 1849. Those first two missionary ventures aimed not to found a new church but to aid the 'Revival' of the Orthodox Coptic Church and to feed into it the spirit of the Reformation. The Coptic Church was initially favourable towards Protestant ideas and the reforming work of pope Cyrillos IV (1854-62) was undoubtedly influenced by the teaching he received in his youth in one of the CMS mission schools. His main goal was to improve the Copts' level of education, particularly among the clergy. Cyrillos even adopted a strangely iconoclastic position when he forbade the exposition of icons in the newly built Cairo cathedral. He even arranged a public burning of icons in front of amazed Muslims. A strange 'puritan' flavour? Besides the CMS missionaries coming in even larger numbers, now came missionaries mainly from the American *United Presbyterian Mission*. Their work developed from 1854 starting in upper and middle Egypt with the foundation of schools and medical services. Pope Cyrillos warmly welcomed certain initiatives such as Sunday schools and the distribution of the Bible.

A 'search for the Holy Grail', i.e. a 16th century Arabic translation of Calvin's *Institutio Christianae Religionis*

Yet again the missionaries' goal was the awakening of the Coptic Church so that she might become an instrument for the evangelization of Muslims.

But with the success of Protestant mission, particularly in the Coptic 'capital' Assiut, and the creation of indigenous Protestant communities, the relationship with the larger church changed. The new pope Demetrius II (1862-70) excommunicated Copts who 'converted' to Protestantism, and also attempted to close down Protestant schools. Thus the split became real and Egyptian Protestantism emerged. In 1863 the Bible School in Cairo was opened. It became a theological faculty in 1926. The first synod of the Nile convened in 1899, by which time some seven circuits had been created. In 1904 one had 167 schools (many girls' schools among them), 36 Egyptian pastors and 63 parishes. British colonization in 1882 further encouraged the influx of foreign missionaries, Protestant and Catholic. French Catholic missionaries founded numerous schools in order to counter the Protestant influence. They attempt to 'save

Orthodoxy from the Protestant danger', particularly in Assiut region, which had become 'the highway of Protestantism' in their terminology. However the Protestant church in Egypt was not the daughter of colonialism but preceded it.

And Coptic Egyptians – Orthodox and Protestant – sided with the Muslims in the nationalist movement and the founding of *Wafd* party in 1919. This was in resistance to the British occupation – they adopted the famous slogan 'the crescent embraces the cross'.

It thus seems that the first American missionaries left a deep impression on the country. When one of the 'founding fathers' died in 1886 it was a day of mourning in the entire region of Assiut. The Muslim provincial governor attended the funeral alongside all religious leaders, Muslims, Orthodox, Protestants and Catholics.

'Copts' means all Christians of Egyptian descent (including Roman Catholics)

Numerous other Protestant groups and Protestant denominations were created in the 20th century – Methodists, Baptists, Assemblies of God, Plymouth Brethren etc.. The vast majority of their members always came from the Coptic Orthodox Church. In 1921 an agreement of co-operation was reached between the seven main Protestant missions. The Egyptian revolution of 1952 put a sudden end to these missions. The 17 Protestant denominations which arose from this work were henceforth autonomous. Today they are gathered in the Protestant Council that represents them to the Egyptian government. The Episcopal Church in Egypt (founded by CMS work) is equally part of it. The Protestant Council has 20 representatives, twelve of whom come from the Coptic Evangelical Church (the main Protestant church).

Its director is Safwat El Bayadi. All official decisions, every ordination and church building must be approved by him.

II The Coptic Evangelical Church in contemporary society

The main Protestant church in Egypt – the Coptic Evangelical Church (CEC) – officially carries the somewhat exotic name 'Nile Synod'. It has been independent from the American Presbyterian Church since 1958 although strong links remain. CEC is a member of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, the World Council of Churches, All Africa Conference of Churches and the Middle Eastern Council of Churches of which the Orthodox Copts and the Roman Catholics are also members. By adopting the adjective 'Coptic' the CEC strongly affirms its national identity.

In the 7th century the Arabs used the word 'Copts' (from Greek *'egyptos'*) to denote the inhabitants of the Nile valley. These days it means all Christians of Egyptian descent (including Roman Catholics).

The Coptic Evangelical Church thus claims full participation in the life of the nation. To affirm their national and indigenous identity is the main struggle of all Near Eastern Protestant churches, facing Orthodox oriental churches who claim exclusively for themselves the true historicity and denigrate them as 'foreign imports'. The face same struggle

with Islam whence they are sometimes accused of being American imperialism's 'submarines'.

I keep a surprised memory of my participation in the Evangelical Church's national synod, functioning similarly to our French Reformed Synod. Lay and clergy delegates representing about 300 parishes in eight regions. Animated debates and discussions, hymns, some of which were familiar to me, all sung in Arabic – all this in a slightly disorganized and rather noisy way, very Egyptian and ... very Protestant!

Protestants in Egypt face two major challenges. The first is to integrate into contemporary society and participate in its development in a general context of change and economic crisis (high population growth, massive migration into the cities, economic crisis in 2001 with devaluation of the Egyptian pound, bankruptcies, unemployment growth and impoverishment of large sections of society).

The second challenge is to live as Christian community in a Muslim majority context where Islam shapes the way society functions and where Christians (6-8% of society), when considered as full citizens with equal rights with Muslims at all, are nonetheless ostracized and exposed to various degrees of pressure. Apart from the difficulties for Christians to access the political sphere or certain jobs in the army or the university, the development of churches is narrowly controlled by the authorities (notably the State Security). They are forbidden to publicly profess their faith and the permission for the construction or extension of places of worship is given drop by drop, sometimes with several years' delay.

In an urban parish one can count up to 25 weekly meetings for all age groups, sometimes with several full-time employed or voluntary workers

Protestant churches, like others, develop a strong communitarian life. The parish constitutes a very strong point of attraction. In an urban parish one can count up to 25 weekly meetings for all age groups, sometimes with several full-time employed or voluntary workers. Multiple social activities are organized to serve the most disadvantaged, with volunteer doctors, lawyers, teachers. A priority is also given to the formation of children and youths. This is a guarantee for the survival of the communities in a demographic context where over the half the population are under the age of 20. This task of biblical and practical education and formation is one of the main tasks for the pastor.

These spiritual and social activities grouped around the church – after the image of the mosques which apply the same strategy – can lead to the phenomenon of *inner emigration towards the community* which thus becomes a kind of refuge and alternative society, split away from the 'world'. The 'world' which is then quickly identified with Egyptian Muslim society.

Generalizing one can say that Orthodox Coptic communities tend to follow this model (after the example of the monasteries which are the heart of spiritual renewal and

constitute a refuge from the world). Whereas the Catholic and Evangelical Coptic churches – undoubtedly due to their status as minorities within the minority – rather choose openness to the field of social action. Social activities – medical centres, schools, rural development programmes – are open to all, Muslim and Christian alike. Social action is no longer just meant to serve the members of the own community but it becomes a means to witness to Jesus Christ through deeds since the word is not free. An Alexandrian pastor whose parish had opened a school for mentally handicapped and a medical centre in a poor part of town said: 'We want to witness to Jesus' love and compassion for all. I live with the secret hope that the children's parents, the poor women of the quarter one day will come and ask me: "Why do you do this?" Then I shall feel free to proclaim the name of the one in whose name I act.'

A charter was signed by all, including the midwife and the barber, the traditional 'operators'.

In certain parts of Cairo or in the villages of Middle Egypt the percentage of Christians is around 30-50%. Copts and Muslims live together, mix in school, at work and public life, live the same culture, confront the same problems, the same prejudices and cultural conservatism. In rural areas one could mention the genital mutilation practised on over 90% of women in the villages of Upper and Middle Egypt by both Muslims and Christians alike.

In the village of Deir Al Barcha, south of Minya, the Protestant church started an initiative bringing together the mayor and Muslim and Christian leaders. A charter was signed by all, including the midwife and the barber, the traditional 'operators'. Female genital mutilation was banned and the practice has since virtually disappeared.

The churches must find this difficult balance between a spirit of participation and engagement in order to further positive social change together with other religious players on the one hand and on the other a spirit of opposition resistance and strengthening of the community facing a certain kind of Islam which denies them the right to exist and bear witness as Egyptian Christians.

'Blessed be Egypt, my people'. This prophecy of Is 19:25 was removed from its historical context and became a very popular slogan appropriated by the Christian churches at the beginning of the third millennium to nourish their vision and their social and even political action.

Finally one can mention one particular challenge for church leaders in Egypt. Facing a lack of professional opportunities, reinforced by denominational barriers and discrimination against Christians many young university-trained Protestant Copts are tempted to emigrate. The relative ease with which they can obtain an emigration visa on religious grounds favours this development.

Pastors have developed a special care for young students and academics in order to raise awareness of their vocation and responsibility as Christians and citizens of Egypt.

Translation: Kai M Funkschmidt



Silvana Bunea

Reflections on the encounter of Orthodoxy with cultural differences

Above in this issue, Philip Hauenstein showed how what seems obvious or 'normal' to us may be far from this to others. A plea for a creative engagement between theology and culture is for most theological traditions unnecessary, since this discourse is part and parcel of doing theology. In other traditions, however, this may be entirely different as is shown in this article from the Orthodox realm. The author, Silvana Bunea is a young Romanian Orthodox. She is currently working at the University of Heidelberg/Germany on a systematic-theological doctoral thesis.

The following reflections plead for a constructive and engaged meeting of Orthodoxy with cultural otherness. Being an Orthodox theologian coming from an East European country with a strong Orthodox majority, a country which has been experiencing political, religious and cultural freedom for only 13 years now, I myself experienced the first steps of encountering cultural and religious difference after the opening of Romania. In the traditional Orthodox milieu such encounters even today are sometimes difficult. The so called *western* influences, issues like the rights of (sexual) minorities, the explosive expansion of various eastern spiritualities or new religious movements, all of these unknown in the long communist time, are a provocation for Orthodoxy in a land like Romania. Orthodox theologians feel responsible to respond to such provocations of the *other*. The encounter with cultural difference, which I shall now consider, is still very much an actual, sometimes an acute issue for Orthodox thinking at least in those East European countries which passed through the experience of communist regimes.

The positive encounter with culture has been underlined by different 20th century Orthodox Theologians. Two examples are: the well known Georges Florowsky from Russia and the Romanian Orthodox Ioan Bria. The first of them affirmed the necessity of a theology of culture, which in his opinion implies reflection upon culture and on encountering culture. The basis of such an interest lies in the creative vocation of the human being, which is not excluded in Orthodox spirituality.¹ Speaking in the same context upon the encounter of Orthodoxy with culture Ioan Bria opposed the (mis)understanding of tradition – a concept which plays an important role in the Orthodox thinking and which sometimes is understood in a static way and used defensively, as a kind of 'magic weapon' against all new ideas coming from inside or outside the Orthodox space – as a static *depositum* of doctrines. What he calls a 'theological hermeneutic' should show that the method of 'closed doors' leads nowhere.²

Although the positive encounter with culture has been affirmed by many Orthodox theologians, reality seems to be sometimes quite different. In such cases the reaction of an

Orthodox Christian or theologian to the (cultural) *otherness* may be strongly defensive and apologetic leading sometimes to polemic. One's own identity might be questioned by the *other's otherness*. In such a situation one may feel the need to defend oneself by arguing and sometimes denying the difference. In this case a dialogue with *the other* is hardly possible. Unfortunately such reactions are not unusual in the Orthodox space. The fear of losing one's own identity by meeting a totally different *Weltanschauung* leads to a blockage in communication with the *other* and can end in intolerance towards any *different one*. This actually might be regarded as a specific reaction of human beings generally. This raises the issue of tolerance. Tolerance is a key notion in the whole problematic of encountering the *other*. This human attitude should imply more than just a passive and sometimes negative acceptance of the *other*, seen as the only way not to enter into a violent conflict with him or as the only way to live near the *other* in a multicultural and multireligious society. The recognition of the legitimacy and particularity of the *other* is a precondition of active tolerance.³

I shall now present a possibly typical example for the encounter between the Orthodox *Weltanschauung* and what may be considered as a provocative philosophy of life for an Orthodox theologian, the universe of thought of Emil Cioran, a well known Romanian-French Philosopher of the 20th century.⁴ Cioran's entirely different way of searching for God – even by provoking the One who for Cioran was a silent, a completely apophatical God, by means of argument and blasphemy, in order to transform the dramatic interior monologue of the human person in a dialogue – should in our opinion be recognized as being specific, sincere and legitimate. It is a different way of trying to meet God, from the background of a rather different *Weltanschauung* and a different personal experience of the whole reality. Among Orthodox Theologians in Romania Cioran's philosophy of life often triggers strong reactions against it. It is too provocative a way of viewing reality and of imagining the relationship between God and a human person. If they are

³ Alois Wierlacher: *Aktive Toleranz in Kulturthema Toleranz: Zur Grundlegung einer interdisziplinären und interkulturellen Toleranzforschung* (Hrsg. Alois Wierlacher), Iudicium, München, 1996, p.62.

