



Churches' Commission
on Mission

CONNECTIONS

Resourcing ecumenism and mission

Vol. 8 (2004)

Issue 2

Editorial

Burg Linn is a wee hamlet on the Lower Rhine in Germany, picturesque to look at today, poor and inconspicuous in history, dominated by its small strongly-walled water castle. From 1678 Linn was occupied by the forces of Louis XIV attempting to annex the lands to the left of the Rhine. A garrison of French soldiers lay in the castle. Then came the war that would drive Louis back from all the annexed territories except Alsace. Advancing forces from Brandenburg reached Linn and laid siege to the castle. Patience carried the day and after a few skirmishes plus a final battle later on 12 March 1689 the French surrendered. Soldiers and prisoners left and peace returned to this forgotten corner of the world. It now fell to the villagers to bury the dead. And that was when they were faced with a dilemma: the French were enemies but Roman Catholic brothers in faith. By contrast the Brandenburgers were countrymen and liberators – but Protestant infidels. They could not possibly go into the churchyard. So the villagers proceeded to bury the French fallen in a mass grave inside the cemetery, and the Brandenburgers in individual graves just outside its walls. They thus did their religious duty to the Catholic French and at the same time honoured their countrymen as best they could by bestowing on them an honour highly unusual for soldiers at this time: they gave them individual graves (probably nevertheless thinking their souls would go to hell).



The episode illustrates humans' basic inclination to form identities through group adherence and how we try to balance them if they are in conflict. It also shows

how faith both enables *and* limits humane action beyond the group. All group identities are based on similarity among insiders and distinction from outsiders. They use markers, which can be cultural, ethnic, national, linguistic (think of the 'Shibboleth' episode in Judges 12!) or religious. The human urge to group adherence is so strong that groups can be formed completely arbitrarily, being sociologically indistinguishable, such as rival football club supporters. The phenomenon, expressing the fundamentals of humans as a social animals, is by no means all negative. It is the basis of solidarity and mutual support. But there is more

to that. Mano Rumalshah, Bishop of Peshawar and former General Secretary of USPG, often demanded more practical Christian group identity (viz 'solidarity') saying: 'If a Christian gets killed in Pakistan, the world barely registers it, if a Muslim anywhere has his finger cut, a billion Muslims around the world are out in the streets'. Indeed – but whence our unease at the example? Where does solidarity end and religious tribalism start? To what degree does and to what degree should our belonging to a faith group shape our identity? And what if religious identity and another, say national identity come into conflict as with the peasants of Burg Linn? *They* found a way of honouring both. But Christian pacifists in 1914 were unsuccessful in their appeals that faith in Christ should supersede national rivalry. Religious group identity seems on the one hand extremely strong and on the other depressingly powerless. Aware of its ambiguity many in the West do not think highly of group identity in general, and we'd often rather it did not exist. The *Church Times* recently published a cartoon commenting on the crisis in Sudan. It showed a billboard 'Welcome to a new division of Sudan'. Underneath this sentence various explanations of the conflict were ruled out: Instead it suggested the reading 'AFRICAN vs AFRICAN'. But only over-individualized Westerners can live in such denial of how strongly group belonging and logically implied distinction from other groups is the fabric of human identity for better or worse. All world faiths contribute to it and at the same time to its overcoming – through their universal claims from which the notion of One Humankind derive in the first place. Yet the truth is that the 'one human family' hardly shapes our identity.

It is en years since the slaughter in Rwanda. People around the world were startled and for many it remained unclear what actually the group distinction between Tutsi and Hutu was. But they were apparently very real. A frequent frustrated observation was that Rwanda was among the most 'Christianized' countries in Africa – and that this had almost no visibly restraining effect. Underneath the surface, it emerged, like in many societies group distinctions had all along been strong – but in public life they were a taboo. In his article Jörg Zimmermann, a missionary who was there at the time, describes how he too, was fooled by the silence on a topic that many thought was of the past (p.2ff). The example shows dramatically how dangerous it can be to assume that we can solve politically incorrect issues by oppressing debate or even thinking about them.

Kai Funkschmidt, Editor

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Jörg Zimmermann

Experiences of the Rwandan Genocide (Part 1)

This is the first part of a report by a former missionary in Rwanda for a workshop 'German Development Aid Workers and the Genocide in Rwanda - Ten Years On' held 12 March 2004 at the Institute for African Studies, Hamburg University. The second part will follow in the next issue and the whole article will appear on the website www.ctbi.org.uk/com.

1. My function at the time

Between July 1991 and April 1994 I worked for the United Evangelical Mission (UEM), Wuppertal, in Kigali/Rwanda as minister of the *Église Presbytérienne au Rwanda*. My task was: directing a socio-pastoral centre on Mburabuturo Hill, Secteur Gikondo in a socially deprived area (work with street children and work on HIV/Aids). I also worked in a service office for all UEM missionaries in the region. My wife was leader of the francophone Presbyterian congregation in Kigali where I was also involved as a minister and choir leader.

2. Confrontation with what aspects of the genocide?

a) 'Approach' phase

- Regular consumption of various media: radio, mainly the *Revue de la Presse Rwandaise*
- Occasional contact with the militia
- Exchange with friends and colleagues about fears re the war, increasing radicalization of the extremists, the ever-growing tensions, particularly the safety situation
- Involved in starting the peace initiative *Dubaranire amaboro!* ('Let us struggle for peace') as an attempt to counter the permanently worsening situation
- 'Prelude' to the genocide in February 1994: massacre in Gikondo, among the victims one colleague and her husband; refugees in our centre; as a result polemics against our centre in *Radio et Télévision Libre des Mille Collines* (RTLTM); we move to Kimihurura; at times accommodating a friend overnight who felt threatened

b) 6 – 10 April 1994

- Indirectly present at the murders by the Presidential Guard in Kimihurura
- First news about murdered friends and colleagues via phone
- Flight to Burundi, witnessing threats towards a neighbour travelling with us
- Experienced distressing reactions of my then five year old son (some of them continuing until long afterwards)

c) Mid April to July 1994

- Back in Germany. Continuous flow of news about mass murders in general and friends and colleagues in particular
Co-founding and later heading the 'Initiative for Peace for Rwanda'
- Many attempts to publicly denounce the genocide and coax international, mainly Western politics to intervene

d) Since then

- Attempt to re-establish and maintain contact with survivors
- Seven trips to Rwanda, including sometimes the refugee camps, many conversations
- Participate in many attempts to come to terms with the disaster, *inter alia* the 'First National Summit for Unity and Reconciliation Among Rwandans' and – particularly dear to me – in drafting, spreading and discussing the 'Detmold Confession'

3. Experience Report (two selected episodes)

a) The Flight

My son and I spent 2½ days full of fear together with our new left-hand neighbour (Rwandan Tutsi) at the house of our right-hand neighbour, a German *Bundeswehr* soldier working as an advisor to the Rwandan Armed Forces (my wife and daughter were in another part of the country and fled independently). During this time all our contact to the outside world had broken down (no electricity, no water, radio transmitter batteries empty) until we heard one neighbour daring to restart his generator which until then nobody had done for fear of attracting the military's attention. Since apparently nothing happened to this neighbour, more and more people gradually restarted their generators. We now had electricity again and soon we heard of a convoy leaving the country due to depart from the American School. Since this school was very close we joined this convoy. Our neighbour at first was fearful but then realized she would be far more unsafe staying alone behind.

... all our contact to the outside world had broken down, no electricity, no water, radio transmitter batteries empty

So we left and passed several places where there were dead lying in the streets – not in such quantities as would later be seen on television. Militia were lining the streets and my neighbour tried to hide behind the white 'flag' (a bed sheet) which we all had in our cars. Still she was threatened with shouts and gestures. Fortunately nothing worse happened although we were only allowed to drive very slowly.

We passed the first and second military checkpoint amazingly fast and had no particular problems. At a third checkpoint, far outside the city at the bridge across the Nyabarongo things became very difficult: the soldiers, rather aggressive and some of them drunk, confiscated my neighbour's passport and ordered her to get out and stay behind.

Eventually we persuaded the really rather friendly commanding officer (who fortunately had his men under control!) by inventing some story to let her pass. She even got her passport back. If the soldiers had forced her to stay behind, I would have been caught in a tricky situation which I do not want to think through to its final consequences! The neighbour would almost certainly have been killed.

In hindsight I thought to myself: the way things went, you have a legitimate claim to having more or less saved this woman's life. Just as easily however everything could have happened differently – and I would have come out as someone who sacrificed a human life, or at least was unable to save it. I believe I would not have been able to cope with that for the rest of my life. And the difference of outcome was simply that we were lucky – or not? (In Rwandan there is an expression for 'Being lucky' that literally means 'Being with God'). This story moved me deeply and still does. An experience of utter powerlessness, completely being at the mercy of others and at the same time an experience of divine preservation – a story that might just as well have ended the other way round!

... no possibility of a real rapprochement, all too fresh were the wounds suffered

b) 'Detmold' (Extracts from my commentaries made in 1997)

During the first two and a half years following the war, genocide and refugee misery in and around Rwanda I took part in at least 30 larger events, presentations, meetings and conferences on the issue. Mostly when I went away I was rather discontented, occasionally outright downbeat and hopeless. Either there was a uniform group of like-minded people which was useless for a discussion, or there were indeed different opinions clashing. But in this case there was generally no real conversation. All one did was to have a heated argument, throwing blames at each other and above all, everything was always the others' fault. Among Rwandans there was the Hutu version and the Tutsi version of the Rwandan disaster. And we Europeans swung back and forth from the one to the other or even aligned ourselves with one of them with amazing zeal. There was no possibility of a real rapprochement; all too fresh were the wounds suffered and the respective positions seemed cast in stone.

As a former mission partner and employee of a Rwandan church I was particularly hurt by the fact that matters were pretty much the same there as everywhere else. The division in Rwandan society ran right across the churches, too. Just as the church had been unable to halt the catastrophe it now seemed overall incapable of giving any meaningful input to its overcoming. And this despite the remarkable actions of some Christians during the horrible events – a phenomenon, by the way, that deserves more mention, despite all justified criticism of Rwandan churches. On the whole, however, the churches, too, were deeply divided before, during and after the catastrophe.

Thus I was not very optimistic when Dr Fulgence Rubayiza, a Rwandan doctor living in Germany, sent me the programme for an 'Ecumenical Encounter of Priests, Pastors and Committed Lay People' to deal with the Rwandan

problem. It was to take place on 12 December 1996 in Detmold. But I knew some of the Rwandan invitees, and was interested to meet them again. My request to be allowed to attend the second half of the event was kindly granted.

I quickly became aware that this meeting would not fit into the mentioned 'drawers' of Rwanda-related meetings: what struck me immediately was the great variety of people whom Dr Rubayiza had managed to gather. There were people from Rwanda and from outside the country, Hutu and Tutsi and a few Europeans, Catholics and Protestants of various denominations, clergy and laity, men and women. At my first evening I noticed how friendly everybody was with each other and that people after work sat together in circles without forming any 'camps'.

The decisive moment came on Wednesday 11 December. In the plenary several people told how they had survived those horrible days and weeks between April and July 1994. At this moment one participant was overcome with emotions and tears. He outed himself as a Hutu and despite the fact that he had not only committed no crimes but to the contrary had under great trouble managed to protect his own Tutsi wife, he expressed his deep shame about the cruelties inflicted on the Tutsi in the name of the Hutu. When he had finished several of the Tutsi stood up, sat down next to the man still in tears, hugged him and spoke to him kindly. This alone was something I had never experienced. Then one of the Tutsi, a man who had lost his wife and several children in the genocide spoke and confessed with visible emotion this was the first time he heard such words, words of confession and begging forgiveness. And from someone who had not himself committed any crimes!

We stared at each other as if we could not believe all that had just been said.

At this stage another Hutu suggested it was time that they, the Hutu, laid down a real, unembellished confession of guilt for all the horrors of the genocide. Even before the other Hutu could answer to the suggestion, a Tutsi took the floor. He thought it improper that only the Hutu should make a confession. They as Tutsi also had reason to confess that they had brought much suffering to the Hutu. – I was watching and thought I was in a dream. I had never before seen anything even remotely like it. While I was still completely flabbergasted trying to understand what was happening here before my eyes, one of the Europeans spoke up: It is not true that only Rwandans bore responsibility for the tragedy of their country. The Western world also had its share of responsibility and hence it was appropriate that the Europeans, too, should make a confession.

We sat and stared at each other as if we could not believe all that had just been said. Eventually we agreed a procedure: we would write a confession, with a joint beginning and conclusion. In between there would be a confession by the Hutu, the Tutsi and the Europeans, each the sole responsibility of the group concerned. In order to work out these confessions Hutu, Tutsi and Europeans needed to split into groups.

This procedure alone was singular. Under normal circumstances the various ethnicities of Rwanda are a real taboo,

presumably precisely because it is so difficult to say exactly what exactly *is* the difference between Hutu and Tutsi. One cannot simply ask a Rwandan what their ethnic identity is, this would be an extreme *faux pas*. And yet the question as such is omnipresent. I would say that the greater the taboo, the less one is allowed to discuss it openly, the more important is the ethnic factor and becomes a hidden agenda of every debate. In Detmold exactly the reverse happened: the ethnic question had suddenly become demystified. Mutual comprehension was so good, that one no longer needed to care for the taboo. Without problems we could split into three groups.

Have you never seen the grass growing between the stones?

After several hours group work we reconvened in the plenary and presented our confessions to each other. We agreed that no group would propose changes to another group's confession. We deliberately left all three texts unaltered and only did some stylistic work on the introductions to make the three confessions compatible and fitting organically into one big whole. Then we quickly agreed on a joint beginning and end, using a draft by Laurien Ntezimana, a well known Catholic lay theologian in our midst.

Maybe one would not agree with every detail of the confession. However I should like to stress: the Detmold Confession is as far as I am aware a singular document on the Rwandan problem. It is singular regarding the spirit in which it was produced, and singular in its striving not always to lay blame exclusively at the others' door but to speak one's own share of guilt. Without the spirit of this document I do not think Rwanda can really find a path towards peace. This document however opens up entirely new perspectives, that one no longer dared to hope for. And I confess that despite all justified criticism of Rwanda's churches I rejoice in the fact that this confession was created in a consciously Christian spirit, accompanied by devotions, Bible studies and spiritual hymns. Who knows if it could have emerged in any other way?

To close this part I wish to share a little anecdote. A few days after the Detmold meeting, Laurien Ntezimana attended a meeting of the 'Rwanda Peace Initiative' in Bonn. He spoke about the impressive peace work in the town of Butare and discussed the Detmold Confession with his audience. Someone objected: That is all very nice, the stuff you're doing, But until now is not the situation in Rwanda very much as unstable as before? War, death and pillage could start again anytime. How can you be hopeful for the success of your work as long as the political framework is not right? Laurien Ntezimana thought for a moment, bent slightly forward, gave his interlocutor a friendly straight look: *N'as-tu jamais vu les herbes pousser entre les pierres?* Have you never seen the grass growing between the stones?

(Transl.: Kai M. Funkschmidt)

Rob Hay

Why they go, why they stay...

Global studies on the attrition and retention of evangelical missionaries

Rob Hay (rob.hay@generatingchange.co.uk) runs Generating Change, an organization focused on helping missions effect change (www.generatingchange.co.uk). The aim of Generating Change is to assist mission agencies to be more effective in their work, through research on areas of concern. He is also a Research Fellow at Redcliffe College, Gloucester. He spent several years in Asia with a mission agency and was previously a management consultant. He is a Member of the Institute of Directors and UK Co-ordinator for ReMAPII. The ReMap studies have been repeatedly on the agenda of the Global Connections/CCOM Personnel Officers Forum. More information on www.generatingchange.co.uk..

