



Churches' Commission on
Mission

CONNECTIONS

Resourcing ecumenism and mission

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Editorial

'Seek the welfare of the city!', the exiled Israelites are exhorted (Jer 29:7). On 1 July 2003 the twelfth Assembly of the Conference of European churches sat together in Trondheim, discussing *inter alia* the new European convention's proposal for an EU Constitution and the regretted absence of a religious reference in the preamble to this. The convention also proposes the introduction of an EU-president, a notion much disliked in these islands. Amazingly the CEC Assembly discussed several for hours without a single reference to the fact that on this very day a few hundred miles to the south the EU was already getting a new 'president'. This happens every six months and is nothing spectacular. However, on this occasion it was not just anybody, but Silvio Berlusconi, a man whose holding such offices as he does casts serious doubts on what the future of the common project 'European Union' may look like (yes, the EU once was not just an economic development programme but a visionary project for a war-ridden continent). Are there shared values and if so, which? Europe is still in a delicate balance on several issues, religion is still a powerful force, for good or evil. Secularized politicians may be forgiven for underestimating the conflict potential as the downside to the enriching reality of religious and denominational



variety. But if the Church is not a self-critical reminder – who will be? Bigger-picture concepts are not *en vogue*, many delegates were even surprised by the simple factual observation that next year's EU borders will run almost exactly along the Western and Eastern Christianity divide. Just a coincidence or food for reflection?

The EU currently has a tendency to create ever new members because it does not know how to create good neighbours. This seems as unconvincing as the claim that organic church union is the only form to express unity in Christ – CEC itself is a statement to the contrary, since many of its member churches are in full communion without organic union.

At times it seemed that ignoring the *real* Europe and her inner tensions and risks in favour of an ideal but non-existent continent characterized by overall easy harmony and permanent economic growth was typical of this CEC Assembly. It thus simply repeats the optimistic voices of politicians overemphasizing the role of economic growth because this is easier to grasp than shared values. Don't the churches owe Europe more? Or is 'seeking the welfare of the city' just talking niceties? The idealistic timidity in relation to potential risks in Europe's future raised questions regarding the churches' role and their claim to be a critical edge rather than just an interest group among so many or at best a bunch of idealists out of touch with reality, only really animated when discussing attempts to have 'their' theme, i.e. 'God' mentioned in the constitution. 'Seek the welfare of the city,' is a word spoken to aliens, Jews in Babylonian exile, strangers in the *politeia* where they lived and yet who owed a special service to their hosts as God's people. Where are we rendering this service?

In this issue two articles look at the issues of churches and Europe, John Kennedy asking critically if most progress regarding the ideas of ecumenism and religious tolerance were not more often than not brought forward *against* the churches rather than *by* them and Audrey Lukwago giving a lively report from the CEC Assembly 2003 in Trondheim.

Bernard Coyault continues his presentation of Protestant Christianity in Egypt, begun in the last issue, while Helen Reid reflects upon questions around credible witness and inter-religious dialogue, so often wrongly seen as alternatives or only technically linked 'activities'. And last but not least Mark Oxbrow from the Church Mission Society continues a discussion on 'Mission and Development' begun in the last issue by Daleep Mukarji, by reflecting from a new angle on what constitutes Christian distinctiveness in mission and development work.

Kai Funkschmidt

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Helen Reid

Christian Approaches to People of Other Faiths

Helen Reid is director of Faith to Faith, a Christian Consultancy supported by the Sir Halley Stewart Trust. In this paper, originally presented to a meeting of the Churches' Commission on Interfaith Relations in the winter of 2002, she explores the theological and practical implications of Christian approaches to people of other faiths.

When speaking of relationships with people outside the Christian community, we often use the term 'mission'. Mission is a purposive action when we, as Christians, make positive moves to reach out to other people in the name of God and with His love. The love of God is the same and constant for all people and in all situations, but there are also particular considerations in mission among people of other faiths. This is the focus of this paper.

Broadly speaking, mission is all that we do when the church reaches out to others and evangelism is one aspect of mission. To quote Bosch

'Mission includes evangelism as one of its essential dimensions. Evangelism is the proclamation of salvation in Christ to those who do not believe in him, calling them to repentance and conversion, announcing forgiveness of sin and inviting them to become living members of Christ's earthly community and to begin a life of service to others in the power of the Holy Spirit.'¹

This paper focuses on evangelism in mission among people of other faiths and explores some of the issues that are raised through practical experience. The starting point is the Churches Together in Britain and Ireland's guidelines for interaction between people of different faiths. These are:

- Dialogue begins when people meet each other
- Dialogue depends upon mutual understanding and mutual trust
- Dialogue makes it possible to share in service to the community
- Dialogue becomes the medium of authentic witness

On this basis, what is good practice for mission?

The guidelines on dialogue emphasize that reaching out to people of other faiths is about making relationships, that is, meeting and building trust, sharing in service and witnessing to the hope we have in Christ. It is, therefore, not about big events or poster campaigns but everyday interaction and building friendships. Moreover, big campaigns can be ineffective because they can be meaningless to people without a Christian background for understanding the message that is being preached. Such an approach is also potentially threatening to other communities who may feel there is a campaign to 'get them'. An example was when a multi faith area was leafleted to publicize a Christian study course and this had a negative impact on community relations. There is a need to maintain good relationships for peace and we need to remember that although many people in the church feel small, the Christian community is regarded by many as both rich, especially in terms of buildings, and influential, for example, there are bishops in the House of Lords. We need an awareness of how we and our actions are perceived by others, not simply to be aware of our intentions.

It is also important for Christians to be informed about other religions and different cultures so that we can show respect for others and be sensitive to their views and needs. *Faith to*

Faith runs study courses for Christians to learn about other faiths and encourages Christians to think through how they might share their faith with others. The basis of such study is that Christians seek to recognize what is good in other faiths and cultures, and explore both similarities with Christianity and differences. The aim is not how to counter another faith but to understand it better.

At what age do children have the right to search for and make their own decisions?

One time when the Islam study course was run, it was advertised in the local press. The facilitator expected about 25 Christians to attend and then on the first night over 100 people came, including local Muslims. They all shared together and the Muslims commented that it was very positive that Christians were learning about Islam. The leader of the course felt challenged by the presence of Muslims and believed that she must speak openly to them as she would among Christians. She did, therefore, raise the status of Christians in certain Islamic states. She felt that it was a matter of principle that she was prepared to be transparent in her approach.

When involved in mission among people of different faiths, we must have a keen awareness of the vulnerable so as not to exploit or manipulate them. This often comes down to judging individual situations, but there are situations that come up quite frequently. There is particular concern about children and young people² – does anyone have a right to determine or influence their faith? The Human Rights legislation says that parents have rights concerning the nurture of their children within a faith. However, at what age do children begin to have the right to search for and make their own decisions?

We must be careful how we reach out to young people. One example of good practice is the Malachi Trust that presents the Christian faith through the medium of contemporary arts. Family reconciliation ministry is at the heart of its vision. They have written musicals for use with children and young people to address some of the deepest concerns and causes of family breakdown, truancy, teenage rebellion, youth crimes, drug addiction and emotional crises. One of the great values of this ministry has been its bridge-building nature because teachers, parents and faith leaders of all persuasions have endorsed and valued this ministry. In addition, children are given a place to develop their talents, build their self-esteem, form positive relationships with Christian adults in a supportive environment and explore issues of faith and discipleship in the context of a loving community.

Other examples of vulnerability are recently arrived asylum seekers, people with limited English language skills and women in difficult domestic situations. The following scenario, as told to *Faith to Faith*, is offered as an example of

issues that arise: Naseema (not her real name) is an Afghan refugee who lost her husband in a massacre. She saw him killed before her eyes. She is traumatized and suffers from depression as well as some physical problems. Her 15-year-old son is with her. When she first arrived in this country Christians who happened to speak a language she knew befriended her. They also helped by finding clothing through a local church because Naseema and her son had only the clothes they arrived in. As a result, without anyone suggesting it to her, she asked if she could go to church. Her teenage son, who in Afghanistan would now be considered the head of the house, forbade her. She asked him again some months later but again the answer was no. She is considering going without this consent. How might it be appropriate to respond?

One aspect of being sensitive to such vulnerability is to be vulnerable ourselves. This includes a willingness to learn from others and to change. Faith is often described as a journey (classically, Pilgrim's Progress), and along the way we learn new things, experience new things and are tested in our faithfulness. For some Christians, learning from people of other faiths is part of that journey. So be vulnerable, try and learn another language or a new way of cooking, for example, if you are English, learn some Asian recipes. Put yourself in a position where you need to ask for help so that there can be give and take in the relationship.

... people of other faiths often make requests for prayers in the name of Jesus because Jesus is highly regarded as a prophet and/or holy man

Another part of good practice is to be at peace with neighbours and to foster good community relations. This can be enhanced by service to others. We must, however, be careful in our approach so as not to be seen as paternalistic or manipulative. Service to the community must be done in co-operation with others. It must not simply be based around a Christian agenda, and so if we want to make a contribution locally then we need to find out what local people need rather than thinking what might be 'good for them'. Perhaps it is best to join in with what is already happening rather than set up something new.

A further consideration is the role of prayer. Those reaching out to people of other faiths from a South Asian background often find that they receive requests for prayers in the name of Jesus because Jesus is highly regarded as a prophet and/or holy man. It is important that Christians respond positively to

Bernard Coyault

Protestantism in Egypt Today (part II)

The first part was published in the last issue. Available in French and English on www.wcom.org.uk. (go to Document Download).

3. Two original works coming from Egyptian Protestantism

a) The CEOSS – Coptic Evangelical Organization for Social Services

such requests and pray with people and also for them. This must be done with confidence that God hears our prayers and also with sensitivity so as not to give the impression that prayer is some kind of 'magic formula' with success guaranteed. In mission, we may also encounter strong beliefs in curses and counter curses to which we must respond positively. In Peter's Epistle we are exhorted to be a blessing not a curse to people. Prayer is one part of the blessing that we can share.

Building friendships, learning about other faiths, being sensitive to vulnerability, serving others and prayer are all aspects of good practice in mission among people of other faiths. These can be our models for action as we reach out to people of other faiths. Through these actions and as a result of the moving of the Holy Spirit, those involved in evangelism hope and pray that people will come to know Christ. This has implications for the individual and also for the life of the church. It is an obvious fact to state, but the majority of congregations and churches in Britain are filled with white British people and dominated by their culture and history. Often white congregations fail to recognize the enormity of conversion for someone in Britain from another faith community, perhaps with a different ethnicity and culture. Churches must be prepared to respond to all the spiritual, moral, social and emotional pressures new converts are under.

There is also the issue of cultural specificity of churches shown in the type of songs that are sung, whether we sit on chairs or leave our shoes outside, and who takes on leadership roles. A positive response requires flexibility among existing church members and a willingness to consider a wide range of implications of multi cultural churches.³ In this way, good practice in mission cannot be separated from good practice in church life. It requires explorations into what it means to be a disciple of Christ and to be a Christian community alongside different faith communities. Evaluation from other perspectives within the church and the response of those not in the church would also play a useful part in further refining Christian approaches.

Notes:

- (1) Bosch, David J.: *Transforming Mission*, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books 1991, p.10f.
- (2) Scripture Union has a list of ethical guidelines for those working with children and young people of other faiths.
- (3) The Alliance of Asian Christians was established in 1990 and works with Asian Christians in the Historic Churches, the New Churches and Asian Churches and Fellowships. As well as discipling Asian Christians, it enables churches to reflect and act on these challenges.

In 1952, the pastor Samuel Habib (1928-97), then a young graduate from the Evangelical Coptic Seminary, later to become the president of the Protestant churches, began to work on literacy campaigns in rural areas of middle Egypt.

His project reached the surrounding areas and Habib began education programmes for local leaders. Volunteers or permanent residents in the villages were charged to conduct actions and awareness-raising campaigns to combat conservative traditions. Development strategies applied then became the basis, to this day, of CEOSS.

With a global viewpoint on the needs of the disadvantaged communities, Habib designed an integrated development programme including literacy, local leadership formation, family economy, improvement of familial relationships, and income-generating projects. In 1960 the Egyptian government officially recognized this programme and he registered it as a social service organization serving all people, Muslim and Christian. CEOSS then became independent from the Evangelical Church in order to fulfil its large mission. It became the showpiece of Egyptian Protestantism in its particular vision of participatory development of society.

CEOSS works with more than 3,000 volunteer leaders, accompanying tens of thousands of men, women and children in about 100 local programmes spread all over the country. These programmes start from base communities – rural or urban – bringing them together with various local players including Muslim and Christian religious leaders.

CEOSS works with more than 3,000 volunteer leaders, accompanying tens of thousands of men, women and children

They target the areas of health (nutrition, family planning), education (for children, girls, adult literacy), environmental conservation, rural development, capacity building, etc. One and a half million Egyptians are reached every year by the work of CEOSS. As an example, the community development programme begun by CEOSS in the potters' quarters of Cairo targets a purely Muslim community. Only the two leaders are Christian.

CEOSS also has a publishing house which seeks to promote publications by Egyptian authors in various fields such as sociology, theology, and more generally Christian approaches in social issues. In the field of cultural development, a 'Forum for Intercultural Dialogue' was initiated in 1992. This structure aims to organize meetings and conferences bringing together religious or lay leaders of both religions.

CEOSS is an original and well recognized voice seeking to promote social dialogue and positive change in the civil society of Egypt. Revd Dr Samuel Habib, who has held many responsibilities both on national and international level, and has also authored and translated several books, he will remain the most significant figure of Egyptian protestantism in the twentieth century. In 1995, jointly with the great Sheikh of El Azhar University, Dr Muhammad Sayyid Tantawy, he received a *doctorate honoris causae* in peacemaking, from Westminster University (Pennsylvania). Both of them were rewarded for their significant contribution towards social dialogue between Christians and Muslims in Egypt.

b) The Bible Society of Egypt (BSE)

Its origins go back to 1811 and the coming of the first English missionaries who distributed Bibles and booklets in

Arabic. The Bible Society in Egypt has to cope with the specific context of a Muslim majority country where proselytism towards Muslims is not permitted. One can hardly overestimate the widespread activities of this ecumenically oriented Protestant organization. We are confronted here with the paradox of the religious situation that prevails in Egypt. In spite of the many difficulties faced by the Christian minority, Egypt remains the most liberal country in the whole Arab world as regards religious freedom. Publication and distribution of the Bible are almost completely free.

The aim of the BSE is : To provide the Word of God to everyone at a suitable price and in a way that can help him/her understand it. Besides the latest Arabic version (Arabic Van Dyk Bible 1999), BSE provides Bibles on cassette in classical and colloquial Arabic, Life of Jesus videos, as well as various books and booklets for adults and children.

The Society also owns a network of eight bookshops, five of which were inaugurated in Southern Egypt within the last five years. Communities served by BSE go beyond Protestant, Catholic or Orthodox communities : an increasing number of Muslims have become interested, even among lower classes, due to non-written material (videos or cassettes in Arabic dialects).