⁴ Emil Cioran (1911-1995), a philosopher, essayist and moralist born near Sibiu (Hermannstadt) in Romania. He went to Paris in order to study and remained there after 1945. He decided to write in French, after he had published five books in Romanian between 1934 and 1937. Some of his most appreciated books in the occident are: *Pain Revelations, Temptation to Exist, History and Utopia, Solitude and Decay*.

¹ See: Georges Florowsky: *Christianity and Culture*, Belmond/Mass, 1974 (The collected Works of Georges Florowsky, Vol. II).

² Ioan Bria: *Hermeneutica teologica. Dinamica ei in structurarea traditiei*, Sibiu, 1999, p. 43, 57.

not opposed and reviled, Cioran's books are usually ignored by theologians in Romania, not being taken seriously as an original, personal and valid way of searching for God and as an interesting systematic view in its own right. It seems to me that an encounter between Orthodox theology and Cioran's universe, where his image of God stands in close relation with his cosmology and anthropology, can also be regarded as an enriching possibility. As in Lévinas or Wierlacher the self-understanding and self-knowing happens by trying to understand and know the *other*. The other questions my self-perception and this can lead to improved knowledge of my self.

Inside God one can identify a fight between two principles of good and evil.

What now are the basic elements in Cioran's thinking? Here are a few glimpses of his image of God, his cosmology and anthropology.

The absurdity and suffering which can be experienced in human existence lead Cioran to the question of *unde malum?* [whence evil] In order to avoid absurd conclusions in tackling *theodicy* one must accept the idea of a duality inside God. The good God cannot be mixed in the scandal of existence. That's why Cioran feels himself forced – like the gnostic movements of the first Christian century and of the Middle Ages – to assume the existence of a bad demiurg. Inside God one can identify a fight between two principles of good and evil. The duality and implicitly the multiplicity Cioran regards as opposed to the initial unity, before the division of substance. That's why multiplicity will always be seen as something negative. The relation between unity and multiplicity is not a complementary one. The one excludes the other. Cioran regards the mystical way as a means of overcoming multiplicity and returning to the initial unity of substance. This tension between unity and multiplicity reflects also on another antagonistic relationship: that between substance and person. The dimension of substance is associated by Cioran with the existence before the division of the ontological unity. This level of substance he sometimes names the 'void', or 'emptiness'. The personal dimension is connected, on the other hand, with the division of substance. The person, the individual is a result of this division. Because of these associations, the person is regarded by Cioran as being something negative and as something to be overcome. The personal dimension will be denied. And this happens in Cioran's image of God – where a personal God will be rejected – in his anthropology and in his concept of the mystical union: such a union is possible only on the level of substance and not in that of person. At the same time Cioran knows and feels the need of a communion between God and the human being. He tries to reach the mystical dimension by addressing himself to God.

And such a dialogue presupposes a personal dimension. The tragedy of such opposite tendencies is to be found in Cioran's anthropology. The tension, yes, even fight between two irreconcilable principles can be found not only at the level of divinity, but also in the human being. The creation and icon of the human being is the bad *demiurg*, the creator of this world. The administrator of creation is sometimes in Cioran's expression the 'devil'. The human being is seen as a paradoxical and absurd being, always divided between two opposite poles, unable to choose one without regretting the other. Creation which is characterized by multiplicity, will be rejected by Cioran. Although even at the level of creation one can find a mixture of good and evil, one can discern in Cioran's work an anti-cosmic attitude, which strongly rejects this world. This rejection happens on an ontological level by denying the material dimension of the existence and on an epistemological level through the need of liberation or *purificatio* from the world of illusions by means of lucidity and suffering. Differing from the Jewish-Christian tradition, Cioran sees this *purificatio* not as an active part of the mystical way, but as a passive withdrawal from the world. After this the human being may experience illumination. This *illuminatio* reveals the lack of meaning, the absurdity of existence. The person who experiences this will be free from illusions, but free in a desert of meaning. The old values cannot be replaced by new ones. It is in this case a kind of *negative* illumination.

Because of the presupposition of two gods, a good but not almighty God who has nothing to do with the imperfection of this world, and a bad creator, the possibility of a mystical union between God and the human being is very problematic in Cioran's thinking. The good God is the totally different one. He doesn't want to reveal himself or because he is not almighty he *cannot* do so. On the other hand, the human being is a controversial being, divided between two extremes. On the other hand, the human being experiences in an acute way the constitutive character of the communion between God and the human being. All these factors lead to a dramatic situation, in which the mystical encounter between God and human becomes very problematic.

The consequences of such a philosophy of life for ethics are interesting for a dialogue between Orthodox tradition and Cioran. Because of the absurdity of existence and because creation is the work of a corrupted demiurg, who is the icon of the humans, there is a denial of ethics to be found in Cioran. The tendency towards evil is constitutive for human existence. Ethics also ignores the paradoxical character of life since the irrationality of life is denied by ethics. Suicide will be in such a context a last sign of revolt against this lack of liberty and against the absurdity of existence.

Beyond its provocative side Cioran's thinking offers the opportunity for rich theological reflections by way of a constructive encounter. A mere denial of his philosophy of life and his perception of the encounter between God and human because of their *otherness* are a loss for Orthodox theological reflection.

CCOM Forum Reports

MTAG

The new Mission Theology Advisory Group began in September and so is in an exploratory phase, looking at the many issues which require attention and asking in what way we can best resource the church for mission. We are generally agreed that we will focus our **exploration of apologetics** in the area of spirituality, asking how it is that people outside the church describe themselves as 'spiritual' people and yet feel that their spiritual journey and its expression is complete without Christ. Conversely, people can be struggling to express their Christian faith and the place of their spirituality in contexts such as professional healthcare. Our first task therefore is to think ourselves into the worlds of such spiritual people; we need to have our eyes open to be alert, not blinded by the security of our own cherished faith.

It was apt therefore that Bishop David opened the last MTAG meeting with some verses from Proverbs on God's delight and read from Traherne's *You never enjoy the world aright...* We reminded ourselves that God delights in the whole created world. In order to find what others find there, we tried to think creatively and came up with some different ideas and stories.

Mission and Mask-making

From the beginning we reminded ourselves that our work does not necessarily need to be word and book oriented. There are other ways to make people aware of God's presence and of God's delight in creation. We talked about a way of getting people to engage with their created self by making masks. By this means we can become aware of ourselves delighting in the face of each other and in the face of Christ who in turn delights in us. But this need not be an abstract exercise but a tactile reality, teaching us about God's intimate and complete love for us as created beings.

Mission and hairdressing

Further, we heard a story about how the tactile contact between a hairdresser and her client created the context for a conversation about death and resurrection. The hairdresser cut her client's hair and he taught her to pray while anointing her hands with the sign of the cross with the only oil available – out of a bottle in the shop. No opportunity for mission is too mundane to bear fruit.

Mission and Middle Earth

We decided that one of our first tasks would be to watch the new *Lord of the Rings* film and try to understand for ourselves what it is about the great themes of Tolkien's trilogy that so grips people through the cinema today. In particular, we would look at some of the environmental issues, as the ancient trees of Isengard are torn down in war and the enemy lays waste the land and not just the people in it. There is death, but also resurrection. There is salvation through sacrifice, not just for the peoples and their cultures, but also for the trees and plants. How far do

we take this into account in our own view of mission? These are matters which we will be exploring further in 2003.

Anne Richards

Middle East

The **threat of war** hangs over the Middle East. While the UN inspection continues in Iraq there remains hope of a peaceful solution, but the momentum towards war increases and the USA appears set on regime change. While no tears whatever would be shed over Saddam Hussein, the extent of innocent casualties is unpredictable and the tide of anti-American feeling is rising so strongly that the vision of a beneficial transformation of the whole region, with further regime changes, seems unbelievable. Our own government is measured in its words, but it seems committed to following the US lead even without UN sanction. In Israel and Palestine the asymmetric conflict goes on. In the occupied territories the population suffers closure and curfew as a norm. Economic life is impossible and more land is lost; poverty and malnutrition grow alarmingly; that and the daily toll of casualties is now little reported in the West. When war comes there is fear of even harsher measures and enforced transfer of population. The position of the Christian population in Palestine and throughout the region becomes more insecure.

In our countries there has been remarkable unanimity in the statements of churches and church leaders. All seem agreed that no further armed intervention should be made without express UN authorization. More could and should be done on the diplomatic level, and there is much doubt if any good arising could outweigh the undoubted evils of war. There was agreement with the Prime Minister's speech when he said that there must be advance on the question of Palestine, with a conference convened on final status issues before the end of 2002, yet nothing has been done. The anger on the street in the Middle East is acute, regimes friendly to the West are made precarious and the appeal of Al Qaeda is strengthened.

Churches and organizations have been keeping contact with partners in the region.. Christian Aid is helping their partners in Palestine to prepare for what could happen if war comes. The Forum has been working with the Quakers, the Church of Scotland and Christian Aid to make arrangements so that Christians from Britain and Ireland can take part in the WCC's Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme for Israel and Palestine (EAPPI). This programme is strongly wanted by the churches there. Accompaniment means standing with the suffering giving what help they can and Being witnesses to what is happening.

Colin Morton

Latin America/Caribbean

The Latin America-Caribbean Forum has continued to meet with increased numbers of those attending the Forum and increased level of interest in the discussion. The meeting in October focused on **Cuba** and was addressed by the Deputy Cuban Ambassador in London, Counsellor Oscar de los Reyes. The talk focused on the injustice that the Cuban state feels in its treatment by the United States and others. 'The State perceives human rights as providing the most widely available access to some basic human needs, literacy, medical care, sanitation and utilities such as water supply... There is no country in the region that has what we have' Counsellor Reyes declared confidently. 'In Cuba, no one has disappeared, been shot, or raped (as a result of political activity)... no church has been burnt down - no violation of human rights taken place - a few tenets remain [to be worked on] these have been used as the basis for discrimination and accusations about the violation of human rights'. Counsellor de los Reyes also highlighted how in response to the changing world political situation, Cuba has 'transformed' itself. This has been the basis of its history since the revolution.

Discussions continue to take place with the members of the Forum about its purpose and subjects to be covered in its meeting. Recent experience suggests that this is a good way forward to stimulate interest and involvement. Help is needed with the administration of the Forum, there has been no response to a call for help within members of the Forum and if this help is not soon found, it may lead to another period of uncertainty for the functioning of the Forum.

Tom Quenet

Asia

'Minority Faiths, Mission and Human Rights in Asia Today' is the theme of a **one day conference** planned on 9 May 2003, between 11 a.m. until 5 p.m. in London. It will be focusing on South Asia in particular and will think about how the recent developments in world politics affect the situation of religious minorities in particular and human rights in general. The situation includes but goes beyond persecution of Christians in many countries concerned. One of the questions to ask is how to cope with the widespread perception that 'mission' (often implicitly defined very narrowly as 'preaching with an aim to effect a change of religion') is partly to blame for this situation. 'Mission' and conversion are often explicitly banned (recently legislation to this effect was introduced in some Indian states) or at least strongly discouraged. What does this mean for the work of mission agencies and Christian development work?

One of the keynote speakers will be Rev Dr Klaus Schäfer, Theological Secretary of Evangelisches Missionswerk in Deutschland (Hamburg) who will be coming back from a month-long teaching assignment in the region shortly before the conference. A second (probably Asian) speaker is currently being sought and will be announced in due course.

The conference is open to everybody involved in Asia work within the British and Irish Churches.

The Asia Forum, which has been struggling for quite a while, has been inactive in the last year due to lack of interest from the member bodies.