ReMAP I – The first study – Why they go

The *Reducing Missionary Attrition Project* (ReMAP I or ReMAP as it was known then) came about after a Brazilian missionary gave a paper at a 1993 conference in which he claimed that 75% of that nation's cross-cultural missionaries quit in the first five years. This 15% per annum attrition rate shocked everyone but after the shock came the realization that no one knew how many people were quitting, no one had the numbers! ReMAP was the *World Evangelical Alliance Missions Commission's* (WEA MC) way of finding out. However it did not just want a 'body count'. It wanted to analyse it and reduce the attrition. ReMap aimed to do both:

- It asked 536 mission agency leaders in 14 countries, why people left the mission field.
- It looked at both preventable reasons e.g. inappropriate training, disagreement with sending agency, problems with fellow missionaries and unpreventable reasons e.g. death, retirement, political crisis.

The study resulted in the publication of 'Too Valuable to Lose: Examining the Causes and Cures of Missionary Attrition' (William Taylor, Ed., Wm. Carey Library, Pasadena) where further information and the full data may be accessed¹.

Some highlights from ReMAP I

- Average number of leavers per agency per annum (pa.) is 3.4 missionaries or 5.1% for preventable and unpreventable reasons (1 in 20 each year).
- 29% of that was unpreventable therefore overall preventable attrition was 3.6% pa.

The table below shows the top ten reasons given for the Old Sending Countries (OSC) and New Sending Countries (NSC) for people leaving the mission field. Six out of the ten are shared by both OSC and NSC.

Reasons For Leaving Mission Field		
Rank	Old Sending Countries (OSC)	New Sending Countries (NSC)
1	Normal retirement	Lack of home support
2	Children	Lack of call
3	Change of job	Inadequate commitment
4	Health problems	Disagreement with agency
5	Problems with peers	Problems with peers
6	Lack of home support	Health problems
7	Disagreement with agency	Change of job
8	Elderly parents	Children
9	Marriage/family conflict	Personal concerns
10	Marriage outside of agency	Immature spiritual life

Legacy of ReMAP I

Whilst ReMAP I reassured the missions' world that 75% was not an accurate figure; the 1 in 20 unplanned departures per annum it had highlighted was still too high. It was a catalyst for change, particularly the need for improvement in selection processes and screening. It also gave a clear mandate for the widespread acceptance and adoption of member care as a core part of mission agency life. The widespread long-term effects are highlighted further when we look at the ReMAP II highlights below.

ReMAP II – The second study – Why they stay

In 2002 the WEA MC launched a second study, ReMAP II, which examined missionary retention and agency practices and provided an extensive database to explore the relationship between the two. Mission executives from 22 countries were asked to assess their agency's practices and actual performance regarding various areas of agency practice² and to provide retention data for their mission personnel. 598 agencies with some 39,200 long-term, cross-cultural missionaries participated in the study. The participants represented one fifth (20%) of evangelical missionaries globally and the results surprised us all with the scale of their significance.

Old sending countries (OSC) of Europe, North America and the Pacific and new sending countries (NSC) of Africa, Asia and Latin America were analysed separately to explore the differences in their mission movements. Agencies were grouped into three equal subgroups according to their retention: High (H), Medium (M) and Low (L). The numbers used in the study give the weighted average of these three subgroups and their standard error (68% confidence level). The methodology used and more results are presented elsewhere³.

Some highlights from ReMAP II

The overarching message that ReMAP II shows is that the Evangelical mission movements from the NSC have greatly matured over the past ten years. ReMAP I, a similar study, had identified some marked deficiencies in many NSC agencies⁴, especially in the areas of candidate selection and support on the field. New findings show that these have been largely overcome. Overall, the research results show only marginal differences between NSC and OSC⁵. Yet the NSC agencies have developed a pronounced difference in their characteristics from those of the OSC. These are strengths that need to be maintained, further developed and utilized to the common good of the global mission movement.

In respect to candidate selection, NSC agencies gave their top rating to: *Clear calling to missionary service* (5.83 – a remarkable value!), *Pastor's endorsement* (5.26), *Doctrinal statement* (5.25), *Committed to agency principles* (5.25), *Mature Christian character* (5.20), *Character references* (5.13), *Contentment with present marital status* (4.67) and *Blessing of the family* (4.60). NSC executives gave higher rating (than OSC) regarding *Calling to missionary service* (5.83 / 5.49), *Family blessing* (4.60 / 3.32 – an important issue in NSC) and lower rating on formal criteria like: *Doctrinal statement* (5.25 / 5.51), *Character references* (5.13 / 5.50), *Ministry experience in a local church* (3.66 / 4.77 – possibly due to less opportunities for young people to exercise their gifts in the more hierarchical structure of NSC churches?), *Cross-cultural experience* (2.42 / 3.12 – how does this fit with the multi-cultural fabric of many NSC? Does it display the ethnic segregation in many churches e.g. homogenous units?), *Demonstrated stress-coping ability* (3.68 / 4.34) and *Psychological assessment* (3.14 / 4.06). Compared with ReMAP I some ten years ago, NSC assessment practices have considerably increased in critical areas such as: *Calling to missionary service*, *Character references*, *Health checks*, *Psychological testing* and *Contentment with marital status*. These developments underline the maturing of the NSC mission movement.

There are marked differences and similarities between missionaries from 'Old' and from 'New Sending Countries'

The educational standard of missionaries from West Africa, Latin America and India are in general lower than that of OSC and East Asia while pre-field training was emphasized more in NSC, particularly *Formal Missiology* (0.88/0.54)⁶, *Cross-cultural internships* (0.32/0.12) and *Agencies' orientation programs* (0.29/0.17).

Regarding their Organizational Ethos and Leadership, NSC gave highest ratings to Prayer throughout the agency (5.37),

Vision & purpose (5.33), Leaders are an example (5.05), Documented policies (4.95), On-field supervision (4.92), Plans & job description (4.85) and Continuous training (4.82). NSC leaders gave a higher rating (than OSC) on Vision & purpose (5.33 / 5.00), Plans & job description (4.85 / 4.53), Communication field and sending base (4.64 / 4.27), Documented policies (4.95 / 4.43), Prayer (5.37 / 4.99), Problems readily solved (4.56 / 4.17), On-field Supervision (4.92 / 4.18) and Continuous training & gift development (4.82 / 4.49). Yet they gave much lesser rating on Language learning (3.37 / 4.72) and Ongoing language and culture learning (4.06 / 4.85). But this may reflect the different geographic priorities: NSC missionaries often serve cross-culturally in their home (or neighbouring) country in a trade (or related) language whereas many OSC missionaries work in very different cultures requiring intensive language acquisition. In general, however, the results show the high organizational standards of NSC agencies.

Regarding the missionaries' ministry NSC mission executives gave highest rating on *Missionary's commitment to his ministry* (5.21), *Commitment to the agency* (5.21), *Freedom to shape own ministry* (4.91), *Assignment according to gifting* (4.74) and *Administrative support on the field* (4.71). NSC leaders gave higher rating (than OSC) on: *Assignment according to gifting* (4.74 / 4.40), *Commitment to agency* (5.21 / 4.64), *Missionaries are not overloaded* (4.21 / 3.22 - is stress and work overload a problem of the achievement-driven Western culture?), *Evaluation & constant improvement of ministry* (3.97 / 3.66), yet they gave lower rating to *Spouse's ministry* (4.17 / 4.88). Again these features generally demonstrate the professionalism of NSC agencies.

'New Sending Countries' invest considerably more time, money and services in member care than 'Old'

ReMAP II also gathered the (total) attrition numbers of the years 2001/02 and found a total Attrition Rate of 3.1 %/year in NSC and 6.8 %/year in OSC⁷. For NSC, this is much lower than in ReMAP I and is also slightly less for OSC. As both studies applied comparable techniques and covered similar countries the data are compatible and clearly demonstrate the improvement of the mission movement, especially in NSC. Some of this may be attributed to the development of improved screening and training methods, and more effective member care. This progress may also have been stimulated by ReMAP which caused a major shock in some countries and alerted mission leaders, Bible school teachers and pastors to critical issues regarding attrition. We have much anecdotal evidence that this study and its publication⁸ led to change and decisive improvements of mission systems and structures. These are now being rewarded with lower attrition rates.

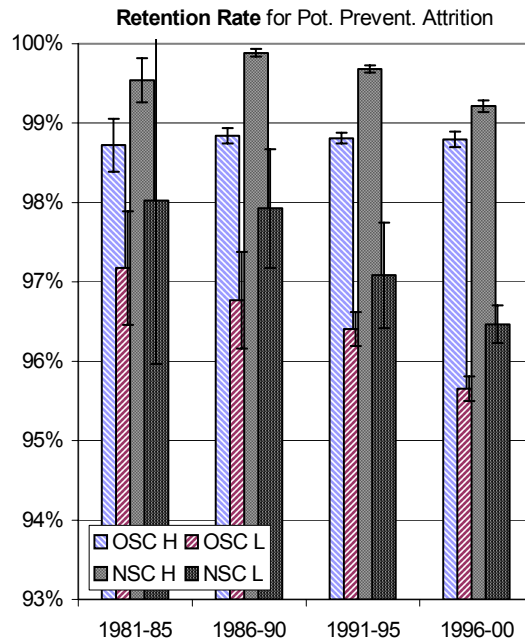
Differences between the two studies

Neither ReMAP I or II make blanket assumptions that long-term equals best. It would be naïve to equate length of service with effectiveness and both studies suggest there is an important role in ensuring ineffective workers return home. However both studies examined cross-cultural missionaries

and many of these situations demand significant time for language learning, cultural adaptation, local acceptance and long-term relational ministry and indeed where scripture translation is required, many years study and studious work. Also attrition was described as 'leaving the mission field earlier than planned with the agency or envisaged by the individual' so it was not a case of longest is best but rather an examination of the root causes of unexpected and unplanned early departure. One of the interesting aspects of ReMAP II is that Sweden took part, a country where all mission partners work on fixed terms of 4 years. Work is underway to examine if a regular opportunity to recommit without expectation to do so actually promotes more effective patterns of service.

Old & New

Further similarities and differences emerge when comparing specific issues across the Old and New sending countries:



Member Care

One area of clear difference between OSC and NSC is member care. OSC agencies invest about 8% of their total organizational time (on the field and in the home office) in member care, so that one out of 12 missionaries is full-time serving in member care in terms of equivalent hours. NSC agencies spend almost twice as much of their organizational time on member care (about 14.5%), and one out of seven missionaries is full-time serving his/her colleagues in terms of equivalent hours. This is an impressive rate, reflecting their strong commitment to their missionaries.

OSC agencies spent just over 4% of their total finances / budget on member care and NSC agencies nearly 10%, so more than twice the amount. The percentages for financial resources are lower than that for member care time, because the agencies' budget includes many non-personnel costs such as project finances, work funds, capital investment etc.

Only a third (OSC) to a fifth (NSC) of the overall member care resources are spent on the broad areas of prevention and personal development so that the majority are invested in crisis intervention: nearly 70% in OSC and 80% in NSC. These findings indicate that member care is still more reactive in nature and crisis-oriented for helping missionaries already wounded. Preventative member care in general is still very underdeveloped!

To summarize, NSC invest considerably more time, money and services in member care than OSC. While the higher percentage of finances could possibly be explained by the lower buying power of some countries of the South; the higher fraction of their overall staff time (roughly 14.5% vs 8 %) probably reflects the relational fabric of their home cultures and commitment to their staff. The NSC time allocation is impressive and the low percentage on preventative member care may reflect their relative newness as missionary senders.

Beyond direct member care, agencies with a high investment in member care also rated their organizational structure, leadership and personal care system higher than agencies with little member care e.g. supportive mission team, pastoral care on the field level, interpersonal conflict resolution, regular financial support, annual vacation, risk assessment on the fields, provision for health care and MK-schooling. In OSC agencies with a higher investment in member care these factors with a higher rating include: field supervision, effective system for handling missionaries' complaints, language learning, regular financial support, strengthening of the missionaries' spiritual life and home church involvement in the missionary's life. These practical aspects of member care are reflected in the categories of 'Self Care', 'Mutual Care' and 'Sender Care' in Kelly O'Donnell's and Dave Pollock's transcultural member care model⁹.

ReMAP II shows the impressive investment of the NSC in member care. It also clearly demonstrates the strong positive correlation between member care and missionary retention and in particular preventative member care: little member care means more attrition, and more member care means less attrition. Member care is not an added department besides leadership, public relations, administration and human resource development. It needs to be an integral feature of the overall operations and be rooted in the organizational ethos and values, and thus shape all operations and procedures of the agency.

Changing times but continuing retention

One encouraging area of similarity is seen in the effectiveness of the High retaining agencies when compared to the Low retainers. By examining the retention rate, just looking at preventable reasons, over the past 20 years it becomes obvious that retention has remained extremely high for high retaining agencies over the 20 years 1981-2000 but dropped from 97.3 % to 95.7 % for the low retaining OSC group. This is not a massive drop, 12% after 10 years but never the less the result shows that low retaining agencies are affected by the modern trend towards temporary assignments and change of agencies, whereas high retaining agencies are able to maintain the loyalty and high commitment of their missionaries. This characteristic of the high retaining agencies is mirrored almost identically in NSC 98.1% to 96.5%, again a drop of

12% over 10 years, in the Low group and unchanged in the High group.

Clearly a high retention rate and good length of service are important factors on their own but the ability to buck the trend is particularly exciting. The question is can this study be anything more than a pat on the back for the good and a big stick to beat the poor? We believe so. The last thing we want is for it to reinforce the status quo by depressing those who are struggling and allowing those that are doing well to sit back on their laurels. No agency is perfect and the aim of ReMAPII has always been to identify areas of good practice and share it widely. What ReMAPII tells us is that if we can get the good practice of the High retaining agencies shared throughout the missions' world we cut the preventable attrition by 85%¹⁰. That's not by applying new ideas, no rocket science, just sharing the good practice we already have in the missions' world.

Conclusion

In summary the ReMAP II data shows that missionary retention is a very complex systemic topic. It is clear that there are not just a few outstanding critical factors but a sophisticated mesh of organizational and personal factors. Many of these factors have been identified and mark the road for the organizational development of mission agencies.

It is encouraging to see improvements in both OSC and NSC in the decade since ReMAP I and it is exciting and challenging to begin to explore some of the unique and innovative ways NSC are 'doing mission' for themselves. Whilst it is recognized that many of these factors are culturally conditioned and may need adjustment to the culture of another missionary or mission agency it does offer a challenge for the OSC to move forward: In patterns of mission we have recognized that 'from the West to the rest' is outdated and inappropriate for our globalized world and that the NSC are doing mission themselves. ReMAP II says we must recognize, too, that OSC do not have the monopoly on *how* to do mission. There are many areas where NSC have things to teach us as together we strive for effective service in Gods mission.

Next time we will explore some of the specific key factors of effectiveness identified and look at how candidates and their church leaders can explore those issues with prospective mission agencies. This process is vital to individuals in finding the right place to serve but it will also help reinforce to the mission agencies the need to change, to be aware of good practice and to prioritize it.

A follow-up to this article (together with this first part) will shortly be published on www.ctbi.org.uk.

Footnotes:

1. An electronic version can be downloaded at the project website (www.generatingchange.co.uk)
2. The areas were Education, Selection, Preparation Time, Orientation, Spiritual life, Personal Care, Member Care, Organizational Values, Leadership, Staff Development, Ministry, Ministry Outcome, Finances and Home Office. Within each of these broad areas individual factors were assessed e.g. as part of Screening the area of the candidates being Committed to agency principles was evaluated. The score was on a scale of 0-6, where 0=Not done to 6=Very well done. The individual

factors mentioned in the text are shown in italics, where appropriate with the rating after in brackets.

