



Churches' Commission on
Mission

CONNECTIONS

Resourcing ecumenism and mission

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Editorial

The year 2001 marks the 800th anniversary of the 4th crusade setting out from Venice. A typical symbol of Western anti-Islamic imperialism, as some may and do claim. However, this crusade like most others, did not and never intended to re-conquer Muslim Jerusalem or the Holy Land but instead besieged and eventually occupied the capital of Eastern Christianity, Constantinople. Exactly one century later the Turkish ruler Osman I Ghasi set upon conquering the whole of Asia Minor and it is 650 years this year since Mohammad II ascended the Turkish throne (1451), the man who later conquered Constantinople for good (1453). All these are minor anniversaries. But they point to a) the never easy and often conflictive relationship between peoples and religions in this not-so-distant part of the world, and b) the complicated and interested

made of an often historical past by the region today. about the fasci-Middle East its understanding ween people and and present in report 'Listening

Pneumatology, a pos which over cades really has long, long slum-Western theo- more and more another recurring

issue. In Kirsteen Kim's article it is tested in mission perspective against an interreligious context of a completely different kind compared to the Middle East. Also referring to the Spirit, Chris Wigglesworth pleads for lasting denominational and religious diversity in the age of globalisation. The Spirit thus becomes a symbol of rich and beautiful diversity, rather than a Christian 'possession'.

With Kirsteen Kim's article you will also find a new method of publication in CONNECTIONS. Instead of printing the whole article you'll find extracts and are invited to download it from www.ccom.org.uk as pdf or word document. This is part of a general move towards stronger and more creative use of new technologies for our communication on which you will also find some information on the following pages.

CCOM wishes you all a refreshing and renewing time of Pentecost.

Kai Funkschmidt
(Mission Relations Secretary)

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Feature

Paul Renshaw: Listening Loudly in the Middle East

If 'a friend in need is a friend indeed' then the British churches certainly have gone to the Middle East whenever the need was greatest – the last visit took place during the last Intifada in 1989 and this visit, too, came in the middle of turmoil, deaths, oppression and suffering and fighting. However: who among the conflicting parties is the 'friend in need' to be? The local Christians in general? The oppressed Palestinian minority, the Arabs of all religions? The Jewish people who expect the Messiah together with us? Or is the role of an outside church to be neutral? The delegation did not look for easy solutions and quick statements. Rather it sought to practise a wise art of listening. But they looked for a way of listening loudly...

Introduction

Listen loudly! These were the words an Irish expert on the Middle East used in February when briefing a dozen people from nine churches within the four-nation CTBI family which was due to spend two weeks in the Middle East in mid-March. His counsel, succinctly put, reflected the complexity of the political, cultural and religious environment which was about to be encountered by an official British and Irish ecumenical delegation for the first time in 20 years.

Genesis

The genesis for this visit lies in the 7th Assembly of the Middle East Council of Churches that took place in the Lebanon in May 1999, the first time it had been able to be held there for many years on account of the civil war. Such four-yearly occasions bring together representatives of the four "families" of MECC member churches (found in a great regional triangle with Sudan, Cyprus and Iran at its points) – the Eastern (Byzantine) Orthodox, the Oriental Orthodox, the Roman Catholics and the "Evangelicals" (in "our" terms a grouping of Protestants and some evangelicals). Reports were made of various ecumenical visits to the region since the previous Assembly, which only pointed up the lack of British and Irish ecumenical contact with the region.

Subsequently an Ecumenical Visit to the Middle East was proposed to and agreed by the CTBI Church Representatives' Meeting. A programme was developed by the CTBI International Affairs Office in consultation with members of the CCOM Middle East Forum and in cooperation with Middle East Council of Churches. It envisaged the first week being spent in groups (Lebanon-Syria; Egypt-Jordan; Iraq) and a second in Israel-Palestine. At the last minute Iraq had to be abandoned when visas approved in Baghdad failed to materialise in Amman and the Iraq-bound group joined the Lebanon party.

Context

In the background lay many intertwined issues – Britain's historic political role in the region and present-day concerns for peace and justice towards Israel-

Palestine and Iraq, the enduring religious significance of the Middle East as the cradle of Christianity and understandings of "Christian Presence" within a largely Muslim environment, the witness of MECC's four families, and Christian-Muslim-Jewish relations.

