

CONNECTIONS

Issue No 9

Resourcing ecumenism and mission
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If you do not hear from your grown up kids for a long time it usually means they are alive and well as usual and they therefore do not see a reason to notify you of anything. In case you were beginning to get worried if CCOM had stopped producing *Connections* we can now assure you that there was nothing to worry about. Staff changes and resulting staff shortage over the summer simply delayed this issue quite considerably. We shall try to make up for the long gap by offering you a somewhat larger issue this time.

With the staff changes came a change in editorial responsibility for *Connections*. I shall take over from Simon Barrow now that he has become the new Commission Secretary.

Since Simon started this publication in 1996 it has become a much appreciated and widely distributed resource, all issues of which in fact he put together almost single-handedly. This is an opportunity to thank him for all the work and imaginative ideas he has put into it over the years! No doubt the readers and I still look forward to profiting from his comments, contributions and ideas. Changes in the setup of *Connections* were already planned before these staff changes. We shall in the future further develop our website (www.ccom.org.uk) and in the process rethink how best to make use of both a regular written publication and an internet site which are closely linked. Watch out for the changes to come with the next issue and check on the webpage occasionally: much of the material in this issue (not just where it is explicitly mentioned) should sooner or later be available for download there.

From the last issue we still owe you the second part of Donald Elliott's article "Re-engineering Mission" in which he explores the practical consequences of his theological reflections in *Connections* No. 8, frequently making reference to the "Building Bridges of Hope" (BBH) process.

Ecumenism relies not primarily on the ecumenical structures but on what happens on the congregational level. You will therefore also find in this issue an account of another grassroots event, i.e. of the Scottish part of this Europe-wide initiative One such grassroots initiative was the events around the 'Pilgrimage 2000'.

Among all CTBI/CCOM activities this year, the visit to Chinese churches was certainly the highlight. An account by John Clark will give you an impression.

With all these comes as usual a wide variety of information, impulses, ideas from the mission scene in these islands, in Europe and from all around the world.

Kai Funkschmidt

Mission Relations Secretary, CCOM



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FEATURES

DONALD ELLIOTT: RE-ENGINEERING MISSION? AN EMPOWERING PARADIGM (PART II)

*In the first part of this article Donald Elliott reflected on the necessary re-shaping of the Church in Europe in order to strengthen the Church's missionary nature. Understanding the concept of the **logos** as the world's "operating principle", he explored how the all-pervasiveness of this "operating principle", sharpened by the perception of the logos incarnate, must affect the understanding of a missionary Church. Rather than an understanding of mission as "draw them closer to make **them** God's people like **we** are" what is needed is an understanding of God's being at work in the world already. The spiritual awareness of God's (or the "operating principle's") presence in this world is high among people outside the Church, even if many find it hard to express verbally as David Hay's study on "The Spirituality of People Who Don't Go to Church" has recently shown.*

In the second part Elliott looks at how this affects the local congregation and its mission.

A Research Basis on Local Congregations in Mission

By introducing the term 'operating principle' I ventured into the field of engineer language.

Engineers proceed on the basis of research and then by trial-and-error testing. It is excellent therefore that the Baptist Union of Great Britain has set up a Department of Research and Training in Mission. If the old-style evangelistic campaigns and missions hardly connect anymore, and if Lesslie Newbigin was right about the primacy of local congregations as the hermeneutic of the Gospel, then – as an engineer – it is clear to me that medium-term in-depth research on local churches followed by a long-term process of regeneration by trial and error is required. We, in the British and Irish churches should have had enough of short-term and unresearched good ideas. Nothing less than a re-purposing and, if you will, re-engineering of our local churches and their support structures will do, it seems to me. And given the numerical decline of most of our churches, it seems that from a human perspective we do not have too much time to get going.

The good news is that, to all intents and purposes, the basic research has been done. Through numerous surveys, such as those which underlie publications like *Natural Church Development*, *The Sheep that Got Away*, Robert Warren's *Marks of a Healthy Church*, together with the Australian *Church Life Survey* soon to be adapted here and David Hay's and Kate Hunt's work already mentioned, many important factors have been commonly identified. The CCOM study *Building Bridges of Hope* (BBH), accompanying the whole life of congregations with carefully recorded and collated verbatim data, has identified an agenda for local churches in mission which can be co-related with these others. BBH identified seven key learning indicators for local mission engagement:

1. *Focusing Vision*. The importance for a local church to articulate its specific calling with joined up strategies for engaging locally, sacramental life, style of leadership and structure.
2. *Building Local Partnerships*. The bridge-building significance of seeking and forming partnerships of action with those with similar concerns in the wider community.

3. *Sharing faith and values*. A commitment to exploring respectful and creative ways to share yearnings, values, aspirations and faith beyond church circles in relation to the Gospel story.
4. *Nourishing Daily Living*. The critical need for believers, old and new, through worship and reflection to relate biblical faith to personal life, work situation and society today.
5. *Developing Shared Leadership*. The importance of the formation *in context* of clergy-lay team leadership animated by one another and linked to church learning institutions.
6. *Becoming communities of learning*. Churches at every level need to become at core communities of learning and engaging fit to be 'bridge-builders' with others.
7. *Being accompanied*. The value of welcoming systematic accompaniment and appraisal in non-directive ways from beyond the local and the networking of experience and stories in order to look with fresh eyes.

Here we do have an outline practical basis upon which we really can build together towards being missionary churches if we have a mind to. The basic research is done; it now has to be tested

Monitored Regeneration With Mutual Accompaniment

The agenda already identifies a methodology for the further process. It is what is encapsulated in the phrase "looking with fresh eyes", coined by David Martin who made the Bridges to Build video. It is about 'systematic accompaniment' and 'the networking of experience'. In a nutshell, the proposal is that the churches in Britain and Ireland do just that for a number of medium-term co-ordinated and monitored pilot projects focusing on the critical agenda items identified through the research. Already a number of deaneries, circuits, dioceses and training institutions have been proposed.

In parallel, it is expected that many local churches, either alone or in clusters, will follow the 'looking with fresh eyes' methodology using guidance offered through the video and booklet soon to be published. The idea is that the process will start small with certain 'pilots' and then by trial and error gather momentum.

So I believe that, as a matter of Gospel obedience, the denominations need to *embark together on a process or journey of mutual accompaniment and appraisal on a commonly identified mission agenda*. The pace of regeneration will depend on the provision of capacity for co-ordination and monitoring. Certainly, revival is not going to come by just wishing for it.

Energy Focused Through Structures For Mission

Several things stand out for me from the experience of the BBH work so far. I will mention two.

The first is the amazing and varied creativity among people in the local congregations. One of the real surprises and delights were the occasions when we brought together folk from as far apart as Broadford on Skye and inner city Sheffield and Leyland and Llanelli and Carlow and Bangor County Down. Catholics, Pentecostals, Free Church-people and Anglicans discovered one another, not confessionally, but missionally (if you will). They were mutually fascinated by the different stories of commitment and practice. Some were shocked, but stayed to digest and ponder. But the main point is the evidence of free creativity. You could almost feel the wind and flame of the Holy Spirit. For most of these churches, mission – not to say, maintenance – is a real struggle. But, despite that I have seen the creative energy of the people of God. And this is particularly the case, be it carefully noted, where clergy and laity (to use our jargon) genuinely animate and inform each other.

"For most of these churches, mission – not to say, maintenance – is a real struggle. But despite that I have seen the creative energy of the people of God."