3. See the project website (www.generatingchange.co.uk).
4. Detlef Blöcher/Jonathan Lewis: Further Findings in the Research Data. pp. 105- 125. in: *Too valuable to lose. Causes and Cures of Missionary Attrition*, William D.Taylor (Ed.), 1997 Wm Carey Library, Pasadena.
5. With considerable variations between individual countries, discussed elsewhere.
6. With considerable national differences.
7. These Attrition Rates are different from those derived from Retention Rates as they refer to a different period and the Total Attrition rate gives the percentage of returnees irrespective of the length of service.
8. William D. Taylor, Ed., *Too Valuable to Lose: The Causes and Cures of Missionary Attrition*, 1997.
9. Kelly O'Donnell, Ed., *Doing Member Care Well: Perspectives and Practices from Around the World*, 2002, Wm. Carey Library, Pasadena.
10. To cut this further is not impossible but goes beyond simply sharing existing good practice. For a detailed explanation of how this figure is arrived at see Detlef Blöcher, What makes Missionaries Resilient – Lessons from ReMAP II, 04/10/03, available on the project website (www.generatingchange.co.uk).

Colin Morton

'Challenging Christian Zionism Theology, Politics and the Palestine-Israel Conflict'

Colin Morton, Focal Person for the CCOM Middle East Forum reports on the Sabeel Conference that took place in Jerusalem, 14-18 April 2004. Sabeel is an ecumenical grassroots liberation movement among Palestinian Christians. It is an ecumenical centre for Palestinian Liberation Theology which seeks to make the Gospel contextually relevant. In Arabic Sabeel means 'The Way' and also a 'Spring of Water'. The Middle East Forum has long had links with Sabeel.

Some 500 internationals attended the conference as well as many local people. Of the internationals half were from the USA, about sixty from the UK, and thirty-eight other countries were represented. The presentations were of a high standard. Speakers were Christian, Jewish and Muslim, from Palestine, Israel and many other countries. The conference was mostly held in the Notre Dame Centre, Jerusalem, but to allow those who could not travel to Jerusalem one day's business was held in the Friends' School, Ramallah, where we also met with President Arafat. On the last day we were due to go to Bethlehem, but the assassination of the Hamas leader, Rantisi, made this inadvisable in the view of the organizers. Participants had the opportunity to see the separation wall and its effects in the outskirts of Jerusalem. There was worship at the start of every session and at the beginning and end of the conference, as well as some invigorating Bible studies.

In Christian Zionist view people are merely characters acting out a pre-scripted story

There was a thorough examination of the most high profile form of Christian Zionism, literal fundamentalist pre-millennialism, its history, theology and political impact. This sees Biblical prophecy as predicting in literal terms the end times, believing that these are being fulfilled now. There are variations in the narrative, but in each variation the story is mapped out with considerable precision. The return of the Jews to the land of Israel is basic to the narrative, and the state of Israel is equated with the biblical Israelites. As pro-

phesy is fulfilled believers will be raptured up to heaven, there will be seven years of tribulation ending with Armageddon, Christ will return and he will rule from Jerusalem for a thousand years before the final day. Some Jews will accept Christ; the others will suffer annihilation. In this view moral choice and response to human reality and suffering have little place, as people are merely characters acting out a pre-scripted story. There are good people and bad people without any sense that the line between good and evil runs through us all. There is no theology of the Cross, and the Church is an unimportant parenthesis in the story. Faith is seen as the uncritical acceptance of the particular group's interpretation of the Bible. Despite its fervent Zionist stance it is fundamentally anti-Semitic, the choice for Jews being either conversion or annihilation.

It was said having a land of their own enabled Jews to show hospitality. Jonathan Kuttub expressed thanks for the Israeli hospitality towards Palestinians

Not all Christian Zionists (nor all fundamentalists or conservative evangelicals) are of this persuasion, and there was some protest at the way the conference dealt only with this form, notably from Tony Higton, CMJ, who attended throughout. Millennialism has and does affect other religions, including Judaism and Islam. However millennialism has never or very rarely impacted on the most powerful political institutions in the way that this form of Christian Zionism now affects the US political process, and this can justify the approach of the conference. The nature

of its political influence in the USA and of its present strong alliance with the Jewish Zionist political lobby were the subject of papers and discussion. The Bush/Sharon meeting and press conference took place on the first day of the conference and reinforced the sense of urgency that the baleful influence of this extreme Christian Zionism must be effectively countered.

As had been publicized, the Archbishop of Canterbury was not present in person, but his speech was given by Canon Jonathan Gough. It was received at best tepidly, perhaps more accurately with dismay. Canon Gough listened patiently and attentively to the criticism which was expressed privately and publicly, and promised to convey the responses to the Archbishop. My personal view of it was that there was much of real value in it relating to the Western Christian understanding of Jewish Zionism and the legitimacy of criticism of the Israeli government, but that it was singularly unsuited to the context of the conference. Extreme forms of Christian Zionism were seen as totally unbiblical and harmful, but Christians were right to feel sympathy for the desire or need of Jews for a state of their own, a state where they were free to exercise their calling and to be a paradigm for all nations, and it was right and legitimate to criticize Israel for the ways in which it falls short of its calling. What was strangely missing was consideration of Palestinian dispossession or of the equality of human dignity and rights. The understanding of the state of Israel as being a paradigm for other nations may make sense in Western circles, but it sounds very strange in Palestine and Israel, where it is very far from being an understanding that any of the locally predominant forms of Judaism ever evince. As an example, the Archbishop said that having a land of their own enabled Jews to practise and show hospitality. There was a withering response from Jonathan Kuttub, who expressed suitable thanks for the Israeli hospitality Palestinians had experienced and for the implied need of Palestinians to learn hospitality from the Israeli example.

The conference heard of the work of local Christians in struggle, in witness and in opening to others, and the

considerable thought given to the meaning and practice of non-violence. Then there were workshops on aspects of strategy in challenging Christian Zionism as well as meetings of national groups. The USA is all-important; there a high priority is the electoral defeat of President Bush. Although little difference can be seen between the two candidates in their support for Israel, Kerry would be more open to international influence and cooperation than Bush and less wedded to an imperialist policy. The target areas for Friends of Sabeel North America are the churches and the black community. Blair is seen as having little influence on American policy, but important in providing cover and some international legitimacy to Bush (and so Sharon). In Britain and Ireland 'Friends of Sabeel UK' plans to build more effective regional groupings, and work would include making contact with more congregations and synagogues, making use of returned companions and local media, organizing boycotts and lobbying MPs. The EU was important and activists from over Europe should work together to have an influential Christian lobby – the Conference of European Churches (CEC) could be a useful channel. There should be a visible church presence in major demonstrations, and the large European Social Forum gathering in London in the autumn should have a strong Palestinian input. In light of the meetings of Bush with Sharon and Blair, of Israel's assassination policy and the separation wall, the UK participants agreed on a letter to the British Consul-General expressing their concern. This was delivered by a group of seven, who met with the Political Consul and a response that was far closer to the position of the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary than to that of the 52 ex-ambassadors.

All in all it was a well-planned and well-organized conference, especially given the circumstances. The numbers attending were excellent and confounded any fears. Everyone learnt something; people were invigorated; there was a real antidote to depression or despair for those from abroad and, I hope, some encouragement for local people. The conference papers are to be published in book form.

Martin Conway

International Association of Mission Studies Meeting in Malaysia

Mission specialists debate the integrity of christian mission

'A very thin woman stood up, walked to the middle, sat beside the candle and told us a long story of suffering. Her name was Alexandrina. We called her Adina. When she was about 6 years old, her parents were arrested by the Indonesian soldiers. She never saw them again. She was left behind with her elder brother, who had joined the Fretelin freedom fighters struggling for the independence of East Timor.

'Some years later he too was captured by the Indonesian soldiers. They tortured him and let him slowly die a horrible death. When Adina was in senior high school, the military

arrested her while giving food to a young man. They accused her of being a collaborator of Fretelin. They tortured her until she was half-conscious and raped her.

'At this point Adina could not finish her story. There was a long silence. Then Adina gathered all her strength, looked at me, and said in a faint voice: 'Father, where is that salvation promised by the Lord?'

'Again there was silence. I could not answer her question. Tears flowed. Slowly I raised my eyes and saw a wooden cross on the wall. I saw it and understood the solidarity of the crucified one, but I could not utter a single word. Adina

needed my solidarity, not my words. For several years I have been living with her question.'

This story was recounted by Fr Leo Kleden, of Indonesia, a member of the Society of the Divine Word. He told it at a meeting of the International Association for Mission Studies (IAMS) in Port Dickson, Malaysia, from 31 July to 7 August, 2004, a gathering which brought together more than 200 people from 44 countries and a wide range of church traditions.

The story was used as an illustration of the importance of 'listening with full respect to what God has done for different people, in various cultures and religions – an awareness which will slowly, but radically, transform our way of thinking and doing mission.'

Only afterwards did he mention that, since writing his paper for the meeting, he had had a middle-of-the-night phone call from that same Adina, to tell him she was now happily married and had built a new life, longing to thank him for the new hope and vitality which the Holy Spirit had communicated to her on that unforgettable evening in the chapel.

Understanding mission today

The IAMS meeting was an in-depth personal and theological encounter between missiologists of a kind which is rarely seen. Entitled 'The Integrity of Mission in the Light of the Gospel - Bearing the witness of the Spirit,' its tone was set by two addresses by experienced theologians.

Rev. Dr Hwa Yung, of Trinity Theological College in Singapore, identified Asian mission factors such as the acceptance of 'signs and wonders' in regard to healing and exorcism, both responding to the needs of people feeling themselves trapped by supernatural powers Westerners have ceased to be aware of.

It is because of the universality of victims that our mission is universal

Professor Dr Pablo Suess, outgoing IAMS president and a Brazilian Catholic, focused in his presidential address on what the Holy Spirit is saying to today's Christians as 'they encounter the Spirit side by side with the oppressed, the excluded and the marginalized.

'The universality of mission today', he said, 'has to be understood as an alternative to globalization under the dictates of a social-Darwinistic liberalism...' He continued: 'It is because of the universality of victims that our mission is universal. Mission follows the suffering servant of God into the most remote areas of the world.'

Other presentations included contributions from Africa, Latin America and Europe. Dr Philomena Mwaura, a university teacher at Kenyatta University, Nairobi, offered, after a careful survey of the current troubles of Africa - the 'bleeding continent' - suggestions to enhance the integrity of mission in the light of the gospel. She spoke of the church as a mediator of peace, healing and reconciliation, providing visionary leadership and discipling the nations, and stressed the need for courageous, empowered and effective leadership committed to evangelization and ecumenism.

European contributors - a Bulgarian Baptist, Dr Parush Parushev, and a French Catholic laywoman, Edith Bernard - presented similar perceptions of mission. Obedience to God's call, they said, consists in serving the needy, in the discovery of friendship across human and social barriers, in pointing to the cross and rising of Jesus of Nazareth as signs of an unconquerable hope.

... women in mission without names have been vehicles of the gospel in the Korean churches and throughout Asia

Another contributor was Prof. Chun Chae Ok, president of the IAMS from 1986–2000, and now professor emeritus of Ewha University in Seoul, South Korea. She spoke of the 'Missiology of Emptiness – mission from the poor to the poor' – as a distinctive contribution of women in Asia.

'The reality is that women in mission without names and in most cases without writings have been vehicles of the gospel in the Korean churches and throughout Asia,' she said 'The existence of a female majority in the world church must no longer be ignored. Rather it should be celebrated and become a source of inspiration for a more authentic form of mission.'

The conference spent two days in 'exposure visits', including trips to a Buddhist temple and a Catholic centre to meet groups of migrant workers from nearby Asian countries. Visits were also made to the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilisation in Kuala Lumpur, and to the International Islamic University of Malaysia.

Since the gathering coincided partially with the World Council of Churches' (WCC) Faith and Order plenary commission meeting in Kuala Lumpur, and was held only about 150 kilometres away, some participants spent time at both meetings. And one of the conference study groups focused on a paper on mission and reconciliation prepared for the next WCC Conference on World Mission and Evangelism, to be held in Athens, Greece, on 9-16 May 2005. [Printed with kind permission of WCC]

CCOM Forum Reports

Mission Theological Advisory Group

Imagine entering a labyrinth and traversing its paths. You encounter a heap of wreckage and twisted metal, scrapped cars, all the junk of human waste. What does this mean? What are you supposed to think? A little further on and you encounter a huge cross, hung with wine bottles, pouring with water and shot through with brilliant light. What is this? What is this water and poured out wine? Even further on and you are blasted with the heat of flaming boulders, the earth caught fire. What is this encounter? Is it God?

This story of a Labyrinth experience set the scene for our last meeting and underlines the method we are now using for our work. Our material is not about interpreting people's experiences, re-reading them and re-presenting them as Christian discourse, but enabling people to *have* experiences and helping them to name for themselves the God who is disturbing them, calling them, urging them to live fully as they are intended to do. If we prescribe what we will say and think and feel before we enter the labyrinth, if we've already got the interpretation lined up, then we are denying to ourselves the element of awe and wonder, of being surprised by the God of surprises, of being shocked or overwhelmed. David Ford reminds us in *The Shape of Living* about the importance of being overwhelmed by the power and presence of the living God and this overwhelming is something that our work on the experience of our senses offers.

Central to our discussion at this meeting was the sense of taste: taste and see the Lord your God is good. In our rich Western society, eating is largely divorced from the experience of being hungry. We live in the time of the celebrity chef, the chic ambience of restaurants, the pleasure (?) of receiving a coin sized roundel of meat calling hopelessly to the elegant green leaf on the farther shore of a delicate china plate. We go on diets, we binge and fast. We worry endlessly about foods that are 'good' for us, foods that are 'bad' for us. We are greedy and wasteful. We get fat. We die.

And elsewhere of course, people do not get fat. They have little or nothing to eat. And they die.

The Son of Man came eating and drinking. But who did the cooking and the washing up? The risen Lord cooked breakfast, offered hospitality and the sharing of food. The risen life offers this physical reality and sense experience: taste and see.

So in reaching out to people outside the church, we shouldn't be telling them *about* food but starting with real ingredients: taste and see. It's no good telling them *about* God and expecting them to believe our experiences offered to them as dream food, beyond their ken. We have forgotten that God's command is to live. Herbert knew it:

You must sit down says Love and taste my meat

And I did sit and eat.

More on MTAG www.inter-mission.blogspot.com

Anne Richards

Africa

For the last year the Africa Forum has been without an official Focal Person, former Focal Person Rev Gordon Holmes all the while standing in. This situation is the result of the ever increasing difficulty in finding office bearers for the Forums in accordance with the ecumenical obligations that the churches mutually agreed in 1990 when the old ecumenical instruments were dissolved and replaced by CTBI and CCOM. These difficulties reflect the ever increasing workload on desk officers which makes it all but impossible to find member bodies who are willing/able to make their denominational staff fulfil ecumenical roles in a group like a Forum where the officers' roles demand a high degree of expertise, experience and available time, requiring a careful assessment of volunteers who could take on the role.

The Africa Forum had the additional problem that there were only disappointing numbers of participants in some of the more recent meetings (starting from a rather high level of participation, however) and that the planned residential in Wales in April 2004 had to be cancelled for the same reason. Similar problems in the past have led to the effective suspension of the Asia Forum (see below).

In view of the seriousness of the situation it is fortunate that a new Focal Person has now been found in Dr Martin Heath who brings a rich ecumenical background. He has worked several years each in Africa and in Asia and was Head of the Asia Department in USPG before he went into retirement.

Martin, who is not an Africa Desk officer, will be 'owned' and supported in his Focal Person role by USPG. (For Gordon this role had been played by the Baptist Union).

Despite the current crisis the Steering Group in June decided that the situation did not yet require a suspension of the Forum and thus a meeting is scheduled for 15 November. An agenda will be put together after the new Focal Person will have had the chance to talk to some of the member bodies individually to ensure that a future Forum meeting is planned in a manner relevant to their work.

Continuity is guaranteed by the fact that Gordon Holmes is willing to carry on as Chair of the Forum which should come as a relief for all those who know the enormous amount of work he has put into this group in the past.

Dates:

Southern Africa Group: **18 October** 2 to 4 pm.

Forum: **15 November**. Both in the CTBI office.