The deep "post-Oslo" crisis between "Israel" and "Palestine" was expected to be at the centre of discussions, with its multiple implications for peace-building between the two peoples and for relationships throughout and beyond the region, both religious and political. At the same time (unlike the 1989 BCC-sponsored visit to Israel and the Occupied Territories in the wake of the first Intifada) the programme was designed to recognise the Christians in the neighbouring Arab countries who have their own issues to share which they do not want to be defined wholly in terms of what is going on in the land west of the Jordan.

CTBI Delegation

On 10 March two parties set off, four people going to Cairo and eight to Beirut. Of the latter party four would go on to Damascus, three spend extra time in Beirut and one (the writer) would visit Cairo before the quartet there moved on to Amman. They would

all rendezvous in Amman on the evening of the 16th before journeying together over the Allenby Bridge to Jerusalem. It was going to be interesting to hear later about where their perspectives on the church, religion, politics, culture and development converged and diverged as a result of their exposure to the Arab nations bordering Israel. This rest of this paper is a "sampler" of some of the ecumenical and inter-faith realities which the CTBI delegation encountered in Egypt, Lebanon, Syria and Jordan.

Ecumenical and inter-faith issues: some Middle Eastern experiences

Egypt

On the evening of Sunday 11 March, four CTBI visitors settled down for an after-dinner conversation with a group of Coptic Sisters and Brothers at a Coptic Orthodox conference centre near Beni Suef, two hours by train south of Cairo. They were at pains to make it



clear that Christian/Muslim relations were good in general, except for the activities of extremists, “All societies have difficulties!” They stressed the importance of understanding the mentality of Muslims who are taught that Christians are heathens who worship three gods, not one. From them and other experiences the group built up a mixed picture of Christianity in Egypt – not so much one of persecution but one where the church is clearly hampered by legislation that bans evangelising, mixed marriages, conversion from Islam to Christianity, and takes away pension and inheritance rights from Christian widows of Muslim men who cling to their faith. Christians working within the professions often hit a “glass ceiling” when seeking promotion. There had, however, been some easing up in terms of getting permission for church buildings and renovations. Church-sponsored development work in Muslim villages is carried out on the basis of human need not proselytisation of creed.

In such an environment the task of effective Christian education is vital. So is the necessity of perseverance in the face of obstacles. “We teach our people to persevere, to keep on trying”, said the Copts of Beni Suef. They viewed the present difficulties of obstructive officials and tiresome bureaucracy, however, in the context of 2000 years of history, and accepted them as “A cross to bear joyfully – we accept it as a gift from God. It teaches us to pray”. In the meantime “witness through service, not proclamation” is their Christian watchword.

A couple of days later in an audience at St Mark’s Cathedral, Pope Shenouda III, spoke, with some force, of the way Christians are treated and discriminated against both in the political, economic and social life of Egypt. He also volunteered his view that Prince Charles’ utterances about wanting to be “Defender of Faith” had been less than helpful to Christian-Muslim relations in Egypt!

The Coptic church has certainly grown in recent years, especially through Sunday School and Youth work. Pope Shenouda has appointed bishops with specific ministries in these and other fields. At his weekly Wednesday evening “lecture” in the Cathedral at least 5,000 attended, thereby making a significant statement on their Christian identity. The event showed how charismatic a figure he is, one who commands great respect, admiration and love from his people.

Pope Shenouda is recognized by the political authorities as the official voice of the church in Egypt. This is not wholly acceptable to the other churches, but on a personal level there is a good relationship between the leaders of Protestant, Coptic Orthodox and Catholic traditions. However at grass roots level much depended on the attitude of the local clergy. “*Denominational prejudice causes problems everywhere!*”

Within the Protestant community, as described by its President, Dr Safwat El-Baiadi, there is a good working relationship. School teachers meet every month to discuss their work, as do doctors to ensure that remote areas are covered. Sunday school teachers and youth

workers meet regularly, there are support groups for women and prayer groups and 24 hour vigils are arranged together.

The Presbyterians – the largest Protestant denomination by far – have a boys’ home and 55 schools which are open to all children, some with as many as 80% Muslim students. At one time Christianity could be taught to Muslims and Islam introduced to Christians but no longer, and each school has to register a student’s religion and provide a suitable teacher. Education is not free and there was some unease in response to questioning as to how children from poor homes were given the opportunity of a good education – though it was said that some effort is made in this respect. The Coptic Catholic Church, though smaller, also makes an important contribution in education, particularly in Upper Egypt.