According to BSE General Secretary M. Ramez Atallah, during the last Cairo International Book Fair (February 2002), items sold over a ten day period included 36,000 video tapes, 78,000 New Testaments and 24,000 Bibles (40% higher than in 2001). The Bible Society is using modern distribution and advertizing channels, such as national TV channels or newspapers, and even billboards displayed on the Cairo-Alexandria highway, which is one of the main roads in Egypt. The text in Arabic says 'A Light Unto my Path', with a large picture of the Bible and with an easy-to-remember telephone number for a home delivery service. People are invited to order a Bible or a Jesus video tape. Along the same highway and beside these Christian billboards, other green coloured boards are displayed, which enumerate the ninety nine names of God according to the Muslim tradition. But these religious messages are also competing along the same road with a multitude of commercial offers. These are strong signals that Egyptian society has definitely entered the era of Western-style consumerism.

... billboards with a large picture of the Bible with easy-to-remember telephone number for a home delivery service ...

All these positive openings must not obscure some serious difficulties. A few weeks before the opening of the last Cairo International Book Fair, and probably as a result of Islamic lobby group pressure, the BSE was temporarily refused official permission to open its sale stands. Equally, the newly inaugurated Egyptian studio of the Christian Satellite TV Broadcaster Sat 7 (in January 2002) was destroyed by fire a few months later. The circumstances of this accident have never been elucidated. Sat 7, a Christian TV station, which serves mainly Arab viewers in the Middle East and North Africa, was founded in 1995. It works closely with all the

major Christian denominations and endeavours to ensure that more than 60% of their programmes are produced locally and therefore are culturally relevant to an Arab audience. We don't want to practise the 'MacDonaldization' of Christianity, claims the Chief Executive. Satellite TV empowers the church in its work and witness by providing a voice for it. As Muslims come to understand that Christians teach forgiveness and tolerance and worship a God of Love, they discover a totally different concept of Christianity.

4. Relationships with The Coptic Orthodox Church

The Coptic Orthodox experienced a deep spiritual revival both at the end of the nineteenth century and during the '40s and '50s. Besides the influence of the monastic renewal in the twentieth century, all Coptic Orthodox leaders – including Pope Shenouda himself - agree to recognize the Protestant influence as a decisive factor. Firstly, use and interpretation of the Bible: with the coming of the Protestant missionaries, the Bible was spread and read to an extent unknown before. The Protestants were quoting key texts in their critique of Orthodox practice. At its beginning the renewal of Coptic theological literature largely took on a polemical form. The themes were often decided by the opponents, Catholic and Protestant.

Coptic Orthodox theology today is characterized by an uncommon knowledge and a practical use of Scriptures. In the writings of Pope Shenouda as well as in those of Father Matta al-Miskin – a very popular theologian who stands in competition with the former – every page betrays a familiarity with the biblical writings. This is the result of a unique combination of the Protestant influence and the monastic tradition where a repetitive reading and meditation of the Scriptures (specially the Old Testament and the Psalms) is commonly practised.

A non-Orthodox is forced to be re-baptized if he or she wants to marry an Orthodox.

Modern European Orthodox theologians have noticed that Pope Shenouda's doctrine of salvation, with its strong accent on penal substitution (Rom. 3,23) does not really belong to the Orthodox tradition but is rather derived from Protestant theology (and notably from the classical biblical commentary by Matthew Henry).

Biblical literalism within the Coptic Church is the result of an influence common to both the Islamic understanding of the Qur'an as being literally the Word of God and by the Protestant emphasis on the immediate meaning of the text. This marked tendency to Qur'anize the Bible is noteworthy both among Orthodox and Protestant churches. It could be shown in various other fields, like ethics for example, how Islam, even unmentioned, provides inescapably the context within which theology is being done.

Another important factor behind the contemporary revival of the Coptic Church is the Sunday School movement. Based on ideas largely taken from the Protestant missions, it was further developed by one of the great Coptic figures of the early twentieth century, the lay leader Habib Girgis, and became the major form of Coptic religious instruction

especially in the rapidly expanding cities. The focus on children's education is the basis for growth and vitality of the local communities.

Today Coptic Orthodox leaders fully recognize the positive influence that Protestantism played in the past. But at the same time they also declare that Coptic Protestants (or Catholics) should now join the Mother Church. The ecumenical spirit is not yet widespread and the Coptic Orthodox Church still displays very narrow doctrinal positions. A non-Orthodox Protestant or Catholic is forced to be rebaptized in the Orthodox Church if he or she wants to marry an Orthodox. Protestants are accused of proselytizing and leading astray Orthodox believers (a fact that proves sociologically true). Coptic Orthodox are accused of overlooking the specific spiritual values of the other traditions.

Prejudice is so strong that still Orthodox can be found who stick to the idea that in matters of proselytism Protestants are worse than Muslims, whereas some Protestant may still think that Orthodox are to be feared more than Muslims! As a practical response to what can well be experienced as a religious dilemma, many Egyptian Christians decide not to choose and carry on with a double ecclesiastical practice. They attend church in a Protestant congregation because of a greater emphasis on preaching, the use of modern hymnals and the less liturgical services, and at the same time they remain faithful to their Mother Church on religious festivals and on occasions of specific importance (baptisms, funerals).

Despite these prejudices, little by little a new ecumenical spirit has found its way, based on dialogue and mutual acknowledgement. In 1988 the Coptic Evangelical Church set up a Joint Committee for Dialogue with the Coptic Orthodox Church. Local initiatives emerged here and there, such as ecumenical prayer meetings or joining together for social service initiatives. The Orthodox have begun to acknowledge the positive role which Protestant evangelism often plays among sociological Christians – in particular uprooted rural populations who are concentrated in popular suburbs of Cairo or Alexandria.

In the face of all these conflicts between Christian confessions, these terrible words concerning Christians which the Qur'an attributes to God come to mind: *Consequently, we condemned them to animosity and hatred among themselves, until the Day of Resurrection.* (Sura 5:14). Today, as in the time of the Prophet, the division among Christians still remains a counter-witness amidst Islam.

These words Comte Zinzendorf addressed to the Coptic Pope in the eighteenth century at the time when the first Moravian missionaries came to Egypt, sound like a prophecy: "The testament Jesus left us in his two speeches and his prayers on his way to his Passion (John 12-17) is the only foundation of all our church organization understanding: this is why we do not allow ourselves to judge any Christian confession, (...) our main goal is to fulfil Jesus' sacerdotal prayer "That they may all be one!" (...) We do not invite the Christians we serve to join our organization; we only aim to water all the churches with Jesus' blood, whatever they are, to spread among Christians his death's leaven, so that little by little this leaven may sanctify the churches to which they belong, keep them from the sleep of death and corruption, until that time when the King Shepherd will appear and gather all in one flock."

5. Dialogue with Islam

The Coptic Evangelical Church appears as a pioneer in the contemporary period. As early as the 1960s, some Muslim religious leaders were invited to take part in cultural conferences held in Protestant churches and to deliver lectures at the Protestant seminary in Cairo. This open-minded attitude towards contemporary Islamic thinking has strongly increased since the beginning of the 1980s. The Gulf War operated as a catalyst. In February 1991, a public meeting which gathered more than 800 leaders took place on a Protestant initiative on the subject: 'Religious values and the Gulf war'. Other conferences were held the following years, dealing with Egyptian social issues. On the Coptic Orthodox side, community renewal with its tendency to go back to its own identity appeared to put a brake on this inter-religious breakthrough. At the grassroots level, some local Protestant churches occasionally organize meetings inviting Muslim leaders, specially during Ramadan. One can also mention a national youth camp which every summer gathers Muslim and Christian students in Port Saïd, on the initiative of the Protestant Church. Despite all these examples, this growing movement towards dialogue remains very marginal. Resistance and prejudice is still to be observed, deeply rooted on both sides, in addition to an age-old fear on the Christian side. In all these attempts, encounter and dialogue aim at promoting acknowledgement and mutual respect but it must be noticed that doctrinal issues are never tackled. Even at the level of close inter-personal relationships between Muslims and Christians, discussions on matters of faith or doctrine still remain an absolute taboo.

Again, one should highlight the pioneer involvement of CEOSS in the field of religious dialogue through its Forum for Intercultural Dialogue. The target population is the new generation of religious leaders regarded as more open to a positive change in mentality. Throughout the year 2002, a group of young pastors and imams have been gathering to study the concept of citizenship - equal rights and responsibilities for everyone - Christian and Muslim, young and old, rich and poor.

The participants gathered several times during the year focusing on three vital issues: the concept of citizenship in the educational system of Egypt, women and citizenship, and the concept of citizenship in the media. The groups presented their findings at a conference in December. This process will now culminate in concrete projects to be implemented in 2003 by local communities, involving both Muslims and Christians. The purpose is to link religion to social action, to provide the leaders with knowledge of

John Kennedy

Pistols for Two and Breakfast for One - Ecumenical Thoughts on Europe

I want to suggest that the big movements in relationships between Christian churches are usually initiated by states, usually against the will of the dominant religious bodies, and that other ecumenical activity tends to amount to a lot of self-important fussing around. There are large issues to deal with. They are between Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox, and the massive international growth of churches that fit into none of these categories. A historical illustration may help.

The cause of Catholic emancipation arose in the United Kingdom as a result of the incorporation into the said Kingdom of some millions of Catholic Irish subjects with the

community development methodologies. This will provide an example of positive Muslim-Christian interaction for the good of local communities.

The CEOSS orientation is to promote a spirit of mutual understanding, respect and cooperation in action. But the field is wide open and full of obstacles. Islam – even enlightened – claims to be the ultimate and definitive truth about humanity and history, definitive truth also about Jesus Christ as an Islamic prophet (with reference only to the Holy Qur'an but without any reference to biblical sources). Christians have the right to practise their religion, but for Islam, Christianity is situated and included, but finally not acknowledged in its otherness.

The main and ultimate challenge is to find a way of living together in a changing society. Egyptian Protestants with their assumed choice of being an open and active minority played in the past, and will continue to play in the future, a decisive part. Far from being allied to American imperialism, their dual belonging - on one hand to the Western modernity according to their Protestant specificity and on the other hand to the Muslim-arabic cultural sphere - enables them to interfere as a force of innovation. They act as catalysts for new experiences of partnership and new solidarities in order to help the emergence of a proper civil society in Egypt. A strong civil society that gives room to the development of individuals and the emancipation of men and women, that resists the many social or religious conservatisms and fundamentalisms, that fights against the pernicious ideology of the 'clash of civilizations'.

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(Translation Bernard Coyault/Claire-Lise Lombard)

union of the Irish and British Parliaments in 1801. The issue came to a head only three decades later, when the Duke of Wellington, son of the Irish Protestant Ascendancy, was Prime Minister.

Wellington saw the need, but the country was against it; the King, the peers, Methodists, the poor, women – it was an immensely unpopular cause. The Archbishop of Canterbury, seeing both the justice of the cause and the fanaticism of many of the faithful, ducked the issue. Wellington persisted with a Bill, until the intemperate opposition of the Marquess of Winchilsea impelled him to seek satisfaction from the

gentleman. So the two met on Battersea Common on 21 March 1829. Both shot wide – though the victor of Waterloo was such a bad shot that you could not be sure. So the Catholics were emancipated against the popular will, and without the generous and unmistakable intervention on their behalf of Christian leaders in other sects.

This is simply one example of the way in which Christian Europe came to terms with its sectarianism without great assistance from the churches themselves, though the much-maligned political leaders were often Christian.

... Christian Europe came to terms with its sectarianism without great assistance from the churches themselves

The violence of the French Revolution led, as we know, to a singular form of dichotomy between Church and State. But the twists and turns of that process are instructive. In July 1790, William Wordsworth attended the 'Festival of the Federation', which went on for some days. The King, Monsieur Capet as he had become, had a walk-on part. The celebrations had little religious content and essentially expressed the wish of the new Order to worship itself. The central ceremony was presided over by Maurice de Talleyrand, still Bishop of Autun, and the Commander of the National Guard, Lafayette. When torrential rain halted proceedings, Talleyrand limped away on the arm of his mistress, Adelaide de Flahaut to a gambling salon, where he proceeded to break the bank. Everybody thought that the new constitutional monarchy was wonderful, and the consequent overthrow of popery no bad thing – with the almost sole exception of Edmund Burke.

The situation was greatly refined by July 1794, when the inauguration of the Worship of the Supreme Being was instituted – sets by the monstrous genius, Jacques Louis David, central performance by Maximilien Robespierre. A famous religious victory had been won; the atheist tendency among the Jacobins had been routed, and religion was back. Not the Church, of course, that had been suppressed, and the traditional leadership of French society guillotined; M Capet had long since performed his last walk-on. The newly religious State was then busy executing its own former leaders at a discreet distance from the celebrations.

There is a peculiar sense in which the status quo was restored, not at the Restoration, but at the Coronation of the Emperor Napoleon. The French church regained and retained its prestige until the terrible events of the Commune, which led to the massacre of many priests and religious, including that of the Archbishop of Paris. The last time an Archbishop of Canterbury had been murdered by the mob was in 1381, 490 years earlier. The French church built the Church of the Sacred Heart on the site of the original insurrection as a sign of expiation of the (Communard) crimes of those days. Only shortly after its opening was the Third Republic strong enough to assert Republican values, and created a *laïque* state, separating religious and political authority. This was not an arrangement welcomed by the dominant church. Thus, the Eiffel Tower, the symbol of republican modernity, faces the Sacré Cœur, across a mile of the city and an immeasurable gulf in sensibility.

And that is the pattern. Emancipation in the nineteenth century became almost synonymous with liberation from dominating Christian power – in Bismarck's Germany and Garibaldi's Italy an antipathy to the anti-Catholic state cast a long shadow forward. Catholics in Italy were forbidden to vote within their new polity until the death of Leo XIII.

That pattern has repeated itself in the twentieth century. Masked by the terrible 'secular' or 'humanist' conflicts from 1914 till 1989, states either imposed forms of relationship, or compelled the reluctant ecclesiastical parties to at least negotiate a *modus vivendi*. But this was probably only possible because the churches had themselves come to understand their diminished standing in the world. Thus, the influence of the Churches has become vestigial in the nations of the European Union, and in the institutions of the Union itself, imperceptible. In general, liberal Protestants have deluded themselves as to the implications of this. They have accepted the replacement of their traditional moralities by an ever more robust hedonism. At the margins, their voice calls essentially for a more egalitarian rather than a more righteous world, and mainly requires that for The South. Meanwhile, its understanding of – and standing in – The North becomes increasingly problematic. On the other hand, Catholics in Britain and Europe feel themselves less at home in an increasingly alien world. They have worked very hard at developing consistency and coherence in their view of the world and have not been averse to taking a reasonably tough look at themselves.