Kai Funkschmidt

Asia

The Asia Forum had planned to hold its annual one day conference 2004 on 10 June 2004 in London on the topic 'Faces of HIV/Aids in Asia Today'. The event had been organized jointly with the China Forum and the Overseas

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From: Hauenstein, Philipp
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> [mailto:Philipp.Hauenstein@Missionswerk-Bayern.de]
> Sent: Wednesday, October 02, 2002 11:26 AM
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> To: Kai Michael Funkschmidt
> Subject: Interkulturelles Lernen, Artikel
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> Sehr geehrter Herr Dr. Funkschmidt,
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> vielen Dank für Ihre freundliche Anfrage. In der Tat wurde < der Artikel von < mir im Original in englisch verfasst. Gerne gebe ich Ihnen dazu die < Abdruckerlaubnis. In das englische Original muss ich noch die < Illustrationen < integrieren. Wenn dies geschehen ist, werde ich Ihnen den < Artikel als E-mail < Anhang spätestens Anfang nächster Woche zuschicken. Gerne < können Sie ihn < auch noch redaktionell verändern. < < Mit freundlichem Gruss < < Ihr < < Philipp Hauenstein < < < <

Health Care Forum. Although there was widespread agreement about the importance of this topic – in absolute figures Asia is the continent where the HIV/Aids problem is greatest – and despite spreading the invitation wider than ever before for an event of the Asia Forum, the number of attendees was so small that the event had to be cancelled. The preparation papers were sent to the few subscribers. One of the eight speakers (Claire Lacey) has handed in her presentation in writing and this will be published in the next issue of Connections.

This was only the second time that the Asia Annual Conference had been staged under the new Forum format, i.e. replacing the biennial Forum meetings from 2002ff which in their turn, too, towards the end failed to attract more than half a dozen people. It seems therefore that there is no real need for an Asia Forum among the member bodies. The Forum has therefore been suspended for the time being until further notice.

Kai Funkschmidt

Middle East

As the situation in Iraq deteriorates and horror stories keep appearing, there is much casting around for a way to achieve any sort of good result to come after the mistakes and failures of the past. Every option seems a bad one, fraught with dangers not only to political reputations and ambitions, but also and even more to the people of Iraq. Indeed the dangers affect all communities in the Middle East, to peace between religions and to humanity as a whole.

The reputation of America and Britain in the Middle East has never been so low. Christian communities can be suspect for any Western connection. Muslims and Arabs are suspect in the West. It is very difficult for any foreign agency to work in Iraq or Afghanistan, especially for American and British ones, and even more especially for Christian ones. At a time when it is more important than ever to keep contacts open and to be engaged in a struggle for real freedom, justice, truth and human dignity, then it is most difficult for our churches and agencies to live out their Christian mission. The Middle East Forum shares together the concerns and dilemmas, but even when things are very dark there are many signs of living faith and hope.

Justice and peace in Israel and Palestine remain an essential key to any better future, but this is an issue which tends to divide those in our churches, and Christians everywhere. The Christian witness is confused and many prefer silence and safety. There is too little encounter across the divide. At the March Forum meeting there was such an encounter; it was certainly worthwhile, and strengthened conviction that dialogue must go on, not for the sake of the talking, but to bear better witness.

Those who stress the claim of Israel on our sympathy and support object to the way they may be identified with the more extreme forms of millennial fundamentalism. It was this form of Christian Zionism and the need it challenges that was the theme of an international conference in Jerusalem organized by the Sabeel Palestinian Liberation Theology Centre in April. Five hundred internationals attended it, including two hundred and fifty from the USA and sixty from Britain. Millennial Messianism has appeared

in all religions at times; what is different today is the political power which this Christian form has gained in the USA.. This impressive conference sought to spell out the danger it presented and the need to challenge it.

See also p.8f.

Colin Morton

Latin America

'The Holy Spirit is loose in Latin America' was an interpretation that Rev Dr Israel Batista, General Secretary of CLAI (Latin American Council of Churches), gave to John 3:8. Rev Batista was in Britain in order to speak to a World Mission Conference at Swanwick, Derbyshire, sponsored by a number of bodies. His visit included an opportunity to address the Latin America Forum of CCOM.

The traditional ecclesiological conceptions are not sufficient to understand the reality of the churches in the region - Rev Batista continued expressing the fact that what is happening in the region is a charismatic movement that is cutting across traditional understandings of the Church and developing unity, ecumenism and mission. There is a danger of romanticizing the effects of the movement, but what is clear is that by the end of the 20th century the 'Evangelical' churches (evangelical is used in Latin America as a generic term for non Roman Catholic) had become one of the strongest social movements in the region and particularly within indigenous communities.

The Holy Spirit is not only transforming individual confessing communities but it is having a significant impact on ecumenism 'Nowadays we live in the imagery of an imposed globalization that brings together as well as separates. The ecumenical vision (of Latin America) is an imagery of unity for a different humanity. The 'Oikumene' in the New Testament is the unity of creation. 'Oikumene' in our church life means the unity of local churches; it is a unity that sets the world as a place in which we 'feel at home' an 'oikos' that comes from below, from the local level. The challenge in this reality is as a church to dream before our dreams are privatized' Globalization has not served Latin American and has to be resisted in seeking a common way together that emphasizes the search for social, economic and political justice throughout the region.

In offering an alternative, Rev Batista saw the churches as moral and ethical places of reserve that would counter the tendency towards individualistic life styles and the crisis of values that is affecting all. On a global scale, power has been concentrated, the maximization of production and profit exists ahead of our responsibility to God's creation; the churches' response is to emphasize the right to justice and life. Churches need to be places of Jubilee where hope, healing and reconciliation can take place. Finally, the churches can be places that go beyond traditional conflicting dualisms and offer a 'mystic and missionary spirituality' where consecrated by God to serve and love, through service to our neighbour we have a wider experience of God and faith grows and deepens.

Rev Batista concluded his message with these words we have 'to go beyond all indulgent conformism and paralyzing diagnosis, to be inspired by the future, even when we see no alternatives in the future. This challenge is

the experience of walking through the desert, opening spaces and picking up the daily manna...' with the assurance that God is with us.

Tom Quenet

Pacific

The increasing European interest in the tuna resources of the Pacific – the Pacific dependence on tuna

Few areas or regions of the world are more dependent on the fisheries sector for development and food security than the South Pacific. The diet of the Pacific islanders is heavily dependent on fish as a source of protein and essential fatty acids and the South Pacific tuna fishery is the Pacific Islands' main natural resource with the greatest potential for the expansion of exports from Pacific island countries. Tuna is the target of the only significant industrial fisheries in the region with half the world's canned tuna supply coming from the Pacific. The majority of the tuna is being caught by foreign nations, so-called Distant Water Fishing Nations (DWFN), from Asia (Japan, China, Philippines, Korea, Taiwan) and the USA. The annual value of the tuna fisheries which amount about US\$ 1.9 billion per year (about 11 percent of the region's GDP) does not stay in the region, but goes to the countries of origin of the foreign fishing fleets. The access fees paid by the fishing nations for the benefit of the Pacific island countries totals only US\$ 60 million which is just approximately 3-4 % of the total value. Additional noticeable benefits for the local industry are non-existent. This is in violent contrast with the intentions of the Pacific governments who try to strengthen and develop their involvement in the fisheries sector by generating employment, maximizing financial returns from licensing arrangements and fish exports, encouraging shore-based development and exercising more effective control over fishing operations within their EEZs (Exclusive Economic Zones).

Europe's interest and opportunities

In the light of this background, it is important to realize that the European fishing fleet, after depleting their own fish resources in EU waters as well as some in other regions in which they are active, are now looking at the tuna stocks in the Pacific Ocean. With no history in Pacific fisheries, the fisheries council of the European Union issued in June 2001 a negotiating mandate to the European Commission to start negotiating fisheries agreements with Pacific countries. In July 2002 this resulted in the first bilateral fisheries agreement with Kiribati, followed in February 2004 by a second agreement – one with Solomon Islands. Agreements with two other Pacific Island states, Cook Islands and Federated States of Micronesia, are also expected to be signed later this year.

Although it is remarkable that fishing boats from Spain, France and Portugal will have to sail to the other side of the world to access the fishing grounds in the Pacific, it does not necessarily have to be a bad development that the EU is starting to fish in Pacific waters since it also opens up the opportunity for Pacific states to negotiate better agreements than, for example, with the Asian fleets. Especially since the EU is now entering into Fishery Partnership Agreements with third countries which should offer better conditions and opportunities to the coastal

state than the former agreements of the EU which were based only on 'cash for access'. According to the European Commission, these new Partnership Agreements will 'ensure the implementation of a sustainable fishing policy and a rational and responsible exploitation'.

The risks

Whereas these intentions might be genuine and welcome, the track record of the European fleet in developing countries in for example Africa may not be ignored. Instead of fishing only for surplus fish stocks (which is fixed in international law as well as part of the European fisheries agreements), EU vessels see themselves competing with local African fishermen for the scarce marine resources. The Europeans, with their more sophisticated equipment are of course no match for the small scale artisanal fisherman. Many examples from Mauritius, Mauritania, Senegal, Guinea and other countries are available. Since Europe only recently started fishing in the Pacific region, no information about the practices of the European fleet in the region is yet available, but it is of course interesting to see how the already concluded agreements are contributing to the intentions of the Pacific governments to strengthen their own fisheries sector.

The Pacific realities

The agreements with Kiribati and Solomon Islands are in this respect not very hopeful. An interesting difference in the two agreements is that the Kiribati agreement of 2002 was concluded under the old EU fisheries regime and can therefore be considered as a normal fishing agreement. The Solomon Islands agreement is part of the new regime and is therefore referred to as a Fisheries Partnership Agreement. One would therefore expect that the regulations in the Solomon Islands agreement are more beneficial to the Solomon Islands than the Kiribati Agreement will be to Kiribati.

When the wording and content of these two agreements are compared, the differences that can be observed are as remarkable as they are alarming. Although the agreements look quite similar, there are a few differences to be observed, and these differences are to the surprising benefit of the Kiribati agreement which is not yet considered a partnership agreement. The differences between the agreements include less local crew onboard EU fishing vessels in the Solomon Islands agreement (so less opportunities for Solomon Islanders to get on the job training in modern fishing practices), no transshipment provisions in the Solomon Islands agreement (resulting in no creation of jobs onshore and added value in Solomon harbours), and less non refundable advance payments for fishing licences in the Solomon Islands agreement (so less guaranteed money when fishing is poor). In practice this means that the opportunities for the Solomon Islands to invest in the development of their own fisheries sector under the new EU fisheries agreement is more limited than the opportunities given in the EU-Kiribati agreement. The remarkable thing is however that the Solomon Islands should be better off in this respect because of their 'Partnership agreement' with the EU.

One can speculate that the disadvantages in the Solomon Islands agreement are a result of the weaker bargaining position of the Solomon Islands due to the civil unrest in recent years and their need to revive their collapsed economy. It was remarkable to see that the fisheries

agreement was made public at the time that development commissioner Nielson was in the Solomon Islands to emphasize Europe's (financial) role in the assistance to the country after an Australian led intervention force restored law and order in the country.

The future

The fact is that the fisheries partnership agreements between Pacific Islands states and the EU do not automatically guarantee a fair agreement for a Pacific state or a push in the development of their own fisheries sector. Therefore a critical analysis of the agreements and the negotiations leading to them as well as monitoring of the existing agreements is badly needed. This is an important role that can be played by civil society. The European Centre on Pacific Issues (ECSIEP) can play this role in Europe, but input from the Pacific is necessary. At the moment ECSIEP is looking for a local partner to provide input in this field, and is therefore inviting Pacific civil society to get involved in the dialogue.

For more information on European fishing in the Pacific, please contact the ECSIEP secretariat: PO Box 151, 3700 AD Zeist, The Netherlands. Phone: +31 30 6927827, fax: +31 30 6925614, e-mail: ECSIEP@antenna.nl

Pavel Klinckhamers

Personnel Officers

The first joint Evangelical Alliance/Global Connections/CCOM Human Resources and Personnel Officers Conference at Hothorpe Hall was held on 16th/17th March. The two day meeting included a day with Bryn Hughes on 'Motivation'.

The second day covered the following key issues:

- (i) Employment Law
- (ii) How to write an Ethos Statement
- (iii) Defining Genuine Occupational Requirements
- (iv) Introduction to the Christian Effectiveness Model

During the Conference there was a brief meeting over dinner when Rob Hay gave an interim report on the progress of the ReMap II Research [cf. p.4ff] – looking at the reasons missionaries leave or stay in their field of service.

Whilst there GC/CCOM delegates were asked whether they thought a joint Conference with EA delegates was useful. Those asked were positive, but felt that there could be an 'overseas mission' workshop included in the programme.

Hothorpe Hall proved to be a good centre and many of the delegates appreciated the comfort and situation, being only 5 miles from the nearest station at Market Harborough.

Future dates for your diary

Thurs 6 May 2004: 'Meeting the HIV/AIDS Challenge to missions – Implications for our personnel' at The King's Lodge, Nuneaton from 10.30 to 4.00 pm To book a place contact Shelagh Horsman at shorsman@globalconnections.co.uk Cost: £25

Wed 22 – Fri 24 September 2004 'Caring for the Missionary in the 21st Century' at Edinburgh International

Health Centre (EIHC) For further details contact Christine Shepherd at cmshepherd@eihc.org

Thurs 2 December 2004 GC/CCOM Personnel Officers Forum at Partnership House, from 1.30 pm to 4.30 pm Further details will be circulated in due course.

On the POF see also p.4ff.

Shelagh Horsman

Overseas Health Care Forum

The last meeting of OHCAF, and the ongoing dissemination of information and discussion via our email forum have been focussing on three key issues:

- The continuing professional development and reaccreditation needs of health professionals working long-term outside the UK with mission and aid agencies (especially, though not exclusively doctors);
- The interface between Faith Based Organizations and UNIADS and the World Health Organization in the fight against HIV/AIDS;
- The loss of national Christian Health Professionals from Christian hospitals and health projects in developing nations, and the various strategies employed to address the causes of this situation.

The main focus of the forum is to share the experiences and issues with members as widely as possible, although this does not preclude us doing some more focussed work in these and other issues in the field of healthcare and Christian mission in the future.

Steve Fouch

Europe

The guest speakers at the April Forum were Roland Smith, British Ambassador in Kiev until July 2002 and now Director of St Ethelburga's Centre for Reconciliation, London, and Nadzeja Cherkas, from Belarus, who is working as intern with CMS on the issues of advocacy in Eastern Europe. Roland Smith spoke about *Christians in post communist Ukraine*. The church was experiencing a new freedom and Roland's talk led to a lively discussion.

Nadzeja Cherkas and Dorothy Knights spoke of the *Legacy of Chernobyl*. In a poor, radioactively contaminated country, with a sharply declining population there are signs of hope e.g. in the work of Belarussian Round Table of Interchurch Aid. It is encouraging to see the concern in this and other European countries not only to provide health-giving holidays to children but to follow up with practical help in Belarus.

The Forum was pleased to have first hand information about the Conference of European Churches [CEC] from Colin Ride of the Methodist Church.

Future plans of the Forum include the proposal of a joint conference with the Churches' East West Relations Network (CEWERN) in Dunblane in 2005 on the theme 'Faith in Europe'. CEWERN recently published a booklet by Ken Medhurst under this title.

The contributors to the November Forum on Reconciliation [postponed from April] include Oliver Schuegraf, a minister of the Lutheran Church in Bavaria working as chaplain to Coventry University and as a coordinator of the Community of the Cross of Nails.