Mr. Nabil Abadir, Director of the Coptic Evangelical Organisation for Social Services, one of the most important and influential NGOs in Egypt, did not appear, like Dr Safwat, as pessimistic as Pope Shenouda as to the position of Christians in the public life of Egypt. Indeed whilst they agreed that there was a perception of prejudice there is no “official” persecution and the situation is much improved to what it was 20 years ago.

“... Prince Charles’ utterances about wanting to be ‘Defender of Faith’ had been less than helpful to Christian-Muslim relations in Egypt !”

The Episcopal Bishop of Cairo, Rt Rev Mouneer Anis, a former medical doctor illustrated in his own person the possibility of Christians having influence within the Egyptian Islamic milieu in being the prime mover of an inter-faith statement about the Al Aqsa Intifada soon after it broke out. This was coordinated at his instigation with the office of the Grand Sheikh of Al-Azhar.

Lebanon

In Beirut, on 13 March, the eight other CTBI travellers arrived at the Armenian Catholicosate to meet HH Aram I, Catholicos of Cilicia and first Orthodox Moderator of the WCC Central Committee. After rejoicing in the “togetherness” which the name of CTBI represented, Aram declared, “*I don’t understand why some Western churches have mission departments. The whole of the Church should be engaged in mission*”. He went on to give his understanding of what it means to be ‘Church’ in the Middle East today. He stressed that Christianity is an integral part of Middle East life and not a Western missionary creation and, as such, it was more important to talk about Christian presence and witness rather than “mission”. “*The Church*”, he said,

“is a missionary reality yet mission in the sense of outreach is not a possibility”.

Having described the Armenian church as a bridge between east and west, Aram underlined the importance of ecumenism. Although diversity is part of our being as Church, isolation, for him, leads to stagnation. Globalisation challenges our theological differences: we have to make sure that our theology is relevant to modern realities. Later he was to relate this theme to Muslim-Christian relations. No longer could that be a matter of comparing and contrasting concepts, the dialogue has to be existential. Dialogue is part of our life, it is on the streets, in the schools. Aram said he believed that there were three emphases in the revitalising of the church: Christian education, theological formation and social action. Of the latter he said that the church can never be indifferent to the issues of justice, peace and human rights. He spoke about the prophetic role of the church – it had to promote values but to avoid taking sides – yet *“we are with justice, we are with peace”*. It is this to which the church must bear witness.

“The church is a missionary reality yet mission in the sense of outreach is not a possibility.”

Syria

Between 14 and 16 March four CTBI visitors followed a programme in Damascus which included meeting heads of churches, the Grand Mufti (a much more ecumenical figure than his counterpart in Beirut) and political figures.

Many Syrians believe that European Christians are oblivious of the Christian presence in Syria. But Syria had a Christian majority till the twelfth century. The dominant churches were the Greek and Syrian Orthodox Churches (and all churches but the Orthodox are still regarded as ‘young’ or even ‘foreign’). Catholic missionaries arrived in the sixteenth century and Protestants in the nineteenth. The CTBI group heard that many Catholics instinctively see Christianity as somehow ‘European’ rather than indigenous, a tendency which became more significant in the years of Christian hardship in Syria, since many Catholics (often well-educated) readily considered emigrating. Now, emigration has since much diminished: not necessarily because things are better in Syria than previously, but because many Syrians have realised that they may be no better off elsewhere!

Evangelical communities are small in Syria: only one church, the Presbyterian, is a member of MECC. In fact it formally represents the other Evangelical churches to the Syrian civil authorities. Its leader, Rev Peter Zouar, is a Judge appointed by the Prime Minister’s Office to preside in the church court system. Some of these churches are explicitly anti-ecumenical. in general,

though inter-church relationships are very positive and amicable.

The Church has far more freedom than in a country such as Egypt. One does not get into trouble in Syria for being a Christian, only for being an opponent of the regime. The Greek Orthodox Patriarchate was rebuilt in 1993, many new churches have been built in villages, church leaders are appointed without government interference and are free to speak out as they see fit.