Emancipation in the 19th Century became almost synonymous with liberation from dominating Christian power

The decline of the churches in Europe has, in a sense, resolved the perennial problem of their place in society. But elsewhere, those questions are not resolved and we may look to interesting times ahead, of a scariness somewhere between Battersea Common and the Champs de Mars. The Cold War froze, among other things, the turbulent conflicts that have arisen elsewhere as freedom and obedience collide – between communities and within individuals. Orthodox churches, for instance, retain enormously powerful followings in Greece, the Balkans, Central and Eastern Europe.

Everywhere the fundamental challenge to reconcile secular liberty with religious obedience remains unresolved. Even more varied, and turbulent, are the challenges arising from such conflicts in Turkey, Iraq and Iran. The same phenomenon, again in a radically different form, finds expression in the assertion of Hindu identity in India. It now seems incredible that India should have succumbed to the external forms of Nehruvian secularism. Nor would anybody have believed in 1948 that religion would be such a persistent thorn in the flesh of shallow secularism. And why should the guardians of divine truth submit to the prescriptions of slack-jawed secularity?

It is just that context in which liberal Christianity struggles to flourish. Our theology and worship recall uncannily those attempts of the progressive French, first to worship their ideals and then a Supreme Being who was simply a projection of those ideals. But we are Pangloss and Pooter, lacking the deformed genius of a David or a Robespierre. It is time to

cease our shrill little denunciations – and to look, listen, feel, pray.

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Audrey Lukwago

Thoughts from the Conference of European Churches (CEC) Assembly

'Jesus Christ heals and reconciles' were words heard time and time again during the week of the 12th Assembly of the Conference of European Churches (CEC) in Trondheim, Norway. The theme 'Jesus Christ heals and reconciles; our witness in Europe' was chosen to 'sound a strong missiological note – 'witness' – and affirm the positive message which the churches have to bring to Europe today in their proclamation of Jesus Christ'.¹ The reconciliation and healing of churches, nations and peoples was addressed in a range of contexts within a variety of settings adopted to develop CEC's mandate for the next six years. The open and very honest plenary sessions and section groupings examined in depth the challenges and priorities for CEC under four distinct umbrella categories – growing together in Europe; growing witness in society; growing in solidarity; and growing fellowship between churches. Thematic hearings were all-encompassing, covering issues that ranged from migration into/within Europe, to the churches' witness in today's information society; from reconciliation in Northern Ireland, to the role of the Church in developing quality of life for all; from the challenges in the Baltic and Barents regions (a meeting place of the Orthodox, Lutheran and Roman Catholic churches), to the challenges of sustainable development. The ceremonies at the beginning and end of the Assembly, and the worship that renewed and focused us at the opening and closing of each day, were reflective of these themes and of the spirit of the *Charta Oecumenica*.² A keynote speech by Kenneth Kaunda broadened out our focus, reminding us that while healing and reconciliation were indeed needed and expected within Europe, it remained necessary not to look at Europe as an entity separate from the rest of the world – a sub-theme that came up repeatedly in recognition of globalization and the ensuing interconnectedness and interdependencies of this age.

What struck me most, as a newcomer to the CEC Assembly, was the heightened sense of purpose present at all times. Many big ideas and ideals were discussed and the spirit of the assembly was reflected in all its activities. The passion for oneness was very apparent but also, to a lesser extent, were the differences and divisions that continue to exist; divisions that seemed to stem from a still existing level of distrust which itself seemed rooted in the need to know and understand *the other* more.

There is often the tendency to look at large international gatherings with a feeling of scepticism, wondering what difference they actually make. As was once explained to me, such international assemblies do not, and cannot, profess to

Victoria Clark: *Why Angels Fall; Orthodox Europe from Byzantium to Kosovo*, Macmillan 2000

Michas Takis: *Unholy Alliance: Greece and Milosevic's Serbia*, Texas A&M 2002

automatically change the world into a different, better place but rather play a key role in provoking new thought and approach within the broad area of concern. I would add to this, saying that a large part of their effect is felt through the changes that they make to each participant and consequently through the ripple effects of these individuals returning to their own local settings. While I am aware that the priorities identified, the documents produced and the pledges made in Trondheim *will* go a long way in influencing the functioning and thinking of Europe at the macro, meso and even perhaps at the micro level, I feel that great potential for change exists in the 600 or so participants who returned to their communities, churches, workplaces with an altered outlook, no matter how slight.

For me, one of the most important aspects of the Assembly was the base interaction of its participants – the one-to-one conversations over the lunch table, the small group discussions in the Bible study sessions, and the informal conversations as we walked across the bridge to the Trondheim Spektrum where the plenary sessions were held. It was through these interactions that I fully appreciated the rich diversity of people that constituted the CEC Assembly. It was here that I learnt most about the Orthodox Church in Russia. It was here that I learnt what Jesus Christ, healer and reconciler, meant to the Lutheran pastor from Hungary. I learnt of the arduous and noble fight against the trafficking and abuse of women in the Europe. It was here that I really began to understand the intricacies of the Ecumenical Movement and the realities of striving towards 'oneness'. It was in these conversations that I saw the human face that must, and does, make real the priorities highlighted in the formal sessions of the Assembly.

It is at this personal level that we are able to listen to each other, hear each other's words, and share each other's experiences. It is here that barriers built on misconceptions of *the other* begin to be broken down and we begin to see the healing and reconciling power of Christ at work.

Notes:

¹ Jesus Christ heals and reconciles – our witness in Europe. Theme Paper, CEC 12th Assembly – Trondheim, Norway 25 June – 2 July 2003, CEC General Secretariat, 2003, p.3.

² *Charta Oecumenica: Guidelines for Growing Cooperation within the churches in Europe*, Council of European Bishops' Conferences (CEE) and Conference of European Churches (CEC), 2001.

Events Resources News

In-service Mission Studies

The first course of In-Service Mission Studies took place on 7-8 April in the United College of the Ascension in Birmingham. It was attended by eight people, all of them desk officers of churches and agencies.

In-Service Mission Studies is a short two-part intensive course 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. It takes place under the auspices of CCOM and the United College of the Ascension upon suggestions coming from within ranks of CCOM members.

On this first occasion the participants were highly satisfied as shown by their feedbacks ('Very relevant course. Good background thinking and underpinning for my work with my Church', 'Very relevant to current thinking & planning for training courses coming up & planned conference & own thinking and contribution as part of the leadership in my agency'). This encouraging feedback makes the organizers hope that the course will continue to attract enough participants to continue it in the future.

The next module will take place on 4-5 November 2003. It is so designed that it is suitable for newcomers as well as a follow-up for participants of the last course.

Further information: Kirsteen Kim, UCA, k.kim@bham.ac.uk, and Kai Funkschmidt, kai.funkschmidt@ctbi.org.uk. Full course contents are accessible on www.ccom.org.uk. Please see also the leaflet enclosed with this issue of CONNECTIONS.

Future Church Conference

Building Bridges of Hope (BBH) will organize a conference on 'Shared Leadership – Future Church' which will take place 12-13 November 2003 in High Leigh Conference Centre. Contributors include: Shirley Cutbush, Noel Moules, Kerry Thorpe. Conference accompaniers/reflectors are Drs Helen Cameron and Stuart Murray-Williams. Cost is £65. Further information obtainable from Terry Tennens, BBH consultant, Tel. 01787 227979, terry.tennens@tesco.net.

CCOM launches new Fund

In spring this year CCOM launched the Edinburgh Centenary Mission Fund (ECMF) as a source of small grants for innovative and creative work in support of Christian mission, both internationally through recognized partners in these islands, and as a result of initiatives in the local context: mission in England Scotland, Ireland and Wales.

The fund is named after the famous international missionary conference held in Edinburgh in 1910 that gave rise to the

modern ecumenical movement. As the hundredth anniversary of that event comes on to the horizon in a changed and changing world, CCOM seeks to re-invest some of what it has inherited from the past.

A capital sum has been set aside which will, in the first instance, enable CCOM to make total annual grants of around £25,000 p.a. between 2003 and the end of 2010. If contributors add to the Fund this may grow (one can make a donation by filling out the form on the flyer in this copy of Connections). CCOM will invest the money ethically and spend capital and income over eight years.

Grants varying from a few hundred pounds to £5,000 will be disbursed, usually for no more than one or two years in support of creative, significant work that furthers the cause of Christian mission or education for mission. This will involve ecumenical purpose, ethos or benefit; either a new initiative or a qualitative development of existing work; and a project or activity with a suitable built-in process for evaluation. The Fund will work, where appropriate, with existing ecumenical or denominational funding, but is not usually intended as a means of offsetting spending cuts.

The formal application deadlines each year will be the last day of January, April and September respectively.

If you have any further questions please write to the ECMF c/o CCOM at ccom@ctbi.org.uk or the address given on the back, or refer to the included flyer or our website www.ccom.org.uk. Contributions to the Fund are welcomed, using Gift Aid where possible.

Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel

The Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI) of the World Council of Churches (WCC) is an ecumenical initiative with the mission to accompany local Christian and Muslim Palestinians and Israeli peace activists in their non-violent actions and concerted advocacy efforts to end the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The programme is responding to a call made by the heads of churches in Jerusalem. Participants of the programme from churches and ecumenical organizations world wide will be:

- monitoring and reporting violations of human rights and international humanitarian law,
- supporting acts of non-violent resistance alongside local Christian and Muslim Palestinians and Israeli peace activists,
- offering protection through non-violent presence,
- engaging in public advocacy
- and, in general, standing in solidarity with the churches and all those struggling non-violently against the occupation.

This year the WCC plans to place in Israel-Palestine 48 Ecumenical Accompaniers from churches and church related

organizations in Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Germany, Switzerland, Canada, the United States, Britain and Ireland.

The EAPPI partners in Britain and Ireland

The co-ordination of the EAPPI in Britain and Ireland is a joint project of members of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI) and Christian Aid, managed by Quaker Peace and Social Witness (QPSW) on behalf of all stakeholders. Currently, the EAPPI partners in Britain and Ireland are: the CTBI's Churches' Commission on Mission, which is providing ecumenical oversight and support, the Church of Scotland, Christian Aid, CAFOD, the United Reformed Church and the Religious Society of Friends in Britain. We hope that more will join soon.

During 2003 it is planned to send to Israel-Palestine twelve Accompaniers from these islands. Recruitment began in late March and it will be open-ended until all vacancies have been filled. QPSW will employ the Accompaniers whose deployment in Israel-Palestine will rest with the programme coordinator in Jerusalem.

How to participate in the EAPPI

There are various ways in which a church could participate in this project. A church could:

- consider becoming a partner for the EAPPI in Britain and Ireland.
- publicize the vacancies for Ecumenical Accompaniers to its members, e.g. through church newsletters, email lists or other mailings to churches/ministers, etc.
- ask to receive reports by Ecumenical Accompaniers – church publications may be interested in reproducing some of these reports.
- publicize the availability of Ecumenical Accompaniers to speak in public about their experiences after their return from Israel-Palestine or organize a public meeting for an Ecumenical Accompanier to speak.
- make a financial contribution to the project.

For further information please contact Floresca Karanàsou on florescak@quaker.org.uk.

Floresca Karanàsou

Building Bridges of Hope

'Knock down that Bridge?'

If you live on Holy Island, North East England, it would not be appropriate to build a bridge from the mainland to the island. Part of the atmosphere special to Holy Island is the ebb and flow of the tide over the causeway that permits and prohibits passage to the island. Therefore, building a bridge would take away from this island community.

The metaphor of a bridge has its limits, but the second BBH (Building Bridges of Hope) learning indicator reveals the importance of connections within and beyond communities, i.e. building local partnerships.

What are the barriers to building local partnerships?

Many churches want to be involved in their communities but struggle in three areas:

1. not sufficient enthusiasm or commitment from the majority of the church,
2. not knowing how to identify the needs and priorities of the wider community and which ones for the church to get involved in,
3. not knowing how to turn an idea into a thought-out plan.

BBH accompaniment addresses these areas, making clear how the the issue is one of researching the local communities' actual needs (community mapping) as opposed to perceived needs (anecdotal).

Thereafter, accompaniment assists the church to develop an action plan whether strengthening existing work or establishing new initiatives and networking to find out what alliances might be formed from groups within the wider community.

Where can partnerships take place? BBH has found that Christians engage in community work in the home (by teaching mothers to cook), outside (by providing a recreational site for young people) and the church (by using church buildings as a place of welcome, safety and service to various users).

A significant proportion of community involvement is with non-church groups and agencies who share a common concern. For example, some churches are engaged with the probation service and people working in the drugs field and have bought a house and provide staff as a half-way house.

Some questions arise: In how far is a shared engagement with others who have common concerns a matter of pragmatism and in how far is there a mission basis which would justify increased investment by local churches in this kind of activity? In how far and in what ways does/could partnership with others in the wider community stimulate the worship and the spiritual and theological reflection of the church itself? What *structures* are required for a church which engaged with the wider community?

Some churches will struggle for the following reasons:

Internal divisions: A pastoral problem that causes significant strife and division. The leadership goes ahead with community engagement hoping the outward focus will lead to unity. However, it doesn't occur because energy levels are dispersed and attention is spread due to the continuing internal conflict.

Over-capacity: Significant time needs to be given to the process of considering who and what and how community development can occur. It cannot be viewed as a bolt-on extra or the preserve of one or two dedicated individuals.

Leadership style: A church that has a very directive style can struggle with the principle of participatory approach that community engagement requires. Without a culture of listening to one another within the church, there will be problems listening to the wider community.

What ethos does a church need to build partnerships?

Engaging with people who are not part of our view of life is a challenge because we have to revisit our theology, church culture and envisage change. Nonetheless, if we are seeking to be relevant and kingdom-focused as a church, it will require some heart searching for purpose, collective brain power to discover the avenues forward and spiritual integrity and passion in order to act.

Churches that are engaging often share certain features:

- A fully committed leadership team
- A well organized and dedicated organizing team with a core of 8+ people
- Openness to learning and change
- Shared leadership expressing the ministry of the whole people of God,
- Prepared to build local partnerships with other Christians as well as people of no faith, different faith, secular and government based initiatives.

Building Local Partnerships – points to be considered:

With whom in my local church can partnerships be forged?
(Christian – secular – other faith – voluntary – government)

Who in the church could form a core team? How many do we need? Remember, small is beautiful – small groups can be more focused and effective.

Where might one find alliances in the wider community?

How does the leadership of the church view this?

What resources do you have and need to acquire, from training to materials?

What is happening in the wider community?

Terry Tennens

Beyond crisis: Christians and Muslims shaping a shared future in Europe

The Islam in Europe committee, established by the Council of European Bishops' Conferences (CCEE) and the Conference of European Churches (CEC) in 1987 to resource and encourage the churches in their relations with Muslim citizens across the European continent, completed its present five year mandate at its final meeting in Strasbourg, from 13 to 16 March 2003.