Dorothy Knights

Sri Lanka

The peace process in Sri Lanka is still on hold. A general election two months ago resulted in a hung Parliament with the new ruling party, the United Peoples' Freedom Alliance (UPFA) dependent on minority parties to gain an absolute majority in the house. One of these minority parties, the Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU) gained nine seats and exclusively fielded Buddhist monks - a first in Sri Lanka's political history. Violent scenes in the Parliament have resulted as parties have jockeyed for votes, and there has been a further erosion of trust between the government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

It was in this context that the Sri Lanka Relationships Committee met on 9 June. Two issues dominated: proposed anti-conversion legislation; the elections and the current political situation. On 3 June, the JHU gazetted the text of 'A Bill on Prohibition of Forcible Conversion of Religions'. This states that Buddhists and non-Buddhists are under serious threat of forcible conversions by coercion, allurements or fraudulent means. It includes this clause: 'No person shall convert or attempt to convert, either directly or otherwise, any person from one religion to another by the use of force or by allurements or by any fraudulent means nor shall any person aid or abet any such

conversions.' 'Allurement' is defined as a gift or gratification in cash or kind, a grant of material benefit or a grant of employment. Penalties include imprisonment for a period not exceeding five years or a fine not exceeding 150,000 rupees (about £890.00). The Committee heard that a group of legal experts in Sri Lanka was preparing to challenge the bill in the courts after it had been tabled in Parliament. It was decided that direct advocacy by the Christian churches in Britain could be counterproductive given the sensitivity of the issue, but that a letter should be sent to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office asking whether the Government had expressed an opinion. The Committee will keep a careful watch on the situation, recognizing that, whilst forced conversions should be condemned, a bill of this kind could be used to restrict religious freedom.

Three people who had been election monitors this year helped the Committee reflect on the current political situation: Michael Walsh, former librarian at Heythrop College; Yolanda Foster, academic researcher; Steve Alston, Chair of the Committee and Programme Director at St Ethelburgas Centre for Reconciliation and Peace. All stressed that democracy was strong in the country. There had been little violence during the elections, although there had been some corruption and intimidation, particularly in the North. Civil society was strong and growing. Serious concerns were nevertheless expressed about the lack of progress in the peace process and the growing mistrust between the LTTE and the government.

Elizabeth J Harris

Building Bridges Of Hope (BBH)

Future Church Conference 2004

20-21 October 2004

High Leigh Conference Centre (Hoddesdon Herts EN11 8SG, UK)

Sharing Christian Faith & Values in a Post-Christendom Context

Dr **Stuart Murray-Williams**

Ruth Hiatt, 'Contagious' (Church for 20's), Bristol

Pall Singh, Sanctuary, Birmingham

Dominic Moghal, Active faith, Bradford

+ BBH Pilot project stories from across Britain and Ireland

Conference Accompaniers: Dr **Helen Cameron** and Dr **Anne Richards**

- How do we share Christian faith in a post-Christian climate?
- How do we share faith respectfully and with integrity?
- How do we share faith with people of different and no faith?

The Conference is inter-active with speakers, accompanier reflections, question time and some buzz groups. An inter-generational, multi-cultural and UK & Irish input. Costs are £ 75.00 all inclusive.

BBH is a project of CTBI that is geared for cross-church mission accompaniment (consultancy) and facilitating the learning from the pioneer and the struggling Christian communities of these islands. Website – www.ctbi.org.uk/bbh. Weblog: <http://buildingbridges.blogspot.com>.

Events Resources News

Beyond violence? An ecumenical conference on DOV

Three months ago I was walking down a street in a provincial English city and passed by a church building of nonconformist heritage. Something caught my eye and caused me to stop – it was a white sheet of paper stuck inside a window which advertized a series of four 'study conversations' on the theme of 'Why Violence - Why Not Peace?'

The Decade to Overcome Violence 2001-2010, a vision of the World Council of Churches 1998 Assembly, is alive among the grassroots in these islands!

A major DOV conference will take place at Swanwick, 29 September-1 October 2004.

We hope for a good response from the four nations - from unsung workers who are working away at 'overcoming violence' at the local level to church leaders who are anxious to reflect theologically on a broad ecumenical basis on the struggle to move beyond violence in human affairs. It is undoubtedly a 'one-off' occasion - and we are therefore hoping that friends in the churches and the parachurch community will make a big effort to support it.

Programme:

Opening: Archbishop Mario Conti, (Catholic Bishops' Conference of Scotland, Co-President CTBI),

Speakers: Rev Kathy Galloway (Iona Community), Rev Dr Deenabandhu Manchala (WCC), Rev Dr Johnston McMaster (Irish School of Ecumenics, Belfast), Bishop Joe Aldred (CTBI - Minority Ethnic Christian Concerns Desk), Rev Myra Blyth (Baptist Union of Great Britain),

Worship – led by Rev Sian Murray-Williams

This is the only official four-nations ecumenical event being convened in the first half of the WCC-inspired Decade to Overcome Violence 2001-2010. It is a unique opportunity

- to share stories of 'overcoming violence' from the personal and local to the regional and national.
- to strengthen networking among people working on DOV-related themes at all levels within and between the four nations whose churches provide the membership of CTBI - Wales, Ireland, Scotland and England.
- to reflect together theologically across the church and national divides and construct a ecumenical message to the churches of Britain and Ireland.

Workshops

- re-thinking ways to peace: led by 'Scotland'
- re-imagining power and forgiveness: led by 'Ireland'
- doing justice to all: led by 'Wales'
- developing communities which value diversity: led by 'England'

'Marketplace' – for churches and other church-related peace-building organizations to draw attention to their work.

For more information on the Decade to Overcome Violence see www.wcc-coe.org/dov

29 September – 1 October 2004, 12.30p.m. Wednesday – 1.30p.m. Friday

Venue: The Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire, E55 1AU

Bookings should be made asap by writing to David T. Fong, International Affairs Office, CTBI, Bastille Court, 2 Paris Garden, London SE1 8ND, including full payment (£100 single room; £85 per person twin-bedded room share), dov@ctbi.org.uk, 020 7654 7226.

Paul Renshaw

Research in European mission

Research in European mission and evangelism: A draft for the work task of the new Conference of European Churches (CEC) researcher in European mission.

RESEARCH PROGRAMME: 2004-2006

A. Two projects focussing on the European context

1. 'Seeking generations' Europe and its churches: portraits from the margins

This project will stimulate the collection of descriptive portraits of individuals who stand at or beyond the margins of the Churches of Europe, in particular their attitudes towards values, worldviews, religion, spirituality, and the Christian church.

Outcomes: will include the *ongoing* collection and electronic publication of portraits, made available through the Research Programme's webpages and related forms of communication.

Timetable: The collection of portraits will be ongoing, commencing straight away. Work will draw to a conclusion early in 2006.

2. 'Reconciling generations' Europe and its churches: CWME and beyond

This project will identify important religious, social, political and economic trends emerging within Europe as they touch upon the 'healing of memories' stream at CWME 2005. Additionally, by contributing research findings relating to mission, evangelism, and proselytism as experienced by the CEC member churches, *Charta Oecumenica's* important achievements can be developed in new directions.

Outcomes: Case-study and other material will be prepared as a contribution to CWME 2005 and beyond. In particular it is suggested that a post-Athens European consultation, jointly hosted by WCC and CEC, would focus on Conference themes of importance for the Churches of Europe. The project's primary contribution would be to deliver the results of field research investigating mission, evangelism, and proselytism within Europe in order to supplement existing

doctrinal and theological discourse and analysis of these issues.

Timetable: Case-study material will be collected by early Autumn 2004 and planning for a European post-Athens consultation in the Autumn of 2005 will begin straight away.

B. One project focussing on the churches response in mission and evangelism to the European context

1. 'Seeking and reconciling in unity' Europe and its churches: mission and evangelism

a. This project will identify and describe new and emerging mission programmes, processes, institutions, Churches, and agencies that are, or appear to offer the potential for, fostering unity in mission.

Outcomes: Case-study material will be compiled and published electronically, resources catalogued electronically, and materials prepared for publication that enable local churches to learn from the practice and experience of new and emerging mission initiatives. It is suggested that a multi-lingual CD audio-visual study guide for use in local churches would prove useful.

Timetable: The collection of case study material will begin from the Autumn of 2004. The suggested CD study guide might be published for the Spring of 2006.

b. This project will foster unity in mission through an interchange of personnel and ideas in a series of visits between and amongst staff of 'emerging mission programmes' and Churches.

Outcomes: The establishment by the beginning of 2005 of a trial programme of interchange visits at national, regional, and local level by church-leaders able to act as reflective listeners and observers, offering mission insight and experience into the situations visited, and taking back to their own ministry contexts insight and experience gained from their visit.

Timetable: The trial interchange project will be developed for initial exchanges to take place from late 2005.

Interim report to the CEC Central committee September 2004 and September 2005. Final report and recommendations autumn 2006.

Darrell Jackson

Civil Peace Service Meetings at the Scottish Centre For Nonviolence

Around the world a great deal of work is going into the idea of having large groups of trained Civilians going into areas where conflict indicators are rising. The idea is that instead of waiting until structural and low level violence move to a more aggressive and damaging stage support is given, upon request, to Civil Society to support more positive and less destructive forms of interaction.

Across Europe, two organizations working towards this positive co-operative model meet annually. Two separate meetings were held concurrently in March 2004 at the Scottish Centre for Nonviolence, Dunblane reflecting the slightly different emphasis of each organization. These are of European Network of Civil Peace Services (EN.CPS, www.en-cps.org) and Nonviolent Peaceforce European Regional Meeting (www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org).

The European Network for Civil Peace Service is a loose affiliation of organizations who are working actively to promote the idea of a Civil Peace Service in Europe respecting the different styles of organization and the different stages each country is at with regard to a Civil Peace Service.

The Statement of Purpose of EN.CPS is

'The European Network for Civil Peace Services is an international network of NGOs with the common goal to promote Civil Peace Services (CPS) as an instrument of nonviolent conflict transformation, both on a national level as well as within Europe. It does this through a multinational co-operation of organizations carrying out research, information sharing and dissemination, lobbying (national and European institutions) and awareness raising activities as well as the recruitment, training and deployment of qualified civilian professionals/volunteers. CPS stands for long-term peacebuilding as well as medium to long-term civilian (non-military) conflict intervention and prevention. The EN.CPS gives non-partisan help to conflicting parties seeking assistance in solving violent conflicts non-violently. By promoting the establishment and use of Civil Peace Services, the EN.CPS and its member organizations work in a pragmatic and constructive way for a culture of peace, for dialogue between peoples, religions and individuals, for the support of democracy and for the respect of human rights.'

The aim of the EN.CPS meeting was to

- share information on the work each organization participating was doing
- work towards a common goal of nonviolent intervention
- look at strategies for fundraising
- have working groups on issues such as
 - 1 Guiding Principals
 - 2 Ideas for Joint Projects other than Cyprus.
 - 3 The pros and cons of Civil Peace Service working with the Military
 - 4 Producing a Leaflet for EN.CPS
- Further develop understanding between organizations involved in the network.
- Elect office bearers.
- Co-operation with other initiatives
- Discuss the European Peacebuilding Agency Proposal.

The EN.CPS is a member of European Peacebuilding Liaison Office who lobby the European Parliament.

This network has been in operation for six years, until the last year the co-ordinator was a volunteer and owing to funding issues the new co-ordinator will again be a volunteer. The people involved are committed and are trying hard to be as inclusive as possible. The meeting was constructive and led very well into the second meeting which was for Nonviolent Peaceforce.

Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP) Mission is

'The mission of the Nonviolent Peaceforce is to build a trained, international civilian nonviolent peaceforce. The Nonviolent Peaceforce will be sent to conflict areas to prevent death and destruction and protect human rights, thus creating the space for local groups to struggle nonviolently, enter into dialogue, and seek peaceful resolution.

The European Regional Meeting of Nonviolent Peaceforce met for the second time. It is the only NP region with its own regional meeting. NP has a paid member of staff Rachel Julian who works in Brussels and she has recently been joined by a second staff person, Alessandro Rossi. In the USA there is a support infrastructure allowing NP to employ paid staff. A pilot project has started in Sri Lanka.

The challenges facing this meeting were around ways of working and funding. There is conflict between focussing on outcome, process or community and these conflicting ideas on how best to work have caused considerable difficulties within NP and particularly within the European Region. English is the language used and although an attempt has been made to have Spanish translations there have been difficulties about the speed with which people speak in English and the number of decisions that appear to need to be made in a short period of time.

To me the very important work done at this meeting and facilitated through the earlier EN.CPS meeting was around trying other ways of working. Therefore the structure of the NP meeting was completely different to the usual model of working with lots of time for working groups and the agenda decided at the beginning of the meeting. The interesting result was that all the work was completed. Essentially the group worked with a conflict that had been blocking activity and found a way of supporting the people involved in the conflict to move forward.

Suffice to say the meeting went exceptionally well, the meeting room at Scottish Centre for Nonviolence adapted well and we had at least twenty-five delegates per day working around a conference table. They stayed at Scottish Churches House in the heart of Dunblane this oasis of peace supported the sometimes gruelling work at the meetings.

Consensus has been the model hoped for throughout the work of NP and owing to the challenges around process and outcomes and community this was not working well. A new participant in NP came up with a model of consensus from the website www.delibera.info (in Spanish). In this system, by using a computer you can see very easily how much consensus is present through a voting card with the options 'I don't know/I don't understand; I don't agree; I agree'.

As you can see, the process and deliberations are slow. A Peaceforce, Civil Peace Service and Peace Teams cannot be created in a vacuum and all the potential difficulties are present in any meeting where people of vision struggle together to achieve a workable alternative to militarism as a response to violent conflict. What is wonderful is the dedication and energy committed to this wonderful goal. It was a privilege to participate.

Next year the meeting will be held in Romania.

If you are interested in finding out more about this work please contact Liz Law on 01786 824730, 0131 446 0291 or elaw@scnv.fsnet.co.uk.

Liz Law

Church Unity and Ecumenical Mission

The Selly Oak Ecumenical Initiative for Study and Action (SOEISA) was launched as a new programme of the United College of the Ascension in 2002. Situated in Selly Oak, Birmingham, the initiative seeks to promote the ecumenical practice of mission in two ways: creating opportunities for academic research and reflection on ecumenical practice in mission; and working alongside local churches and groups who are engaging in mission through ecumenical co-operation.

Involvement in ecumenical discussion and debate is both stimulating and challenging, especially in today's climate when serious questions are being asked about the viability of visible Christian unity. Jesus' prayer in John 17 is a reminder that working for Christian unity is a biblical imperative. It is therefore important to be wary of thinking that encourages churches to retreat into their denominational fortresses. In John 17:20 unity is part of God's mission: 'May they also be in us so that the world may believe...' For SOEISA, this has led us to ask the following question: to what extent is vibrant and visible unity dependent on churches jointly participating in mission and evangelism? There are many examples of effective ecumenical co-operation in mission that can help to explore this question. At a recent gathering held in the United College of the Ascension at the end of February, a group of 15-20 ecumenical practitioners reflected on various stories of ecumenical practice in mission from across the West Midlands. We sought to discern key factors that were enabling churches to successfully participate in mission. The theme of 'taking time to build relationships' emerged as a strong common thread running through the stories. It became apparent that ecumenical organizational structures needed to support and be supported by relationships of trust between people.

Cotteridge Local Ecumenical Partnership, Birmingham, is an example of three smaller congregations who successfully formed one church family in one building with a common worship. The process of integration was helped by their strong desire to undertake together new things that each small congregation alone could not achieve. The motivation to share their faith together in worship and in the community helped them through a painful period of relationship building. In the early stages of working together they could not have foreseen the outcome: an ecumenical congregation engaged in mission through a wide range of activities serving the community, including two day centres for the elderly and a popular coffee bar offering lunches to the local community. Sharing in worship and mission has increased their confidence, but only as a result of a painful process of change and relationship building. Learning to journey together by letting go and embracing new ways, enabled three small, struggling congregations to come together out of weakness and move outwards into the local community.

On the outskirts of Shrewsbury, Christ Church is the only church building in a community with a population of about 9,000 people. In recent years, its mainly Church of England congregation has been welcoming Christians of other traditions into its life. To fulfil its aim to work with all Christians in their local community a Declaration of Ecumenical Welcome was signed on Advent Sunday, 2000. Churches from other denominations in Shrewsbury were invited to endorse the principle that any of their members,

who wished to serve in ministry and mission in the parish, could do so by participating fully in the life of Christ Church, whilst maintaining membership of their own denomination. The declaration was a formal acknowledgement of an existing informal reality and a pattern that was already evident in its everyday life: Christians of different traditions being welcomed to serve in ministry and mission at Christ Church. The foundation for signing the declaration was the relationship of trust built up between Christians of different traditions as they sought together to serve Christ in their local community.