The question then is, How is this energy best *focused* for the missionary renewal of the churches of Britain, Ireland and Europe? Mission history is full of movements as shown by the Nestorian Christian traders who gossiped the Gospel along the Silk Road to China in ancient times, the sea journeys of the Celtic missionaries, by the often lay-led 18th missionary societies, or the Pentecostal movements, especially of black Christians, in our midst today and many other examples. We need to recognise that mission requires such movements involving lay-people. Voluntarism is alive and well in the churches of our islands, but not so plentiful that we can take it for granted. Don't snuff it. For, as Lawrence warned, *Giving life is not so easy...* and don't let *the living dead eat you up*.

This is where the second point arises. In BBH we had a small sub-group on Church Structures for Mission chaired by Michael Doe, the bishop of Swindon. The report states:

"The key question for our sub-group is whether current structures support, by-pass, or hinder congregational life. Looking at the data, few of the participating places identify the wider church as a factor in moving from

maintenance to mission. They do however welcome encouragement and challenge from the wider church, including participation in networks of mutual interest [...] There is great value in the wider church offering support, sometimes called 'mentoring/ accompanying' [...]. This approach avoids both the local church feeling that it's being left to sort out its own problems, and, the opposite, being told what to do 'from above'.

- consultancy which can bring a more objective mind to bear on the local.

- 'catalytic events' (residential experiences, 'Cathedral' festivals, etc.) as long as there is assisted re-entry to local and everyday church life.

- external resourcing (e.g. the Parish Development and Renewal Programme in the Archdiocese of Dublin and the CofE's Springboard) but only if geared to helping the local to realise its potential.

- opportunities to share good practice, locally and ecumenically".

I am sure that any process of regeneration will embrace these points: the creative energy that is manifest where it is encouraged and shared, and the means of its focusing through the wider structures for the benefit of all.

The Churches' Commission on Mission as a structure is illustrative. When we were in formation, we wanted a relatively lightweight framework for inter-change on global mission. It was John Clark, now Chief Secretary of the Church of England's Board of Mission, and Chris Wigglesworth, our present Moderator who back in 1992 invented 'the Focal Person' to be drawn from the informed members of our constituency to provide a personal focus for a certain period on each of the various regions and areas of concern in mission *ad gentes*. This actually has meant, not only a high investment by a number of creative individuals over the years enabling the rest of us, but also an enhanced ecumenical commitment and understanding by many bodies. As a result, there has in fact been a good focusing of expertise and creative practice for the common good.

The Operating Principle, a Research Base, Monitored Regeneration, and the Focusing of Energy. All this is what I mean by re-engineering mission.

The journey back into mission in Europe is not of course for the mere survival of the church: indeed to aim for that would be to belie the basic 'operating principle' of God in Christ and therefore be self-defeating. In the words of my old school motto, quoting the missionary apostle, *Deus dat incrementum*; it is God who gives the growth. That is something we may not and cannot engineer!

The full article (parts I + II) is available for download on www.ccom.org.uk.

JEAN MAYLAND: PILGRIMS CROSSING: THE EUROPEAN PILGRIMAGE 2000 IN SCOTLAND

'Pilgrimage 2000' is an initiative started by the European Co-ordination Group for Mission and Evangelism (ECG) which was established by the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the Conference of European Churches (CEC). It is composed of representatives from various Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox churches in Europe.

'Pilgrimage 2000' perceives itself to be an answer to recommendations made by the Second European Ecumenical Assembly in Graz 1997, which was made up of representatives from CEC member churches and the Roman Catholic Bishops' Conference in Europe (CCEE). There it was stated:

"We recommend that the churches take the year 2000 as an occasion to give their fellowship visible expression through jointly prepared symbolic, liturgical and pastoral actions and initiatives. They should particularly work towards ensuring that Easter can be jointly celebrated from the turn of the Millennium onwards, and also seek to achieve mutual recognition of baptism among all Christian churches."

Parts of the 'Pilgrimage 2000' initiative took place in Norway, Romania and Scotland. The following is a first hand account from the Scottish event, titled 'Pilgrims Crossing', which took place in September.

DESPATCH FROM DURHAM – WOMEN'S PRAYERS

In the evening of Saturday September 9th I met with up with Bernadette Askins, the English representative to 'Pilgrims Crossing', outside Durham Cathedral under the turret carved with the picture of the milkmaids and their cow. According to tradition it was these milkmaids who led the monks up the hill at Dunelm as they came carrying the coffin of Cuthbert. So Durham Cathedral came to be built. After evensong with prayers for the Pilgrimage we were invited into the nine altars chapel by Canon David Stock, who offered further prayers for us in front of the altar of St Hilda and her icon. He used a pilgrim prayer by Cathy Galloway, the prayer of St Hilda by Edith Reyntiens and the collect for St Margaret of Scotland. He commented that the hangings for St Hilda's altar were still being made and that a modern artist was being commissioned to paint a picture of St Margaret to stand by her altar once that was revived. So women are being restored to their rightful place in Durham Cathedral. Affirmed and blessed we went on our way rejoicing.

ACTIVITIES IN ALNWICK – PILGRIMS & MURDERERS

An hour's drive brought us to the White Swan in Alnwick where we eventually had a good meal after the guests who had come for a murder weekend had been fed! Like pilgrims of old we shared our stories, telling of all the problems and pressures of our work, letting the burdens be lifted from us and giving laughter a chance to break through.

CUPAR, CERES AND THE ROBIN'S SONG

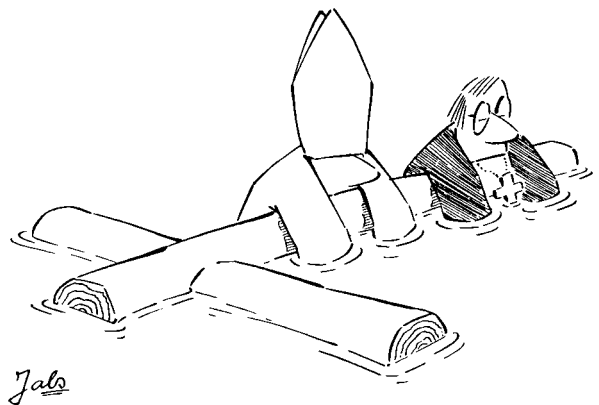
A wonderful drive brought us by Edinburgh and the Forth Bridge to Cupar by 3.30 pm where we found Sister Vincent from Wales who had been present at the events in St Andrews. Together we set off for Ceres. There we located the Church of Scotland, talked with the minister, and watched the 'walking' pilgrims arrive two by two. With joy I recognised Berit Lanke of Norway who had come from

Trondheim to join in the pilgrimage. Two young girls came carrying the lightweight cross. The heavy cross eventually arrived pulled on a trailer by a tractor and was duly erected. The third station of the cross – 'he fell and we fall' – was observed with prayer, meditation and silence, broken only by the robin's autumn song.

A walk up the hill brought us to the kirk where we attended a special Church of Scotland service culminating with communion at 18th century long tables. Seated at the long tables waiting for the bread and the chalices to be passed along was a most moving experience with a deep silence that could almost be felt.

A VERY WET MONDAY

When we woke up on Monday morning, it was pouring with rain and it never stopped all day. In spite of this 20



brave souls walked with the lightweight cross from Ceres to Falkland and got absolutely drenched to the skin!

We did it the coward's way. We drove to Falkland in torrential rain and parked opposite Falkland Palace. With our pilgrim passports we were able to go round the palace free. We saw many beautiful things, learnt a lot about Scottish history and eventually prayed in the royal chapel.

Gillian Kingston arrived from Ireland and joined us. Later we went for a mini pilgrimage around Falkland. We got soaked too. Over a cup of tea we read the local pilgrimage

leaflet and silently prayed the prayers. It was very impressive. The leaflet reminded us that 'traditionally pilgrimage was a means of travelling respectfully and prayerfully over another person's land in a quest of spiritual growth.'~. We felt we had done this during the day. We had also learnt to receive hospitality most graciously offered.