The committee was mandated:

1. to advise the churches by providing information and guidance for Christian communities on different aspects of Christian-Muslim relations; this it has done by producing two documents: one on inter-religious prayer (*Christians and Muslims: praying together?*) and the other on guidelines for dialogue (*Meeting Muslims?*);
2. to promote contacts with Muslims. This has usually happened in the autumn meeting of the committee (in Brussels, Tirana, Sarajevo and Prague). The committee's most important meeting was the conference in Sarajevo on 12-16 September 2001, which met in the shadow of 11 September, when scholars and representatives of Christian and Muslim organizations discussed the theme *Christians and Muslims in a Pluralistic Europe*,
3. to exchange experiences and information from the different countries. These were communicated to the churches in two letters (*The education of young Christians and Muslims in a pluralist Europe* in 2000 and *The role of the Christian churches in a pluralistic society, as seen by the Muslims of Europe*, in 2001).

Inevitably the committee has had to respond to events in the wider world which impact on Christian-Muslim relations in Europe. Therefore the committee discussed the implications of the present Iraq crisis and the consequences of a possible war, as well as the continuing conflict in the Holy Land. In this regard, the committee was inspired by the unanimity expressed by church leaders in Europe and around the world, in opposing the resolution of this crisis by war in preference to working through the United Nations; as well as by the active collaboration of Christians and Muslims across Europe and around the world in joint statements, shared initiatives and prayers for peace. This cumulatively gives the lie to those who want to present this conflict as one between Christians and Muslims.

Many of these concerns were included in the Charta Oecumenica, adopted by the European churches in Strasbourg in 2001: 'We would like to intensify encounters between Christians and Muslims and enhance Christian-Islamic dialogue at all levels. We recommend, in particular, speaking with one another about faith in one God, and clarifying ideas on human rights.'

The texts mentioned here and a list of the committee members are available on the CEC website (www.ccc-kek.org). For further information: Sarah Numico sarah.numico@ccee.ch or Luca Negro luca.negro@cec-kek.org.

CCOM staff relocation to Scotland

Plans first made over a year ago finally were realized when one member of the CCOM staff was relocated from Interchurch House in London to Scotland in early February. Kai Funkschmidt now has his office in Scottish Churches House, Dunblane, where it is hoped his presence will contribute to strengthening links between CTBI/CCOM and the Scottish churches. His main task remains his work as Mission Relations Secretary.

There had long been reflections about how CTBI might widen its presence beyond the London-focused Interchurch House. The political and ecclesiastical set-up both changed considerably since 1990 (when CTBI came into being), with devolution greatly strengthening national identities. New communication technologies allow out-of-office working in ways hitherto impossible. While it is generally recognized that a four-nations ecumenical body like CTBI is vital for churches in these islands it is equally clear that patterns of working and relating need to be adapted to the new situation by functioning in decentralized ways, strengthening co-operation between CTBI on the one hand and ACTS, ICC, Cytûn and CTE on the other. The new arrangement will be evaluated after six months.

UK Religious Statistics

The government in February published results of the National Census including information on religious adherence. 76% of the respondents recorded a religious affiliation. While in Scotland and Northern Ireland the questionnaire asked for different Christian denominations, this was not the case for England and Wales. Full results at national level and by local authority area are available at www.statistics.gov.uk.

Religion	UK Total	UK %
Christian	42,079,417	71.6
Muslim	1,591,126	2.7
Hindu	558,810	1.0
Sikh	336,149	0.6
Jewish	266,740	0.5
Buddhist	151,816	0.3
Other	178,837	0.3
No religion	9,103,727	15.5
Religion not stated	4,288,719	7.3

SCIFU ends

Plans to create a union of Scottish churches suffered a heavy blow after the Church of Scotland's General Assembly in May overwhelmingly voted to abandon merger talks.

The proposals drawn up by the Scottish Churches Initiative For Union (SCIFU) would have eventually envisaged the merger of the Church of Scotland, the Scottish Episcopal Church, the Methodists and the United Reformed Church. But delegates described the plans as, at best, pointless and, at worst, a threat to the long-term survival of their church.

The SCIFU proposals were the product of more than 40 years of on and off discussion. They included plans to create 'maxi-parishes' served by teams of ministers from across the churches and led by 'bishops' elected by regional church councils.

One of the fiercest critics said: 'The premise [behind these proposals] is that we are not united in Christ if we do not have a single church organization. That is a false premise. We are all one in Christ. We do not need to negotiate a complicated joinery of denominations to make that apparent.' Other speakers asked if the SCIFU discussions, begun in the 1960s, were not relying on an ecumenical model of the past, where unity equaled union and was negotiated from above. Should not a more decentralized approach to unity be taken, as expressed in countless local ecumenical initiatives?

Doubt was expressed about the missionary renewal allegedly flowing from organic church union when one speaker pointed to what he saw as the failed ecumenical experiment in Livingston. 'Livingston is a wasteland of mission, not a shining example. If SCIFU is supported that will be multiplied through Scotland, hastening the end of the Church of Scotland.'

The debate at times became amazingly hostile in tone, and not always factually accurate, e.g. when one speaker claimed that the proposals wished to fit Episcopal-style government into a Presbyterian structure and would bring an end to the Church of Scotland's egalitarian character. 'I know that the new bishops would be different from the current Episcopal ones but I have to argue that a bishop is a bishop is a bishop.' This failed to recognize that the (biblical) term 'bishop' covers structures so varied that they clearly share almost nothing but the word. This was in fact illustrated by the benches of ecumenical guests who included a mix of Roman Catholic, Episcopal and Reformed bishops – who in turn are very different from Lutheran and Moravian ones.

The one element of the discussion that most ecumenical observers later on commented upon with dismay was that in two hours of discussion not a single speaker had touched

upon the fact that they were debating a *conversation* with other partners, many of whom were actually present in the Assembly as guests. This impoliteness, certainly unconscious and unintentional, reflected a self-centredness which in its way is typical for large churches throughout the world.

Eventually an overwhelming majority of 384 delegates voted to throw out the proposals from SCIFU and only 99 supported them.

The other three churches involved in SCIFU have in the meantime held the regular meetings of their governing bodies and will look for a common way forward despite the pulling out of the largest player.

Kai Funkschmidt

MECC delegation returns from Iraq

'The primary need of the Iraqi people is security,' says Revd Dr Nuhad Tomeh. 'First, security. Second, services - electricity, water - garbage is everywhere. And third, they need to send their children back to school. The schools have been closed, and many of them have been looted.'

Dr Tomeh, Middle East Council of Churches (MECC) International Linkage Coordinator, returned to Beirut on 8 May, from a one-week inspection trip to Iraq. He travelled with a delegation of nine officers from church-related relief organizations from the Middle East, Europe and North America.

The group left Amman, Jordan on 30 April and arrived in Baghdad the same day. During their stay they visited the northern cities of Mosul, Kirkuk, Suleimaniya and Erbil, and the southern city of Hilli. They saw the situation on the ground and discussed the problems the country faces with local people as well as church leaders.

The Christian community in Baghdad suffered some losses during the war, Dr Tomeh reports. Some 18 to 20 people are known to have died during the fighting, and there is a large Christian community in an area near to the airport that has been closed off by the military. Local people are unable to enter or leave that area.

Another concern raised by church leaders was that the food supplies issued by the Iraqi government before the war will run out soon. Because people have not been paid their salaries for the last few months, they are unable to buy more food, and so food supplies need to be arranged by other means. MECC and its partners have promised to help supply food for some 5000 people.

The economy has completely broken down. Most people who were employed before the war have seen their jobs vanish in the destruction. Those people who have been able to work have not been paid. Petrol is growing scarce, making it difficult even for people with jobs to get to work. There are ongoing attempts to reorganize the public and private sectors, but they have not yet borne fruit.

People are also very worried about the country's future. 'If there is no stable, strong government soon, they are afraid of civil war,' says Dr Tomeh. 'There are many weapons - the army weapons centres were looted, and they were selling machine guns for thirty dollars.'

This fear has added impetus to efforts to preserve good relations between Christians and Muslims. In Mosul, a

rumour had spread that the Christians were going to attack local mosques, and likewise that Muslims were planning on attacking Christians. In response, local religious leaders got together and formed inter-faith committees in each neighbourhood. These committees worked to ensure the security of each faith's worship services. MECC's work during the war, providing food supplies to Christians and Muslims, helped lay a foundation of goodwill that these committees could build upon.

The delegation returned to Amman on 6 May. There, they briefed a meeting of the MECC Department on Services to Palestinian Refugees' steering committee. Although this steering committee is dedicated to meeting the needs of Palestinians, most of the same organizations and many of the people are also working actively to help the people of Iraq.

The delegation later met with international partners to compose an assessment report on the needs of the Iraqi people in the second phase of relief and rehabilitation. The report will cover the coming 3-6 months, and will deal primarily with the provision of relief supplies and the rehabilitation of basic services such as water and medical care. The report is available on www.mecchurches.org.

Organizations taking part in the inspection trip to Iraq included Action by Churches Together, the American Friends' Service Committee, Christian Aid (UK), Diakonia Austriche, and the Middle East Council of Churches.

Please see the Action by Churches Together website: www.act-intl.org for more information on and reports from the delegation.

Churches value work of EU Convention

(CEC – COMECE 03-33e 27 May 2003) On 26 May 2003, the Presidium of the European Convention published the revised draft of Part One of the Treaty establishing the EU Constitution¹. The Church and Society Commission of the Conference of European Churches (CEC) and the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Community (COMECE) published the following statement:

We congratulate the members of the European Convention for the impressive work which has been achieved so far. Their efforts are a significant step forward towards making the European Union more understandable, more effective and more accountable.

In their numerous contributions to the Convention, churches and church-linked organizations have promoted the concept of the Union as a community of values based on respect for human dignity and human rights, liberty, democracy, justice, solidarity, sustainable development and the pursuance of the common good. We therefore welcome the inclusion of these values and objectives in the draft Constitution and the incorporation of the Charter of Fundamental Rights. We particularly welcome the amendments which will strengthen the Union's commitment to a social market economy and, in its relations with the wider world, to promote peace, security, free and fair trade, protection of human rights and respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter.

Title VI of the Constitution on the 'Democratic Life of the Union', which has been improved in the light of the debate in the Convention, will help citizens to participate and feel that they have a stake in the EU democratic process by

recognizing the importance of different actors in society. We welcome the growing consensus on the place of religion in the future EU as reflected by the amended draft Article 51. This article guarantees the EU's respect for the status of churches and religious communities in the Member States based on their different constitutional traditions. The provision for open, transparent and regular dialogue reflects the specific contribution of churches and religious communities, distinct from secular authority, in the service of society as a whole.

HIV/Aids in India

Ninety-six delegates of various Indian and other Asian churches have come together for an Ecumenical Church Leaders' Conference on HIV/AIDS organized by the National Council of Churches in India (NCCI) at Mumbai from 5-7 February 2003. It is estimated that India will move from its present 4 million cases of HIV infection to 25 million by 2010, which will be second only to Africa.

The conference observed that the Government of India and the NGOs have taken some steps towards combating this pandemic but that these are insufficient for the size of the nation and the increasing number of victims. The delegates made the following declaration:

'At the very outset we affirm that human sexuality is a gift from God. We acknowledge that although some churches have initiated responses to HIV/AIDS for over a decade some have not yet given this issue its due importance and priority. We endorse the vision, affirmation and commitment expressed in the previous statements made on HIV/AIDS issues by the following:

- i. A series of statements made by the Salvation Army in April'95, June'98 and June'2001.
- ii. A communiqué of the Conference organized by the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) and the World Council of Churches (WCC) at Chiang Mai, Thailand in 2002.
- iii. The 'Commitment of Churches in response to HIV/AIDS crisis in India' made at New Delhi in June 2002 and other similar documents.

Recommendations:

We expect NCCI to take the initiative and leadership in charting the united course of the churches in India in the field of HIV/AIDS. To this end we have collectively decided to request the NCCI Working Committee to take the following steps in a time bound manner as a unified response of the churches in India to the HIV/AIDS epidemic:

1. To form a working group (e.g. HIV-AIDS Mission) which is an ecumenical body comprising representatives of all churches. This will include the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India and the Evangelical Fellowship of India. This body will:
 - i. Meet regularly for planning initiatives, sharing experiences and mutual learning in the field of HIV/AIDS.
 - ii. Encourage and assist all churches (including church bodies, parishes, and individual churches to develop locally relevant projects to affirm the dignity of HIV-affected, to care for them and also take up preventive activity.

iii. Gather and share information from and to all such activities mentioned above in a spirit of networking and co-ordination.

2. To form a theological commission to do an in-depth study on human sexuality and the suffering in the world in the context of the HIV pandemic.

3. To form an Advisory Body which will keep the churches informed and updated on the latest technical, scientific and medical matters related to and arising out of HIV/AIDS.

4. To form working groups for developing material and model teaching programmes for spiritual organizations in each parish eg. Sunday Schools, Youth Groups, Women's Groups, as well as for pastors and even theological colleges.

PROCMURA European Liaison Committee – Islam in France

Four representatives (Walter Dunlop/Church of Scotland, Gordon Holmes/Africa Forum, Helen Reid/Faith to Faith, Kai Funkschmidt/CCOM) from Britain attended a meeting of the European Liaison Committee of the *Project for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa* (PROCMURA) in Paris from 31 January to 2 February.

The actual Procmura meeting consisted largely of business detail, project funding and the financial future of the Procmura office itself (which looks brighter now than in the past). Most of this is of little interest to a wider audience.

But the most interesting bit of the meeting was the opening with a presentation from Jean-Marie Gaudeuil (RCC Secretariat for the relations with Islam, CEC Commission on Muslim-Christian relations in Europe) speaking about the current state of Christian-Muslim relations in France.

He distinguished several phases of Muslim consciousness in France, with turning points in 1975 and in 1988. The first wave of immigration lasted until 1974 when the government first regulated the hitherto virtually unrestricted immigration

from the Maghreb. The Muslim population then was almost entirely made up of male menial labourers. As a consequence of the new restrictions and the impossibility to leave with a possibility of returning, those already in the country saw themselves as being *permanently* there and began to bring in their families, thus changing the makeup of the Muslim population. For a while longer, however, the home country was being seen as paradise lost, a country of warm-hearted hospitality, family-ties and a less materialistic life-style. This projection of all that is good crumbled when in 1988 Algeria stopped subsidizing its fixed bread price. This suddenly led to dramatically increased cost of basic amenities and eventually widespread poverty riots. The distant home was not even a theoretical albeit romantic option any more. But then, what was a home?

The changes throughout this period also affected the religious orientation of Muslims. The second generation of Maghrebins grew up in France with new career expectations, better education than their parents who therefore 'had nothing to teach them' which led to an inter-generational break in the tradition (handing down) of Islam. Although it is very difficult to get accurate figures because of the French understanding of *laïcité* and the ensuing absence of religion-related statistics, it appears that there are an estimated 4-5 million Muslims (within a population of 61 million). Yet all prayer places in France put together would not accommodate more than 4% of all French Muslims, putting in question some statistics which give far higher percentages of religious observance. All serious surveys show that a vast majority of young Muslims do not pray in mosques at all, although 70% of all Muslims in France keep Ramadan. Popular perceptions of Islam in the West are mostly simplistic and that is not helped by the atmosphere after 11 September. Hard facts are only now beginning to be collected, which should allow in future to take a more sober look at developments within the Muslim community. It also remains to be seen what effect the foundation of a Muslim umbrella organization for France, upon strong initiative from the government, will have in this field.