Stories, such as those shared during our day of reflection in February, provide important pointers for ways of being ecumenical in the twenty-first century. Time spent fostering relationships of trust can provide a strong foundation for new ecumenical structures and agreements. In the examples we explored, the written signed agreements reflected informal relationships and bonds of friendship that already existed. The stories also demonstrated that the desire to share mission through word and deed can motivate people to work through the painful process of forging trusting relationships that are the foundation for visible Christian unity.

Colin Marsh

Edinburgh Festival of Middle Eastern Spirituality and Peace in 2005

Festival Introduction And Background

From Thursday 24 February – Sunday 6 March 2005 the 2nd Annual Edinburgh Festival of Middle Eastern Spirituality and Peace will bring together artists, scholars, grassroots spiritual activists, and speakers from the Sufi, Druze, Baha'i, Ismaili, Zoroastrian and other lesser known spiritual traditions, in addition to representatives of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

The Festival is being jointly organized by the Edinburgh International Centre for World Spiritualities, EICWS, and the Edinburgh Institute for Advanced Learning, EIAL, and with the support of many other organizations.

The Festival affirms the diversity contained within the religious and spiritual traditions of the Middle East, as well as those here in Scotland. We intend to create a forum in which we can listen to one another and learn with an open mind and heart. The emphasis of the Festival is on spirituality, and on spiritual approaches to peace.

The Festival will bring together at least three different kinds of presentations. First, we will learn from each other about our shared traditions, as well as those that form the unique voice of any one of us. Second, we will hear from those who have been active in peacemaking on a spiritual basis on the ground in the Middle East. Third, we invite participants to share in the musical and devotional spiritual practice presented, in order to gain an experiential view of the traditions that we discuss.

Festival events outwith Edinburgh will be considered, as will proposals for Festival events that fit within the Festival ethos. All events in the Festival are either organized by the Festival coordinators, or in close collaboration with them.

Festival Volunteers would be welcome to help out among other things with hospitality; the hosting of events; collecting

feedback, evaluation and contacts; photography, videoing and recording and transportation for speakers within Edinburgh. Contact Neill Walker, njwalk3300@hotmail.com

South African Council of Churches wants to act as Zimbabwe peace broker

The newly elected head of the South African Council of Churches (SACC), Dr Russel Botman, says his organization wants to be seen as a broker in helping to resolve the political crisis in neighbouring Zimbabwe.

Botman said that the SACC had reviewed its stance so that its response to the situation in Zimbabwe was 'more than just an affirmation' of the position of the ANC.

After Zimbabwe's 2002 presidential elections, the SACC had, Botman noted, echoed the sentiments of the ANC-led government in Pretoria in declaring that the ballot reflected 'the legitimate will' of voters, despite widespread violence by supporters of Mugabe and reports of poll irregularities. Still, the new stance of the SACC, would not be 'just a reflection of the South African opposition's role', Botman said.

In an interview during the 24th general council of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches taking place in Accra, Ghana, he said: 'We have decided to choose our own way, by working with the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC).

'The ZCC has called on us to support it in calling for a national summit of civil society, the ruling Zanu-PF, the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) and local churches.' No timeframe has yet been set for such a summit.

'We decry the tragedy unfolding in Zimbabwe politically, economically and socially,' Botman said. 'We have heard their call and will support them in their commitment to strengthen the churches. We want to be seen as brokers in Zimbabwe in relation to church structures.'

Asked whether one could be a broker with Mugabe, who has in the past not been influenced by either church or political leaders trying to find a solution to the country's political and social instability, Botman replied: 'Too much attention has been put on Mugabe. Very little attention has been given instead to strengthening civil society and the churches. A weak civil society is more problematic than a strong leader.'

Church leaders from South Africa and Zimbabwe met in Johannesburg at the end of February, when they agreed to create a task team to promote talks between Zanu-PF and the MDC. Botman will lead the team, which includes SACC general secretary Molefe Tsele, Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference secretary-general Richard Manatsi, and Evangelical Alliance of South Africa representative Moss Ntla.

Botman was elected as SACC president in July after serving as acting president when he took over from Methodist Bishop Mvume Dandala, who was appointed general secretary of the All Africa Conference of Churches in August 2003. He continues to be vice-rector of Stellenbosch University near Cape Town and a professor in its theology department.

Free Church Executive Secretary Appointed

Rev Mark Fisher has been appointed the next Executive Secretary for the Free Churches at Churches Together in England (CTE). A minister of the United Reformed Church, for the past seven years he has served as General Secretary of Birmingham Churches Together. He will succeed Rev Geoffrey Roper in April 2005.

At Birmingham Mr Fisher's work has extended to over 40 Christian denominations in the city, as well as to other faith communities and bodies such as the City Council, Health Trusts and the Police. He has acted as General Secretary for the West Midlands Region Churches Forum and is part of the national Churches Regional Network.

Until 1978 Mr Fisher taught Ceramics, Art and Design, and he has an active interest in expressing personal biblical faith through visual arts, working on a project 'Image of Faith'.

Professor John Briggs, Convener of the Free Churches Group, welcomed the appointment, 'Mark is both a clearly committed Free Churchman and somebody immersed in and committed to the ecumenical movement.'

Mr Fisher commented on his appointment, 'I am delighted to be joining the CTE 'team'. Birmingham has a very rich mix of Christian traditions from across the ecumenical spectrum and from around the world and I trust that my experience there will equip me well for my new national post.' [CTE news service]

World Mission Conference 2005

The Commission for World Mission and Evangelisation, CWME of the WCC is holding its next conference in Athens in May 2005 on the theme 'Come, Holy Spirit, heal and reconcile'. A major preparatory document 'Come, Holy Spirit, heal and reconcile: Towards mission as reconciliation' was drafted in January 2004 and is now available on the conference website at www.mission2005.org (Go into the site to the English section, click on resources, then documents, then 'reconciliation general' and select document 4).

Jacques Matthey, Programme Executive for Mission Study asks interested bodies to contribute to the preparations for the Conference by commenting on the document. Contributions from BIAMS members are especially welcome in view of the thinking we have already done on the theme through our own conference last year). Comments can be sent directly to Jacques Matthey.

General Secretary of NCC USA arrested over Sudan demonstration

In an act of civil disobedience and protest at the genocide unfolding in Darfur, Sudan, the Rev Dr Robert W. Edgar, General Secretary of the National Council of Churches USA (NCCUSA), was arrested outside the Sudanese Embassy in Washington, DC on 14 July. Dr Edgar presented himself for arrest as part of a campaign to call attention to what the UN calls the worst humanitarian crisis in the world today and to mobilize U.S. and world action to stop it.

The campaign, coordinated by Christian Solidarity International, includes daily demonstrations in front of the Sudanese Embassy that began on 30 June. It is pressing Congress to pass a resolution declaring genocide in Darfur and calling on the Bush Administration to lead an international intervention, impose targeted sanctions on the Sudanese government and establish a humanitarian aid fund.

At the protest participants marched outside the embassy to demand that the government of Sudan stop attacks by its military and proxy militia against civilians in Darfur. The Rev Dr Walter Fauntroy, Baptist Pastor in Washington, and a former member of Congress, led the demonstration, which ended shortly after Dr Edgar and other participants were arrested, taken to a police station, fined and released.

According to the United Nations, tens of thousands of people have died and more than one million people in the region have been displaced in an apparent attempt at ethnic cleansing in Darfur. Refugees are living in makeshift camps, where mass rape of women is common, living conditions are deplorable and diseases such as cholera, meningitis and polio threaten to take the lives of infants, children and the elderly. If nothing is done to prevent it, countless thousands will die in the weeks and months ahead.

'It is clear that a genocide is unfolding in Sudan,' Dr Edgar said. 'In April 2004, as the world commemorated the tragic Rwandan genocide of 1994, we all said we would never allow this to happen again. Yet we are faced today with another horror that is clearly preventable. Getting arrested for this cause is the very least one could do to bring attention to the urgency of this situation. The solution rests at the door of the government of Sudan -- and also at the feet of the international community. We must face the fact that time grows dangerously short for action. As our governments hesitate to do what is right, the loss of precious lives accelerates with each passing week.'

Additional acts of disobedience are planned.

Church Union in Alsace

According to *Réforme*, the synod of the Reformed Church in Alsace and Lorraine (ERAL) has voted in favour of union with the Lutheran Church (ECAAL) in the region of France, and it is proposed that the project be ratified at a joint assembly of the two churches in November this year. Full details in French of the union project can be downloaded at www.epal.fr/union/index.html. It is too early, according to *Réforme*, to say whether this will give new impetus to a possible union of all the Reformed and Lutheran churches in France, but a commission has been set up to consider these wider issues, reporting in early 2005.

Sri Lanka: Faiths groups unite against anti-conversion laws

Several Buddhist leaders and a Muslim have expressed their opposition to proposed anti-conversion laws in Sri Lanka. 'It is not possible to stop Buddhists from converting to other religions through legislation,' Ven Thibbotuwawe Sri Sumangala Mahanayake Thero, head of the Malwatte chapter of the Siamese sect of Buddhist monks commented. Ven

Madampagama Assaji Thero, co-chair of the Interreligious Peace Foundation has also opposed the laws.

Sri Lanka's Supreme Court started an inquiry on 6 August into the constitutionality of the anti-conversion bill. Maulana Rilwan Rahim, of the Muslim Theological Council was among more than 20 leading religious figures who signed a petition asking the highest court to settle the matter.

In the last few days, 3,000 Catholics have demonstrated in the streets of Chilaw against the bill. Christians fear the new law might lead to abuses and curtail religious freedom.

If passed, the anti-conversion law will mean individuals have to inform local government officials before changing their religion. Punishment for breaking the law would be up to five years' imprisonment and a fine of 150,000 rupees (US\$1,500).

Buddhist backers of the bill claim that it is only designed to 'keep in check the activities of Christian fundamentalists' whom they accuse of undermining the 'secular religious harmony of the country'. [From the Council for World Mission news service].

Jerusalem churches praise EAPPI

Three heads of churches in Jerusalem - Roman Catholic patriarch, Michel Sabbah, Lutheran bishop, Munib Younan, and Greek Melkite archimandrite, Mtanios Haddad - visited three predominantly Muslim Palestinian communities on 2 August, showing their support and appreciation for the work of the members of the World Council of Churches (WCC) Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI).

During visits to the West Bank communities of Tulkarem, Jayyous and Nablus, the three bishops met with Christian and Muslim religious and civil leaders, demonstrating the cooperation between members of both faiths, and the fact that the Palestinian people are one and united. The work of the EAPPI companions was praised by the delegation and local community leaders as demonstrating the positive role that churches play in Palestinian society, both Muslim and Christian.

The sites were chosen because the companions have been working in all three places. The church leaders also wanted to show solidarity with those communities which have suffered the effects of Israel's 'separation wall', and its policies restricting freedom of movement.

Latin Patriarch Sabbah showed his appreciation for EAPPI's work in an address to a group of Christian and Muslim religious and secular leaders in Nablus. 'The love of Christ is not only for Christians; it is for everyone,' Sabbah said. 'And to the ecumenical companions from the World Council of Churches, we called upon you and you came. We have put faith in you and we are always with you. This is an occasion to thank you, and also to thank the churches you represent and the World Council of Churches.'

Bishop Younan saw the EAPPI as helping to show how all people of faith can work together towards a common goal of peace. 'It is not true that there is a struggle between Christianity and Islam,' Younan said. 'We are communicating to the world that we are one nation, one cause, seeking justice and reconciliation - Christians and Muslims. The programme (EAPPI) proves this, as it is not only in Palestine but in Israel as well. We work with everyone who works for justice and

reconciliation - Christians, Muslims and Jews. This programme works with people of all three faiths who work against injustice and for reaching a solution as members of one human family.'

Reiterating the words of his two colleagues, 'This programme is important,' Archimandrite Haddad said. 'It shows that the church is working for justice, without worrying about whom we are helping. I am very happy that Muslims accept the ecumenical companions without worrying about religious divisions. This shows that it is not a religious problem; it is a political problem. This programme is a Christian testimony to peace.'

Abu Azzam, a member of the Land Defense Committee in Jayyous, was one of many members of the local communities who thanked both the churches and EAPPI for their help. 'We are one people, Muslims and Christians. We are together against the occupation. This visit not only confirms that, but shows the support we get from the churches and that we are not alone. They have supported us all the time. The ecumenical companions show that as well. ... They are good friends to this community, and we are all one family.'

'It's an honour to have them come and see what we're doing here, and the village people's reaction,' said Ann-Catrin Andersson from Sweden, one of the companions in Jayyous. 'It is very important to see the commitment to us of the people who invited us. It is gratifying to see that they appreciate us. There are strong relations between the church and the community, a fruitful cooperation. I think that the work of the ecumenical companions here has helped as well.'

The EAPPI was launched following a call by the heads of churches in Jerusalem for an ecumenical presence here in the Holy Land. Ecumenical companions are placed in communities throughout Palestine and Israel, working alongside all those who struggle non-violently against the occupation.

Two Ecumenical Companions (EAs) from Britain joined the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI) in Jerusalem in June 2004, with 5 to follow in early September and another 5 in late November.

The 12 EAs who have been selected to serve in 2004 are all British as this year we have not been able to recruit anyone from Ireland. Most of them are in their 60s and two in their twenties.

The eight EAs who served from last November to February undertook their debriefing and preparation for public speaking in early March. Since then they have spoken about their work as EAs in tens of public meetings and *they are still available to speak. Please contact the EAPPI at QPSW in order to book a speaker.*

EAPPI national co-ordinators from seven countries and World Council of Churches (WCC) staff met in Jerusalem in March to assess progress. They agreed new aims and objectives for the programme and an EAPPI Code of Conduct.

The EAPPI partnership in Britain and Ireland, which already includes CTBI and CCOM, Christian Aid, the Church of Scotland, the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development, the Methodist Church, the United Reformed Church and the Iona Community, was enlarged to include also Pax Christi UK as a partner. It is hoped that more Churches or organizations will become EAPPI partners in future.

Floresca Karanàsou

Reviews

Mel Gibson: The Passion of the Christ

If Kai hadn't asked me to review this film, I wouldn't have lasted to the end. Frankly, it contained some of the most brutal and sadistic passages of cinema I have ever seen and I found them profoundly, deeply, upsetting. I have read other reviews suggesting that faith is stirred, emotions of love and gratitude are provoked, but to me now this sounds like some sort of machismo. Looking at the bloody pulp stuck on a stick by the end of the film, I thought: the resurrection? So what? And I couldn't get rid of the thought that other people, *who are not Jesus*, then and now, undergo such mental torture and physical suffering. Why aren't we all screaming?

This is not to say that I object to people knowing and seeing the reality of Jesus' dying in tortured pain and being reminded of his real and complete human death, but I wouldn't (for example) have taken a congregation to see it without being very clear what they were going to be subjected to. The unrelenting witness of the big screen means there is no place or opportunity to reject brutality, inhumanity, the misuse of power, the enjoyment of another's pain. I couldn't ever see this film as an evangelistic tool.

But beyond the violence, two things about the cinematography particularly struck me. The film seems to be about frozen human impotence, the inability to act, just as we, the cinema-goers, are also impotent, stuck in our seats forced to witness the torture. Apart from Peter's strike at the beginning, the disciples, woken from sleep, stand around helplessly. Mary and the women follow Jesus but can do nothing, even small acts of compassion are denied with violence. Pilate is similarly unable to act decisively, to make something happen that will stop the process descending into an orgy of violence. Herod peers into Jesus' face uncomprehendingly, while insane laughter echoes about him. Jesus himself does nothing, but submits and submits and submits as the blows fall and the blood flows. Even Simon of Cyrene, flailing about shouting 'leave him alone' is tossed aside and sent away.