In all conversations it was however always agreed that in addition to the more technical and detailed discussions on Asian countries (Bangladesh, Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka) already going on between the British and Irish and other churches and agencies it was worthwhile and necessary to retain a platform where wider and more general issues and developments could be discussed and reflected.

This conference, therefore, is also an attempt to rekindle interest in the Forum in trying out a different shape and format.

Further information on the conference is obtainable from Focal Person Chris Wigglesworth, wiggles@talk21.com or Kai Funkschmidt, kai.funkschmidt@ctbi.org.uk. It will also be published in due course on the Asia Forum website accessible through www.ccom.org.uk

A WCC **Sri Lanka** Round Table planned for November 2002 was cancelled and replaced by a meeting of Western partners to Sri Lankan churches on 6 December in Geneva. Attended by representatives from several European countries as well as Australia and the USA, it showed generally comparable assessments of the situation. One partner had delayed a planned withdrawal from work in Sri Lanka due to the very hopeful developments in 2001. The peace process started in February culminated in a peace agreement signed on the night before the Geneva meeting. There was agreement that this historical moment should be honoured by Western partners without unduly rushing into unreflected action. For example continued development work even outside the former war zones was required in order to avoid envy amongst the majority Sinhalese who often were impoverished through indirect war effects and could easily be overlooked in the current Western rush to help in former no-go areas.

A fuller report on this meeting is available on the Sri Lanka Group's website: http://www.geocities.com/ccom_ctbi/Sri_Lanka_Group.html.

Kai Funkschmidt

Africa

The Project for **Christian-Muslim Relations** in Africa (PROCMURA)

'Christian women should regularly pay visits to their Muslim counterparts and participate in Islamic women's activities.' This was suggested by a participant at a West Africa region consultation held in Togo by the Project for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa (PROCMURA), within its current three year women's programme. Others suggested activities to prevent juvenile delinquency, collaborative family life education, with a focus on issues such as reproductive health, and the need to address problems such as the inheritance of a man's wealth and properties by Christian women. A group, making reference to 2 Cor. 6:14 where Paul writes about working with unbelievers, concluded that Christian-Muslim marriages should be discouraged. There was a consultation re-

commendation urging the study of the Qu'ran and the Bible on the subject of interfaith marriages and of the need for guidance to young people as to when and whom to marry.

Speaking at the consultation Dr Johnson Mbillah, the General Adviser of PROCMURA, said that in their bid to share the gospel with Muslims they should desist from polemics and bearing false witness to their neighbours. The gospel he said is Good News and should not be presented in a manner that it becomes Bad News. Christian witness in a Muslim environment should take context seriously.

At the end of January 2003 there will be a briefing of this and other programmes to the European Liaison Committee of PROCMURA meeting in Paris. CCOM is a partner of PROCMURA along with CMS, USPG, the Methodist Church and the Church of Scotland.

It was at the CCOM Africa Forum 2002 consultation in Dunblane that Prof. David Kerr, Director of the Centre for the Study of Christianity in the Non-Western World Edinburgh University, particularly commended PROCMURA. It is, he said, a Pan-Africa organization with a mission 'to keep before the churches of Africa their responsibility for understanding Islam and Muslims in view of the churches' task of interpreting the gospel of Christ faithfully in the Muslim world... It is decentralized into various regional and very largely national sub-conferences, or regional committees, and some of these, frankly, are more effective than others. There is also a range of theological opinion within PROCMURA, which is perhaps one of its strengths. There are those who lay their emphasis upon preparing themselves through studying Islam to convert Muslims in order to be faithful to the Great Commission. There are others who would lay their emphasis on studying Islam in order to engage in dialogue with Muslims in order to fulfil the Great Command.' David Kerr emphasized that 'most of their programmes take place at the local level - local seminars, local study projects and local activities that are regional in their organization and focus'.

See also the announcement of the Africa Forum's 2003 Residential meeting on p.18.

Gordon Holmes

Personnel Officers

A few years ago I spoke to a missionary friend in the Sudan and he said that his organization had checked all his skills on logistics and trained him in several other useful things. But then he spent a third of his time in Sudan running after the government army trucks who 'recruited' the young men working in his project by just loading them on and driving away to the barracks. 'Nothing prepared me how deal with a situation were I had to confront a bunch of heavily armed, irritable soldiers, trying to obtain something from them, namely my colleagues.'

At its meeting on 12 December the Personnel Officers Forum (POF), run jointly with Global Connections discussed **Crisis Management**. How can personnel-employing organizations safeguard the security of their staff in areas and times of crises? Speakers were Floresca Karanasou of Quaker Peace and Social Service and Tim

Mercer, a former RUC policeman now employed by Crisis Consulting International, a firm specializing in giving security advice specifically to missionary organizations.

Both speakers mentioned the difficulties of finding full insurance cover for personnel working in crisis areas, especially after 11 September 2001. Tips were exchanged on where to find insurance companies that insured people even in high risk areas. Tim's presentation concentrated mainly on the technical side of security: risk assessment, how to protect buildings, how to drive in convoys, how to avoid conflict.

Floresca Karanasou spoke from the Quakers' experience with peace workers in Israel/Palestine. They receive special training in how to deal with tense situations, e.g. at Israeli army checkpoints or how to de-escalate an aggressive situation using awareness of verbal and body language. Thus both soft skills and technical means as well as organizational questions (insurance cover) were dealt with.

The relatively low participation of CCOM member body representatives remains a concern in this Forum, especially since all CCOM member bodies' personnel officers were invited in a letter last summer to draw their attention to this resource. Next meetings are 16-17 June and 3 December.

Kai Funkschmidt

Europe

The **Charta Oecumenica** (ChOec) and Georgia were the themes of the last Europe Mission Forum (EMF). Former dean of Durham Cathedral John Arnold, when he introduced the Charter to the Forum on 12 November, described it as 'house rules for living together in a common European home'. Those compiling the Charter focussed on '*no* to competition *yes* to cooperation'. Each part of the Christian church had different concerns. The miracle is, emphasized Dean Arnold, that through the Holy Spirit it is now a document to be read and talked about all over Europe. ChOec was conceived to preserve and develop the fellowship that grew out of the two Ecumenical Assemblies of 1989 (Basle) and 1997 (Graz). The presidents of the Conference of European Churches (CEC) and the Council of European Bishops' Conferences (CCEE) signed the completed document in Strasbourg at Easter 2001. It has been translated into 24 languages and according to Monsignor Aldor Giodano, CCEE General Secretary 'No other ecumenical document has aroused so much interest and debate'. *For more information see www.cec-kek.org*

John Arnold, Dean of Durham Cathedral until December 2002 and former President of CEC brings his long experience to serve the Europe Mission Forum. He will chair the Forum from the beginning of 2003.

Tim Okroev, recently returned from a visit to **Georgia** introduced the situation in this country which is still recovering from civil war although it dropped from the Western media headlines. There are growing tensions with Russia and tensions over the growing influence of the USA. There is no national infrastructure for the economy, which remains "clannish" and controlled by mafia and political elites.

There has been a failure to deal with human rights abuses even in the Orthodox Church. 1997 saw the withdrawal of the Georgian Council of Churches from the World Council of Churches to save the unity of the Georgian church yet schism still happened. On the Orthodox side there were calls to cease all ecumenical contacts. Any mission-mindedness still to be found is amongst Baptists and Lutherans. The Baptist Church is the only church working with refugees. CMS is involved in two refugee projects.

First Ecumenical Kirchentag: a new experience for all!

The first *Ecumenical Kirchentag* will take place in Berlin 28 May to 1 June 2003. The theme is *You shall be a blessing*. Visitors from a variety of churches in Britain and Ireland regularly attend the biennial German Kirchentag, helping to make it an ecumenical occasion. So what will be different in 2003? Firstly it is a joint invitation from a Catholic and Protestant team. They have worked together for several years and there will be events that we are used to e.g. well known speakers, large and small meetings for Christians and their friends of other faiths and none. It will cater for young and old. Secondly it is earlier than usual, taking place during English school holidays, and including

Ascension day, giving teachers and their families an opportunity to attend. As before we are invited to stay in local homes. To many the most significant change will be that the final service will be non eucharistic. This service will take place near the Reichstag because the Olympic stadium is too small! For a unique ecumenical experience book now until 15 March. Further details www.oekt.de or from Sheila Brain: ktag@sheilabrain.com.

Researcher in European Mission: a new post.

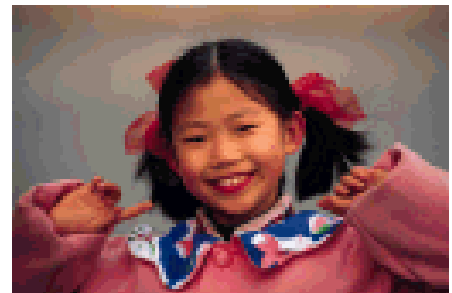
The Forum was pleased to hear from Timothy Okroev (Regional Director for Europe of the Church Mission Society/CMS) that, upon an initiative from CEC and following some time of consultation, CEC and CMS are going to appoint a **Researcher in European Mission**. The person appointed will be employed, probably on location in central or eastern Europe, as a CMS Mission Partner seconded to CEC. His/her task will be initially to map existing innovative mission work throughout Europe in order to facilitate improved co-ordination and exchange in the future. Further information and applications (by 31 January) to timothy.okroev@cms-uk.org.

Dorothy Knights/Kai Funkschmidt

Face to Face

Are you a Christian aged between 20-30, looking to put your skills to good use this summer? Why don't you think about joining a small team going out to China for a month this summer?

Joining 2 local Christian communities this project will give you a unique opportunity to see a side of China most people miss. Participants do not need to speak Chinese but do need to be willing to respond to the friendly and welcoming attitude of our Chinese hosts by exploring their culture and the whole experience with an open mind.



Be prepared to change, prepared to learn and prepared to have a summer to remember!

For more details and application forms contact Caroline Fielder at CCOM China Desk

e-mail: china.desk@ctbi.org.uk

Tel: 020 7523 2118

An estimated £1,000 per participant will need to be raised to contribute towards the total costs of the visit.

See also p.17.

Update...Update...Update...Update...

BBH

“What is your Church’s Purpose?”

One of the significant tasks of leadership in the church is that of enabling and giving direction for the future that can be absorbed, understood and owned by the church community. There may be different methods of arriving at that agreed direction. For instance, at a diocesan level that is shared amongst the parishes, or at a congregational level for an individual Christian community.

It’s worth asking what is the clarity of purpose for the local church where you worship? How has that been agreed? Maybe, a church away day, or a series of consultations over a period of time, or an inherited statement from a previous decade.

What are the means for communicating the purpose amongst the members? Perhaps, the purpose statement is typed above the weekly notice sheet, or in the constitution of the church, or pew cards are distributed for worshippers use.

If you asked a random selection after Sunday worship what the purpose of your church was, do you think there would be a broad agreement of that purpose? If so, why and if not, why not?

Unsurprisingly, there was found to be a mismatch of stated aims, priorities and practices among the local churches, in the research phase of BBH (see the document compiled by Donald Elliott *God’s Mission in the Local Church*, accessible through www.ccom.org.uk).

Subsequently, it will be no surprise that in BBH’s careful methodology of changing churches from maintenance to a mission paradigm the first learning indicator for a mission church is **Focusing Vision**.

What BBH means by Focusing Vision

To summarize the first indicator, focusing vision, means:

The importance of local churches articulating their specific calling through integrated strategies for community engaging, mature spiritual life, enabling leadership and appropriate structure (page 6, Summarising BBH, CCOM 2001)

Purpose, values and vision are addressed in the initial audit of a church (pilot) that is using the BBH mission accompaniment. The purpose of a church remains the most static statement over a long period of time, in fact it may rarely change. The purpose statement of a church is essentially answering the question ‘why are we here?’. One pilot which is an ecumenical group of churches in a city, states that their aim is to maintain a Christian presence in the inner ring road of a rapidly changing city.

The values statement considers ‘how we shall operate the purpose’. Values are an agreed set of principles. For instance, in one BBH pilot that is a new emerging church, they have agreed that they will not receive members from other churches without first consulting the person’s current church leaders and receiving their blessing.

So, values are about ‘how church operates’ the quality of characteristics of being the Christian community of faith.

The vision statement, often termed mission statement, can be a combination of values and vision. Vision statements can last from a matter of weeks to twenty to thirty years. Vision is ‘what the church seeks to specifically achieve’ over a given timeframe.