Volunteer Wanted

CCOM is looking for a volunteer to administer the Edinburgh Centenary Mission Fund in exchange for expenses and a good honorarium.

For further information, please see p.37 in this issue and contact Simon Barrow, CCOM Commission Secretary (simon.barrow@ctbi.org.uk, 020-75232122)

CCOM Forum Reports

For updates on the Forums please check also the CCOM website where some of them report their most recent activities.

MTAG

The game of the gift

Mission Theological Advisory Group (MTAG) members got a chance to do more than think and talk together at the last meeting, where we were looking at Christian themes in modern film – in particular Peter Jackson's *The Lord of the Rings*. Under the guidance of Dr Nicholas Adams, (one of our members) we played a game together in which we offered one another an unusual and rather horrific gift: a bloody knife.

What was interesting about this game (in which the rules dictated that we *must* receive the gift and say what we would do with it) was that it is clear that Christians will do anything to attempt to refuse the violence and unpleasantness associated with the object. Our instinct as Christians is to transform it, put it away, reject it, use it for good, try and force it to become something other. We used the knife for peaceful purposes – our desire is to change the world and make it a better place. This is good and shows how important transformation, change, is to the mission urge to reconcile, to repair, to make good what is wrong, what has been damaged by sin. The problem is that by concentrating on this transformation, we turn away from the reality of the object, its history, its function, its deeds. We over-narrate, elaborate the story of it in order to get far away from the blood dripping from the blade.

So this leaves us with a question. How far does the fact of being Christian make us selective about what we see and share? How far does the presence of evil in our world make us tell ever more complex stories in order to distance ourselves from the presence of pain and suffering that we inflict on others. What will it take to make us face the killer in us, the anger in us, the temptation to rage and power? And do we spend our time seeking reconciliation because of the guilt, the complicity we cannot face or name? These questions affect the way we detect 'Christian' themes in film or other media. But perhaps, if we are to become more missionary, we have first to acknowledge who we are in the face of evil deeds, before we can hold out peace, love, reconciliation and change. In the light of current events in our world and the rhetoric surrounding them, the game of the gift is particularly acute.

Anne Richards

Personnel Officers

A residential meeting of this joint CCOM/Global Connections Forum took place on 16-17 June in the Wycliffe Centre, High Wycombe on the theme of '**New Patterns of Global Service**'. The Forum looked at how generational changes in career planning, motivation for mission/humanitarian work, family life and professional training affect the personnel side of mission. How do our recruitment and selection processes, our efforts to support the staff reflect

current social changes and how do these changes affect our ability to do our work effectively? Particular attention was paid to the area of mission personnel retention, with Rob Hay (CMS) as speaker. Another topic, and one that the Forum has had to tackle repeatedly in the past, is the reflection about how the current EU employment legislation affects organizations' ability to keep a distinctive Christian ethos in their life and work. Chris Bocutt introduced a document 'A Christian Ethos' produced by the Evangelical Alliance and the Forum discussed how this could be made useful for organizations involved in overseas mission relationships. This task was given back to the Forum Officers to further explore.

Middle East

War came. The protests, the arguments, the opposition of the churches were in vain. An overwhelming victory was claimed. A brutal dictator was removed, but not the fears of the churches and of others. Forward planning to mitigate and repair the damage of war and the previous decade seems less than adequate. Whether in Iraq order can be attained and retained and what the future of Iraq will be are quite unclear. Will it be a democracy; will it be an Islamic state; will it be seen as home-grown or imported; will the Assyrian Christians and other smaller minorities have their place or suffer in a free-for-all for power; will the future of Iraq and the wider Middle East be determined by the conquerors or by the local people, or by the outcome of a long, violent and damaging struggle? All these are questions with no certain answer. Other worries remain – the future of the UN, the effect on international law of a doctrine of pre-emption, the loss of trust in governments as the ostensible arguments for war prove more and more unsustainable, growth of inter-religious conflict and fears of an increase in international terrorism, heightened by the appearance of the first British suicide bombers. We feel these concerns, but they are desperately important for the Christians in the Middle East, for whom instability brings all sorts of dangers. They long for better civil societies, more respect for minorities, movement towards a more settled, peaceful and prosperous future with a stop to Christian emigration.

Real progress on the Israel/Palestine conflict is crucially important and the Prime Minister is to be commended on working hard to get the 'Road Map' adopted, published and into operation. But this is a very fragile child indeed, needing determined and intensive care and there are real doubts about the commitment of the nurse. Occasional suicide bombings continue and meanwhile Palestinians suffer even greater loss of life, and loss of land as the wall of partition is rapidly extended. The Israeli military grows more casual about the damage to innocent civilians; more internationals, accompaniers and media are casualties, and the government appears to want no international witnesses in the West Bank and Gaza. The real restraining effect of accompaniers' presence is diminishing, but the need for witness remains. As UK Christians begin to participate in the World Council of

Churches' Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme for Palestine and Israel (EAPPI), this is a real concern. Changes in the Palestinian Authority could be positive, but if the new Prime Minister comes to be seen as being imposed in order to improve life for Israelis without achieving anything approaching justice for Palestinians, the effect on Palestinian society will not be good. Israel/Palestine remains the key to the future of the Middle East, to progress or disaster.

The Middle East Forum is deeply involved with these concerns through its members' work in the Middle East and numerous contacts there and through the work of Christian development agencies. Work on EAPPI goes ahead. Christian Aid produced an excellent report, *Losing Ground*, on the causes of the crisis of Palestinian poverty with an accompanying video, *Peace under Siege*. The Forum continues to engage in increasing understanding of the Middle East and supportive relations with the Christian communities there.

Colin Morton

Asia

The Asia Forum held a day conference on 'Minority Faiths, Mission and Human Rights in Asia Today' on 9 May 2003 in London. The speakers were Dominic Moghal from Pakistan, currently in Leicester and Klaus Schäfer, Theology Desk of the Evangelisches Missionswerk in Deutschland (Hamburg), complemented by Andrew Clayton of Christian Aid and Asia Forum Focal Person Chris Wigglesworth.

Schäfer, who had recently returned from some months as a guest lecturer in India, in an inspired paper painted a bleak picture of the situation of religious minorities in India. The situation, marked by violence and discrimination for a long time had further deteriorated after 11 September 2001. He interpreted the developments as expressions of a general 'search for identity' both religious and nation-oriented. The way the conflict between individual and group identities is now seen, the weight put upon religion as basis of group identity and some other factors fundamentally distinguish Indian and Western culture in this question. Contrary to common prejudice cultural diversity was recognized as a fact but *not* always seen as a positive thing in Indian history. He suggested that the particular contribution of mission in this situation was to be sought in the field of discovering the meaning and practice of reconciliation.

Dominic Moghal concentrated on the plight of Christians in Pakistan. Since the foundation of the state it had been disputed whether it was an Islamic Theocracy or a state with Muslim majority and equal rights for minority religions. In recent times the fate of non-Muslims has become ever more difficult, making Moghal wonder if Christianity in Pakistan might face the same slow erosion process through emigration as Middle East Christianity. He then introduced the work of the Christian Study Centre in Rawalpindi of which he was the leader for many years, a body trying to further Christian-Muslim understanding and dialogue in Pakistan.

All contributions are available on the Asia Forum's website www.geocities.com/ccom_ctbi/Asia_Forum or via www.ccom.org.uk.

This day was the first meeting of the Asia Forum in over a year and implied an attempt to find out if there was a need for such a Forum. It was agreed that instead of holding several meetings a year, which was more than people could

attend, we should rather try to hold a similar conference once per year.

This was also the last meeting of the Focal Person Dr Chris Wigglesworth who had to lay down his office due to his being elected a councillor in Edinburgh. The Forum warmly thanked him for his service and wished him well for his work in Edinburgh.

Kai Funkschmidt

Africa

Peace-making in Sudan

In Khartoum, despite cease-fire violations and unresolved issues, there are now those in the Sudan government who strongly favour peace. President Bashir and Dr Garang, the leader of the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement SPLM/A, have spoken of it coming by June 2003. After over twenty years of civil war that is very soon.

Sudan watchers say that there is a danger that civil society, including the churches, will be insufficiently prepared for post-conflict reconstruction. Driven by self-interest, there are some in the unthinking international community who might deluge Sudan with money and unrealistic expectations.

Some current challenges in Sudan focus on areas not geographically part of the South: Abyei, Nuba Mountains and Southern Blue Nile. Southerners wish to see them within an overall settlement. Facilitated by civil society, led by the churches, there are also discussions about the extent of a new government's authority in the South.

Full participation in the proposed post-war legislature, judiciary, executive and civil service will be demanding for southerners given their limited number of skilled personnel. Capacity building and training are priorities for a settlement to be long lasting.

In order to share information and recurring hopes for Sudan, the Sudan Support Group, on which the Africa Forum is represented with other church groups, met at Partnership House in London in April. Included were Christian Aid, Tear Fund, CMS, the Sudan Church Association and the Anglican Dioceses of Bradford and Salisbury, which have very active links with dioceses in the Sudan.

There was to be an opportunity for representatives to meet with Clare Short at DFID in June as she too was keen that Sudan and the international community are prepared for the peace. (The meeting was cancelled due to her resignation two days before it was due to take place). Short saw the church network as an important conduit for resources. This is a tribute to be regarded with care but it bears witness to many years of consistent engagement with their partners in Sudan which churches and their organizations in these islands have had.

Bridge building between the Sudan government and those who have opposed it will be hard work. An emphasis on 'the need for reconciliation and the transformation of society' was made by Sudanese Catholic and Anglican church leaders and representatives of the Sudan Council of Churches and ecumenical partners when they met in South Africa in February 2003. They met on the basis of their 'hope in the reconciliation of the world to God in Lord Jesus Christ and the reconciliation which this brings to one another'.

Anyone wishing to follow events in the company of others with Sudanese connections may attend the meetings at the House of Commons of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Sudan. The sponsor is Hilton Dawson MP and contact can be made via Colin Robertson at the House of Commons.

Peace-making in Zimbabwe

Africa Forum member bodies continue to be in touch with their Zimbabwean partners seeking ways forward, ones that contribute to peace rather than stoke damaging rhetoric. However, not to speak out loudly can be seen by others as betrayal. A specific group within the Africa Forum is addressing the issues as individual or collective action is considered.

Recent comments by President Robert Mugabe have opened the door for the church to constructively engage government on democracy and government issues, the General Secretary of the Zimbabwe Council of Churches told the IRIN news agency.

Also, the official Herald newspaper has reported that President Mugabe has urged clergy to seek dialogue with the government if they feel there are grievances to be addressed. He said too that some sections of the clergy are campaigning against the government.

The Zimbabwe Council of Churches has previously said that it has a duty to speak out against oppression and injustice - reports of which are also in the Zimbabwean press. Recently some clergy were arrested and some church people have been vilified. There are Christians in Zimbabwe who wish to see churches make prophetic statements, as was done during the oppression and injustice of apartheid South Africa. Regretfully, the churches and/or church leaders in Zimbabwe are not united in their responses.

Of late there have not been many outward signs of peace-making. However, in Southern Africa and in Europe churches and church-related agencies have been co-ordinating their responses. The discussions at the Africa Forum 2003 consultation were relevant to Zimbabwe. Held in Hamburg jointly with German partners in April the theme was 'The European Union, Africa and the Churches'. Reports of that meeting will be available shortly. An informal fact-finding visit by Paul Renshaw (CTBI International Affairs Desk) and Steve Kibble (Catholic Institute for International Relations) to Zimbabwe was planned at the most recent Southern Africa Group meeting. They will report back at the next meeting on 23 July.

Gordon Holmes

Sri Lanka

As I write this, the agreement for a cease-fire in Sri Lanka, signed over a year ago, is still holding. Peace talks continue between the government of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers Tamil Elam (LTTE). Although the cease-fire has been threatened by violations on both sides, there is still a cautious optimism that the talks will continue until a negotiated solution to the ethnic conflict is reached. In terms of building trust between communities, however, there is still a long way to go.

The Sri Lanka Relations Committee was privileged to have Rt Revd Kumara Illangasinghe at its last meeting, on 30 January. The Bishop stressed that it was the desire of the

majority that the cessation of hostilities should last as long as possible. Ordinary people were beginning to see a difference in their lives, and it was important that the people's wish for peace should be made as strong as possible. The statements that had arisen from the peace talks, he explained, had been encouraging. However, there was still a gap between what the government seemed willing to give and what the LTTE was wanting. One negative aspect of the peace process, he continued, was the neglect of human rights. Abuses were occurring in all parts of the country, perpetrated both by the LTTE and government forces.

Speaking of what the church stood for, the Bishop stressed that the church believed that Sri Lanka should remain united, but that, within this, the welfare and dignity of all communities should be worked towards, through a constitutionally entrenched devolution of power achieved through negotiation.

The chair of the Committee, Mr Steve Alston, is now Director of Programmes at the St Ethelburga's Centre for Peace and Reconciliation. One focus of his work is religion and conflict. It is hoped that a future meeting of the Committee will be at the Centre and that a constructive working relationship will develop between the two.

Elizabeth Harris

Europe

The Europe Mission Forum meeting in April looked forward to the two major European Christian events of 2003. Most people at the meeting would be attending either the first ecumenically prepared German Kirchentag or the Conference of European Churches (CEC) Assembly in Trondheim in June, and some hoped to attend both.

Trondheim will bring together the representatives of some 128 member churches, stretching from the Azores to the Bering Strait, roughly half of the Christians of Europe, the other half being Roman Catholics - cooperation with whom, as at the Graz 1997 gathering, is hugely appreciated on both sides.

John Arnold outlined four major foci for the likely Agenda:

1. The continuation of the good relationships with the RC Church, especially around the Charta Oecumenica, which will undoubtedly have been received very differently in different parts of the continent.
2. The European Union is in process of receiving 15 new countries as member states in the next year, with the war in Iraq revealing many new strains and stresses, not least in relation to the USA.
3. The Assembly is preceded by a 3-day 'sailing seminar', exploring the extent of pollution and environmental threats to North-West Europe (much of it attributed to the UK!), arranged by the Church of Norway in partnership with the Ecumenical Patriarch, whose leadership on such environmental questions has given a wholly new and positive thrust to partnership between the Orthodox and other member churches.
4. The debate about the evangelization or re-evangelization of Europe is recognized by all as vitally important, even if the issue of proselytism remains highly sensitive to many Orthodox.

David Brain, CTBI delegate to the Berlin Kirchentag, anticipated the event where 100,000 guests were to be hosted by the people of Berlin. The chairman recalled a number of considerations that would condition the event, not least the Pope's new Encyclical on the Eucharist, which may well have been composed in order to remind his lay followers in Poland and Germany that the strict discipline about eucharistic hospitality must continue to be observed!

The Forum was glad to receive news from Timothy Okroev (CMS) that Darrell Jackson, on the Baptist Union's management team in Didcot, has been appointed (CEC/CMS) Researcher in European Mission based in Budapest.