We can only leave, or shut our eyes, or we shall have them horribly pecked out like those of the unrepentant thief. There is yet another important technique in the film, related to our roles as watchers. The significance of *gaze* is paramount in this film. Jesus's eye (the other is smashed shut early on) fixes on those around him, Judas the betrayer, Peter the denier, Mary the helpless, tortured mother, her fate inextricably bound to her son's pain (why does God do this to his handmaid?). Jesus looks too on those who hurt him, interrogate him, scream abuse at him. It is his seeing eye we discern in the tomb.

I admired (I won't say I 'liked' anything about this film) the supernaturalism of the way it was photographed. I appreciated the way the seductive devil stalked about, going to and fro upon the earth, the devil's own kingdom, a devil intimately known to Jesus. They understood each other. I was moved (I think) by the God's eye view of the cross and what I understood to be the tear that falls from the eye of the

grieving Father as the first drop of rain in the storm, when, literally, all hell breaks loose.

Theologically, it made me think about a number of things. In the film, the Incarnation is the descent of Christ into a world already a Bosch's hell. Judas commits suicide to *escape* the demonic curse under which he lives. Jesus undergoes a torment of hell in his life in order to liberate us from it, for we see the devil howling in a physical emptiness. Who killed Jesus? The Jews? The Romans? *God* killed Jesus. Abraham unrestrained. The Son is not given, but *sent* to death. The mission of Christ includes all of this: fear, abandonment, suffering, punishment, death. The Father's will is implacable. 'You would have no authority over me, except it were given you from above'. Mere human politics could not make this happen. And this is not an outcome of the natural world, but the supernatural world: Jesus as some ultimate Exorcist sent to take the rap.

I thought again about the word 'forgive' coming from the cross. Is it prayer request or command? Is it, even then, local or universal? Does the Word spoken, then, make it actual, that we hear ourselves forgiven? And though I didn't like the resurrection scene, which seemed to me a bit Terminator-like (wouldn't the risen Christ at least permit himself a smile?), it made me think about an old problem: if he still bore the marks of the nails and the wound in his side, where did all the other lacerations, dislocations and ruined flesh go? By his stripes we are healed? When exactly did God start tidying up the mess?

It seemed to me that for people unacquainted with the Christian story, much of the film would not make sense. If you have no Bible, then what could you make of Jesus bruising the serpent's head with his heel, his consciousness of the dove fluttering above him, the flashbacks to the Last Supper, the washed hands, the washed feet? The irony of Simon of Cyrene complaining that he is 'an innocent man'. The man in front of me at the cinema commented, when the crucifixion nails were hammered over 'He's not coming down off there, then' as if this was what he was waiting for. (So who hammered the nails out again?) When he left, this same man commented to his wife 'that was worse than *Dawn of the Dead*. Way over the top!'

Indeed.

Anne Richards

Fleming: Asian Christian Theologians in Dialogue with Buddhism

Kenneth Fleming: Asian Christian Theologians in Dialogue with Buddhism, Peter Lang (Oxford, Bern, Bruxelles, Frankfurt, New York, Wien), 2002, ISBN 3-906768-42-2, £36.00

'To reject 'Asia's Wisdom would be an act of self-idolatry on the part of the Church.' (Kosuke Koyama, quoted on p. 90).

'Buddhismis basically a religion of the heart and compassion. How then could it be totally unrelated to the

love of God revealed in Jesus Christ?' (C.S. Song quoted on p. 165).

'Our option is for 'symbiosis', a cultivated form of reciprocal proexistence whereby each idiom (religion) sharpens its identity in conversation with the other.' (Aloysius Pieris quoted on p. 251).

Can the 'other' of another faith help define Christian theology? Can the experience of holiness in the religious 'other' change how the mission of the Church is seen? What kind of relationship should different religions have with one another? These are just three of the questions raised in this study. The focus is three contemporary Asian theologians - Kosuke Koyama, Choan-Seng Song and Aloysius Pieris - and their relationship to one religion, Buddhism. Fleming seeks to 'enter into a critical but friendly dialogue' (p. 332) with them, through listening to the rhythms and questions within their theology. For this is not primarily a book about Buddhism or indeed about inter-faith relations. It is about theology in action.

The book is divided into three parts. The first maps the field, by looking at the origins of Buddhism in India, its expansion throughout Asia and the history of Christian-Buddhist dialogue in Asia. The second takes the three theologians one at a time and looks in detail at the theological fruits of their encounters with Buddhism. The last turns to assessment and critical evaluation.

Fleming maps the field well, particularly the history of Christian-Buddhist Dialogue in Asia. Particularly interesting is his survey of the dialogue between Nestorian Christians and Buddhists in China from the 7th century CE, when Buddhist terms were used to speak of Christian truths and Christian figures were painted in Buddhist caves (p. 40-42). Using the fourfold typology put forward by the Roman Catholic Church (the dialogue of life; the dialogue of action; the dialogue of theological exchange; the dialogue of religious experience) he then reviews the contemporary map of positive Christian engagement with Buddhism in Asia, touching on pioneers such the Sri Lankan Methodist, Lynn de Silva, Korea's feminist theologian, Chung Hyun Kung and the Jesuit, Hugo M. Enomiya-Lasalle of Japan.

The heart of the book is the middle section. Fleming engages with each theologian in a sensitive and probing way, linking their theologies to their spiritual journeys. His task was not easy. Each theologian has been a prolific writer. With liberal quotes, however, Fleming, I believe, succeeds in communicating what has inspired and motivated each. Here I will mention one or two points that particularly stood out for me, as an indicator of the material covered.

Kosuke Koyama is shown moving from a negative view of Buddhism to the realization that 'the other' of Buddhism was actually within him. The experience of Buddhism in the lives of the Thai people was pivotal in this. The Buddhist themes of renunciation of self and the giving of self for the good of others particularly spoke to him. This, in turn, informed his developing theology of the cross. What happens to Christian theology when 'something approaching a theology of the cross is possible outwith Christianity?' (p. 82), Fleming shows Koyama asking. Can Buddhists, because of their religious struggle against greed, judge Christianity? And does the witness of Buddhism throw question marks over western forms of mission and evangelism?

C.S. Song is also shown to have had a negative image of Buddhism in his early years. The positive, Fleming explains, came in the 1970s as a consequence of his theological conviction that God's saving activity was to be found in Asian cultures. Reacting against the hegemony of western constructions of theology, he, therefore, began to mine Mahayana Buddhist narratives to create an Asian theology. For instance, he employed the Buddhist view that action to overcome suffering is more important than speculative metaphysics to direct Christian theology along an activist path of identifying with the poor, and declared that the Buddhist emphasis on compassion could be compared to the love of God. Fleming charts how this project led to Song re-evaluating his theology of religion - declaring for instance that an exclusivist theology was based on a false image of Jesus (p. 187).

Pieris presented Fleming with a paradigm different from the other two. For, as a young Jesuit priest, Pieris radically passed over into 'the other' that was Buddhism in order to enter its self-understanding, 'forgetting Christianity, to the point of denying it, to receive the fullness of the Buddhist kenosis' (p.217). The theology and missiology that emerged from this placed dialogue at the centre, a dialogue defined through the concept of 'symbiosis', a process through which, in the context of a shared commitment to the empowerment of the poor, Buddhists and Christians could teach one another what was life-giving in each tradition. What the Asian churches must undergo, Pieris came to insist, was evangelization from below, from the poor of Asia, who were the body of Christ, whether they were Buddhist, Hindu or Christian. And Fleming shows that, in this process, the Buddhist could be invited to tell the Christian who Christ is.

In assessing the work of the three theologians, Fleming employs his evangelical background. His strongest criticism in terms of praxis is for Song, because he probes Buddhist stories not to move Christians towards a greater understanding of Buddhism but to challenge Western theology. His strongest theological criticism is for Pieris, challenging him to clarify whether he sees Jesus simply as a manifestation of the religious truth of liberation or as the constitutive embodiment of this. Here he aligns himself with Jaques Dupuis' 'inclusive pluralism', which combines respect for what God may be saying to Christians through other religions with absolute allegiance to the centrality of Christ (see *Christianity and The Religions: From Confrontation to Dialogue*, Jaques Dupuis S.J. Orbis Books & Darton, Longman & Todd, 2002). He calls all three to take Chalcedon seriously and to adopt a 'Middle Path' that allows for a deeper dialogue between traditional Christian doctrine and the insights that arise in praxis. Yet, he is also willing to support Koyama in his declaration that 'all theology is incomplete, broken and imperfect' (p. 319). He affirms much within the theologies of the three and calls for a dialogue between evangelicals and Asian theologians. He is in no doubt that theologians in the West need to listen to and learn from the challenges that come from the voices he so sensitively probes.

This book, which began its life as a doctoral thesis, is a mine of information. There are some errors of fact. The Pali Canon of Theravada Buddhism, for instance, does not have its own 'script' (p. 22). I read it in Roman script. People in Thailand read it in Thai script and Sinhala Buddhists, in Sinhala script. There are also some viewpoints I would want to take issue with. To take as an example his treatment of Aloysius Pieris, I do not think he has made it his mission to

interpret Buddhism to Christians or that most of his writing on Buddhism is for Christians (p. 237), as Fleming asserts. An important part of Pieris' indological work concerns subjects that are of primary interest to Buddhist scholars. And my own experience of his guidance tells me that he would encourage Christian students of Buddhism to go initially to Buddhists, not his own writing. I would also contest Fleming's implication that Pieris' immersion in Buddhism at one point in his life has meant that he has not been as rooted in his Christian faith when in dialogue as Kosuke Koyama. In Pieris' case, radically crossing over to the other side was so that he could both understand Buddhism from the inside and also come back to Christianity with renewed insight. It is a motif that is relevant not only to inter faith dialogue but to many situations where there is conflict or misunderstanding.

Having said this, I would recommend this book as a most valuable exploration of the work of three seminally important theologians. Its most important message is that exploration of this kind into the experience of theologians who have lived in situations of religious diversity much longer than many in the West should not simply be an academic exercise. It should be central to the renewal of Western Christianity in its developing multi-religious context.

Elizabeth J Harris

How Understanding Mediates Faith

Jonathan Hill: The History of Christian Thought (Lion Publishing, Oxford, UK, 2003). ISBN 0-7459 5093-0. Pp 352pp, £9.99

Whatever the state of play in the secularization versus de-secularization argument (and there is plenty of evidence for both trends these days), it cannot be denied that religion is a topic of increasing interest in the public arena. The tragedy of 9/11 and its uncomfortable links with 'faith' has made policy makers, pundits and ordinary people alike stop in their tracks. Religion in its various forms has shaped the modern world. But how equipped are we, believers or not, to engage with it seriously?

As I began to write this review of *The History of Christian Thought* a useful distraction surfaced. BBC Radio 4's 'Start The Week' programme, a weekly airing of cultural, literary, social and scientific thought, was broadcasting in the background. The topic was the task of seeking truth, justice and reconciliation in South Africa, in post-war Iraq and in Israel/Palestine. Alongside a journalist, a politician and a psychologist in the studio was an Archbishop. Much of the discussion revolved around religion as a force for both good and evil. Most of it was encouraging. Here we had a Christian leader who could acknowledge the deep problems posed by misshaped faith; a non-believing activist who nevertheless considered himself a 'student of the teachings of Jesus'; a practitioner interested in how our mental / spiritual maps shape the world; and a commentator who brought questions about the internal logic of Judaism and Islam to bear on the issues concerned.

Nevertheless, even among a well-educated forum, there were some pretty superficial judgements flying around. What's more, I couldn't help thinking how difficult it would be to hold a conversation as good as this (let alone better than) in many churches. Whatever is going on 'out there', most of our faith communities remain closed in upon themselves --

talking about the wider world as a problem or as an opportunity, perhaps, but often finding it difficult to deploy a wide ranging understanding that would enable us to face the lesions at the core of the Gospel message.

Jonathan Hill's excellent volume is surely part of the intellectual armoury that can help Christians to shift the balance in favour of faith that seeks understanding and (just as important) understanding that mediates faith. Not 'intellectual' as in obscure, difficult or elitist, I should stress; but as in the necessity of loving God with the head as well as the heart, particularly in a fast-changing, forgetful world.

To call a book *The History of Christian Thought* is a risk on a number of fronts, of course. It is in danger of sounding dryly academic, for one thing. And that definite article is certainly a hostage to fortune, not least among reviewers who might well be tempted to point out just how much the book doesn't include as well as how much it does!

In fairness, Hill (a philosopher and theologian now working in publishing and broadcasting) makes no claim to being encyclopaedic. His aim is to give a broad, clear, fair and non-technical overview of Christian thinking throughout the ages; one intended for the general reader, both within and without the church. In my view he has succeeded in this important but difficult task.

The book's organization is straightforward. There are six sections dealing with the Church Fathers (Jonathan Hill is a Patristics specialist), the Byzantine era, the Middle Ages, the Reformation era, the Modern era (from the Enlightenment to so-called Higher Criticism) and the twentieth century. An epilogue hinting at the shape of debate to come is perhaps least satisfactory in its sketchiness, but the rest is generally superb.

Hill tells us that he has tried to write in a way that assumes no prior theological learning but which does require general familiarity with the Bible as a whole and the New Testament in particular. His claim seems broadly true. The author describes the evolution of Christian thinking from the Early Church onwards in a way that combines thoughtfulness with a lively narrative and plenty of good (but not obtrusive) humour. In places it reads like a good detective novel. What will happen now? Where will the next twist in the plot surprise us? Where will it all end?

Not many people will read a 350-plus pages book in one sitting, even if it is attractive and not-too-dense, as is the case here. But if you do so it will probably take you between five and seven hours. Breaking the book up for study or reflection on the part of individuals and groups would also be fairly straightforward. Each section features a short introduction. It then proceeds in generally chronological order by exploring the life, thought and impact of some major figures. These are mostly theologians (from Justin Martyr to Wolfhart Pannenberg), but sometimes key philosophers (the Alexandrian school, Aristotle, Lessing, Kant, the Existentialists) or key protagonists, (the Mendicant orders, Wesley, liberation theology). There are also short explanatory text boxes on the principal historical or intellectual streams, from the Ecumenical Councils through to Feudalism, the Conquistadors, Romanticism, the Vatican Councils and -- inevitably -- postmodernism.

All this is extremely well presented and organized. The glossary, 'further reading' and the index of names and themes are helpful if a little cursory. A few pages of maps and chronology might have been useful, but these are readily

available elsewhere. The virtue of *The History of Christian Thought* is that it interweaves biography, history and reflection so well. The author does not withhold his views, but his judgements are fair and open. They invite further exploration and often link well to other 'entries'. Some will feel that Pentecostalism, recent third world thought, linguistic philosophy and post-modern theology (which is almost wholly absent) deserve greater coverage, but the overall selection is pretty good. And it can be dipped-into as well as read in linear fashion.

The major omissions are stand-alone entries on twentieth century missiology and the modern ecumenical movement. The Radical Reformation is also overlooked except in one passing reference. Modern Roman Catholic thought is dealt with well, but rather too briefly. There are also some minor mistakes - Jürgen Moltmann's *The Crucified God* is wrongly described as his first work on page 342, though it is correctly located on page 308, for example. But in the broad sweep of this book these are not major objections. Hill is especially strong and clear on Patristic and Orthodox thought. And he untangles the web of Trinitarian and Christological disputes with admirable (but not, I think, deceptive) brevity. A great deal of learning is condensed in a highly readable way.

Overall, this summary of how the Christian Gospel has been received, appropriated, developed and thought-out across the ages is a wonderful resource. Its importance is not simply descriptive. In a lively and compelling way it illustrates the great variety and fecundity of Christianity, as well as the terrible mistakes it has made. And for those such as the psychologist in the radio programme I mentioned at the beginning, who said *inter alia* that Christians seem to think of reconciliation in purely me-and-God terms, it would be a good way of summarizing some of the subtleties of a tradition that is more caricatured than appreciated these days, by advocates and detractors alike. I'm usually reluctant to be prescriptive and say things like 'every local church should have one', but in the case of this book I'm tempted to make an exception. Unless someone can point to a better modern summary and introduction, of course.