Another BBH pilot has a vision to develop a single denominational church centre in collaboration with other denominations ministering in a demanding social environment of a massive housing estate on the edge of a big city. Whilst another BBH pilot seeks to renew the training for the formation of its priests, to include as part of the syllabus, priests as mission leaders in the local church.

Vision statements need to be time assessed in order to quantify the strategy to be implemented.

BBH Mission Accompaniment and Focusing Vision

The uniqueness of BBH’s mission accompaniment scheme is that it has developed across the ecumenical arena, with churches from the historic traditions, for example, Church of Scotland, Roman Catholic and Church in Wales, to the newer streams that prefer to be termed a ‘family of churches’, like New Frontiers International, Pentecostal and Independent Charismatics.

BBH has a number of ‘Accompaniers’ (external facilitators) who are systematically visiting their designated pilot (case study: local churches/regions/denomination headquarters/theological seminaries) over a period of time.

The accompaniment takes place for between eighteen months and three years. We believe that this is a key feature of the fruitfulness of BBH. The accompaniment offered by BBH is situation-centred, rather than a top down imposed framework. This means that the accompanier is non-directive in style, therefore with the facilitation that the accompanier brings the pilot is enabled with outside assistance to discern its future and patterns of ministry and mission.

Notably, the reason why BBH accompaniment is proving fruitful is that the accompanier ensures that the pilot doesn’t forget or neglect the bigger reflective questions that can so easily be lost in the activism or maintenance mentality or ostrich syndrome. Also, an annual snapshot is taken to appraise the aims from the beginning of the year and what and why has occurred in the meantime.

To illustrate this, the accompanier will audit a pilot, addressing its purpose, values and vision and may well use some questions like these:

- Why are you here? What is your vision? What are your core values?
- Where do these come from? What sustains them? How are they grown, changed, shared and developed?
- What is your church (project) identity? How do you know?
- Where would you like to be in 3-5 years time?

What are the Challenges to Focusing Vision?

A Christian vision needs to be both a vision of God and from God. The challenges to any vision-making process, in other words the lurking dangers, could be 'who holds the power'. For a wholesome vision, it needs to be an inclusive process that is carefully and widely shared. This means that a process of listening within is paramount to discerning God's vision. To conjure up a vision which the people are unwilling to follow not only destroys trust in the leadership, but also sets back the greater vision to be an engaging church with the community: retrenchment is an attitude that can affect us all.

Vision touches the areas of being Church, in the World, and seeking the Kingdom; our theology of church, world and kingdom comes to the fore. Therefore, in one BBH pilot, seeking God's vision is not simply limited to the internal interest of a local church, but also explored amongst the parish council leaders and significant and insignificant others in their place.

A vision implicitly suggests reaching for a new future, a changed state of affairs and whether Gods people are willing to own the vision that will inevitably incur sacrifice, willpower, determined love, adjustments of giving and of course adventure. A letting go of the old order, to welcome at times painful change, as well as positive change.

Clarity of purpose is crucial to igniting the flame of faith and service. What we are discovering in BBH is that with these friendly strangers we call 'accompaniers', people are finding fresh faith and renewed courage to believe that they can make a difference in the world. Often we are more aware of the gifts we do not have in a local Church, however, accompaniers are well placed to acknowledge the gifts that do exist and hear the smallest voice.

Conclusions

Within the BBH action pilots we wait with intrigue to find how they fair in reaching their purposes, values and visions. However, with friendly, sustained and skilful accompaniment these pilots will undoubtedly be given more focus to their mission and ministry.

What is clear to me is that being a missionary church in a fast changing world, means that mission will continue to be a messy business. No longer will clinical and fixed approaches to mission cover the broad sweep of life in Britain and Ireland. What is required is that more than ever our churches look to able leaders and skilful accompaniers.

More than ever do we need to be clear about where we are going or intend to go. There is a saying that warns us of the dangers of myopic vision, *if you aim at nothing, you will hit nothing*. Focusing vision is people in the church who begin to have a whole new vision of what is possible, about changing lives and communities.

Terry Tennens

CCOM archives

A meeting took place between Rosemary Seton, the archivist of SOAS and several CCOM staff on 25 November in the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London. SOAS houses the archives of CCOM and its predecessor organizations, the Conference of British Mission Societies

(1912ff) and the Conference for World Mission (1978ff). It was agreed that because until now the wealth of material of historical interest in these archives was used to a far lesser extent that its historical importance would suggest, steps should be taken to make better use of the archives by propagating them among academics and churches. In co-operation with SOAS, CCOM intends to encourage more research both into its own history and general research drawing on its archive material. One project is the writing of the history of CBMS/CFWM/CCOM for 2010, i.e. for the centenary of the 1910 Edinburgh Conference which triggered the modern Ecumenical Movement and led to the foundation of CBMS in 1912.

Web resource to missionary collections

SOAS Library has launched the Mundus Gateway, an on-line guide to missionary-related resources in the UK. Since the early eighteenth century missionaries have set out from Britain to evangelize the world. In so doing they have created or collected a wealth of documentation, including archives, personal papers, printed books and pamphlets, photographs, films, sound recordings and artefacts. The materials are increasingly being used and appreciated by researchers from a broad range of academic disciplines. However, missionary collections are widely dispersed and difficult to locate. For the first time descriptions of these scattered resources have been brought together in a unified electronic guide.

The database contains summary descriptions of more than 400 collections held in over 50 institutions in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Each description provides content and contextual information, and details of finding aids and of access conditions. The database can be accessed in a number of ways: free-text searching, browsing by name, place and subject indexes and using a clickable map. There are links to missionary-related on-line resources and other useful web sites. A gallery provides a sample of the extensive range of visual materials to be found in many missionary collections.

The material is potentially useful for scholars in the arts, humanities and sciences as well as missiologists and church historians and anyone interested in such topics as race, class, gender, religion, cross-cultural relations, art, education, medicine, languages and literature, as well as less-expected ones such as climatology, transport and genetics.

The Gateway is the culmination of the three-year project to improve access to missionary collections held throughout the UK. The web address is: www.mundus.ac.uk. Comments and feedback to mundus@soas.ac.uk.

Irish Mission Info

The Irish Council of Churches' World Mission Committee publishes a quarterly newssheet called MISSIONinfo. The following news are taken from its Oct-Nov 2002 edition.

Africa 2003 for Irish Methodists

The first three weeks in July, 2003, Irish Methodism is sending two Work/Witness Teams to work in the local churches in Sierra Leone and Zambia. The teams will be involved in church and Sunday school programmes,

outreach to children in schools and orphanages, testimony, drama, mime and music, and children's and youth programmes. Africa 2003 will also be active in building and maintenance work, helping to raise in Ireland the money for building work, and providing labour on multi-purpose buildings for education and painting of existing buildings. Further details are available from Revd Laurence Graham, Epworth, Woolhara Park, Cork.

Presbyterian Prayerline

The Overseas Board of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland issues a weekly e-mail *Prayerline* which focuses on different countries as well as the work of the Overseas Board. The issue of 2 October, for example, features Brazil, Kenya, India and Nepal as well as prayer points regarding the Board. Presbyterian Church in Ireland, Overseas Board, Church House, Fisherwick Place, Belfast BT1 6DW. Ph. 028 - 9032 2284, e-mail overseas@presbyterianireland.org

Study Day: Inter-Faith Dialogue and Encounter

An annual mission study day is organized by the Irish Missionary Union and the World Mission Committee of the Irish Council of Churches. In 2002 it took place in Dublin with 45 participants. The topic was *Inter-Faith Dialogue and Encounter - How do Christians dialogue and work with others?* Speakers included Fr Oliver Crilly, Sr Rebecca Conlon, Revd Katherine Meyer and Revd Desmond Sinnamon. A report is available from the ICC World Mission Committee, e-mail icpep@email.com

European Union and Developing Countries Monitor

The greatest effect which the EU has on the poor world is through the Common Agricultural Policy. This detailed publication (now at No.7) includes statistics, policies and comment. It is a joint initiative of the Global Food Security Group-Ireland (GFSG) and FOS-Belgium. Contact; Barbara Hegarty, Comhlámh, 55 Grand Parade, Cork, ph. 021 - 427 5881, e-mail comhcork@iol.ie

Resource with information for potential overseas volunteers

Trying to find out information about all the different volunteer opportunities overseas is an almost impossible task for an individual but a directory from the British-based World Service Enquiry (the information and advice service of Christians Abroad) makes the task quite easy. Their *2002 Guide to working for development at home and overseas* (64 pages, A5) lists British and some other agencies, and has lots of useful advice to anyone thinking of working as a volunteer abroad; very helpfully in this context it marks those agencies which require people with Christian faith. The directory is free but a donation (~ £3) is welcome. World Service Enquiry, 233 Bon Marché Centre, 241-251 Ferndale Road, London SW9 8BJ, ph. 0870 770 3274, fax 020 7346 5955, email wse@cabroad.org.uk and web www.wse.org.uk

'Water for Life - Sustainable Future'

This is the theme of the **Fourth Assembly of the European Christian Environmental Network (ECEN)** to be held from **6 to 11 May, 2003** in **Volos, Greece**, by invitation of Metropolitan Ignatios of Volos and the

Evangelical Church of Greece. You are warmly invited to attend.

ECEN is a network set up in 1998 to bring together Christians and church organizations involved in environmental work from all over Europe and from every Christian tradition. Our fourth Assembly in Volos will provide a valuable focal point to share what is being done in our countries to tackle environmental issues, to plan future collaborative work, and to be stimulated by top speakers on current environmental questions. In previous assemblies we have examined energy, climate change, transport, and sustainability in Europe. At Volos our double focus will be on the main issues emerging from the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg (WSSD), and on the particular case of water.

Sustainable Development : Johannesburg was not the visionary goal-setting summit it should have been. Several ECEN members attended and came back with a mixed picture. There were many encouraging signs of practical work across the world since the 1992 Rio Earth Summit. The importance of poverty eradication, corporate responsibility and partnerships with civil society were recognized afresh. But most environmental goals were watered down. No effective targets were set for crucial areas like energy, transport, waste or natural resources. The weak official agreements reflected the threat to environmental progress posed by the parallel rise of forces of economic globalization, trade liberalization and corporate power. Johannesburg saw an erosion of some key values of sustainable development, like the global commons and the precautionary principle. The challenge for the European churches, inspired by the gospel, is to find ways at every level - personal, community, corporate, national and international - where we can make a difference in caring for God's created order and in the building of just, healthy and sustainable communities.

Water : Climate change is adding to a growing crisis in access to fresh water. Some regions in the world are increasingly experiencing severe droughts, while others are coping with excessive rainfall and flooding. The conservation, efficient use and careful management of water are crucial for communities and their livelihoods across the globe. How can clean water and water scarcity be dealt with justly and participatively? The increasing trend to privatize water services often has negative effects on the transparency of management, responsiveness to needs, and access to water. The churches are called to work actively on these issues. Water is basic to life. One way of shaping the churches' witness, to be explored at the Assembly, is to emphasize the symbolic value of water in the Bible, as a parallel to the acknowledgement of water as a global common good.

ECEN was founded in 1998 in response to a recommendation of the Second European Ecumenical Assembly in Graz. It has working groups on several themes, including climate change, mobility, church environmental management, celebrating creation, and environmental education. It promotes the inclusion in the church calendar of a special 'Time of Creation' from 1 September until mid October.

Ruth Conway

Hate campaign root of violence against minorities, say Pakistan churches

New Delhi, 15 January (ENI)--Church leaders in Pakistan say ongoing attacks on Christian and other minorities is a fall-out of unchecked hatred against the minorities.

The National Council of Churches of Pakistan (NCCP) this week endorsed a statement the Commission for Justice and Peace of the Catholic church issued expressing "deep concern over hate speech and provocation of religious frenzy against non-Muslims". "We share the fears expressed by the Catholic church," Victor Azariah, NCCP general secretary, said.

The statements followed an attack on Christmas Day by assailants clad in traditional Muslim dress who hurled a hand grenade into a small Protestant church in Chianwala, north-west of Lahore, killing three girls, ages 6, 10 and 15, and seriously injuring more than a dozen worshippers.

Later, more than 100 Pakistani Christians rallied, calling on police to arrest the church bombers. The Commission for Justice and Peace statement said: "The policy of turning a blind eye on hate crimes has resulted in destruction of churches and temples and the deaths of thousands of innocent citizens in the name of religion."