In the evening we moved out to the cross which had been erected in the car park of the Memorial Hall instead of in the lovely palace gardens. There we observed the fourth station of the cross in words and music - the music of the choir and once more the autumn song of robins.

AND SO TO DUNFERMLINE

On Tuesday morning we woke up early. The sky was still leaden gray but the rain was just a fine mist. Some of us went for Communion at 7.45 at the Church of Scotland, others went to mass in the Royal Chapel. The Keeper of the Palace is a Roman Catholic. His wife died a few months ago but he had obviously put a great deal of effort into the pilgrimage preparations in Falkland.

"... the church is now a historical monument owned by Historic Scotland and acts of worship there are strictly forbidden. It made me want to weep."

After breakfast we set off for Dunfermline where we eventually found the Episcopal Church. This was where the launch of the material for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity was to take place. We were welcomed by the priest and together put up our display of books and material for sale.

Some 60 people turned up for the launch, apart from a Lithuanian choir who were to sing for us. Sister Vincent explained about the bilingual Welsh/English version of Prayer Week material to the delight of two Welsh people who were present.

Later we went to the abbey, found St Margaret's grave and met up with a small group of pilgrims and had a service in honour of St Margaret. Nearby the large cross had been erected and about a quarter of an hour later the small but valiant band of 'walking pilgrims' arrived escorted by actors dressed as Queen Margaret and King Malcolm. I think that the local people were disappointed that our numbers were so small. In fact, quite a lot of those who were there came from Norway and Romania – not to mention the choir from Lithuania. People from Britain and Ireland really did not support the pilgrimage well at all. This made our presence all the more important.

Exploring the abbey we found the nave is a miniature version of that of Durham Cathedral and was made by the same craftsmen whom Margaret had brought there. Sadly it is a historical monument owned by Historic Scotland and acts of worship there are strictly forbidden. It made me want to weep. At least Durham Cathedral is still a live place of worship. I could not help feeling that Margaret is better honoured in Durham where the worship of God still continues than in that dead museum the sight of which, I think, would have made her weep too.

AND BACK TO REALITY

The pilgrims were going on to Queensferry but Bernadette and I left Sister Vincent at the station and set off wondering whether I would manage to reach London despite the fuel crisis.

The Holy Spirit – she was with us that day! In fact I think she was present at the pilgrimage all along even though the numbers were disappointingly small but I am glad that I persuaded a woman from each of our four nations to join in *Pilgrims Crossing 2000*.

The European Pilgrimage 2000 campaign will end with a central highlight event in Prague, 6-8 July 2001. Further information on the past and the plans for Prague is available at www.megabaud.fi/~pilgrims/project.htm or from Mrs Berit Lanke e-mail: european.pilgrimage2000@online.no

KAI FUNKSCHMIDT: "GOD IS ROTTING AWAY. ONLY WE DO NOT SMELL THE STINK YET"

12th AÖF conference with Walter Hollenweger on "Pentecostals and the Ecumenical Movement" in Hamburg

The Ecumenical Studies Association (= 'Arbeitsgemeinschaft Ökumenische Forschung', AÖF) is a group of young theologians (and the occasional anthropologist, economist, judaist etc.) from various countries and denominations. This year saw some 45 participants from as far afield as India, Nigeria, Switzerland, Romania, the US and Germany. AÖF was originally started in 1988 by Theo Sundermeier and Konrad Raiser to allow better networking among doctoral students and young scholars from different universities in Germany. In that country the subject "Religious Studies, Ecumenics and Missiology" is usually combined in one Theology Faculty Chair. It is the smallest of the six traditional theological disciplines, not even existent in many universities, therefore many students and scholars find themselves short of competent discussion partners. The AÖF is a means of avoiding this kind of scholars' isolation.

THE STATE CHRISTIANITY IS IN

"We have killed God by neglecting, yes, even abolishing his supremacy in matters of church organisation, in matters of state finance, in matters of scientific research priorities! Therefore God is rotting. Only we do not smell the stink yet." (This and all following quotations are translated from the script of Hollenweger's presentation.)

The churches, and with them the ecumenical scene, do *not* primarily suffer from the secular world's hostile attitude to the church, from the militant atheism in the media or the materialism of the 'world'. Much more dramatic is the factual "Christians' atheism of the heart". "This is why it has become cold in Christianity." This theology of practical atheism of course is not found in the churches' confessions but in their budgets. It shows in the fact that Christians of all denominations, including Pentecostals, are indistinguishable. They happily play their roles in the research laboratories of Siemens and NASA, generally playing the game by the rules of the world in which they live.

Keynote speaker *Walter Hollenweger* did not lack in clarity of content or expression in his address to the 12th Annual Assembly of the Ecumenical Studies Association that took place on 3-5 November 2000 in the Missionsakademie Hamburg, discussing the relationship between Pentecostal Churches and the Ecumenical Movement.

Hollenweger did not restrict his contribution to Pentecostal involvement in bilateral interdenominational dialogue. He went on to propagate the search for a "new ecumenism", a renewal of academic theology, maybe even a new Church.

If upon reading the beginning of this article you did not think of Hollenweger but of Nietzsche you are right, of course. Hollenweger started with Nietzsche's "Gay Science". He told about a seminar session run by the Pentecostal theologian Miroslav Wolf (then professor at Fuller Theological Seminary). Wolf hired an actor to perform Nietzsche's Mad Man halfway through his opening lecture on 'God'. The first year students were taken unaware by an obvious lunatic jumping around in the lecture theatre over the tables yelling away: "God is dead and we killed him". He recited Nietzsche's entire speech while some eager students tried to catch him. Only when everything was over did Wolf unveil the truth and handed

out papers with the original Nietzsche text to read as homework.

ORAL ACADEMIC THEOLOGY IS POSSIBLE

Hollenweger's point was not just a professor's pedagogical inventiveness. He intended to prove that it

"makes sense and is possible to do theology at a high academic level in oral, visual, physical categories. Oral theology is not *eo ipso* primitive theology."

This oral theology, taking its starting point from "the excitement of faith" rather than deductive reflection is typical for Pentecostalism, the youngest and fastest growing of denominations (if that is an appropriate term).

Corresponding to this kind of theologising is the way in which Pentecostals evangelise. The biblical model for this is Peter's encounter with Cornelius (Acts 10). The whole point here is that "the evangelist learns something on the gospel from the person he intends to convert". Peter has to restructure his understanding of God's action and grace. Evangelisation is *not* biblical when the sinner is just invited along to an event in order to learn something new. Evangelisation is biblical when the Other is invited "to do interpretation of the Bible together with us".

"Evangelisation is biblical when the Other is invited to 'to do interpretation of the Bible together with us'."

With this kind of mission, churches different from one another are bound to emerge (biblically, for example, Gentile and Jewish Christians). Hollenweger argued that the many theological variations within the pentecostal movement be recognised as being in accordance with the Bible. The theological differentiation within the Pentecostals not only makes these an "ecumenical movement within themselves" but also justifies this variety being described as "syncretistic". This holds true even though Pentecostals deny it, claiming they were merely biblical, yet without being able to explain the great many different theologies, structures and practices within their movement.

Hollenweger did not see this statement as problematic since "Christianity is a syncretism *par excellence*".

He went on to explore the need for a 'new ecumenism'. His understanding of ecumenism was clearly missionary, starting from the above mentioned model of 'human centred evangelisation'. Arguments are not helpful against atheism, only the witness of a different lifestyle is. We need an ecumenism that does not define itself as a kind of 'Church Trade Union', created to have a louder voice in the world but created in the awareness that to-day's world's urgent questions can only be answered ecumenically. So dialogue between denominations is of little interest and importance. What really matters is denominations joining to have a dialogue with the biblical text.