Simon Barrow

Arnold/Sardar: Europe's Double Legacy

John Arnold and Ziauddin Sardar: Europe: A Double Legacy. The Legacy of Christendom and The Legacy of Islam, London: Action Centre for Europe 2002, 30 pp. (free from www.actioncentreeurope.org.uk)

John Arnold, former dean of Durham Cathedral, and journalist Ziauddin Sardar attempt to show the emergence of modern Europe from two sources, viz Christendom and Islam. Their venture intends to understand the past and thence derive guidance for responses to current and future challenges.

In his section Arnold argues for: (a) a spiritual and ecumenical renewal of the Church which 'successfully' lost itself in the worldliness of European secularism (thereby indissolubly imbuing European culture with Christendom), (b) a re-evangelization of Europe and (c) a re-orientation of the political European project along Christian values, valid for the geographic entirety of Europe, including Orthodoxy.

Arnold asserts that Christianity has shaped Europe more than anything else has, despite the relevance of non-Christian in-

fluences. This, he claims, becomes increasingly clear at a time when the failure of 'neo-paganism (Fascism) and atheism (Marxism-Leninism)' becomes obvious and the materialist consumer societies produce more and more people longing for spiritual guidance in cults and sects, believing 'not nothing but anything'. Arnold observes that Europe underwent major crises every five hundred years, from the emergence of the Roman Empire and Christian Church in the 1st century, the fall of the Empire and the beginning of the middle ages in the 6th and 7th centuries, the fall of Byzantium and finally the Reformation in the 15th and 16th centuries. Arnold then interprets the developments of our present time as signs of a fourth major European crisis after a 500 year interval. Generally I am doubtful whether anyone living at any given time can judge its historic relevance, and more specifically one may doubt the interpretative value of a theory that fails to include epoch-changing events like the appearance of Islam and the Great War. But according to Arnold the current crisis offers an opportunity for a re-evangelization of Europe, an event which he sees as necessitating ecumenical co-operation of churches.

Arnold presents an ecumenically very committed essay, assuming that only unity can lend the Christian message credibility. Referring to John 17 this is a classic position, but is it true? I have never met a single person who said to me that the existence of many churches was a barrier to their embracing faith. Even though Arnold does not deny the importance of secularism for European history, one may wonder if he does not underestimate its tremendously positive contribution by naming it only in *opposition* to the three religious factors Christianity, Judaism and Islam. Most probably secularism did more to end religious wars in Western Europe than the ecumenical movement did.

In a final chapter Arnold touches upon the question of Eastern Europe and the European Union, quoting the *Charta Ecumenica* to say that 'the community must be pan-European.' Apart from adhering to a doubtful 'bigger is better'-ideology re the EU, another weakness of this part is that it remains unclear when 'Eastern Europe' denotes the former Communist block (large parts of which are now in the EU) and when it denotes the lands of Eastern Christianity (which are not). Furthermore one must ask if these popular and widespread propositions do not betray an arrogant concept of the EU. They imply that Europeanness is something that could be graciously bestowed upon countries by allowing them membership of the EU. Is it not rather something which is culturally inherent, irrespective of membership of a political body that currently tends to stretch its fingers ever further East and gain control of countries only recently become independent?

When he explores the relationship of Orthodoxy on the one hand and Protestantism and Catholicism on the other, Arnold rightly observes that all three traditions are an integral part of Europe, defining the continent that otherwise lacks an obvious geographical demarcation. Indeed it long has been *one* continent embracing what would become Western and Eastern Christianity. Today's geographical term 'Europe' only became common when it was defined as the 'Christendom' reduced from the previous Mediterranean Christianity when Islam obliterated it in its previous North African heartlands. Only then did Christendom and Europe become synonymous, and only then was the term 'Europe' widely used in its modern geographical sense. Europe is thus from the beginning defined by the advance of Islam.

Arnold consistently stresses the unity of Europe's Christian heritage. He does indeed mention that only Protestantism and Roman Catholicism have gone through Renaissance, Reformation and Enlightenment, in the process being imbued with the current values of Western Europe, while Orthodoxy is not. But he is optimistic that this will not lead to more than a temporary wobbliness of these values on Eastern soil. This optimism might well prove to be equally unfounded as the widespread optimism regarding the development of the Third World after decolonization – a matter of a few years before it would have caught up with the West. Is there necessarily a fast lane through a cultural development that took centuries in the West, just because we wished there was one? Wrong optimism in the political sphere is a luxury that can cost dearly and thus it is this part of Arnold's (and the *Charta Ecumenica's* which he quotes) stance that needs to be most thoroughly debated.

The thesis of Sardar's part of the booklet is straightforward albeit rather unsystematically dispersed over the pages: a) it was Islam 'which turned Europe into a world civilization', b) most positive things in Europe were learnt from Islam, and c) these truths about the role of Islam were and still are 'ruthlessly suppressed by Europeans'.

The first striking feature of this piece is not the content but the style. Where Arnold reflects and queries in order to understand, Sardar is on a mission to reveal the 'real history [of] Europe', 'its true lineage', thereby exposing the 'elaborately manufactured history, which has been imposed on the rest of the world.' Consequently his essay is full of certainties in which even the most unusual statements are a 'matter of course', 'evident' and any possible disagreement is mocked and vilified. Sardar adopts the *habitus* of a prophet revealing the truth, a truth that was and is being kept hidden by European academics, churches and the education system. Conspiracy theories currently abound in the Islamic world and the essay is no exception. But they facilitate neither sober analysis nor intelligent questioning.

Sardar disagrees with the proverbial view of the origins of European civilization in Athens, Rome and Jerusalem and sees Islam as the primary source, deliberately kept hidden by the West. It is unclear how he comes to the conclusion that the role of Islam was suppressed by European academics. In my history books Averroës and Avicenna *et alii* always featured highly for their role in passing on Greek philosophy until the originals were later found. But the essay seems to rank the Arab interpreter above the Greek author. Apparently himself uncertain if this really suffices to prove European unoriginality Sardar proceeds to discredit Greek civilization itself, by claiming that most of what is good about it was unoriginal and fundamentally Asian i.e. 'Barbarian'. Yet, he does not explain how this should diminish its value. If drawing on older sources devalidates, where would this leave Islam, the youngest world religion? The Roman origins are dismissed since they were 'more venal, bloodthirsty and brutish' than any other civilization – an astonishingly narrow view of a civilization whose language dominated European learning for over a millennium and whose legal system still is the basis of all continental law. Europe's Jewish roots he deems not even worth mentioning or refuting.

In the essay Sardar not only is contemptuous of European culture but also of Europeans, who, he states, 'feel a bit disoriented' at present, because their values are to be found in large parts of the world and because 'the people of Europe

[have] an indelible inferiority complex'. This is because 'Europe's evolution is doubly barbarian' (Asian and Goths/Vandals/Franks), not really Greek or Roman as 'propaganda' has wanted to make us believe for 2000 years.

Only after dismissing the most common assumptions about Europe Sardar explores the role of Islam. He states that almost everything positive about 'Europe' was learnt from 'Islam' (although earlier he opposes such generalizing terms, denying that there is such a thing as an 'Islamic civilization'): libraries, health systems, maths, experimental research and even liberal humanism. It is not clear how the fact that most of these institutions and ideas far predate Islam, and some of them were found by Islam in the Christian lands it conquered, fits in with his basic thesis.

The problems of the essay are too a large part methodological. Despite many historical references, Sardar does not *think* historically and critically but only uses history ideologically, eclectically quoting isolated references. Rather than try to understand how the difficult sides of the relationship between Islam and Europe have shaped and been used to shape the thinking in both 'camps' to this day, Sardar mostly uses generalizations where they fit to make his point.

For Sardar the history of European-Islamic relationship starts with the crusades, an early form of European colonization of *terra islamica* (for the contemporaries it was of course the reverse: *terra christiana* recently lost, where even then the majority of the population was still Christian). He does not mention the emergence of an Islamic world in the first place, a precondition for crusades to take place and in fact, as mentioned above, the cause of the term 'Europe' in today's meaning.

Sardar is *not* making the point that the crusades are today instrumentalized in education and propaganda in Islamic lands. He does not explore how this ideology shapes the present relationship. Rather he uncritically subscribes to this partisan view and uses it in his argument, thus abandoning the attempt of a critical analysis of his subject matter. Sardar does not share the common view that Muslim-European relations were at most times conflictive, the two being each other's paradigmatic foe. He attempts to show that either there was no conflict to speak of (proof: Spain's golden age) or that it was the fault of Europe. He argues that Islamic conquests and wars waged on Europe by the at most times militarily far superior Ottoman Empire for over 500 years are a sort of European projection rather than a 'clear and present danger'.

In this view almost all current problems surrounding Islam in Europe are due to Europeans' prejudice, ill-will, misunderstanding and self-denial. There are no inherent reasons for real difference or fact-based inter-cultural tensions. A conflict theory that allocates all blame unilaterally is always suspicious, but more importantly it is hard to see how such a superficial analysis could contribute anything to the current challenges of plural societies and the re-orientation of Europe.

The reason for his shortcomings is again methodological. Comparing the theory of one set of ideas (culture, religion, constitution etc.) with the practice of another, as Sardar routinely does, is a common means of arguing if one wants to discredit one system compared to another. It is not a means for understanding. Similarly he seems uncertain if he wants to make broad observations at all or not, for example while denouncing generalizations of 'Islam', Sardar sees no problem talking of 'Europe' or 'the West' as if it was not equally internally varied. And finally he commits the basic mistake to argue solely from historical merits for contemporary rele-

vance. The essay draws little distinction between Islamic history and present. Even if the past influences of Islam on European culture were as strong, and medieval Spain as ideal a golden-age place as here claimed, this would say little about the present challenge of integrating Islam in Europe and the root causes of its widespread failure. One of the greatest problems of Islam for the past centuries, as modern Islamic thinkers agree, is its refusal to see innovation and change positively, thus catching large parts of the Islamic world in a time warp, falling behind both the modern West and the fast modernizing Orient. What is good and innovative at one time becomes outdated and backward if it remains unaltered for centuries.

What, however, is most problematic in this publication is that its general outline and Sardar's essay in particular replace the role of Judaism in European culture and history with Islam. While one would not criticize a book for silence about something outside its subject matter this omission seems programmatic and at best insensitive. Even if one would agree that the role of Islam is underestimated, one would hardly deny that the role of Judaism in the making of Europe is greater. The omission of this brochure indicates a dangerous attempt to re-read this history. Europe post-1945 has done much to tackle her anti-semitic heritage. These endeavours are still fragile and are currently being jeopardized by her Muslim minorities, many of whom re-introduce a casual, almost matter-of-fact anti-semitism into Europe. It is problematic to not even mention and tackle this. At a time when the majority of a wave of desecrations of synagogues and Jewish cemeteries and anti-semitic crimes comes from young Muslim males this is more than a minor academic shortcoming. It is one of the main challenges for current Islam in Europe.

The shortcomings of this article are the more deplorable since the topic addressed is highly relevant. Undoubtedly in our time more knowledge and reflection about the role of Islam in the making of Europe is required (also among Muslims), so that it may contribute to shaping the future. It could offer new perspectives on the self-perception of an ancient continent in transition. But the article's muddled, often illogical, partly contradictory reasoning does not bring it forward much. Dealing with the topic in an ideological manner, from a simplistic anti-Western viewpoint does little to bring the debate forward.

Kai Funkschmidt

Received for Review

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

Kenneth Medhurst: Faith in Europe, published under the auspices of CTBI by CEWERN, CAFÉ, and the CCOM Europe Mission Forum, 60 pp., £ 5, ISBN: 0-85169-304-0

Valentin Dedji: Reconstruction and Renewal in African Christian Theology, Acton: Nairobi 2003, 280pp., ISBN 9966-888-40-3

Jean Mayland (ed.): Beyond Our Tears. Resources for Times of Remembrance, prepared by the Joint Liturgical Group and Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, CTBI: London 2004, £7.95, ISBN 0-852169-286-9

Deleted: ¶

PS: Hast Du eigentlich mal meine Diss wenigstens zu einer kurzen Anzeige verarbeiten können?¶

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CONNECTIONS
Issue 2/2004 (vol.8)

CONNECTIONS is published three times a year by the

Churches' Commission on Mission
Churches Together in Britain and Ireland
35-41 Lower Marsh
London SE1 7SA
Phone: +44 (0)20-7523 2125
Fax: +44 (0)20 7928 0010
Internet: www.ccom.org.uk
Editor: Kai M. Funkschmidt
connections@ctbi.org.uk
ISSN: 1476 - 332X

Subscriptions cost £7.50 p.a. incl. p&p

Views expressed are those of the individual contributors and not necessarily of CCOM or CTBI, their commissions or member bodies.

For reflection

I don't agree with your picture of the history of religion – Christ, Buddha, Mohammed and others elaborating an original simplicity. I believe Buddhism to be a simplification of Hinduism and Islam to be a simplification of Xianity. Clear, lucid, transparent, simple religion (Tao *plus* a shadowy, ethical god in the background) is a late development, usually arising among highly educated people in great cities. What you really start with is ritual, myth, and mystery, the death & return of Balder or Osiris, the dances, the initiations, the sacrifices, the divine kings. Over against that are the Philosophers, Aristotle or Confucius, hardly religious at all. The only two systems in which the mysteries and the philosophies come together are Hinduism & Xianity: there you get both the Metaphysics and Cult (continuous with the primeval cults). That is why my first step was to be sure that one or other of these had the answer. For the reality can't be one that appeals *either* only to savages *or* only to high brows. Real things aren't like that (e.g. *matter* is the first most obvious thing you meet – milk, chocolates, apples, and also the object of quantum physics).

CS Lewis, *Letter to Sheldon Vanauken*, 14 December 1950 (quoted from: S. Vanauken: *A Severe Mercy*, Harper: San Francisco s.a., p.87)

Contributors

Barrow, Mr Simon (Anglican, Exeter): CCOM Commission Secretary
Conway, Dr Martin (Anglican, Oxford): Former president of the Selly Oak Colleges
Fouch Mr Steve (Anglican: London): Director of MMA Health Service, Focal Person Overseas Health Care Forum
Funkschmidt, Rev Dr Kai M. (United Lutheran-Reformed (EKD), Dunblane): CCOM Mission Relations Secretary
Harris, Dr Elizabeth (Methodist, London): Methodist Church Interfaith Secretary; CCOM Sri Lanka Relations Committee Secretary
Hay, Mr Rob (Baptist, Gloucester) Director of Generating Change and Fellow at Redcliffe College, Gloucester
Horsman, Ms Shelagh (Anglican, London): Global Connections' PA to Executive Director
Jackson, Rev Darrell (Baptist, Budapest): Researcher in European Mission, Conference of European Churches
Karanásou, Dr Floresca (Quaker, London): Middle East programme manager, Quaker Peace and Social Witness
Klinckhamers, Mr Pavel (Reformed, Utrecht/NL): Communications Manager of the European Centre on Pacific Issues (ECSIEP)
Knights, Mrs Dorothy (Anglican, Worcestershire): Focal Person CCOM Europe Mission Forum
Law, Ms Liz (Quaker: Dunblane): Co-ordinator of the Scottish Centre for Nonviolence
Marsh, Rev Dr Colin (Anglican: Birmingham): Tutor for Ecumenical Studies, United College of the Ascension
Morton, Rev Colin (Presbyterian, Edinburgh): Focal Person CCOM Middle East Forum
Quenet, Rev Tom (Methodist, London): Methodist Church Latin America-Caribbean Desk; former Focal Person CCOM Latin America/Caribbean Forum
Renshaw, Mr Paul (United Reformed Church, Crawley): CTBI Co-ordinating Secretary for International Affairs
Richards, Dr Anne (Anglican, London): Secretary to the CCOM-CofE Mission Theology Advisory Group (MTAG)
Zimmermann, Rev Jörg (United Lutheran-Reformed (EKD), Bonn/Germany): Parish minister, former missionary in Rwanda

The last word

From Pretoria