Religious minorities account for less than 5 per cent of the 140 million people in Muslim-dominated Pakistan. The anti-minority hate campaign, the statement said, had continued "for decades through public rallies, sermons, text-books, print and electronic media". This had created an atmosphere that could trigger actions like the Christmas attack.

"Preaching of hatred [against minorities] creates intolerance. It sparks a violent response from those who get carried away by such propaganda," Archbishop Lawrence Saldana of Lahore, chairman of the Justice and Peace Commission, said in an interview.

Leaders of all churches will meet in Islamabad on 16 January to discuss ways to avert the current dangers.

Five major attacks on church targets in Pakistan had claimed more than three dozen lives since October 2001 when the United States and its allies launched attacks on perceived terrorist targets in Afghanistan, Pakistan's neighbour.

New project for China Forum

"China isn't a country - it's a different world. From shop-till-you-drop metropolises to the epic grasslands of Inner Mongolia - with deserts, sacred peaks, astounding caves, and imperial ruins - it's a land of cultural and geographic schisms. It's not that China has completely done away with its Maoist past - it's more that the yin of revolutionary zeal is being balanced by the yang of economic pragmatism, and the old-guard communists are giving way to the new wave dot-comers." So says the flyer for a new guidebook on China.

There is no doubt that China is changing fast ... so fast that at times it is hard to know what is happening and where. A recent group of final year students from Nanjing Theological Seminary felt that they needed to get a better hold on some of the issues rural churches were facing. They toured the neighbouring province of Anhui to get a sense of how the church was responding to the rapid changes that Chinese society is undergoing. Their short trip showed them examples of thriving congregations, new initiatives in youth work, a church-run kindergarten and old peoples home, a guesthouse and other social development projects. They acknowledged the pace at which the church was having to change to meet the needs of their local communities and the struggles that some of the churches were under to try and meet these needs.

The encouragement the students felt being welcomed by local congregations and the encouragement their hosts felt in receiving the small delegation of students was touching. One place that they visited on this trip was Huangshan. Since the dawn of Chinese history, poets, writers and painters have found Huangshan a great source of inspiration and have extolled its beauties. Now home to a thriving church it is one place that I hope to visit this summer with a small team of young adults (20-30 year olds) as part of the new China Forum Summer Project.

Working alongside the Chinese church in Anhui and Guizhou provinces, the trip aims to deepen the relationships between our churches by providing a unique opportunity for young Christians from UK/Ireland and China to come together, to share and learn from one another. It will be an opportunity for young Christians from here to see China and the churches first hand, and to then return to share their experiences with churches back at home.

Although details need to be finalized activities during the visit are likely to include work with the kindergarten and youth groups in Huangshan and hands-on work with the Guizhou seminary building project, one of the China Forum's major projects at this time.

Applications are being sought from young Christians who are keen to spend a month in China, learning and sharing with our hosts. No Chinese is necessary ... just enthusiasm, a respect for the local culture and a willingness to experience something new. Participants will need to work as part of a team and be ready to be challenged and changed by their experience. A readiness to share their experience when they return home is also important.

Participants will be asked to raise a substantial amount of money towards the trip, the rest of the costs being provided by the China Forum. Participants will be invited to take part in a residential preparation meeting around Easter with a final pre-trip briefing shortly before leaving.

If you know of people who might be interested in joining this small team please let me know.

See also advert on p.13.

Caroline Fielder

News, Resources and Events

12th and last CCOM Annual

Commission Meeting in Bangor/Wales

The CCOM held its 12th Annual Commission meeting on the theme of *Globalization and Mission* from 13 to 15 September in Bangor, Wales. The current widespread talk of globalization, varyingly demonizing or glorifying it, portrays it as a new phenomenon. To some globalization is an anonymous force coming from outside, bent on economic subjugation, to others it is a promise of equal access to labour markets for the poorer parts of the world and others again perceive globalization as the development of a freely accessible global communication network. From a wider perspective, however, one cannot fail to notice that a lot in today's globalization is not actually new. For CCOM and missiology in general this year's globalization is a theme that almost feels like coming home. Mission can be seen as an early form of globalization, in which ideas spread on an existing infrastructure (the Roman Empire) to 'the ends of the earth' bringing people in inter-cultural contact and sharing their good news.

Speakers were Tim Webb (Welsh Identity, Christian Mission and the Pressures of Colonialism and Immigration), Aled Edwards (The role of the Church and politics in the face of globalization's effects in Wales), Anton Wessels (Faith and Faiths After 11 September 2001), Allan Anderson (Pentecostalism and Globalization), Edmond Tang (Pentecostalism in China and Asia) and CCOM Focal Persons Gordon Holmes and Tom Quenet (Mission and Globalization from the Perspective of Africa, respectively Latin America). Most of these papers along with Bible Studies by Simon Barrow are available either in full or in extracts on the website www.ccom.org.uk.

Due to a major re-structuring of the Commission this was the last meeting of its kind. In future it will be replaced by a smaller 'Members' Meeting', held twice a year, and a larger Mission Conference taking place every two to three years.

Joint Anglo-German Africa Conference

The European Union, Africa and the Churches is the theme of the first Joint Africa Consultation between *Evangelisches Missionswerk in Deutschland* and CCOM Africa Forum. It will take place **24 – 27 April 2003 in Hamburg**. We are to explore some aspects of what is behind the slogans on globalization, 'fortress Europe', i.e. the effects of the great project 'European Union' on other parts of the world, in this case Africa, and the propaganda around it. In order to resist the temptation of ready-made good-will answers to complex issues which church activism sometimes tends to the speakers come from economic and political as well as theological and church backgrounds. Speakers include so far Detlef Kuester (German Foreign Office), Rob van Drimmelen, (Association of World Council of Churches

related Development Organizations in Europe/APRODEV, Brussels), Revd Sam Kobia (WCC, Geneva), Dr. Erhard Kamphausen (Mission Academy Hamburg).

This is the first time that the good co-operation with our German colleagues over the past couple of years leads to a joint meeting which will provide a great opportunity for networking. With last year's Residential Meeting taking place in Dunblane, Scotland, this is the second time in a row that the Forum moves away from England in order to express the wide horizon of our mission. The choice of the venue consciously took into account the relatively cheap travel opportunities to Hamburg from London.

Further information can be obtained from the Focal Person Gordon.Holmes@btinternet.com, 0117-9623684 or kai.funkschmidt@ctbi.org.uk, 020 7523 2126.

Kai Funkschmidt

In-service Mission Studies

- How did we end up doing mission this way?
- Business (or) partners? Everybody talks about it but what actually does 'partnership' mean?
- Are inter-church and development aid really 'mission'?
- What difference does it make being a Christian in another culture?

Reflecting questions like these will lead to deeper theological reflection in a new programme offered by CCOM and the United College of the Ascension (UCA).

In-Service Mission Studies is a short two-part intensive course instigated by CCOM at the suggestion of its member bodies and designed for employees of British and Irish churches and mission agencies. It is an introductory course informing and stimulating mission thinking and raising awareness among those who are promoting mission, relating cross-culturally, or facing global mission issues in their daily work without the benefit of either missiological (or theological) training or relevant practical overseas experience.

The course will be held at UCA in Selly Oak, Birmingham in April and November 2003. Participants will look at foundations for mission – biblical, historical and theological – and grapple with issues of culture, justice and faiths. Theological questions will be discussed not just theoretically but as they arise from participants' practical experience in order to show how these relate to basic concepts and perspectives in mission studies.

Dates: 7-8 April and 4-5 November 2003 (can be taken individually).

Further information: Dr Kirsteen Kim, UCA, k.kim@bham.ac.uk, and Dr Kai Funkschmidt, kai.funkschmidt@ctbi.org.uk

Full course contents are accessible on www.ccom.org.uk. Please see also the leaflet attached to this issue of CONNECTIONS.

Yr Yspred: Spirit and Spirits Conference

Yr Yspred. The Spirit in a world of many faiths is the title of a conference for Christians encountering people of different faiths in Newport Wales from 14-17 July 2003.

In what is the Spirit active and present in the world? How and where may we discern the Spirit of God amongst people of different faiths and spiritualities? The conference is designed to explore and enlarge our understanding of the nature of the work of the Spirit in a plural world, drawing on biblical and theological resources to engage with contemporary experience. Speakers include His Holiness Aram I, Dr Elizabeth Harris, Revd Dr Amos Yong.

The event is organized jointly by the Churches' Commission on Interfaith Relations and the Church of England Board of Mission in partnership with Cytûn and the cost is £199. Further information from Conference Secretary Pat Cutting: pat.cutting@c-of-e.org.uk.

'May they all be one...but how?' **Christian Unity Conference**

An Archbishop, a Cardinal and a former Cabinet minister will be among leading figures from the Anglican, Roman Catholic and Free Churches taking part in a major day conference on Christian unity, to be held at St Albans Cathedral on Saturday 17 May 2003.

Keynote speakers will be The Most Revd Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury; Cardinal Walter Kasper, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and a leading Catholic theologian; and the Revd Elizabeth Welch, Moderator of the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church 2001/2 and a former member of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches. Former Cabinet minister Baroness Williams of Crosby, Catholic politician, academic and writer, will also be addressing the conference. Other conference speakers will be Elaine Appelbee, Director of the Bradford Health Action Zone, formerly Bishop of Bradford's Officer for Church in Society and member of the Church of England's General Synod; and Bishop Joe Aldred, Director of the Centre for Black and White Christian Partnership at the University of Birmingham and a Bishop of the Church of God of Prophecy. Bishop Aldred will also preach at an ecumenical service at the end of the conference.

Announcing the conference Canon Iain Lane, Director of the St Albans Centre for Christian Studies, said: 'This conference will draw together a range of distinguished speakers to explore a vision of Christian unity for the next generation. Everyone is happy to affirm that Christian unity is important, but in reality progress is slow and often churches seem to have become focused only on the theological and institutional issues.

'There is a need for renewed energy in all aspects of the search for unity, and a new emphasis on a shared experience of prayer, social action, engagement with the Bible, and the expression of the gospel in and through the creative arts. The conference aims to stimulate, encourage and inspire a renewed commitment to discover a form of unity which is practical and achievable in the next generation.'

The meeting is jointly organized by the St Albans Centre for Christian Studies, the Newman Association, and the Society for Ecumenical Studies on 17 May 2003 in St Albans Cathedral. Subscriptions are £12. For bookings and further information refer to: Canon Iain Lane, Director, St Albans Centre for Christian Studies. Tel. 01727 890205 E-mail: study-centre@stalbanscathedral.org.uk.

The Effects of the War on Terrorism

Whether or not '9/11' changed the world in terms of its basic configurations of power, it certainly brought into being a period of intense reflection on many dimensions of international security. This is going on in various ways within CTBI churches and in its ecumenical Forums. Over the next few months some of the fruits of this initial thinking will become clearer and further steps identified which will deepen the churches' contribution.

In September I paid a short visit to the Philippines, to attend an 'International Ecumenical Conference on *The War on Terrorism in a Globalized World*, convened by the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (with the support of the Christian Conference of Asia and the WCC). Twenty-eight nationalities were represented in an intensive four-day meeting, with presentations from an impressive range of speakers from around the world.

At the end a statement was finalized - the 'Manila Covenant on Peace for Life: Another World is Possible!' Its wording more than hints at the desire of the participants to see global affairs conducted through another prism than that of the 'War on Terror'.

Key issues which emerged for me from this conference were:

1. What does it mean for us in 'CTBI-land' when partner churches in the South characterize the US 'War on Terror' as crystallizing in a more comprehensive way than ever the disease of the global system, i.e. identifying the WoT as a tactical means of strategically extending the unmatched 'full-spectrum' imperial power of the USA - in political, military, economic and cultural terms?
2. How can the churches help to focus the response to 'terrorism' more on 'root causes', not just on 'rooting out terrorists'? - a task which puts an onus on deeper understanding of inter-faith, as well as the economic, financial and other cultural issues.
3. Are CTBI churches maximizing their possibilities of enabling those in power in the West to hear the local analysis and alternative visions of justice and peace of partners in the South, whether they be in West Asia (Palestine) or East Asia (Korea) or South-East Asia (Philippines) or from other locations caught up in the 'War on Terrorism'?

4. Given that the degree of insecurity in the world is largely a product of masculine exercise of power from time immemorial, what can women's movements contribute to the 'reordering' of the world as a safe space for human development?