Hollenweger's paper understandably led to a very lively discussion. Was it really right to categorise Pentecostal academic theology generally as 'oral'? In his own example was not the actor's performance only the introduction to the handing out of Nietzsche's paper and therefore rather a pedagogical means than a new mode of theologising?

VISIONS VS ARGUMENTS?

And did he not sometimes confuse levels of argumentation? No doubt in most churches employment laws are more important than ordination, asset administration more important than justification *sola gratia*. And yet, if Paul at the Apostles' Council (Acts 11; Gal 2) really referred to his vision and calling more than he did rely on argumentative reasoning, as Hollenweger pointed out, it is questionable if this should be recommended for imitation?! If really at a "discussion on finance someone decided to found his argument on the Grace of God rather than the achievement of man" surely it would eventually be hard to get into any kind of rational discussion at all?

Could it not very easily lead to contradictory visions, revelations, callings? The varied nature of Pentecostalism and others after all is not only due to a sensitively inculturating evangelisation method as described above. It also has something to do with a tendency to solve internal congregational conflict and gratifying personal ambitions by claiming all kinds of visions and revelations.

Pentecostal participants did not contradict Hollenweger's critical analyses of some aspects of the Pentecostal movement. Rather they emphasised his stress on the Pentecostal movement as an 'ecumenism in itself'. In the end of the day what mattered to them was not the interdenominational dialogue for its own sake but the question: "What can we do together?", particularly in regard to evangelisation. Dialogue – yes! But not without a precise goal. This point was further discussed among participants throughout the next two days.

One can hardly deny that this plea for centring the ecumenical encounter around evangelism is quite close to

the origins of the entire ecumenical movement! This seems to me an important point to remember as we try to travel along the path of ecumenism with Pentecostal churches in CTBI. Structurally Pentecostals (at least some of them being members of CTBI/CCOM) are a lot closer to the ecumenical structures in Britain and Ireland than in Germany. But whither then? The question is: Are our structures and intentions sufficiently oriented towards common practical goals and action to accommodate them?

"Pentecostals want the dialogue – yes! But not without a precise goal."

After the theme-oriented part on Friday, the Saturday and Sunday at AÖF meetings are given over to presentations of participants' papers emerging from their current research. Most of them are doctoral, MTh or post-doctoral theses. They are not generally thematically limited to Friday's theme, yet this year about half the presentations were from research by Pentecostals or on Pentecostalism.

This part of the meeting always reflects the variety of participants and gives a good impression of what is currently happening in the field of ecumenical research by the younger generation. I can only name here a small selection of the presentations given: Ludwig Eisenlöffel: Conflict between Pentecostal Movement and Ecumenical Institutions in Germany; Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen: Pentecostals and the alleged oblivion of social justice; Matthias Wenk: Spirit and Community in Luke's scriptures; M.T. Cherian: Hindutvā and Indian Religious Fundamentalism; Uta André: Theology of Life in Latin American Liberation Theology; Benjamin Simon: African Christianity in Germany – Kimbanguists/Aladura-Church/All Christian Believers Fellowship).

In the aftermath of this meeting a collection of articles on "Pentecostals and ecumenism" will be published, including Hollenweger's contribution (the book will be partly in English).

The next meeting will take place from 2-4 November 2001, again in Hamburg Missionsakademie. Its focus will be on "Intercultural Reading of the Bible". It should be stressed that many English-only-speakers have attended in the past and true to the ecumenical character of the event there is no difficulty for them to fit in, whether they wish to give a presentation or not. Participation from Britain & Ireland is therefore encouraged! Information is available on the website www.a oef.de (mostly German) or by e-mail from a oef@bigfoot.com (Ms Silvana Bunea).

BRIDGES TO BUILD

Much has happened with Building Bridges of Hope programme since we last reported on it in *Connections*. The learning process involving 40 congregations across Britain and Ireland has been summarised in a video and work booklet for local use. These can be ordered using the form enclosed with this mailing. An interim report, *Building Bridges of Hope: An Invitation and a Challenge* has also been widely circulated. Further copies are available for £2.50 including postage from the CCOM office.

Meanwhile, a four-nations development group has been established to oversee the next stage – which involves looking at how the key lessons from local places (about focusing vision, building local partnerships, sharing faith and values, nourishing daily living, developing shared leadership, becoming communities of learning, and being accompanied) can be implemented more systematically within the life of churches and communities. The new development consultants, Donald Elliott and Terry Tennens, are working with a methodology group and regional contacts (especially in England) to establish the basis of a set of 'pilot projects' over the next few years.

Active consultation is also taking place in Scotland, Ireland and Wales.

Laying the foundations for an effective 'Stage C' is a careful and methodical business.

At the same time, an *Association of Bridge-Building Churches* (ABC) has been established and has had several meetings. This is aimed at encouraging the local churches who have already been involved, and others who will make use of the video and work booklet. It aims to strengthen good practice at the grassroots level. At a large gathering in Leyland in July a special 'thank you' was said to Ronald Ram, the former BBH consultant, who has been instrumental in helping us along the road to this new phase. (*Simon Barrow*).

CCOM LOOKS TO THE FUTURE

'Good News in the 21st Century: evangelisation in an age of transition' was theme of the tenth Annual Commission meeting held at Ushaw College, Durham, from 14-16 September 2000. Speakers included John Clark (Secretary to the Church of England Board of Mission), Jan Royan (Urban Theology Unit tutor, recently returned from an ecumenical visit to Brazil), Tim Dakin (new General Secretary of CMS), Andrew Kirk (Centre for Missiology and World Christianity, Birmingham University, and two representatives of the Churches' Commission for the North-East (looking at the local context).

Witness and Service in the World Today' is the theme of the 1999-2000 CCOM annual review. Copies are available from Eva Kisitu in the CCOM office. It will also soon be available for download from our website.

The new CCOM staff team is now fully operational and looks forward to serving you in 2001. Simon Barrow, Commission Secretary and Kai Funkschmidt, the Mission Relations Secretary will be visiting member bodies in the four nations from January onwards. We want to ensure a match between CCOM's priorities and those of churches, mission departments and agencies throughout Britain and Ireland.

VISIT OF CHINESE GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

At the end of November, CTBI hosted a group of six representatives from the Chinese Religious Affairs Bureau and a linked, government-funded, body called the Chinese People's Friendship Association. They were accompanied by staff members from the Amity Foundation and the China Christian Council. This was one of a series of visits to Europe coordinated by the World Council of Churches.

The aim of the visit was to show the visitors the nature of religious life in UK, in particular inter-faith relations, the involvement of the churches in social service, and the relationship between church and state. In practical terms, this meant visits to places like Church House, CAFOD, the Welsh Assembly and church projects in Cardiff. They were taken to the Dome, where they were told of the multi-religious character of life in these islands and joined in the Jubilee 2000 final gathering. CTBI also hosted a reception where our work was introduced by staff members.

The hopes of the visit were that gaining an understanding of British church life would help the officials to understand better the religious situation in China, and, it is hoped, make them more sympathetic and helpful in their dealings with the churches there.

The visit was financed by member bodies of the China Forum and the arrangements were coordinated by Rachel Parry of USPG, which had taken on the role of 'lead organisation' – part of the new 'devolution policy' of the Forum. (Margaret Allen)

MISSION THEOLOGY ADVISORY GROUP (MTAG): THE CAPACITY TO SAY "YES" TO GOD

The last MTAG gathering was supposed to be a boring meeting addressing a number of issues aimed at making decisions about how we finish up our project and move on, but in fact it turned into a meeting with one emergent theme: how people say "yes" to God.

It began with Graham Kings' exposition of a sculptured crucifix by Jonathan Clark. Christ is both on and in the

crucifix, struggling, being overwhelmed, but simultaneously overcoming. We then considered the way the sculpture had been formed, - pouring molten aluminium into a mould which is then vaporised by the heat of the metal. We discussed the riskiness of such a method, the once-for-allness of it.