Three new faces attended the meeting. They were Lisa Bournelis (Christian Aid, Eastern Europe Programme Manager), Jim Bryden (Salvation Army Ecumenical Officer) and Keith Jenkins (former director of Church and Society Commission of CEC). The meeting welcomed too its new Chairman John Arnold, dean emeritus of Durham Cathedral and former CEC-president.

Dorothy Knights

OHCAF

At its meeting in March the Overseas Health Care Forum (OHCAF) said farewell to its Focal Person of many years, Sr Molly McGrath.

Steve Fouch was appointed as the new Focal Person for this Forum. He stepped into this role for OHCAF at a time when the Forum is going through some major re-thinking about its role and function.

OHCAF has decided to see if it can function as a more 'virtual' forum, by setting up an e-mail newsgroup to share information, ideas and news among its members more quickly, and to restrict physical meetings to those convened to tackle a specific issue or achieve a specific goal. We will be seeing how this works over the next few months.

Steve's background is nursing, mainly in the UK, working with people living with HIV and AIDS in London. For the last three years he has been Director of HealthServe, an information resource centre for medical mission. Steve has also an academic background in medical anthropology and works with Global Connections as chair of their Healthcare Mission Forum. He worships with an Anglican Church in Walderslade, Kent.

Steve Fouch

CNI/CSI Relationship Committees

Almost one and a half years after it started the Review Group has now submitted its final report to CCOM and the members of the Church of North India and Church of South India Relationship Committees (CNI/CSI RC). The Review Group consisted of four members of the body under review (Jill Hughes, CofS, Julie Lipp-Nathaniel, USPG, Adrian Watkins, CMS, Surya Prakash, EMS) and the Group's

Secretary and Chair (Kai Funkschmidt and Kathleen Richardson). Simon Barrow (CCOM) and Chris Wigglesworth (Asia Forum Focal Person) were invited to one meeting each.

The CNI/CSI RC, founded in the 1970s under the auspices of the Conference of British Missionary Societies (CBMS, today CCOM), ensure the ecumenical co-operation between the overseas partners of the two united Indian churches in between the rarer meetings in which the Indian side is personally involved. The review was triggered by the imminent retirement of the group secretary Revd Gordon Shaw and a gradual decline in membership of the committees over recent years.

The review took rather a long time because the process was hampered *inter alia* by two things: 1) unclarity about the (existence of a) relationship between CCOM and the CNI/CSI RC, partly due to the fact that the CNI/CSI RC contain non-British/Irish members and 2) the fact that the views of the nature and value of the CNI/CSI RC work differed strongly between the four committees' members on the Review Group and the two coming from outside, with the latter being more critical.

In the end it was resolved to recommend that the CNI/CSI RC should cease to be formally a sub-group of the CCOM Asia Forum and continue purely as a sub-structure of the CNI/CSI partners' networks without any ecumenical accountability within Europe.

The wish of other CCOM member bodies with links to India, but not to CNI or CSI, that the committees widen their remit in order to provide a platform for discussion of wider India business was impossible to fulfil due to the group's specific focus on CNI/CSI. But instead it was agreed that the CCOM Asia Forum should henceforth hold an Annual Conference and give itself a stronger India focus with the help of the committees' members (see the report of the Asia Forum residential above).

The review raised serious questions about the general Forum structure of CCOM and how ecumenical accountability can be ensured. It seems that the more CCOM Forum work is done successfully by volunteers (who replaced desk officers in the post-1990 structures) the greater the danger that Forums and Sub-Groups lose all sense of belonging to the wider network of CCOM member bodies, coming to see themselves as basically free-floating, unlinked to the instrument 'CCOM' which was set up by the churches and agencies. While this need not be a bad thing (an ecumenical instrument is not an end in itself), it is at present not a conscious decision but an unconscious automatic development.

CCOM therefore in its Executive Committee meeting on 9 June not only accepted the review report and its recommendations but also decided to conduct research into the matter of Forum structures in and the implications of the many questions helpfully raised during the review of the CNI/CSI RC.

Kai Funkschmidt

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

Mark Oxbrow

Transforming the Mission of Development: A Response to Daleep Mukarji

In the last issue of CONNECTIONS Christian Aid director Daleep Mukarji offered a reflection on the relationship between 'development and mission' from the point of view of a Christian development agency. Given the importance of the issues e.g. for the question of Christian distinctiveness in diaconal work, relevant not just for development agencies but also for churches and 'their' mission agencies – who since their foundation two centuries ago engaged in what later came to be called 'development aid' or 'development co-operation' – we asked the Church Mission Society for a contribution from their view and experience. We hope to further continue this discussion, which apart from theological questions also raises very practical ones. Readers are invited to comment and contribute their views.

'Do you believe in life before death?' ran one of the more memorable Christian Aid fundraising slogans. Christian mission agencies may well be tempted to respond, 'Yes, certainly but in the final analysis it is life after death that really counts.' This is of course both a false and a misleading dichotomy, but the question takes us immediately to the core issue in Christian mission and development, that is 'Life'. Whether we express our commitment to Christian discipleship through the ministry of a development agency like Christian Aid or a mission agency like the Church Mission Society (CMS), the motivator and the goal is the same – participation for ourselves, the whole human family, and all creation in the Life of the triune God. This is the agenda Jesus set himself and us when he proclaimed amongst the poor of Palestine, 'I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.' (John 10:10)

We may describe the process in which we are engaged as mission or development, or, as I will suggest below, transformation, but always the objective is 'Life', not a better life, or a longer life, or a more fulfilling life, but rather the 'Life' which the Christian scriptures describe as a full participation in the life of God whom we know as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Once we grasp the significance of this single objective then we must call into question all narrow definitions of non-life, such as material poverty, lack of purpose, lack of faith in Christ, etc.

In his article in the last edition of *CONNECTIONS*, Daleep Mukarji helpfully makes the connection (p.23) between John 10:10 and 'kingdom theology', the understanding of mission as the 'making real of the promise of the kingdom'. He goes on to say that 'this promise reveals itself in word and action that empowers the disciples of Christ to be agents of transformation, of liberation and renewal.' In this article I want to show that this transformatory process, which has its eternal origin in the in-breaking kingdom of God, is the life-blood of mission. But first, partly because traditionally we have often thought of both mission and development as being primarily focused on combating poverty, I want to look a little more closely at the concept of 'the poor'.

In his *Walking with the Poor* Bryant Myers maintains a constant focus on both the poor and the non-poor and at every stage of his argument, helping us to see that the poor and the non-poor are both agents and subjects of transformation. Indeed he argues that it is impossible for the kingdom of God to break in unless the non-poor and the poor together seek the transformation which will allow them

to participate in the Life which is promised. The human problem is not poverty alone, we equally have a problem of non-poverty.

In a world dominated by consumerism and a modern/postmodern worldview that values material possessions it is all too easy to think of poverty primarily in terms of the lack of material necessities such as food, shelter, medical care and educational facilities. In his *Empowerment: The Politics of Alternative Development* John Friedman encourages us rather to think of poverty as exclusion from social power in four overlapping domains – the state, the political community, civil society and economic life. The household which is deprived of any meaningful engagement with, or influence upon, these four centres of human community is effectively marginalized, disempowered and rendered incapable of changing its own situation. This concept of poverty as disempowerment was further developed by the Indian development practitioner Jayakumar Christian who identified five sub-systems of disempowerment – the biophysical, the cultural, the social, the spiritual, and the personal. By understanding themselves to be superior, omniscient, and divinely appointed to rule over, or care for, the poor, the non-poor maintain these five systems of entrapment which guarantee the poverty of the poor.

The work of Walter Wink, especially in *Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination* is also important at this point. Wink proposes that Paul's 'principalities and powers' are the 'interiority of earthy institutions or structures or systems'. Whilst maintaining that these human institutions, structures and systems were an integral part of God's creation ordinance, and therefore Kingdom enhancing, Wink goes on to say, 'An institution becomes demonic when it abandons its divine vocation – that of a ministry of justice or a ministry of social welfare – for the pursuit of its own idolatrous goals'.

As the principalities and powers, or the five sub-systems of Jayakumar Christian, are corrupted by sin (rejection of Kingdom-living centred in the reception of divine love) so both the poor and the non-poor alike are entrapped.

Influenced both by Christian and Wink, Bryant Myers maintains that in the final analysis, 'Poverty is a result of relationships that do not work, that are not just, that are not for life, that are not harmonious or enjoyable. Poverty is the absence of *shalom* in all its meanings. At the centre of this understanding of poverty is the idea of the poor not knowing who they are or the reason for which they are created.' Once we

link poverty with this abrogation of human identity we see how both the poor and the non-poor are equally diminished by poverty. Whilst the poor are distorted by a loss of human dignity and an inability to believe in their own significance before God, the non-poor face the distortion of self-aggrandizement and god-complex. In *Three Mile an Hour God* Kosuke Koyama alludes to the same problem for the non-poor. He writes, 'Man is supposed to eat bread. But what if bread eats man? People are dying from over eating today in affluent countries. Man is supposed to live in the house. But what if the house begins to live in the man?'

Having looked in some depth at the concept of poverty, let me now return to our understanding of development and mission. My suggestion is that wherever we are engaged in mission or development our focus must be on Life and those things which prevent the participation of ourselves and others in the divine life which the Triune God desires for us to share in. How do we make this move, for ourselves as much as for the 'other' who is the object of our concern, from entrapment to abundant living? The key for any Christian must be the cross held in the context of the whole life of Christ, cosmic and earthly. In his beautiful description of salvation, Miroslav Volf in *Exclusion and Embrace* writes, 'When God sets out to embrace the enemy, the result is the cross. On the cross the dancing circle of self-giving and mutually indwelling divine persons opens up for the enemy; in the agony of the passion the movement stops for a brief moment and a fissure appears so that sinful humanity can join in (see John 17:21). We, the others – we the enemies – are embraced by the divine persons who love us with the same love with which they love each other and therefore make space for us within their own eternal embrace.' This is the moment of transformation. As that fissure appears and the costly embrace is offered so the whole identity of the 'other' is changed and the relationship between the divine and the 'enemy' is transformed from 'otherness' to 'withinness'.

It is at this point that we begin to see that mission and development, for Christians, are inseparable. If development is simply about changing the physical conditions of the lives of the poor, or even confronting human institutions that entrap the poor, then success will inevitably be limited and the process has only limited claim to being called Christian. If development, on the other hand, is about a process of transformation – the transformation of people and their relationships with themselves, each other, the physical and human environment and with God – then it has become truly Christian, it has become mission.

What does all this mean in practice? Will we end up doing development in a different way? How will development work, and indeed development agencies, relate to the mission of the Church?

Firstly this understanding of development as transformation means that no Christian development intervention or activity is possible without a serious acknowledgement of the spiritual (and religious) context in which it takes place. We need to be clear about how the spiritual context is shaping the self-understanding, the identity, of the people we are working with, what systems of power it generates in the community, and what possibilities for change it allows or precludes. The spiritual context of *karma* for example will put severe limitations on development in some communities. Similarly we must not be blind to our own spiritual context. The development worker (non-poor) whose self-identity is shaped by

a particular theological tradition will engage with the poor in a way, which reflects their own spirituality and this in itself encourages some responses and precludes others.

Secondly development must become an engagement with the whole lives of the people with whom we work, not just their economic or social persona. It is, of course, possible to change the housing conditions of poor people in an informal settlement in Nairobi through the provision of building materials and land, or to improve the health of children in Malawi through the construction of clean water sources and clinics, but such interventions fall a long way short of Christian development which is understood as transformation for 'Life'. The 'beneficiaries' (a telling word in itself) are left with better homes and healthier children but they are still excluded, they are still poor, they remain non-participants in the abundant life of which the gospel speaks. And, what is perhaps even more important, the (non-poor) development worker has also not been transformed. (S)he is still the 'giver', the one with power, the one who is able to 'act as god' in the lives of the poor. Development that is Christian must engage with, and seek transformation of, every aspect of the lives of the poor and the non-poor – economic, social, political, spiritual. This work may not all happen at the same time and the agents of transformation may be different in different aspects of life but the context of each intervention must be holistic.

How people live and what they understand as being susceptible to change or transformation in their lives is largely governed by what they believe about themselves and the human, physical and spiritual context of their existence. Immanuel Kant's work on what he called *Weltanschauung* and the development of this by Michael Kearney and others has enabled us to understand that our *World View* is of immense significance in how we engage with others and how we live our lives. The more interesting, but related, concept, in terms of development practice, is, however, that of 'community narrative'. Much has been written in recent years on 'narrative theology' but it is important to understand that we all tell different stories and that each story is a coming together of several different narrative strands. It is out of these stories that we gain both our identity and our future possibilities – our potentiality for transformation.

At a simplistic level the personal story of any one individual (poor or non-poor) can be understood as the coming together of three stories – the story of his or her community, the story of his or her life and the story of faith to which they hold. If the faith story can be told vividly and meaningfully into the story of my community and my personal experience in life then transformation becomes a possibility. In *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, Lesslie Newbigin suggests that seeing the development story of the community as part of God's larger work in history (God's story, the story of faith) 'offers to all people the possibility of understanding that the meaning and goal of history are not to be found in any projects, or programmes, ideologies and utopia.' Bryan Myers then builds on this saying: 'The fulcrum for transformational change is no longer transferring resources or building capacity or increasing choices, as important as these things are. But these things count only if they take place in a way that allows the poor to recover their true identity and discover the vocation God intends for them.' The telling of the story of God's self-giving love, of the divine embrace manifest on the cross (cf. Volf above), of the inbreaking of a Kingdom of justice and peace, is, for every Christian, an

essential aspect of all development work. As that story is received and owned, as it becomes a part of the personal and corporate story of the poor and the non-poor so identities and relationships are transformed and Life becomes a possibility.

My own mission agency, CMS, continues to wrestle with this understanding of mission and development as transformation. We have committed ourselves to 'evangelistic Mission' and have spent the last year and a half trying to understand what we meant by these words! Is not all mission evangelistic? How do we also own the concept of 'holistic' mission? What 'outcomes' are we looking for or expecting from our work? Are we as ready to be transformed by the Spirit of God as we are anxious for others to be transformed into the image of the triune God? I was helpfully reminded recently that when Jesus called his disciples he appointed them to do three things – to be with him, to be sent out to preach, and to have authority to cast out demons. Later they were commissioned to heal the sick. In our wrestling with 'evangelistic mission' in CMS we are coming to see in this commissioning of the early disciples a useful four-fold pattern of – Life (being with Jesus), Word (preaching the gospel), Deed (healing the sick), and Sign (casting out demons). I believe

that this four-fold pattern of Christian discipleship is as essential for the development worker as it is for the mission worker (or missionary) if we are to witness to the transformational breaking in of the Kingdom of God in the lives of the poor, and the non-poor.