5. What does the experience of the Ecumenical Movement (a term I heard all week long - it was rather a surprise!) teach in relation to the 'War on Terrorism' about 'justice, peace and reconciliation'?

6. What do UK churches directly, and Irish churches within the EU context, have to say about the nature of the UK-US relationship as regards 'international terrorism' (and Iraq) - especially if the paradigm of 'Empire' is anywhere near correct.

Paul Renshaw

Dr Jocelyn Murray

Many associated with CCOM, with East Africa and with mission scholarship across the world will have known Jocelyn Murray, who died last year. Her *Cultural Atlas of Africa* (revised edition 1998) is a defining work in its field. She is also known for *Proclaim the Good News* (a short history of CMS), for her long-term interest in women in mission, for her work in Kenya, New Zealand, the US and with the British and Irish Association of Mission Studies. Jocelyn's literary archive is currently being re-examined.

Simon Barrow

Andrew Kirk Retires

The Revd Andrew Kirk, a former member of the CCOM Standing Committee and of the Mission Theological Advisory Group, has retired from his lectureship in the Department of Theology at the University of Birmingham. In recent years Andrew played a key role at Selly Oak and as Director of the Centre for Missiology and World Christianity (in which he has been succeeded by Professor Werner Ustorf). Andrew's influence on mission thinking at the interface between evangelical and ecumenical practice has been considerable. His own work in Argentina encouraged a life-long interest in liberation theology. Andrew has at various times worked for CMS (as Theologian Missioner), for the South American Missionary Society (as Education Secretary) and for the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity (as Director, and as an associate with the Revd Dr John Stott. We can be reassured that he will continue to write widely. His recent books include a textbook, *What is Mission?* and a co-edited volume on mission and epistemology, *To Stake a Claim*. He continues to be interested in missionary apologetics and the impact of Christian faith on contemporary world-views. Andrew already has a busy agenda in 'retirement'!

Simon Barrow

European Christian Women's Summer School

What Common Future can we build? is the theme of a Summer School organized by the Ecumenical Forum of European Christian Women. It takes place 13 to 20 August 2003 in Bratislava/Slovakia. A report on the last summer school in 2000 and more information on the coming one can be obtained from Mrs Dorothy Knights: dorothy.knights@which.net.

«Judaism for Future» - Second liberal Jewish Training Centre in Europe

Judaism for Future was the motto for the opening of the 'Abraham Geiger Kolleg' in Potsdam (near Berlin). The institution started training RE teachers and rabbis for the 200,000 Central-European Jews in the academic year 2001-2002. This is the first time rabbinic training has been offered in Germany since 1942. Until recently the only European training centre for liberal rabbis was the Leo Baeck College in London-Finchley. All other comparable institutions are in Israel and the USA.

The foundation is not welcomed by all however, notably not by the representatives of Orthodox Judaism and the Central Council of Jews in Germany. Both object to this institute which is affiliated to the 'World Union for Progressive Judaism' (founded 1926 in London, the world's largest Jewish Organization) as being funded by well-meaning progressive American Jews who however are blamed for dividing German Judaism.

German Judaism is currently going through a difficult time. Of the ca. 6 million living there in 1933 only a remnant of some 50,000 people remained after 1945. From ca. 1990 their numbers swelled through several hundred thousand immigrants from the Soviet Union - most of them completely secularized Jews. The existing congregations struggle to integrate them and liberal Jewish critics claim that for these secularized Jews the appeal of the dominant Orthodox tradition is very low.

Kai Funkschmidt

Vatican supports Christians in Israel/Palestine

The Vatican is giving \$400,000 to Roman Catholic causes in Israel and the West Bank to try to improve life for Christians there and persuade them not to flee the ongoing fighting. Archbishop Paul Josef Cordes, head of *Cor Unum*, the Vatican's charity arm, will deliver the money and an appeal for Christians to remain in the region during a 7-10 November visit, the Vatican said yesterday. A statement from *Cor Unum* noted that religious tourism to the region had fallen precipitously in the past two years of fighting, particularly after a standoff earlier this year between IDF troops and Palestinians holed up in the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. 'It is understandable why there is a desire among many to leave the country,' the statement said. 'The safekeeping of holy sites, however,

would be seriously put in danger if Christians abandoned them.' Cordes will deliver the \$400,000, as well as an appeal from Pope John Paul II to 'encourage Christians to remain in these tortured places, like so many missionaries already are doing in heroic fashion,' the statement said. The money will be divided among the Jerusalem Patriarchate, the Franciscan order, Caritas and various Catholic communities in the region. 'The support is offered to improve the condition of life and work in their lands, to be a fertile seed of humanity and peace,' the statement said. The \$400,000 was collected in an appeal launched by John Paul after the September 11 attacks to help comfort victims of war and terrorism.

The percentage of Christians in Israel-Palestine has constantly declined over the last century, so that for example Bethlehem which once had a Christian majority now has only 13% Christians left. The recent exodus has further increased the threat to any Christian presence.

A dead Christian worth as much as a dead Muslim

Tehran, 1 Sept (IRNA) An Iranian court has for the first time granted the family of a murdered Christian man the same 'blood money', or compensation, as that of a Muslim, the official news agency IRNA reported on 1 September. The ruling was part of moves to give Iran's non-Muslim minorities the same right as Muslims to have killers pay their victims' families to avoid execution.

The agency said the court in a south Tehran suburb granted the family of Christian pastor Haik Hovsepian-Mehr 150 million rials (\$18,750). It said the blood money for a non-Muslim man had earlier been one-twelfth that of a Muslim under Iran's Islamic laws. Judiciary head Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi recently asked courts to pass equal judgements in such cases and the parliament is to debate a formal legal change.

Hovsepian-Mehr, a Protestant pastor, was killed under mysterious circumstances in 1994. Authorities blamed an exiled opposition group for his killing. Western human rights groups said the murder might have been part of alleged extra-judicial killings of dissidents. The blood money was to be paid from public funds, which is usual in unresolved killings.

UCA Mission Programme

The United College of the Ascension (UCA), Birmingham, a college of the United Society for the Propagation of the gospel (USPG) and the Methodist Church, now offers its own one-term residential mission programme (UCAMP). It is intended for Christians in mission from everywhere to everywhere and those preparing for or reflecting on Christian mission. UCA is an international ecumenical community in which people from more than 20 countries live, worship, learn and share together. UCAMP draws on the College's human and library resources and also on its rich heritage as a centre for mission education and training for nearly a century.

UCAMP is an encounter with Christianity worldwide in this international ecumenical community, which involves

facing issues of culture, justice and inter faith relations, learning to do theology and read the Bible in context, and developing mission spirituality within the worship-centred Christian fellowship of UCA. UCAMP offers individualized programmes, interactive learning in community, personal tuition, pastoral care, and a basis for life-long learning. The Principal, the Revd Dr Israel Selvanayagam and the seven-strong tutorial team represent several nations and all have direct long-term mission experience together with academic qualifications in aspects of mission studies and inter faith dialogue.

In 2002-2003 subject areas taught at UCA include foundations for mission, inter-faith encounters, worship and liturgy worldwide, cross-cultural communications, ecumenical studies, women in mission, development studies, mission training, regional studies, and English for theology. While at UCA, UCAMP participant are able to take advantage of other courses offered in Selly Oak such as Anglican Communion Studies, Methodist Studies, conflict resolution, and postgraduate courses in missiology at the University of Birmingham. The multi-cultural city of Birmingham offers further opportunities for cross-cultural encounter, for specialist language study and for technical and professional courses.

Further details are available from Dr Kirsteen Kim, UCAMP Coordinator by phone: 0121 415 6826, email: k.kim@bham.ac.uk, or through the College website: www.ascension.ac.uk.

Kirsteen Kim

Rowan Williams calls upon mission agencies to 'ask awkward questions'

An important role of Christian mission agencies is to ask the church 'irritating questions' and 'to remind the church what the church is all about' - according to the new Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams.

Archbishop Rowan's comments can be found in the first issue of Re-thinking Mission - the re-launched version of USPG's missiological magazine Thinking Mission, which is now co-published by USPG, the Methodist Church and the United College of the Ascension (UCA).

In his article, Archbishop Rowan says mission agencies exist to ask 'awkward questions'. He adds: 'We need to know how and why we ascribe to Jesus Christ the liberty and authority to convene the whole human race as citizens... I suspect that in the early generations of the church, the theological impetus of mission came partly from the baffled surprise that Jesus seemed to be making sense - making a difference in contexts so "other" from those in which he lived.'

The March edition of Re-thinking Mission also features essays by USPG General Secretary Mano Rumlshah, UCA Principal Israel Selvanayagam and the head of the Methodist Church's overseas programme Peter Sulston.

For a copy of the magazine and details of how to subscribe, send a cheque for £2 - made payable to 'USPG' - to USPG Distribution, 157 Waterloo Road, London SE1 8XA.

Focus... Focus... Focus... Focus...

Daleep Mukarji

Christian Development Agencies and Mission: A Christian Aid Perspective

Christian Aid from its very start in 1945 has been part of an ecumenical response in the UK and Ireland of the churches to the needs of refugees, the realities of poverty and the desire to help at times of emergencies and natural disasters. Till 1990 it was a division of the British Council of Churches and seen as the 'diakonal' wing, or the 'service' department of the churches together. The work has always been in response to sharing the love of Jesus, inspired by a gospel that is good news for the poor and an integral part of the life, witness and common activity of churches here. Our flagship fundraising event, Christian Aid week, run every May, besides collecting money (£13m in 2002) is also an opportunity for local churches to do things together in their community. Over three hundred thousand volunteers go from house to house collecting funds for Christian Aid. It is probably the greatest collective action of Christian witness in the UK as it shows how we care for other people.

But is it mission? Debate about the interrelation between mission and service is as old as the modern ecumenical movement (from about 1910). The World Council of Churches (WCC) finally had different streams of the movement come together in the work of Mission and Evangelism, Faith and Order, and Life and Work, including the work of Interchurch Aid, Refugees and World Service (the old CICARWS). At the same time a more holistic and integrated understanding of mission began to be accepted and promoted by WCC, the mission agencies and the Ecumenical Movement.

Christian Aid is inspired by the dream of a New Earth where all people can secure a better and more just future.

In a world where poverty is a reality, where injustice, inequality and exploitation are daily experiences for millions and where people seem to have lost hope – it is imperative that Christians share a gospel that is truly good news to the poor. The poor 'are victims of the oppression of an unjust economic order or an unjust political distribution of power... To announce the Good News to the Poor is to begin to render the justice due to them. The Church of Jesus Christ is called to preach Good News to the poor, following the example of its Lord who was incarnate as poor, who lived as one among them and gave to them the promise of the Kingdom of God. Jesus looked at the multitude with compassion. He recognized the poor as those who were sinned against, victims of both personal and structural sin.' (Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation, WCC 1982)

Supported and sustained by the churches and driven by the gospel, Christian Aid is inspired by the dream of a New Earth where all people can secure a better and more just future. Christian Aid's purpose is to expose the scandal of poverty, contribute to its eradication and to strive to be prophetic by challenging the structures and systems that keep people poor and marginalized. In its role as the official relief and development agency of its forty sponsoring churches, it recognizes its responsibility to listen to and to inspire, resource and serve the churches here enabling Christians to put their faith into action. Thus it provides educational, liturgical, bible study and reflective material that encourages people to pray, act and give; so that together we can build a more inclusive, healthy, just and sustainable world in the perspective of the reign of God.

In its broadest sense the work and service of Christian Aid is a component of a holistic understanding of mission where the agency plays its more specialized and delegated function on behalf of the churches.

Sadly mission has become, in some circles, a dirty work. It is historically linked to the nineteenth and early twentieth century expansion of mission agencies closely associated with colonization. The perspective of many in the Third World was that missionaries with their commercial and governmental friends (the interests of the trading companies and the colonial powers) were supportive of the agenda to 'colonize, christianize, exploit, westernize and civilize' the people. Much good work was also done by missionaries: the starting of schools, health centres, hospitals and helping to address social ills. They encouraged a spirit of caring, sharing and service that was well received and many missionaries were pioneers in this essentially 'service' - orientated concern for the people they met. Very soon the work of the mission agencies separated in the traditional role of evangelism, church planting and the running of local churches from the maintenance of educational, training and health centres and welfare concerns. They were complementary, but different.