Some Muslims, at least, look on Christians as not fully Arab. That Europe is in turn seen in Syria as a ‘Christian continent’ lends an unfortunate religious colouring to many political tensions. Patriarch Hazim put the point crisply: *“The Muslim world? Yes. The Christian world? Tell me where it is!”* Inter-faith relationships are harmonious at the personal level but it was inevitable, he thought, that a ‘religion of the book’ could not accommodate easily to a faith in which even the Sacred Book is seen as somehow penultimate to the action of the Holy Spirit. Worse, many Muslims still think of Christianity as the ‘religion of the Crusades’. In this context, said Patriarch Hazim, Christians need to set their hearts less on a dialogue about religious convictions than on a process of mutual presence: *“Look at me, not just at my beliefs”*.

All the churches are conscious of an historical mission in Syria, to witness that the Middle East cannot be itself without Islam, nor without Christianity – indeed, as the Greek Orthodox Patriarch Ignatius IV Hazim said to the group, *“not without Judaism too, though not Zionism”*.

Jordan

The programme only allowed for 36 hours to be spent by one group in Jordan, but it was important that Amman not be used just as a rendezvous point. It turned out to be a very significant visit in that it brought to the surface some of the ecumenical challenges ahead in the Middle East in a fairly sharp way.

“The Muslim world? Yes. The Christian world? Tell me where it is!”

Christians make up only about 3% of the population, while the 90% Muslim majority is very largely Sunni, as in Egypt. Relations between Christians and Muslims are cordial. The constitution provides safeguards for “all forms of worship and religious rites in accordance with the customs observed in the Kingdom, unless such is inconsistent with public order and morality.” However, this freedom of religion has to be set in the context of the Constitution which states that Islam is the state religion. Some activities, such as proselytising or encouraging conversion to the Christian faith are prohibited and considered illegal.

Christians in Jordan are not subjected to any significant discrimination, and are represented in government and

business at the highest level. Eleven of the eighty seats in Parliament are held by Christians (cf. 3 out of 444 in Egypt), including two Cabinet posts. Christians also hold senior positions in the army, security services and other government institutions. 40% of private businesses are in the hands of Christians, including many of the major banks. This is attributed to the tolerant and supportive policy of both the late King Hussein and his son King Abdullah towards Christians. The distribution of wealth among Christians is very uneven. A few families control the wealth while the majority remain poor.

“The traditional churches and the Muslims hold this view in common – ‘If you are born Orthodox/Muslim, you die Orthodox/Muslim.’”

Only the three main monotheistic religions: Islam, Christianity and Judaism are recognized by the State. Official government recognition is granted only to the Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Greek Catholic, Armenian Orthodox, Maronite Catholic, Assyrian, Anglican, Lutheran, Seventh-Day Adventist, United Pentecostal and Presbyterian Churches. Other churches (New), including Baptists, Assembly of God, Free Evangelical, Church of the Nazarene and the Christian Missionary Alliance are registered as “societies” but not as churches. Despite this they do enjoy almost the same freedoms as the recognized Churches.

The Historic (Orthodox) Churches in membership with the MECC view the New Churches with deep suspicion, seeing them as newcomers who, with Western financial support, are “sheep-stealing” the Orthodox youth. There is little differentiation between the new churches on the criteria of evangelical sensitivity or linkages with American Christian Zionist funds.

There is a deep divide on the question of conversion. The traditional churches and the Muslims hold this view in common – “If you are born Orthodox/Muslim, you die Orthodox/Muslim.” Passions run high on discussion on the nature of the church, its mission, evangelism and conversion. The historic churches see mission in terms of presence (the existence of the Church in the Middle East from the first century), and social action (MECC work in the refugee camps). On the nature of the Church the conviction is that a person born into the historic churches can only belong to that church. There is strong opposition to those who convert from the Historic Churches to any of the New Churches because of a personal experience of faith. The New Churches are accused of “sheep stealing” and “fishing in our pond”.

This criticism is mainly about the exodus of youth from the historic churches. It is acknowledged that the youth are disillusioned with the historic churches and are drawn by attractive and well-resourced programmes of activities for youth in the New Churches. The strong-held conviction is that the New Churches are not authentic Christian Churches, just “new invaders”. It was interesting to meet a Lutheran pastor and hear about his journey of faith. He was born and brought up in the Greek Orthodox Church, and educated in the Lutheran School, where he was introduced to the Lutheran Church, joined it, and is one of its enthusiastic young pastors in Amman. There was passion and conviction in this young man. His spiritual life had been enriched by both traditions.