This led to a discussion of annihilationism and a very personal discussion of the four last things. Some people in the group saw the annihilation of individuals who reject God as right and proper, others of us spoke of God's eternal lament for those who turn away. This then crystallised out into a discussion is how people can say "yes" to God and what happens to people for whom being in existence is too terrible to bear. What relation, then, has mission to helping people find a way to say "yes" to God's affirmation of them?

We turned from intellectual probing of this question to practical questions in our further exploration of the relationship between mission and pastoral care. We were assisted by Annie Hargrave from Interhealth helping us to discriminate between personal formation and corporate formation and helping us further to determine what place directive and non-directive counselling has in helping people to say "yes" as a person and "yes" as a group.

From here, we moved into a discussion of mission and worship, and because it was in our minds, we began to look afresh at worship as a means of witnessing publicly our collective "yes" to God, affirming not only our faith for ourselves, but making this affirmation a means of outreach to others.

With Simon Barrow's report on the WCC Faith and Order meeting, we were able to gather all of this up into the question of what *missio dei* and *missio christi* really mean. Do we just mess about with these terms as ways to avoid the central question of what we think we're doing in mission, or is there buried at the heart of it the powerful desire to say "yes" to God and to offer that challenge and opportunity to others? (*Anne Richards*)

DIALECT HELP NEEDED BY BBH

As you know (see above) a video has been produced in the process of BBH. Although mainly focussing on Britain and Ireland with the occasional glimpse across the channel it is an interesting resource well worth watching shown outside these islands. But first trials have shown that the video vividly reflects the cultural variety in this country, namely the variety of dialects. The rapid change between Glaswegian, Welsh, Irish dialects etc. has made the video hard to understand even for those hardened foreign ecumenical activists who have long experience with English.

The solution is simple: a verbal transcript of the text will allow viewers to read along while watching. We therefore look for a volunteer or two with English as their mother tongue who could spend an hour or so on this. Maybe you could ask around in your local congregation and let us know?

CCOM FORUM REPORTS

GENERAL

Currently a new Forum Handbook is being drafted by CCOM staff to replace the merely technical "Guidelines for Forums and Meeting Points" with something rather more practically useful. The drafts are being discussed with the Focal Persons and the resulting booklet should facilitate the functioning of Forums by clarifying working procedures, identifying goals, helping with the identification of the respective roles of member bodies and their delegated Forum members, Forum officers, CCOM staff etc. The Handbook is planned to be ready in the spring of 2001.

MIDDLE EAST

The Forum had for some time been drawing the attention of the churches to the fact that the process that culminated in Camp David (2) could not provide the basis for a just and durable peace between Israel and the Palestinians. In the present crisis members have been receiving harrowing appeals, reports and stories from our partner churches in Israel and Palestine and from those working for our own churches and agencies in the area. There is an even more urgent need for our churches to increase their understanding and support for our brothers and sisters in the area, and for our government and the European Community to play a more active role in peace-making by establishing a return to negotiations based on UN resolutions. Through the Forum member churches and agencies have been supporting each other in pursuing these aims.

Among other activities the Forum hosted a delegation of Iraqi church leaders, and is seeking to encourage closer relations between our churches and peoples. Despite political differences there is common ground in the belief that blanket sanctions achieve little but the suffering of innocent people and a harmful isolation of a society. (*Colin Morton*)

LATIN AMERICA / CARIBBEAN

The Forum has revived and concentrated on hearing a report of the 10th gathering of Base Ecclesial Communities (CEBs) in Brazil - one of the few church conferences for which there is intense competition for the 3000 places. We heard that CEBs met needs of faith - no clergy, need to celebrate, circles of people around the Bible; of social need - the necessity to organise to get basic facilities; and of political transformation - to try to change society. Reports of the demise of CEBs seem misguided, with a strong episcopal presence. Delegates looked at their memories - the work of God in their history, remembering their own Exodus and martyrdom experiences. *Connections* with indigenous faiths were also explored.

Some (very selected) quotes from delegates: "The priests said don't dance - but we speak to God through dance - it was like killing us" (an indigenous); "Rome is both a guarantor of stability and part of the problem"; "Hands up prayers to God all the time - but never brought them down to touch the people" (criticism of conservative Pentecostal churches, who share the same style of celebration but are unwilling to meet with the CEBs); "Anyone can have an option for the poor - it's the option for the causes of the poor which is more difficult" (quoting Brazilian Bishop). (*Philip Wetherell*)

AFRICA

In November the AACC assembly in Lomé/Togo discussed HIV/Aids and planned a consultation on the issue in Kampala/Uganda for January. This coincides with the resolved theme of the Forum's next residential meeting on 3-5 April 2001 and if possible the Focal Person will attend the Kampala meeting.

At the last Forum Meeting the new CCOM Mission Relations Secretary Kai Funkschmidt was invited to speak on the topic "We Need Africa - What For?". His reflections, focussing on the relationship between Gospel-Culture Relation in Africa and Europe and the question of intercultural community will shortly be downloadable on the CCOM website.

The Forum is currently assessing the relationship between the Forum and its Sub-Groups/Meeting Points re the question of how much "Discussion and info-sharing only" needs to go on and in how far one can proceed to "active propagation of co-operation and co-ordination".

Other topics high on the Africa Forum's current agenda were Nigeria and Sudan.

CHINA

Apart from the China Government Officials' Visit the Forum organised a visit from Hong Kong Church leaders. Discussions to evaluate the experience led on to consideration of the general principle of devolution of responsibilities for specific pieces of work of the Forum. Attempts are being made to establish guidelines as to what exactly devolution means in terms of workload, responsibility and accountability.

EUROPE

The EMF at its last meeting discussed the very anti-ecumenical recent Russian Orthodox statement on the relationship with other churches. Despite its being more of an internal document (not easily even available in English) it was feared that it would have negative effects on the actual relationship to other churches by strengthening those

in the church who considered 'ecumenical' itself to be a swearword. The 'Soul for Europe' process is going through a difficult period following the replacement of the old corruption-torn European Commission and a total change in application procedures for project funds. In the churches' office in Brussels the new person in charge, Mrs Win Burton is attempting to sort the situation out as well as possible.

The current situation in the Balkans and the question of how to deal with Mission Personnel inside Europe were further topics on the Forum's recent agenda.

OHCAF

The Forum was concerned with HIV/Aids prophylaxis and the medical as well as moral questions involved in the protection of medical staff working overseas but not of local employees. A progress report on the Mental Health Workshop from late 1998 is now available from the Focal Person, Sr Molly McGrath.

PACIFIC

The Forum has been particularly concerned with the increasingly worrying situation in Indonesia, especially West Papua, East Timor and the Moluccas. Several press releases have been issued both by the Forum and some of its member bodies.

INDIA GROUP

Since the Report for the year 2000 Commission Meeting was written (cf. Annual Report), there has been progress with arrangements that were foreshadowed in that Report, as well as with new initiatives.

The Oxford Centre for Mission Studies has been invited to organise a series of **training workshops** in Bangalore towards the end of November 2000 particularly for the

benefit of younger bishops from the two United Churches. Member organisations of the India Relations Committee have assisted with the financing of this. Several forms of episcopé were brought into the United Churches. It is hoped that time might be given in the Workshops to exploring how these other forms of episcopé can be sustained and developed in the contemporary life and practice of the United Churches. So far episcopé has tended to be identified with a form of episcopacy which is popularly (and probably mistakenly) thought to be 'Anglican', and which appears to have been widely adopted in the united Churches, almost to the exclusion of other sorts of episcopé.