Christian Aid continues this service tradition of the church from its earliest days in responding to vital needs of people and communities that help people to help themselves and that seeks to reach out to all people irrespective of caste, colour, creed or community. It works with local churches, ecumenical partners, people of other faiths or no faith as they seek to serve their people and side with the poor. It is active today in about 60 countries with approximately 600 partners.

At the WCC World Consultation on Diakonia, 2000: 'Called to be Neighbours' – Larnaca, 1986 there was a Declaration that set some of the principles and agenda for service in the years ahead. 'We are called to be neighbours to one and all. Jesus Christ is Lord and we pledge to obey him in the power of the Holy Spirit... As Christians we must act, and act now, to ensure a decent life and dignity for all. Economic and

social structures, which perpetuate inequality and poverty, must be replaced... [with] political structures which ensures the full participation of all people in the discussions which affect their lives'. (from the report)

It became very clear that diakonia had a political dimension. Clearly a concern for poverty, injustice and inequality could not be apolitical. A concept of prophetic diakonia evolved at the consultation recognising the need for advocacy and the building of a global movement for social justice and a better world. This rediscovered and reclaimed the churches' role in shaping the future and getting involved in the ills of society.

focus on poverty eradication and vision for a just society is not the only, or a full, understanding of mission

This was not new. Many missionaries were pioneers in the anti-colonial or freedom movements. Christians have been involved in the anti-slavery movement for over 200 years and recently in the anti-apartheid movement. The Jubilee 2000 debt relief campaign was one more example of the churches providing leadership and direction in attempting to influence policy makers, government officials and the international financial institutes. Not only have they been successful in getting some debt cancelled, but the movement has given energy and life to local Christians, churches and para-church groups. Ordinary people feel they can change the world by putting their faith into action through getting involved in the campaigns.

Thus the relief and development work of an agency of the churches such as Christian Aid cannot but be part of the wider mission of the churches in society today. It accepts that its focus on poverty eradication and vision for a just society is not the only, or a full, understanding of mission; it is only a part, but a vital part, of Christian witness. The work of traditional mission agencies and the more specialized relief and development agencies of the churches have always been interrelated, interdependent and are two sides of the same coin. Together they provide a more holistic approach to mission allowing different people with different callings and emphasis to be part of the broad understanding of the life, work, witness and service of the churches in mission. Mission is essential for all churches; locally, nationally and globally. Some have felt there has been a tension between the more evangelical wings and the more ecumenical wings of the church in their approaches to evangelism and social and political justice. The experience of Christian Aid is that they are increasingly united in a shared commitment to social justice. John Stott says: 'it is exceedingly strange that followers of Jesus Christ should ever have needed to ask whether social involvement was their concern, and that controversy should have blown up over the relationship between evangelism and social responsibility... [both] have been intimately related to one another throughout the history of the Church.' (John Stott: *New Issues facing Christians Today* (1999) page 3)

Yet we need to be careful. The building of the kingdom of God, and all mission, comes from God. It is God's mission and we are privileged to be co-missioned into it. It is God's

mission to make the kingdom a reality for all people; everyone is a child of God and everyone has basic human need for shelter, education, health care and income. All are made in God's image. The work of Christian relief and development agencies is to play a small part in God's mission.

Christian Aid is a development agency, a church based agency and one that is inspired by a vision of a new earth 'where all shall be included in the feast of life... God's design for a new earth is to put the poorest first' (from Christian Aid's statement of faith). Christian Aid is proud of its Christian identity and heritage, which gives it its mandate on behalf of the churches in the UK and Ireland. It has a special relationship with the Churches Together in Britain and Ireland as one of its official agencies and has always been linked to the Churches' Commission on Mission (CCOM) in its history and in its desire to work with others.

Development and Mission – in the eyes of many these have become separate realities of the work of the churches in recent decades. There are perhaps two stereotypes – for many the mission agencies' agenda is something we 'do overseas' and which continues in a more enlightened way the tradition of the great missionary movement and development seems more secular and material. There is a role for bodies like the CCOM amongst others to enable churches and agencies to develop a more coherent and comprehensive theology of mission, one that is properly connected holistically which moves us beyond these stereotypes.

Many mission agencies have continued to fund 'development work' by partner churches (who see this as integral to their mission). Moreover, they have increasingly used their experience of global mission to challenge the churches in the UK and Ireland in their own understanding of mission locally as part of the world Church. As a development agency Christian Aid says something profound about the nature of mission too. Christian Aid enables Christians in the UK and Ireland to get involved in a variety of ways by doing something practical about poverty, environmental degradation and injustice. It helps people to see they can make a difference; that they can become part of a global movement to change the world. It also attempts to challenge and inspire its supporters in their own faith as it puts new meaning to being a Christian in the reality of the world in the twenty-first century.

Development and Mission – in the eyes of many these have become separate realities of the work of the churches

Christian Aid states: 'We believe in life before death' (from its strap line) which gives perspective to Christ's own statement of purpose 'I have come that they may have life; life in all its fullness' (John 10:10). The mission of God is a proclamation of life, that God's kingdom may come and God's will be done on earth. This was the central message of Christ – bringing life, restoring lives and challenging lives – so that the promise of the kingdom is made real. This promise reveals itself in word and action that empowers the

disciples of Christ to be agents of transformation, of liberation and of renewal. The mission of God inspires a spirituality rooted in struggle, of incarnation and of solidarity. It expects people not just to identify those who are poor and help them, but to identify *with* the poor and marginalized and be advocates of a world where life is valued, people are empowered and more equal relationships are sustained. It means that Christians take seriously the challenge of Christ: 'as the Father sent me, so send I you' (John 20:21) to proclaim the kingdom of God – a world where people, life, justice, love and dignity are valued. Christian Aid recognizes that change will only come about as a movement is built of individuals who are committed to a better world for all, bringing their faith and talents, their energy and their influence, their gifts and their actions, to achieve what should surely be possible.

in the gospel, there is a bias for the poor, a 'preferential option for the poor'

Christian Aid, with others, accepts that in the gospel, there is a bias for the poor, a 'preferential option for the poor', the marginalized and the weak. We take seriously the mandate to play our part to feed the hungry, befriend the refugee, encourage the downcast, proclaim release to the captives and to let the oppressed go free.

Jesus sent his disciples 'out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal' (Luke 9:2). In a broken, sick and unhealthy world where a child dies every eight seconds from a preventable condition, where HIV/AIDS is a major problem in Sub-Saharan Africa and where over 15 million people in Southern Africa are in a situation of famine, drought and acute food crisis – Christians working with others, must be agents of change, of healing and reconciliation and of building a world of justice and peace. For too many people the dream of a new earth is shadowed by the scandal of poverty. More than a billion people live in extreme poverty. Some societies are enjoying great affluence while others are entirely denied any of the benefits of growing prosperity. The world's poorest communities are the most vulnerable to natural disasters and yet they are also hit hardest by man-

made disasters, conflict, environmental degradation and preventable disease. In this face of reality Christians are called to stand up, speak out and take sides and affirm their commitment to a better world – a vision of the kingdom. Thus we are agents of this new world and the values of the kingdom.

Christian Aid's basic statement of commitment includes the following: 'We will commit ourselves to:

- strive for a new earth, transformed by the end of poverty
- promote the dignity and basic rights of every person
- provide resources to enable poor people to improve their quality of life
- empower people to reform the systems that keep them poor
- take risks and ask the questions that spotlight the causes of poverty
- engage young and old, poor and rich in a global movement that changes the course of history
- be inspired by the gospel of good news to the poor which provides a fulfilling life for all and the hope of a new earth'

(From the Christian Aid Statement of Commitment 2000)

This we believe sets out some of the vision, mission and approach of Christian Aid – the churches' official relief and development agency. It is privileged to play this role at the service of the churches and the wider public, to be an expression of the churches' love, commitment and concern for the weak and the vulnerable. In this it remembers Christ saying that 'just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it for me.' (Matthew 25:46) This then is our purpose. It is our commitment, on behalf of the churches, to have impact on the lives of the poor, the marginalized and the exploited.

'Despite the persistence of evil, now is always the time when more good can be done and we can make a difference. We long for the time when the meek shall inherit a new earth and all who hunger and thirst after justice shall be satisfied' (from Christian Aid statement of faith).

Presence and Prophecy

A Heart for Mission in Theological Education

(Mission Theological Advisory Group)

Published by: Church House Publishing, Price: £11.95, Paperback

How does theological education equip people to face the challenges of mission and ministry in a changing world? How does Christian presence in society make a difference, and how can the Churches speak prophetically of God's purposes today?

This book suggests how theological education can provide essential opportunities to find encouraging and helpful answers to these questions. It explores the kind of world we live in and asks what kind of teaching and learning experiences help Christians to become people with hearts for mission. It takes a fresh look at elements of the theological curriculum and suggests a new vision and hope for all the Churches. *Presence and a Prophecy* is also accompanied by a study guide.

Can be ordered through Church House Publishing, accessible through our website: www.ccom.org.uk.

See also the review on p.27.

Book Reviews

Church and Globalization

'God and Globalization: Theological Ethics and the Spheres of Life', ed. Max L. Stackhouse, Trinity Press International, Harrisburg, PA, USA, 2000-2002. Volume 1: 'Religion and the Powers of the Common Life' (2000) xiii+288pp, vol. 2: 'The Spirit and the Modern Authorities' (2001) x+244pp, vol. 3: 'Christ and the Dominions of Civilization' (2002) xii+347pp, (vol 4-forthcoming)

The word globalization (gn.) is on everybody's lips, and books about it pour off the presses, yet many Church members are not sure what to make of it. Most books about gn. ignore the religious issues, many simply polarize for or against the global economic system and financial integration, and a few think gn. is an over-rated topic. Popular and academic discussions in Britain, like Tony Giddens' *Runaway World*, and David Held et al's *Global Transformations* (see below), while arguing that there are important political and cultural aspects to gn., comment very little on the religious issues involved. This makes these three volumes of great interest to anybody wanting to reflect theologically on gn. They are expensive but ought to be in your nearest decent library.

The main affirmations made by Max Stackhouse, the eminent Princeton Christian Ethics professor who leads the project and contributes a major introduction to each volume, are, first, that gn. is an important, new, and multi-dimensional phenomenon; second, that consideration of it has to include taking the religious aspects seriously; third, that gn. derives in large measure from the social impact of the Christian faith, and is therefore best critiqued and guided by ethics and theology together; and, fourth, that such a theological consideration of society is facilitated by analysis in terms of the Pauline 'principalities and powers'.

The other 20 contributing academics, who include J. Moltmann, K. Koyama, T. Thangaraj, L. Sanneh, R. Robertson, D. Tracy, D. Shriver, J. Mbiti, and S. Thomas, agree with Stackhouse in varying degrees. All provide some evidence in the diverse areas they discuss that gn. is important and that it has major religious significance. Most of them also assess an aspect of the neglected theological and ethical issues. They are less agreed on the role of theology, and, significantly, only one uses the editor's elaborate 'principalities and powers' framework of the subtitle, on which see below.

Stackhouse begins his General Introduction, in volume one, with the importance of addressing gn. as 'one of the most fateful clusters of issues for our time'. He defines it as a dynamic transformation of people and societies with major implications for the planet and for concepts of the world. The succeeding treatment amply bears out that claim and the definition, over against reductionist or dismissive views of gn. He then seeks 'to identify the 'Powers' that animate the social, cultural and material forces moving toward a global ethos' (p31) This approach derives from Walter Wink's model in his trilogy on 'The

Powers'. These are moral and spiritual energies, and their embodiments Stackhouse terms 'the Spheres', based on Abraham Kuyper's concept of 'sphere sovereignty', elaborated to produce three major types of Powers: Principalities, Authorities, and Dominions, plus a secondary group, called 'Regencies'.

For Stackhouse, the Principalities are basic, and the aspects of society they refer to are treated in the first volume: Mammon, studied in economics, Mars, studied by political science, Eros, inter-personal relationships, studied by psychology, the Muses (cultures), and, most basic, Religions. No civilization exists without these five principalities and to guide and regulate them people form clusters of institutions, the 'Spheres' of social activity, each involving organizations and practices. These are unable to be autonomous and are prone to spiritual degeneration. This seems a complicated way of expressing the observation that society has some five aspects, any or all of which can be distorted by claiming too much moral or spiritual power for themselves, (see p.44). For Stackhouse, there are also Authorities and Regencies, see below on volume two, and Dominions, see on volume three.