Listening loudly

Questions and issues which these experiences point up provide some of the agenda of the Middle East Council of Churches. They are not unique to the Middle East, but they have a very distinctive flavour. They also bear reflection by churches who seek to relate to Middle Eastern Christianity, not least over the interpretation of “Islamic cultures and Christian responses” and the issue of “Christian identity, Orthodoxy and the renewal of the Church”. There is much to learn – by continuing to listen loudly.

CTBI Delegation

Very Rev. Dr Robert Davidson	Church of Scotland
*Rev Frederick George	Baptist Union of Great Britain
Rev Christopher Gillham	Congregational Federation
Esther Hookway	Greek Orthodox Church
Gillian Kingston	Methodist Church in Ireland
Rt Rev Michael Langrish	Church of England
Rev Sigrd Marten	Church of Scotland
*Dr Charles Reed	Church of England
Paul Renshaw	CTBI – International Affairs
*Rev Hywel Wyn Richards	Union of Welsh Independents
*Rev Dr Frank Turner SJ	Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales
Rev John Waller	United Reformed Church
* Providers of some of the material used in this article.	

Paul Renshaw, Coordinating Secretary for International Affairs of CTBI

Kirsteen Kim: The Holy Spirit in Mission. Where and how is the Spirit at work in religions, cultures, and movements for liberation?

This is only an extract (about a third) of Kirsteen Kim's paper which she presented as part of the Waterloo Mission Seminars in Partnership House in London last December. Drawing on her years of experience teaching theology in many contexts, among them in several Asian countries she examines Christian thinking on the Holy Spirit and relates it to Indian theology. In the process we are given a critical appraisal of David Bosch and are introduced to the theology of Stanley Samartha, Vandana Mataji and Samuel Rayan. The full document is downloadable on www.cccom.org.uk

[...]

The Holy Spirit in Mission

To outline the state of play in Christian understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit in religions, cultures and movements for liberation there should be no better place to begin than David Bosch's great book *Transforming Mission*.¹ If we look there, we find that Bosch describes an ecumenical consensus that the Holy Spirit is missionary in the sense that the Spirit initiates, guides and empowers the Christian mission. That is, we all agree that the Spirit was upon Jesus Christ, directing his mission, and that, since Pentecost, the Spirit has provided the impetus for Christian mission. That is fine as it stands but it does not answer the question Indian theologians are asking.

I have used Bosch as a textbook for teaching missiology in India and have seen that it lacks the resources to deal with religions and poverty because of a limited pneumatology. Bosch does not go far enough in developing a theology of the Spirit and mission because he does not understand the work of the Spirit in a Trinitarian way. He does not deal with the Old Testament in which we read of the Spirit of God, the wind or breath of God active in creation, in the prophets, and in resurrection. So he does not conceive of a mission of the Spirit alongside that of the Son but sees the mission of the Spirit as secondary to and entirely dependent on Jesus Christ.

"... the Holy Spirit was not brought to India by the Western missionary but was already at work there not merely 'among' but *in* the faith of those of other religious traditions"

I wish to affirm a deep and intimate connection between the Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ. But if we understand the Trinity as three equal, united yet distinct persons, as Chalcedon attests, then the mission of the Spirit need not be simply a continuation of the mission of the Son. We can identify a mission of the Spirit, described in the Old Testament and continued in the New. [...] Because of his

limited theology of the Holy Spirit, Bosch cannot ask the question: Where and how is the Spirit at work in religions, cultures, and movements for liberation? Instead he asks the prior question: *Is* the Spirit at work in other religions, cultures, and movements for liberation? His answer is cautious: his approach of "bold humility" recognises an "unresolved tension" between the mission of proclaiming Jesus Christ and recognition that the Spirit is at work in unexpected ways.² In other words, the Holy Spirit *might* be at work in other religions, cultures, and movements for liberation but Bosch is not prepared to commit himself this side of the *Parousia*. Bosch's answer is not adequate in the Indian context – and perhaps not in the British context either – because it does not square with the experience of many Indian Christians of truth and goodness in other religions and cultures and genuine liberation brought about by non-Christian movements.