CSI-RMC, CNI-RMC: The CSI will convene in January 2001 a meeting with its external partners, amongst other things to make the usual biennial review of how well the partnership is working. The CNI is moving towards convening a meeting of the CNI Partners in Mission before the CNI Synod meets in October.

The Board of **Theological Education** (BTE) of the Senate of Serampore College (SSC) is organising a nationwide consultation on theological education culminating with a meeting in the CSI Centre in Chennai in May, to which some 10 - 12 external observers/participants will also be invited. One of the main purposes of the Consultation is to improve the relationship between the Churches and the process for theological education and ministerial formation in India. In recent years there has been some estrangement and alienation in this relationship. More recently this Agenda has been widened to include new challenges to theological education, financial viability and other issues. External partners hope that the Consultation will look for ways of prioritising all proposals from India concerned with Theological Education before they are shared with external partners. At the moment the system makes it look as if external partners essentially determine who will receive what in India, and for what purpose. If this continues it can only add fuel to the fire of political accusation that Christian institutions in India are the tools of foreign interests. (*Gordon Shaw*)

NEWS, RESOURCES AND EVENTS

29TH DEUTSCHER EVANGELISCHER KIRCHENTAG WITH BRITISH PARTICIPATION

If you are interested in...

the future of Europe / mission and evangelism / ecumenical cooperation / contemporary spirituality / peace, justice and environmental issues / youth work / social and political questions / new church music / traditional church music / theology / dance and drama / adult education and lay training / meeting some 100,000 Christians from all over the world in a unique atmosphere ... then come to the 29th Kirchentag in Frankfurt 13 – 17 June 2001.

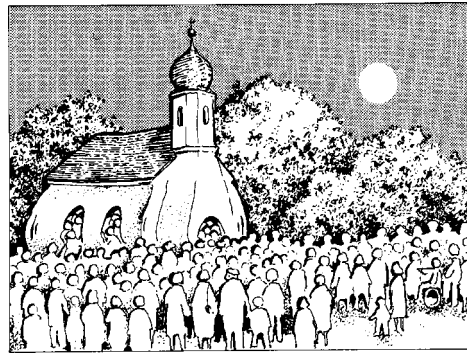
The Kirchentag, taking place every two years since 1947 has been the greatest source for renewal in spirituality, social action, church music and new worship styles in the German protestant churches. Visiting it is a unique experience and as an event it is almost beyond description, particularly for young people. The participation fee is low (£50 max) and it is possible to participate even without knowledge of German.

The word *Kirchentag* means 'church assembly', as in *Bundestag*, the federal parliament of Germany. Many people think it means 'church day' (as in *Guten Tag*), but then it would have to be in the plural (Tag-e) – as the event extends over five days. And are they action-packed! The host city almost has to declare a state of emergency, and with so much going on it is quite impossible to describe everything awaiting the visitor.

Services, lectures, discussions, Bible studies, pilgrimages, "market of possibilities" ("marketplace"), Living Liturgy, workshops, debates, podiums, halls of creation and of silence, Ecumenical European House – the Kirchentag can be all of that. There is also a wealth of art and culture on offer.

Over 100,000 participants are expected in Frankfurt, a city with a population of 624 000 from 181 countries. It is always exciting when visitors and residents get to know one another. When the buses and underground trains are filled with the sound of joyful singing you really get that Kirchentag feeling. Likewise when, on the first evening, visitors and locals enjoy the festive atmosphere until far into the night; or when, on the last morning, almost everybody attends the final worship service and shares bread and grape-juice together.

The Kirchentag is also an event for the host region. Hospitality reigns supreme: tens of thousands are accommodated in the city and surroundings of Frankfurt. They are guests of families with spare beds, or stay in group accommodation, e.g. in schools. Special events take place in many local churches almost all of which extend an invitation to the Friday evening eucharist.



In an exhibition hall several thousand people speculate about our common future. In a small suburban church there is a time of prayer and meditation every evening. All that is part of the Kirchentag. It can only work thanks to the many volunteers. There are about 30,000 every time. They too characterise the Kirchentag: scout groups rolling up their sleeves to set up the various venues, or musicians performing in worship services or devotions. Not to mention those political and business leaders who give of their time talking to visitors or, in Bible studies and panel discussions, telling why they are Christians. What is the Kirchentag? For five days it is a huge forum, traditionally making a statement about contemporary Protestantism; it is a time of experiment, a seismograph for the church and the world, and a Protestant civil rights movement – all rolled into one.

In 1999 there were 200 British visitors to the Kirchentag and for 2001 the British Kirchentag Committee organising the trip from these islands are hoping for even more. 2001 in Frankfurt? Will you be there?

Information leaflets and registration forms are obtainable from Mrs Sheila Brain, 1 Cavendish Rd., Eccles, Manchester M30 9JZ, sheilabrain@atlan.cix.co.uk. Internet: www.kirchentag.de (German - English)

APPOINTMENT IN CAMBRIDGE

Following the appointment of the Founding Director Canon Graham Kings to be Vicar of Islington (London) at St Mary's Church, the Henry Martyn Trust and the Cambridge Theological Federation have appointed **Brian Stanley**, MA, PhD (Cantab) as Director of the Henry Martyn Centre and Henry Martyn Lecturer in Mission Studies in the Cambridge Theological Federation from September 2001.

Dr Stanley is currently Director of the Currents in World Christianity Project (formerly North Atlantic Missiology Project) in the Faculty of Divinity, University of Cambridge and Fellow of St Edmund's College. He was formerly Lecturer in Church History at Trinity College, Bristol and before that at Spurgeon's College. He is the author of *The Bible and the Flag: Protestant Missions and British Imperialism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Leicester: Apollos, 1990), *The History of the Baptist Missionary Society, 1792-1992* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1992), and joint editor with Kevin Ward of *The Church Mission Society and World Christianity 1799-1999* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, and London: Curzon Press, 2000).

During the academic year 2000-2001, Sebastian Kim, MDiv (Presbyterian College and Theological Seminary, Seoul), ThM (Fuller Theological Seminary, CA) will be serving in an interim capacity. Reverend Kim is a missionary of the Presbyterian Church of Korea and is currently completing doctoral studies in the Faculty of Divinity, University of Cambridge. He was formerly Visiting Lecturer and Co-ordinator of the Centre for Mission Studies, Union Biblical Seminary, Pune, India and before that Home Director of World Concern Korea. He is the editor of several books published in India on aspects of missiology

SOCIETAS OECUMENICA MEMBERSHIP INFO

Societas Oecumenica is the European Society for Ecumenical Research, which was founded in 1978. Institutional members include the Departments of Ecumenical Studies in European Universities and associations of ecumenical academic theologians in Europe. The main work of the Societas is to provide a biennial Consultation to bring together members for lectures and workshops. The Societas is anxious to broaden its membership. Very few women are involved and a greater input from the English speaking Nations would be very welcome. Information may be obtained from: Rev. Dr. Kajsa Ahlstrand, Secretary, Church of Sweden Research Dept. SE-751 70 Uppsala, Sweden.