The contributors to the following chapters of volume one examine the above five areas of society. On Religion, Roland Robertson, a doyen of gn. studies and the only sociologist in the project, summarizes his views on the importance of religion and the inter-relationship of the global and the local. On Mammon, William Schweiker, accepts the general value of economic gn. but asserts the need for a moral view outside the system, rather like George Soros. He says little on poverty or sustainability other than the need for justice. The other four chapters are informative Christian comments on trends in their area, but do not discuss the pressing cross-connections which characterize gn. David Tracy, for example, is stimulating on culture and the media but does not engage with leading thinkers like Manuel Castells and the economic issues. Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen writes on 'Faith, Feminism, and the Family in an Age of Gn.' She is the only contributor to expand on the 'powers' and 'spheres' concepts, but her largely historical comments do not touch on the new global aspect of the challenge to state sovereignty. In this interesting essay on gender equality, gn. barely features, and third world concerns receive only a generalized mention, with no reference to the impact of gn. on the crucial issue of women's education.

The Introduction to the second volume argues that Authorities and Regencies are Powers which only exist in advanced, ie Western, societies, and they distance people from the Principalities. The Authorities control specialized areas of complex societies, through the professions of education, law and medicine mainly; the new 'Regencies' of technology, nature and hero-figures emerge from modernity. They tend to displace Religion but are in part dependent on the Principalities. (In volume three Stackhouse adds that the other Principalities also usurp Religion's place -see vol.3 p.16). At this point the reviewer has to express serious doubts about these complex

'conceptual tools' (vol.2 p.12). This is not the place to argue about any biblical basis for Wink's approach, or Kuyper's scholastic Calvinism, but the assertion that the professions are Western features flies in the face of history and the realities of gn. Further, the idea that Nature and ecological aspects of gn, are Western issues is wrong. It would be better to 'elevate' these Powers to the level of Principalities (or drop the schema). Moltmann's chapter on ecology makes clear how central this is to any study of gn, (even though it is only a slight update of part of *God in a Secular Society* (ET 1999). He has been arguing since his *Crucified God* (ET 1974) for the essential place of the ecological dimension of society. In this introduction Stackhouse also mentions the Seattle WTO 1999 riots as evidence that the developing institutions of gn. treat the Principalities as in principle irrelevant, becoming laws unto themselves. This seems exaggerated, since the international financial institutions are accountable, but rightly the need to strengthen and clarify the powers of supranational authorities is an emerging priority for many writers on gn. Scott Thomas' chapter in the third volume is a useful introduction to the impact of gn. on international relations, suggesting the limitations of Western modernity in coping with emerging cultural and religious issues. Stackhouse ends the introduction with the claim that the subsequent chapters on the professions and 'moral exemplars' point to the continuing role for theological ethics to guide society. Space does not allow a discussion of this. The chapters are informative on academic and professional interests but convey little of the uncertainties, new challenges, or need for institutional change forced on humanity by gn.

The third volume is mainly on the other world religions, understood as Dominions. In the Introduction Stackhouse responds to the standard UK treatment on gn., *Global Transformations: Politics, Economics and Culture* by Held and McGrew, Goldblatt and Perraton, (Polity 1999). While welcoming the broader view beyond economics adopted by that work, he analyses the failure of their basic analytical framework to deal with religion, theology or ethics. He asserts that the leaders of social institutions 'must make their decisions with reference to the frameworks of great traditions...or lose their legitimacy' (p.11). He goes even further to list some ten social forces which he claims 'were formed in societies fundamentally stamped by Christian theological ethics. If we do not understand this, we will not understand whence gn. came, what is driving it...and what it would take to alter [it]' (p.12). The other chapters, while all informative, do not bear out such a sweeping historical claim. Diane Obenchain wrestles with the obvious rejoinder to Stackhouse that such mere assertion of the superiority of Christianity and the West isn't going to do much for future global co-operation. Lamin Sanneh argues that Islam can be challenged to play its part, and Thomas Thangaraj is interesting on the impact of gn. on Hinduism, but neither really take up the economic pressures evident amongst the mujahadin or the dalits.

The book as a whole makes a compelling case for taking the inter-relation of religion with politics, culture, economics and biology seriously, but it is less convincing on the primacy or adequacy of theology! More interaction with Robert Schreier's 1997 *New Catholicity*, one of the few other ventures in this area, would have been welcome. This reviewer agrees with the thesis that gn. is extremely

important with its multidimensional character, but thinks that other writers have documented its special challenges more precisely, notably *Global Transformations*, or, more accessibly, Giddens. In reaction perhaps to the widespread preoccupation with economic problems, Stackhouse and his colleagues give insufficient space to urgent needs for debt, trade and other economic reform. Instead they reinforce the impression that gn. is a Western imposition on the rest of the world, especially Islam and Asia. These volumes do provide a welcome challenge, both to the complacent 'nothing new under the sun' response to gn., and also to the superficiality of many economic, or even broader sociological discussions. But, while accepting that important religious issues are involved, it has to be questioned whether theological ethics unaided can deliver what is promised. The 'powers and spheres' analysis seems to be of limited help. The urgent task of theology to do more on interfaith questions receives real help, though the ethical demands of poverty rather less, from this project. The final volume is eagerly awaited!

Chris Wigglesworth

Europe's Wider Loyalties

David Barton and Martyn Bond (edd.): *Europe's Wider Loyalties. Global Responsibilities for the New Europe*, London: Federal Trust/The Wyndham Place Charlemagne Trust, 2000, ISBN 1 903403 10 3, 191 pp. £19.95

One instinctively shrinks away from essay collections by the great and good telling us how wonderful Europe is. This collection isn't like that. It is quite splendid. Two themes dominate it. The first is to celebrate the immense effort that has brought together 15, rising to 25 European states within the Union. The other theme is that of the 'Europe of Values' – and how such a lofty concept can be sustained in a Europe whose traditional religious structures are steadily crumbling.

I especially shrank from reading an article on Europe and Religion by 'The Joint President, World Council of Faiths'. But Marcus Braybrooke's piece on Religion and Conflict is not the usual sort of bogus ecumenicity; it is a careful elucidation of the fact that religion tends to be part of the problem rather than part of the solution. He quotes the Chief Rabbi tellingly: 'The fact that the great universal monotheisms have not yet formally endorsed a plural world is the still unexorcized darkness at the heart of our religion'.

Dr Sacks' personal attempts at such endorsement have subsequently enraged his own community. Braybrooke rightly questions Samuel Huntington's 'Clash of Civilizations' thesis. He does not quite get to the crunch however – which is the clash between freedom and obedience, modernity and tradition. This contradiction has created figures as diverse as M.K.Gandhi and Osama bin Laden.

Andrew Marshall is especially good on the contrast between the rhetoric and the reality of Europe, and especially in the EU's appalling failures in the Balkans – a theme echoed elsewhere. Richard Mayne is witty and wise on European culture. Enid Wistrich is informative on race and citizenship; Peter Pooley is sharp on the developing

world, but not hard enough on the Common Agricultural Policy. It is neatly topped and tailed by Chris Patten and Kofi Annan.

There are two serious omissions. First is the failure to discuss the EU's obsession with creating new members rather than good neighbours. Second, the USA is mentioned only in passing. The European Union exists because of Generals Eisenhower and Marshall; because thousands of young Americans died to liberate us, and the American people stumped up \$15 billion to rebuild us from the wreckage. The US is the single greatest force in the creation of the Union; admittedly, with much encouragement from that scion of the American merchant bank, Dulles and Co – Jean Monnet. Why does nobody say so?

John Kennedy

Presence and Prophecy MTAG Report

Mission Theological Advisory Group: Presence and Prophecy, a Heart for Mission in Theological Education, London: Church House Publishing/Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, 2002, 242 pp., bibliography, index. The volume is accompanied by two further booklets (same year and publisher): *MTAG, Transparencies, Pictures of Mission Through Prayer and Reflection*, and *Simon Barron, Presence and Prophecy, a Heart for Mission in Theological Education - Study Guide*

MTAG, an ecumenical group run by the Church of England's Board of Mission and CTBI's Commission on Mission, published a number of reports. *Presence and Prophecy* is its most comprehensive, practical and ambitious brainchild. Ambitious, because the focus is on the place of mission in theological education – notoriously a precarious place in today's theological academy. Among the British universities there is only one having a professorship in the area of mission. The current trend of closing down chairs of mission in some European universities, or their reinvention under significantly different names (intercultural theology, multireligious studies, global Christianity and ecumenical concerns etc.), indicates that *Presence and Prophecy* goes against the academic *Zeitgeist*. Will the churches now finance more professorships in mission? Or will the intellectual investment be geared towards church-owned seminaries? The report and its two supporting texts does not analyse how and why this *Zeitgeist* impacts on the theological and academic topography (including the question why theology at the university today is what it is), but rather offers resource materials that are useful for missionary reflection in diverse

settings of Christian education. The approach is eminently practical and its main emphasis is on the question of how the (remaining) Christians themselves (and the teachers of theology) can be helped to recover the missionary implications of the faith. 'Faith' is, interestingly, defined in a conservative way, though the reader is also encouraged to experiment with new ideas. This, in today's world, is a reasonably realistic approach. It is an important step the churches have taken after all the campaigns to re-evangelize the nation have dismally failed.

This brief review cannot possibly do justice to a document offering a wealth of insights. Some questions, however, may be in order. Among the many facets that contribute to the recovery of mission, the Report highlights the need to escape from inherited and often narrow definitions of what 'mission' was supposed to be. The missiological competence of other disciplines, in theology, the humanities and social sciences, is explicitly endorsed. This is another step in the right direction, that is towards closing the gap between missionary thought and the wider religious, cultural and academic discourse. It is reminiscent of previous attempts to radically rethink the place of mission within Western culture such as, in the 1930s, Joe Oldham's project to recover the 'Christian message' or William Hocking's redefinition of mission in the sense of 'ambassadorship', and, in the 1940s and 1950s the worker priest movement, or, in the 1960s, the reflections in the World Council of Churches about structures for 'missionary congregations' which implicitly replaced ecclesiology by missiology. Some of the insights gained in these previous attempts at reconstructing mission would have added to the Report an even greater sense of realism, seriousness, and risk. Risk, because it is debatable whether the churches are still the carriers of good news. The interest of the established churches to be in control of the story of God's love is understandable, but also in tension with the course Western culture has taken over the last 200 years. 'Mission' is a precarious and deeply compromised word indeed. MTAG has removed it from the main title of the Report, but it pops up as the main issue in the report and here *mission* describes divine and human activities - one single term must hold together a diversity of concepts, practices, histories, and assumptions. Interpretative uncertainty is not a new phenomenon in Christian history, but it may not make any easier the attempt at reintroducing a sense of mission in Christian education. There is no question, however, that *Presence and Prophecy* is a major step towards this goal.

Werner Ustorf



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For reflection

'[C]onsent to pluralism and secularisation must not be confused with an indifference towards the cultural and intellectual character of Europe. More than a few Christians consider the question, 'how Christian should Europe be', as misplaced. They see in that a return to the ideas of the 'Christian Occident'. This is not what it is about. It is more about the question which traditions will remain or become characteristics for the European culture, such as the political system, legislation and social-security or the relationship between men and women. Pluralism does not at all mean that everything will remain binding in the same form and with that become indifferent. Rather, pluralism itself lives of the fact that traditions which want and make pluralism and its tolerance possible are determining factors. [...] It is a wrongly understood generosity and toleration if Christians think that all traditions should culturally have an equal impact. Christians should rather stand up for the European culture to continue to be characterised by the Christian Spirit, for example, the respect for the inviolability of the individual's dignity, the protection of decisions of conscience, love and compassion for one's neighbour and the search for social justice. A political unit lives culturally from provisions which it cannot create via political and legal structures alone.

The notion of a multi-cultural society concerns the same problem. It cannot be denied that today many different cultures live side by side and with one another in Europe and in the individual European countries, and that everything possible has to be done to promote respect for one another and to recognise the wealth other cultures have to offer. But the idea of a multi-cultural society must not lead to the false conclusion that to stand up for the prevalence of a certain cultural characteristic is a detestable form of cultural imperialism. There are alternatives which simply cannot stand peacefully side by side, but between which a choice has to be made.'

(Hermann Barth: The Christians and Europe, www.ekd.de).

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The last word