If Christian development and mission agencies, such as Christian Aid and CMS, can agree on the holistic agenda for transformation towards Life that I have tried to spell out in this brief article then we will find that we have much to offer to each other as we serve God together in God's world. As our organizational stories are transformed by the narrative of the gospel the deceptions of power, competition, and spiritual jealousy, will be transformed and we will better, together, walk with the poor who are God's favoured children.

I end with a final quotation from Kwame Bediako who writes (in *Biblical Perspectives on Transformational Development*, an unpublished paper quoted by Bryant Myers in *Walking with the Poor*), that transforming people begins with helping people discover that 'their human dignity and identity are intrinsically related to God in Christ through his redemptive purpose in salvation history.'



Changing Communities

By Jeanne Hinton and Peter B. Price

Published by: Churches Together in Britain and Ireland

Price: £7.95 112 pages, ISBN 0851692842 Published April 2003

How can the churches in Britain and Ireland flourish in the face of rapid change, cultural variety, non-traditional spirituality, social division and secular assumptions? Many say the answer is a 'new way of being church'. But what does this mean in practical terms? In *Changing Communities* Jeanne Hinton and Peter B. Price offer hands-on advice. Hinton and Price have worked together for over ten years as part of New Way of Being Church, a team that is involved in creating processes for change in church and society. *Changing*

Communities combines their experience and knowledge and provides examples of vitality and growth from small Christian communities across the world.

Peter B. Price is the Anglican Bishop of Bath and Wells and has thirty years experience of ministry. Jeanne Hinton has spent many years living with and writing about different kinds of Christian community. She facilitates workshops on storytelling and community development.

Book Reviews

Changing Communities

Jeanne Hinton and Peter B. Price: *'Changing Communities: Church from the Grassroots'*, London: Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, 2003. 90pp, £7.95

Back in the middle years of the last century, the British mainstream churches looked to the future with considerable confidence. Their structures were being modernized. Their congregations were keeping up. Their place in civil society seemed assured. And evangelists like Billy Graham still drew huge numbers – many of whom fed into the churches afterwards. Change, if it had to come, would be handled with caution and with circumspection – evolution, not revolution, would be the way ahead.

That said, there were, even then, signs that Harold MacMillan's famous 'wind of change' was not confined solely to the sphere of international politics. Even earlier, in the '30s, George MacLeod in Glasgow's depressed shipbuilding parish of Govan had warned that radical action was needed if the Church was not to lose all credibility in the new housing schemes of the land. Ted Wickham, in 1957 in Sheffield, was saying something similar about the inner city. The Bishop of Woolwich, in 1963, caught the attention of the popular press, and of the increasingly secular spirit of the times, with *'Honest to God'*. Debate was growing about the place of the laity in the mission of the Church; the World Council of Churches' programme on 'The Missionary Structure of the Congregation' was beginning to energeise the local congregations to see mission as starting, as it was later phrased, 'on the pavement outside the church's front door.' And on the pavement, in Scotland at least, MacLeod's Iona Community members were beginning to experiment with new approaches to congregational life; while in Glasgow's Gorbals, throughout the '60s, the Gorbals Group Ministry were trying what would now be seen as 'a new way of being church'.

Into this confused situation, Roger Schutz, prior of the reformed religious community of Taizé in the south of France, dropped his startling statement that we were witnessing 'a spring-time of the Church'.

At the time, this seemed to be a rather over-optimistic view. True, there were exciting things happening – but the mainstream churches gave no signs of intending to make radical changes to the way things were being done. And at the time, some of us on the edge of the church, excited by the new things but increasingly frustrated by what felt like the complacency of the institution, were more inclined to think that things would need to die before new life could appear. Indeed, the air felt more autumnal than vernal to many.

Was Schutz right? Forty-odd years later, it is pretty hard to argue that he was. True, surveys show that a majority in Britain professes belief, of some sort, in God. Church attendances probably well outstrip voting figures in local elections. But it would be hard to find any who would argue that the mainstream churches are in anything but serious and rapid decline on every front. Well over a century ago, Matthew Arnold wrote of the 'melancholy, long withdrawing roar [of the] sea of faith, retreating to the

breath of the night-wind down the vast edges, drear and naked shingles of the world.' Looking around the churches of Britain today, would he not have felt his prophecy well founded?

What has been the response of the mainstream churches to this situation over the last half century? Perhaps the most radical response has come from the Roman Catholic Church. The reforms of Vatican II surely attempted to reach to the very roots of that church's understanding of itself. Inevitably, in such a widespread denomination, it is patchy – and always the business is unfinished. But there can be no doubt that new life has begun to appear in many places.

Elsewhere, serious attempts have been made to respond to the rapidly deteriorating situation. From above, as it were, have come reviews like the Committee of Forty in Scotland, 'Faith in the City' in England. At ground level, clergy, now fewer and further between in every denomination, have increasingly sought to find new ways of fulfilling their traditional role; although the truth is that, overall, their traditional role is what the majority of church-goers, and indeed others, still want them to fulfil. A wealth of new worship material has been, and is still being, produced, some of it of outstanding quality. But again, the truth is that it is still mainly being used within church walls by an ever-decreasing number of worshippers. Incredibly, in Scotland, the only serious attempt to offer university-standard training to lay people has been abandoned, due it would seem to the unwillingness of the central boards of the participating denominations to pay for it.

Against this, in Scotland again, there is the attempt, in the recent 'Church Without Walls' report, to stimulate congregations to explore new ways of relating, for instance, to the club culture of today's 20- and 30-somethings. Most denominations are trying to take very much more seriously the Gospel commitment to bring 'good news to the poor'. And in England, as well as the many local ecumenical experiments, there are encouraging signs of new thinking in the field of pastoral and sacramental support for the local church.

In recent years, we have begun to see hopeful signs of new life from below, in many cases drawing inspiration from the practise and theology of the grassroots churches of the developing world. In Scotland, one of the main Assembly Boards of the Church of Scotland has started producing material documenting local stories of new ways of doing the church's work in the secular world, under the title of 'Good News for a Change'. The Churches' Community Work Alliance has been doing sterling work in seeking to map examples of church related community work throughout the country. And now, out of the New Way of Being Church project, and the Building Bridges of Hope initiative of the CTBI's Churches' Commission on Mission, comes *Changing Communities; Church from the Grassroots*, the sequel to *Changing Churches* (2002).

In essence, this book is suggesting that 'small Christian communities', as they describe them, are the best hope yet for changing the church. As the authors say in their introduction, 'it tells some stories and provides some

practical ideas for creating, developing and maintaining communities of faith and witness in our time.'

The experience of the two authors is obviously crucial here, and to me this is one of the book's strongest points. Jeanne Hinton writes out of long experience of a whole variety of Christian communities. Peter Price is an Anglican bishop, also with a wide experience in this field. They have both written on these issues before. Together, they seem to me to offer a balanced approach, from the edge and from the centre, as it were, of how small Christian communities can help to change the Church.

Such an approach is badly needed. Too often, there has seemed to be a sort of polarization. Either people seem to see hope for change in the Church as *only* coming from the edge – or *only* coming from within. Here, both in the way they tell their stories and in the way they analyse elements within them, the authors make it very clear that, while there are bound to be differences of emphasis, it is *both/and*, not *either/or*.

They begin, it seems to me, in the right place, and with the right questions. They start by looking, not at the structures of the church, but at the needs of the world, and the growing of God's kingdom, as one case study they cite puts it, 'in the nitty-gritty day-to-day loose ends of life.' The questions are, not 'how do we ensure the survival of the Church' but how, for instance, can there be 'a Church *of* the people rather than *for* the people?' (c.f. Julio de Santa Ana's seminal *Towards a Church of the Poor*, WCC 1979), 'what is the church *for*?' and 'what is culture?'

The central working chapters, as it were, of this short, very readable book, should be required reading for all charged with leadership in today's Church. 'Taking practical steps', 'Building community', 'The whole of life', are refreshingly down-to-earth, full of helpful examples, and offer very sensible and exciting thinking on how, for instance, to use the Bible to build up small Christian communities, and how to pay proper attention to the complex human dynamics of community building. Taken together, they are, as indeed is this whole book, a powerful antidote to the debilitating individualization that has so paralysed the life of the church in British society over the last thirty years.

The chapter I had to read not once, not twice, but three times – and the chapter, therefore, that has really set me furiously to consider! – is their penultimate one, 'Making a Difference'. This is where the authors raise the hugely challenging question – how exactly can 'small Christian communities' engage with the traditional church structures in such a way as actually to bring about change?

What are the issues here? How to move from a church organized on the old top-down model, led by clergy and committees, to a church growing organically, based on small groups which grow into real communities? How to do this without splitting the local congregation into 'traditionalists' and 'radicals', those who prefer to work with the old model and those who are impatient for something new – and run the risk of cliques and elitism? How to use the Sunday liturgy to find new and dynamic ways of still telling 'the old, old story'? How to ensure that there is a proper place for faith-based celebration, so that the church doesn't become just another arm of the welfare state? And how, in all this, to provide for the people who know themselves to be so crippled, so trapped, so needy that they

have no energy left for anything except to allow themselves to be held, embraced, and fed?

The authors address many – but not all – of these issues in this chapter. You will judge for yourself just how far they deal with them convincingly. When I came to the end of the book, if it is any indication of what I think of it, I immediately ordered three more copies for the staff of our local congregation, and I've been recommending it to everyone I can, ever since! This book will not, of course, save the Church. But I think we owe Jeanne Hinton and Peter Price a huge debt of gratitude for writing it. I am convinced that what they are writing about is exactly the sort of things we should all be thinking about, and more importantly acting upon, today. If Roger Schutz were to read it, I hope he might feel that his 'spring-time of the church' was not so far away, after all.

John Harvey

Lynne Price: Hollenweger Biography

Lynne Price: Theology Out of Place. A Theological Biography of Walter Hollenweger, Journal of Pentecostal Theology Supplement Series 23, London-New York: Sheffield Academic Press 2002, 169 pp., pbk £18.99 hdb £55

An excellent book on an outstanding person. Lynne Price manages in her own style of writing to reflect Walter Hollenweger's approach to theology in two ways:

1. By writing a 'theological biography' she pays tribute to Hollenweger's call for a narrative approach to theology. And indeed, it would be impossible to merely analyse his theological thinking without embedding it into his biography.
2. She never engages in a polemic discussion with Hollenweger's theology. Throughout the book she points out that he himself never got entangled in polemic debates with his theological 'opponents'. He might have provoked his readers and audience in order to stir up further thoughts, but refused to enter all polemic/defensive discussions. Lynne's work on Hollenweger mirrors 'the same spirit'.

After having presented a brief outline of Hollenweger's career, Lynn discusses 1) his theological methodology, 2) his narrative approach to exegesis and his understanding of the Bible, 3) his concept of an intercultural theology that no longer is dominated by the categories of the Western academia, 4) his understanding of mission, and 5) his approach to pneumatology.

Right at the beginning of her book Lynne warns, so to speak, her readers: 'Walter Hollenweger is difficult to locate in accepted categories of mission or theologizing. He is unconventional, sometimes contentious, never irrelevant.' (p.3). Because he is so difficult to locate in accepted categories, it is very appropriate of her to start the section on his biography with his own prayer of the frog as an in-between creature (p.4). It seems that this prayer presents Lynne with a sort of a hermeneutical key for Hollenweger's life and academic work. This frog as a symbol for Hollenweger's own self-understanding also accounts for his constant reference to society, the academic world and the Church in his theological work (p.26). He never understood himself as a theologian 'only for the Church', or only for

academics. Whatever he did had to be relevant to all the 'publics' (church, academic, society).

This in-between creature is then especially well captured in her discussion of his understanding of the Bible: 'He is conservative with regard to the centrality of the Bible, but radical with regard to its interpreters and interpretations' (p.63). Rarely has someone grasped so well his almost unshakable confidence in critical biblical scholarship as well as is unwavering commitment to the significance of the Bible for the Church and society.

Lynne's discussion of Hollenweger's intercultural theology, which is also truly an ecumenical approach, and his understanding of mission are presented as natural consequences of his call for a more narrative approach to a theology that is relevant for the entire world and not simply the Western universities.

She concludes her book discussing Hollenweger's pneumatology, pointing out that there is no systematic discussion of it. According to Lynne it is a 'very unusual combination of knowledge and experience' (p.125), giving due attention to creation. She summarizes it as follows: 'The 'cards' are from the standard deck but some have rarely been brought into play in this game. Hollenweger brings diverse perspectives into dialogue with the effect, not of reducing variety to a false synthesis, but of revitalizing reflection' (p.148).

Lynne's book on this Swiss theologian who has among many other things brought Pentecostalism into the 'theological awareness of the West', enables any reader to get a first and excellent exposure to the theological thinking of a person who is 'difficult to locate in accepted categories' and 'seems strangely at home in a situation of reappraisal, fragmentation and redistribution of power' (p.4).

Mathias Wenk

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See also p.37.

Christians and Muslims in the Commonwealth

Anthony Mahoney and Ataullah Siddiqui (edd.): Christians and Muslims in the Commonwealth. A Dynamic Role in the Future, London: Altajir World of Islam Trust 2001, 330 pp. £15.00

In July 2000, about eighty Christians, Muslims and others with a concern for Christian-Muslim relations, gathered from around the Commonwealth for a conference in the hospitable surroundings of Cumberland Lodge, Windsor. This volume, admirably edited by Anthony O'Mahony and Ataullah Siddiqui, is a record of that gathering. It was published in September 2001, a month which in some sense marked the beginning of a new, and generally more difficult, chapter in Muslim-Christian relations. Yet reading again these contributions, both Muslim and Christian, this reviewer was forcibly reminded of the continuities which can so often be ignored in the trauma and flurry of the latest global crisis: the continuity of seriously urgent practical agendas to address together, the continuity of deep theological interchanges to explore together, and – fragile and endangered but none the less real – the continuity of

genuine friendship and trust to celebrate together in hope for the future.

The book includes overarching surveys of the role of religion in society, more detailed perspectives on Christian-Muslim relations in particular parts of the Commonwealth, and three fine concluding pieces: a characteristically dense but elegant meditation by Kenneth Cragg on the meaning of compassion for a world seeking 'commonweal' amidst 'commonwoe'; a sensitive and moving reflection on the gathering itself by Christopher Lamb; and a sermon by John Oviden which struggles with the expression of spirituality in the symbol of an interwoven Christian-Muslim 'quilt of faith'. The centre of gravity for me, though, lies in the two theological essays contributed by the two authors, each writing from the perspective of their own faith.

Ataullah Siddiqui provides a careful mapping of modern Islamic responses to Christian mission, the way in which this has been perceived by many Muslims to be linked to a secular agenda, and the impact of organized missionary activities in leading to an institutionalization of traditional *da'wab* ('invitation' to Islam). This is on one level a brilliant *tour de force* – Siddiqui begins his piece by quoting none other than Bishop Lesslie Newbigin to blame 'missionaries in India and Africa' for secularization, and later rather

mischievously points out that the notorious Islamic controversialist Ahmed Deedat 'discovered his skills of debate and argument when American evangelical missionaries based across the road where he lived [in Durban] hounded him'. At a deeper level, though, Siddiqui suggests, with an almost uncanny foresight, to the fear that 'the harm which can be done to religion by religious extremism may well surpass any such harm by secular extremism'. Here, surely, is the authentic voice of one who genuinely seeks, like faithful Christians, for ways in which the name of God should be honoured in our divided world.