KONRAD RAISER ON IONA

In the spring of 2000 WCC General Secretary Konrad Raiser visited the Iona Community and was deeply impressed. In an address he identified four major challenges for grassroots movements contributing to the ecumenical movement: ecology, gender equality, pluralism and eventually globalisation and the catholicity of the church. He said: "The significance of the ecumenical movement beyond 2000 does not depend so much on the actions and decisions of its institutional manifestations, but on the readiness of groups and communities within the churches to respond constructively to the following challenges:

- a) moving beyond modern separation between human society and history on the one hand and nature on the other. Reinterpret the oikumene as 'God's household of all life'.
- b) moving beyond the mindset and structure of patriarchy in church and society and develop the Christian community as a genuine community of women and men.
- c) moving beyond the dream of Christian hegemony and learning to live as church in a situation of religious and cultural plurality.
- d) moving beyond a naïve adaptation of or a purely defensive approach to globalisation and reappropriate in thought and practice the true catholicity of the church." (Source: Living Spirituality News Oct 2000)

MIDDLE EAST CONFERENCE

The Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Centre, an institution of the Palestinian Christian community, hold its 4th international conference between 21 – 24 Feb 2001 in Jerusalem (instead of the originally planned location, Bethlehem). Speakers include members of the Jewish, Christian and Muslim constituencies, among them Rafik Khoury and Walter Wink. Further updated information can be viewed on www.sabeel.org or write to conf2001@sabeel.org.

MISSION AND SPIRITUALITY – BIAMS IN 2001

The next Conference of BIAMS will take place 25-28 June 2001 in Cardiff University on the topic "Mission and Spirituality. Creative Ways of Being Church". An information leaflet is included in this issue of *Connections* and further details can be viewed on www.martynmission.cam.ac.uk/BIAMS.htm.

CHRISTIAN WITNESS – A DAY CONFERENCE IN CAMBRIDGE

"Christian Witness in a landscape of individual consumers and mass legislation", thus is the title of a Day Conference organised by the Gospel and Our Culture Network in Cambridge on Saturday, 3rd March 2001. A leaflet is enclosed in this issue of *Connections*, registration forms should be sent to Network Conference, 11 Redgate Rd. Girton, Cambridge CB3 0PP.

FOCUS... FOCUS... FOCUS... FOCUS...

THE GROUND PRODUCES A CROP BY ITSELF (MARK 4:28) - REFLECTIONS ON AN ECUMENICAL VISIT TO THE CHURCH IN CHINA

From 13 to 30 April 2000 a group of church representatives from CCOM and CTBI went on an ecumenical visit to the Protestant and Catholic Church in China. They found a Church very much alive and growing, encouraging signs of hope in a surrounding not always easy. Here is an abbreviated (and slightly edited) version of the report by John Clark (Church of England).

1 Background and Purpose of the Visit

The concept of a CCOM/CTBI group visit designed for those within the Churches of Britain and Ireland responsible for relations with the Church in China arose in discussions in the China Forum of the Churches' Commission on Mission (CCOM) in 1998. The visit had a number of purposes:

- To give some corporate experience of China to Asia staff, a number of whom had been recently appointed, who knew little of China.
- To widen experience of China among members of the Forum, so that responsibilities of the China Secretary could be more widely shared, following his move to a more academic environment in Birmingham.
- To provide a new impetus to the work of the China Forum as the experience of the visit could be developed by those with on-going responsibility for connections with China.

The group was a good mix – with at least one from England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland; Catholic, Anglican and Free Church; eight denominations represented by six men and five women; nine were lay people with one Catholic Columban priest and one United Free Church minister (a woman).

2 The Itinerary

In **Beijing** we had meetings with the Beijing Christian Council, the Roman Catholic Bishop, the Deputy Foreign Affairs Director of the Religious Affairs Bureau (RAB) and paid a visit to the tombs of Matteo Ricci and early Jesuit missionaries to China. The visit concluded with an early Sunday mass at the Roman Catholic Cathedral followed by morning worship at the Chongwenmen Protestant Church where members of the delegation brought greetings and preached.

Wuhan is the industrial, cultural and business centre of Hunan province. Here the focus was on theological education with visits to the Roman Catholic and Protestant seminaries which work closely together. This

is not entirely common taking into account that both by the Chinese government's standards and in the self-perception of the churches 'Christianity' and 'Catholicism' count as two different religions alongside Islam, Buddhism and Taoism. There was also time to meet the Director of the Religious Affairs Bureau (a Government institution that 'regulates' matters relating to religious communities), to visit the Roman Catholic Bishop, a government medical training centre run by a Chinese doctor/nun and the new offices of the provincial Christian Council.

The group then divided (before meeting up again in Nanjing on Easter Saturday).

Group A made a detour to **Huang Shan** to experience the work of Pastor Esther Ma in charge of one church in the city and also large rural meeting points, with a comprehensive network of lay volunteers.

Group B went directly to **Nanjing**, one of the historic centres of Christianity, to attend a Consultation celebrating the fifteenth anniversary of the Amity Foundation (a non-religious NGO founded by Chinese Christians to assist social development in China). There were visits to the Provincial Christian Council, the provincial Protestant Seminary, the Amity Foundation offices and some of its projects. At the Nanjing Theological Seminary (the sole Protestant national-level seminary) there was opportunity to meet some staff and students and visit the centre for developing Chinese Christian art. Easter Sunday found the whole delegation worshipping in two churches where members preached.

The visit continued with **Guizhou**, one of China's poorest provinces. Here we visited a Bible Class (elementary Bible School) in the town of **Panxian** for Christians from China's ethnic minorities. The extremely hearty reception by the Bible Class, for whom it was the first such visit by a foreign delegation since Liberation in 1949, was a high point of the whole visit.

The visit then went on to overnight stays in the provincial capital of **Guiyang**, where we had the opportunity to meet the Roman Catholic bishop and city and provincial Christian Council members.

3 Issues raised in the visit

3.1 Understanding of mission, ecumenism, and the role of preaching and the Bible.

A number of observations are striking for the outside visitor and they provoked reflections on theological issues. These observations included:

- the almost incredibly rapid growth of churches in China,
- the comparatively low level of Protestant-Catholic ecumenism (seen beginning only in one or two places),

- the understanding of preaching (at length) as 'sacrament' and the important role of the Bible in worship,
- the development of a liturgy.

3.2 Local church leadership

The important role of local church leaders was seen particularly in Huangshan, with a strong local pastor equipping and training lay members for the mission of the church, and in Panxian with a local pastor in a 'bishop' role of leadership, discipline and training. In particular note was taken of the strength of the women in leadership roles in the churches. There is a widespread sense of the gospel as seed that has been sown in previous generations and that has taken a firm root and a life of its own in Chinese soil and culture. The radical teaching of Roland Allen on the spontaneous expansion of the Church and the experience of the Church in China may need to be revisited for lessons for the West.

3.3 Political observations

Apparent freedom contrasted with the reality of great control. The role of the Religious Affairs Bureau is important for the churches and has many aspects too complex to be simply summed up as 'control and oppression'. Generally there is an acceptance for the need for a 'Religious Law' and the relationship between Church and State after 1949 is an important issue. The Three Self Patriotic Movement is a relevant factor in the understanding of the Church, mainly because it is the official government line that the churches abide with the Three Selves principle.

4 A brief summary of the issues for further consideration

The China Forum discussed the visit and came to the following conclusions:

4.1 Relating to China we need

- to invest in people, particularly the younger generation through scholarships for leadership training and visits.
- to look for long-term relationships. Personal friendships formed and developed over a long period will be important if connections between British and Irish and Chinese churches are to grow.
- to direct resources to least resourced provinces, particularly in the west of China.
- be aware that a new model of ecumenical working with China may be emerging, in which different agencies and churches develop relations with different parts of the church in China - care needed to be taken not to reinforce pre-Liberation denominational links.

4.2 For the China Desk:

- Continuity was needed in China desk officers in churches and agencies. This should be commended to member bodies.
- The importance of Selly Oak. It was noticeable how many we met had studied at Selly Oak, often assisted by an Amphlett scholarship. This reinforced the significance of moving part of the China work to the University of Birmingham's Selly Oak campus. But it was noted that there were concerns about pastoral support for students in the university arrangement.
- Within British and Irish Churches there needs to be developed a 'bank' of Christians who have knowledge and experience of the Church in China.
- Provision of opportunities for British and Irish experience of China; the main opportunity for extended experience remains the Amity teachers programme.
- The role of the Friends of the Church in China is important.
- The joint delegation was a valuable experience, providing a core of people within the Forum who have had a common experience.
- The significance of the missionary heritage. This is part of the heritage of the Chinese Church to be rediscovered and reinterpreted.

Participants of the visit: Margaret Allen (CCOM/China Desk staff); John Clark (Church of England, China Forum Convenor); Martin Conway (Friends of the Church in China); Patricia Johnston (Scottish Churches China Group); Karin Jonsson (USPG, Church of Ireland); Gillian Knight (Church in Wales); Tommy Murphy (Columban Fathers, Dalgan, Navan, Ireland); Rachel Parry (USPG); Steven Pearce (Methodist Church); Alan Prosser (BMS); Edmond Tang (CCOM China Secretary/Birmingham University).

John Clark

The full report is available for download on the CCOM website (www.ccom.org.uk).

BOOK REVIEWS

DONAL DORR: MISSION IN TODAY'S WORLD, THE COLUMBA PRESS, 2000 £9.99

This is an important and creative book by the Irish Roman Catholic priest Donal Dorr, which challenges people to look at world mission today with new eyes. Dorr has himself been a missionary with wide cross-cultural experience, has been a resource person for the Irish Missionary Union and is the author of several previous works in the area of justice.

Dorr significantly takes as his opening stance the concept of mission as dialogue, exploring the importance of dialogue both with world faiths and what he calls primal religions. He sets his marker out early on: 'My starting-point is that each of the great religions of the world has a special gift to offer the others. No religious believer has the right to say, "Our religion is complete in itself, in the sense that we have nothing significant to learn from the other".' I found this a liberating book, both in terms of the freedom of spirit with which Dorr addresses many of the issues that mission needs to confront today – evangelisation, inculturation, the purposes and frontiers of mission – and in terms of Dorr's obvious commitment to work for liberation in the whole realm of human life. Through this book Dorr certainly comes over as a warm and loving human being, and also one who is prepared to wrestle with the needs and concerns of his own specific Christian tradition. It is certainly a book that non-Catholics could read with profit, as well as the Catholics who were I imagine Dorr's primary target audience.

Clare Amos

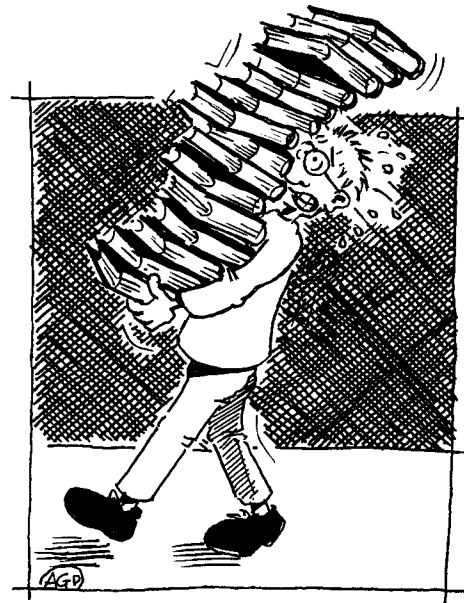
BISHOP LAURIE GREEN: THE IMPACT OF THE GLOBAL: AN URBAN THEOLOGY, URBAN THEOLOGY UNIT 2000 £3

Laurie Green has placed many of us in his debt over the years with his perceptive and thought-provoking discourses on contemporary issues. Those who despair that bishops seem so often out of touch should note that at Bradwell at least the church's finger is very much on the pulse.

Here Green explores the twin phenomena of globalisation and urbanisation, and while he is careful not to see them in a wholly negative light he is clear that they present a huge challenge to the church. More and more people, especially in the developing countries, are now urbanised, and while cities do have in common 'an openness to new possibilities of interchange between people', they are also increasingly subject to a process of 'global convergence' as 'consumer preferences across the globe converge to North American and European tastes and patterns' – what Green calls the "MacDonaldisation" of the globe! (p.9). The spread of

western capitalist values has many consequences, Green notes, the most serious being an increase in poverty, for new countries entering the free market in competition with already developed ones soon find the playing field far from level.

Green develops his case with clarity and conciseness, his chief concern being to awaken the church to the challenges it faces. His question for the church is, does it know what its mission is in this urbanizing world and how it can live it out, and his concern is to help equip it to make its response. Along the way he suggests some useful theological resources, including the doctrine of the Trinity, and argues for the church to take seriously



'networking', 'advocacy', 'parabolic and sacramental action', and 'discernment'.

The book is primarily for an Anglican readership, but there is much for church-people of all persuasions to ponder. All of us would do well to heed Green's salutary warning and engage with his thinking.

The booklet is obtainable from office@utu-sheffield.demon.co.uk.

Andrew Bradstock

BARBARA KINGSOLVER: THE POISONWOOD BIBLE, FABER AND FABER LTD 1999

This fine novel has all kinds of resonances for those of us involved in, or interested in, cross-cultural mission today. For those who know and love central Africa it is compelling reading. The author, Barbara Kingsolver, grew up in the Congo, the daughter of missionaries of a

very different kind from the central character of the story.

It is the story of a Southern Baptist preacher who offers for missionary service in the Congo in the 1950s and who is sent to a remote village with his wife and four daughters.

They go completely unprepared. Their luggage contains enough Betty Crocker cake mixes to cover a year's birthdays and the preacher planned a big welcome prayer meeting on arrival although he did not know a word of the language. His obtuseness gives the novel its title. He fails to learn the difference between the local word for 'poisonwood' (a dangerous local tree) and 'lord and saviour' – and loudly proclaims 'Jesus is poisonwood!'

The story is told, almost exclusively, through the four girls who range in age from perhaps five to sixteen. They have very different voices. The youngest, Ruth, is the most open and her childlike comments help the reader build a picture of a poverty stricken community, where the clothes are all ragged and there are so many people with deformities. The twins, Adah and Leah present very different pictures. Adah, herself handicapped, finds herself no longer an object of pity, but part of the norm. She is a natural sceptic and takes a scientific interest in the local rituals. Rachel, the self-absorbed teenager, never ceases to long for her USA home life centred, it seems, on clothes, make-up, pop music and gossip. Her attitude to her surroundings is uniformly one of disgust. The mother, Orleanna's voice is rarely heard and then

only in retrospect, but her resourcefulness and endurance are impressive.

The politics of the period as the Belgians leave and the USA uses its power to destroy Patrice Lumumba, the chosen leader of the people, gradually come to affect the lives not only of the villagers but also of the missionary family. The author, in the second half of the book, cannot resist following the fortunes of the family members over the next two decades. Although interesting, this does, I think, detract from its power and shape as a novel. Her obvious anger against the USA involvement in the region over those years also, although understandable, weakens the novel as an artistic whole.

The novel powerfully portrays the meeting and the clashing of cultures, but it is the African culture which dominates. The landscape, the climate, the vegetation and the animal life are much more than a back-cloth: they are part of the action of the novel, from the terrifying advance of the army of ants to the tragedy brought by a poisonous snake.

Christianity is both central and marginal to the story. The father's appalling theology, the result of his own tragic past and his naturally rigid personality, is at the heart of the story-line but is not central to the underlying movement of the book. That is concerned with how these young girls from the southern states of the USA are, in their very different ways, radically changed by their encounter with the wonderful, terrifying, rich and alien culture of the Congo.

Sheila Maxey

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CHURCHES' COMMISSION ON MISSION
Churches Together in Britain and Ireland
Inter-Church House, 35-41 Lower Marsh
London SE1 7SA Tel. +44 (0)20-7523 2126
Internet: www.ctbi.org.uk
E-Mail: kai.funkschmidt@ctbi.org.uk