Anthony O'Mahony's account of modern Christian (in fact, largely Roman Catholic) responses to Islam is pivoted around the extraordinary figure of Louis Massignon, who recognized Muhammad as an authentic prophet, at least in the negative sense of a vigorous repudiator of any compromise of monotheism. O'Mahony points out Massignon's influence on later Islamic thinkers, and identifies him also as the most important figure to help mould a new theological attitude to Islam before the Second Vatican Council. He quotes Claude Geffré to the effect that Muslims and Christians should 'vie with each other in seeking a God who is always greater' – and in so doing, open up the real differences in emphasis between two authentic monotheisms: that built on the Islamic principle of *tawhid* ('unity'), and that which expresses itself as Christian Trinitarianism.

It is perhaps a measure of the reality and depth of the interaction between Christians and Muslims portrayed in this excellent volume that the traditional stereotypes which either holds of the other should be shattered in this way, with Siddiqui as a Muslim focusing on the secular as an indispensable factor in mission and O'Mahony as a Christian highlighting the nature of monotheism as central to the life of faith.

Michael Ipgrave

Denys Turner: Seeking Faith and

Steven Shakespeare: Kierkegaard

Denys Turner: Seeking Faith, London: SCM Press, 2002, ISBN 0-334-02888-4, £9.95 pbk.

Steven Shakespeare: Kierkegaard. Language and the Reality of God, Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2001, ISBN 0-7546-1561-8, £42.50 hbk.

How do we Christians give an appropriate account of the shape and grounds of the hope within us? The question of what is (perhaps unhelpfully) called 'apologetics' lies not very far from the surface of any meaningful encounter between the language of faith and the culture of context. This is the broad concern of the Mission Theological Advisory Group (co-convened ecumenically by the CTBI Churches' Commission on Mission and the Board of Mission of the Church of England) at the moment.

As these two fine books remind us, the issue is not just one of rhetoric – language designed to persuade – but of intellectual integrity, engagement, hope and compassion. Moreover, to speak faithfully in a religiously plural and functionally secular world is always to speak, at some level or another, of fundamental categories of belief: the nature,

identity and communication of God. And for that we need tough thought as well as prayerful action.

In different ways Denys Turner, Norris-Hulse Professor of Divinity in the University of Cambridge, and Steven Shakespeare, vicar of St Augustine's Church in Sheffield, share these concerns. Their aim is to help us to move forward in thinking and practice. Turner does this through a collection of stimulating, provocative and (carefully) readable talks and sermons. They all converge on his central conviction about the congruence of heart and head in matters of faith. He has divided his reflections into five broad sections, concerning the 'otherness' of the divine; politics, piety and the Church; remembering; prayer; and the intellectual love of God.

Turner is both a theologian of his time and a theologian out of time. He is acutely engaged with the questions raised by 'cultured despisers' of Christianity over the centuries. But he also speaks of the confusions and wounds of everyday life in a cosmopolitan society. Through all this he retains a thoughtful confidence in the capacity of the Christian tradition, and especially the tradition of mystics and subversives, to help us navigate such choppy waters. However this is only possible, he suggests, through new perspectives on old subjects, and through an iconoclastic honesty about the solipsism and sentimentality that can characterize both dogmatic belief and dogmatic non-belief. Above all, he says, we need to understand that we are located in an 'unseeable light' and an 'unknowable horizon' that flows from the heart of God.

Steven Shakespeare pursues a not dissimilar course in a different way. Whereas hard-pressed ministers might warm to a collection of theological cameos, an expensive hardback organized around an exploration of Søren Kierkegaard's 'indirect communication' sounds less promising. Certainly it takes us way beyond the world and words of daily parochial life. But it is these that still take up much of the author's time and that shape his passionate intellectual interest in what kind of reality God is.

Shakespeare suggests that metaphysical realism (which confidently posits objectivity in things human and divine) and philosophical anti-realism (which denies the independent existence of God outside our language and beliefs) have dominated debates about God for too long. Having lost a proper sense of 'the other', of transcendence, they therefore both tend to collapse argument, to tame reality and to domesticate religion. The result can be cheap faith and cheap anti-faith in the arena of public discussion.

Contesting the way that both camps have selectively enlisted Kierkegaard, Shakespeare argues instead for a form of 'ethical realism' in which the otherness of God is discovered in the making of liberating signs in the world and through the human inter-subjectivity by which word becomes flesh. His book is a tough read, but well worth the effort. It is full of energy and precision. Shakespeare is convinced of the transforming reality of the God we meet in Christ, and for this reason he challenges both believers and sceptics to remove the ideological shackles by which that transformation is most readily avoided. While abstract in form, his aim is missionary (though not proselytizing) in essence.

Simon Barrow

Michael Oleksa: Orthodox Alaska

Michael Oleksa: Orthodox Alaska: A Theology of Mission, New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press 1998, 252 pp. £9.99 [obtainable through Orthodox Christian Books Ltd., Newcastle-under-Lyme, orthbook@aol.com]

The 1790s were a remarkable decade for missions. But it is not always known that alongside the founding of the Baptist Missionary society in 1792, the London Missionary Society in 1795 and the Church Missionary Society in 1799, the Russian Orthodox Mission to Alaska began with the arrival of a group of Russian monks there in 1794.

I first came across an account of what in many ways is a model for missionary activity in an article in an Orthodox Journal in 1994 celebrating its 200th anniversary. The secret of its success was that it was initially led by monks who were keen to adopt indigenous languages and culture and world-view as the basis for their worship and teaching. At the same time they defended the Alaskans against unjust exploitation by Russian traders. Over the years the Russian Orthodox also created a bi-cultural church, through the ministry of lay people and clergy many of whom were half-Russian half-Aleut. It is interesting to note that that this was part of a continuing Orthodox eastward-moving missionary development, which began in Central Siberia and included Japan, Korea, and China. In Alaska, however, the long-established Orthodox Church eventually came into conflict with Western administrators and missionaries who had very different ideas about and approaches to indigenous languages and culture and Christianity. 'For Alaskan Orthodoxy', writes Michael Oleksa, 'Unity is based on plurality of culture and identity of faith, doctrine and liturgy. Assimilation into mono-lingual Anglo-American society has been resolutely rejected.'

Orthodox Alaska tells in full the fascinating story of Alaskan Christianity. It opens with an introduction to the intellectual and spiritual life of Alaskan native peoples prior to their first contacts with Russian missionaries, and emphasizes the need still today to affirm 'the essentially spiritual world views of traditional peoples'. A first historical survey then looks back at the initial evangelization of Russia in the ninth century and at the history, doctrine and patterns of worship of the Russian Orthodox Church as it developed over the next few centuries. This will be a particularly helpful section for those not already acquainted with the life and teachings of the Orthodox Church. It ends with some account of those 'explorers, exploiters and entrepreneurs' who first came over the Behring straits from Russia to Alaska in the eighteenth century, and created the situation into which the first missionaries came – with all the ambiguities of exploitation on the one hand and on the other, intermarriage and the fathering of hundreds of bilingual children whom they baptized, and so 'prepared the ground for the sowing of the seed, the Gospel message brought by eight monks from Valaam monastery'.

The second major section of the book covers the course of the Russian Orthodox mission, its problems, particularly its conflicts with the Russian traders, its welcome by the people of Alaska, its hardships and its eventual establishment. One of their priorities was to open a school, since they believed that 'training indigenous clergy was absolutely necessary for the growth and stability of the church'. Among the first missionaries were the martyr

Iuvenalii and the saintly Father Herman, who was later canonized. The latter was described as 'a traditional Orthodox ascetic, who spent his nights in prayer, his days in physical work and service, continually fasting, constantly joyful, welcoming every opportunity to be of assistance to others'. Another priest who was later canonized was Innokenty Veniaminov, who was a remarkable scholar and pastor, who developed the educational work of the mission on sound foundations, and served first as Bishop of Alaska, and then in 1868 was made Metropolitan of Moscow, where he maintained a keen interest in missionary work and inaugurated the Orthodox Missionary Society. (Did any other missionary bishops become archbishops of their home church, either then or later?) This section ends with a chapter on 'The Development of an Indigenous Orthodox Culture'. This concludes with an account of the sale of Alaska by Russia to the United States in 1867, and its consequences. At first it was hoped that this would help to create a single Orthodox Church in the United States. But, by the time of the Russian Revolution in 1917, it was clear that the majority of the half a million or so Orthodox in the United States were more concerned to maintain their links with their national churches in the 'Old World' than to become part of the Russian/Alaskan Church of which they knew little. The other tragic consequence of the sale of Alaska to the USA was that this brought with it a public social and educational policy of assimilationism and, as the final Section of this book is entitled, attempts at 'The Suppression of Alaskan Orthodoxy'.

However, the life of the Orthodox Church in Alaska continues, despite the problems it encountered throughout the twentieth century. The book's sub-title is *A Theology of Mission* and it ends with a chapter on 'Alaska's Enduring Orthodox Heritage' and a Conclusion which summarizes for today both 'The Church's Mission to Alaska' and 'Alaska's Mission to the Church'. It includes these words:

In 1794, the first Orthodox missionary monks arrived in Kodiak to found what they believed would be an indigenous Orthodox Church in the New World, not an overseas ecclesiastical colony of the Russian, Greek or Syrian churches, nor a church 'in exile' from some other place...The mission understood its function in cosmic terms: to sanctify, here and now, this land, these people, and bring them to the unity-in-love which is the goal of all authentic Christian mission.

Archpriest Oleksa has been an Alaskan Orthodox missionary for nearly thirty years. He has studied in Slovakia and in Moscow and is now Dean of St Herman's Seminary in Kodiak, Alaska. *Orthodox Alaska: A Theology of Mission* will teach us much about Orthodox Mission and its message to us all. I just wish such an excellent account of its history had also included some maps to help us understand its geography better!

Colin Davey

Dialogue with Muslims in Britain

Dialogue. A CMS study pack for use in small groups. £10.00 from Church Mission Society (info@cms-uk.org) – 020 7928 8681 [There are no other publisher or ISBN details in the pack]

The Church Mission Society has produced a welcome resource to help Christians relate to Muslims and Islam.

A variety of 'sharing faith with Muslims' resources have become available in recent years. Many helpfully adopt an approach that builds on friendship and mutual sharing of life and faith – loving your neighbour as you love yourself. Some are weak. They basically look at Islam as a 'religion' (not as a lived faith), or else their primary purpose is to provide Christians with a robust apologetic with which to counter Muslim 'error'.

One intention of 'Dialogue' is to encourage genuine two-way communication between Christians and Muslims, and to help people connect with each other. The last of the course's four sections looks at sharing faith, and whether Jesus is a bridge or a barrier to dialogue. But the purpose of the course is *not* to set up Christians to coldly evangelize. The motivating principle is to encourage friendship and mutuality – a context of honesty in which Christians will inevitably share the faith that is at the heart of their life.

A second intention of the course is to help foster Christian understanding of Muslims. The course uses a strap line 'Muslims before Islam'. Although this phrase is open to misinterpretation, it nevertheless is a helpful summary of what is being offered here – encouraging Christians to relate to people (as God's children) and not to fall into the trap of thinking of Islam as a monochrome system or culture.

The first part of the course looks at '11 September'. In some ways I found this the least helpful part of 'Dialogue', perhaps because it is tricky to explore such complex and multi-layered issues in a simple study. In that environment there is the risk that people will be sharing their ignorance rather than be seriously challenged to look and think differently. However, the session is important, because it is overwhelmingly the context in which much media debate about Islam takes place, and because it permits important insights into both the variety of Muslim (and Christian) thought and practice, and the variety of Muslim (and Christian) response. This first session also touches on Muslim-Christian difficulties in other countries – an important issue because some Christians easily base their assessment of Muslims in Britain on what they hear reported about Muslim-Christian conflict in Indonesia, the Philippines or elsewhere.

The second session looks at how Muslims understand and connect with God – 'How do Muslims seek God?' The third session looks at Muslims in Britain, and this session is enormously helped by an accompanying video. Here UK Muslims from different ages, genders and ethnicities talk about their experiences of how Islam is lived and believed. It is easy for Christian literature to distort and misrepresent. But here Muslims are given space for their own voice. Those interviewed are an interesting, fun and devout group of people – people with whom most Christians would sense an affinity, and people it would be interesting to get to know better.

Also included in the pack are some common questions that get asked about Muslims and Islam, and some guidelines for Christians witnessing to Muslims. There is also a (brief) reading and resource list, and 'A Brief Guide to Islam' produced by the Muslim Educational Trust – Muslims giving their own outline of their faith.

Although this is a CMS product, its relevance is not limited to CMS supporters (although it would have been encouraging to see contact information for other agencies in addition to CMS). It is a resource that shows Islam as a lived faith, that encourages mutual respect and understanding, but which also encourages Christians to go beyond the bland and well-intentioned (almost mutually patronizing) types of 'dialogue' to share life and faith. I enjoyed the material, and I think it would be helpful in a wide variety of church settings.

Robert Freeman

Received for Review

Inclusion in this section does not necessarily imply that a book will be reviewed in CONNECTIONS.

Gregory Heille (ed.): Theology of Preaching. Essays on Vision and Mission in the Pulpit, London: Melisende 2001, £8.95 pbk, 128 pp.

Keith Clements: The Churches in Europe as Witnesses of Healing, Geneva: WCC 2003, £10.50 pbk, 140 pp

John Atherton: Marginalization, London: SCM Press 2003, £14.99 pbk, 210 pp.

Some new articles for download on the CCOM website www.ccom.org.uk

Andrew Clayton: Minority Faiths, Human Rights and the Role of Mission in Asia Today from a Christian Aid perspective

Dominic Moghal: Working Alongside Muslims In Pakistan

Karin Ulmer: The EU, Africa and the Churches: European Partnership Agreements. Results From A Research Project

Klaus Schäfer: Minority Faiths, Human Rights and the Role of Mission in Asia Today. Lessons from the Indian Context

Anton Wessels: Faith in the World after 11 September

Kai M. Funkschmidt: Partnership Between Unequals - Mission Impossible?

Tim Webb: Un-Christian Colonialism and Christian Anti-colonialism in Cymru/Wales



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and not necessarily of CCOM or CTBI, their commissions
or member bodies.

For reflection

A conversation between the Orthodox priest and a young man from his parish, now a communist partizan in the Greek civil war (1945-49) after the partizans have taken the priest prisoner:

'Wherever I may stand, my Pelikare, mind you, for this is my nature - never will there be another standing before me to protect me but God alone.'

'In real danger, priest Jannaros, you will see that the God of which you speak will desert you.'

'But I won't desert him! Wherever he goes, I cling onto the corner of his robe, I won't let him go!'

Nikos Kazantzakis, *Fratricide*

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The last word