The Holy Spirit from India

So we will look briefly at three Indian theologians who have each sought to develop a theology of the Spirit in the Indian context for what they may teach us about understanding the Spirit's wider work.

Stanley Samartha – the Holy Spirit in other religions (dialogue)

[...]

Samartha looked back over Indian history and saw that those who claimed to be Christians had supported colonial power and colonial attitudes that were not only destructive of life and limb but were also so negative toward Indian religion and traditions that their work amounted to cultural oppression. It was not at all obvious to him that the Holy Spirit was initiating, guiding and empowering this kind of mission. On the other hand, Indian leaders – particularly Mahatma Gandhi – seemed to have far more of the Spirit of Christ. It seemed clear to Samartha that the Holy Spirit was not brought to India by the Western missionary but was already at work there not merely 'among' but *in* the faith of those of other religious traditions. In a groundbreaking paper,³ Samartha justified his dialogue approach on the basis that the Holy Spirit could not be confined within the "narrow corridors" of salvation history but is at work in our neighbours. Samartha emphasised the biblical picture that "the Spirit blows where it wills" (John 3:8) and that the Spirit's anointing in Scripture was often on those least expected. So, he argued,

² Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 489.

³ Stanley J. Samartha, "The Holy Spirit and People of Various Faiths, Cultures and Ideologies", lecture given in 1973 and published in Samartha, *Courage for Dialogue*, 63-77.

¹ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission. Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991).

the Spirit may be speaking on either or both sides in a dialogue.

[...]

Vandana Mataji – the Holy Spirit in other cultures (inculturation)

Vandana is a sister of the Society of the Sacred Heart, and former leader of the Society in India. After visiting a number of Hindu ashrams, she discovered that her particular faith-tradition, which emphasised contemplation and the interior life, had much in common with Hindu meditation practices – indeed she found that in many ways Hindu spirituality was more developed and sophisticated than her Catholic spirituality. [...]

Samuel Rayan – the Holy Spirit in movements for liberation (liberation)

Rayan is a Jesuit who teaches at a major seminary in Delhi. His early experience of mission was in development work among the poor and the outcasts of India. From this perspective, Brahmanic Hinduism and the philosophy of *advaita*, which advocated the unity of all things in Brahman, was oppressive because it privileged the Brahmins or priests, the upper castes. The emphasis on unity or peace meant that issues of justice were secondary and movements to improve social conditions or reform or eradicate the caste system were seen as subversive because they threatened the status quo of Indian society and the vested interests of the religious leaders. Rayan became a liberation theologian because for him the most important thing about the gospel was that it should be good news to the poor. Rayan sought to give theological justification to Christian involvement in development and connected “bread for breakfast and for the Eucharist”.⁴ [...]

Discerning the Spirits

[...] The theme of Canberra was “Come, Holy Spirit – Renew the Whole Creation” and the most memorable event was a plenary presentation by a young Korean theologian, Professor Chung Hyun Kyung. Chung dispensed with the conventional notes and lectern and instead donned the dress of a Korean shaman and led an exorcism dance in which she invoked the Holy Spirit and identified the Spirit with the spirits of suffering, oppressed individuals and peoples. She used the imagery of Korean shamanism to inspire feminist action to bring about the renewal of creation and presented the Holy Spirit as the spirit of nature, inviting participants to join with this spirit in her “wild rhythm of life”.⁵

Chung’s presentation was greeted with both rapturous applause and immediate condemnation from the Orthodox and Evangelicals present. The ensuing debate at Canberra “concentrated on the issue of the action of the Spirit within and outside the church, and on the criteria

necessary to recognise the presence of the Spirit”.⁶ I share the concern of Chung’s critics about her romantic identification of all oppressed spirits with the Holy Spirit to say nothing of the lack of biblical or theological justification for this view. [...] Though Chung used the imagery of Korean shamanism, her theology was closer to Indian *advaitic* philosophy or liberal Western philosophies of Spirit than it was to shamanistic thinking, which conceives of many cosmic spirits, some good and some bad. Korean shamanism is generally regarded as the background to Korean Pentecostalism, which recognises supernatural spirits as a reality. An important difference is that in Pentecostal theologies, spirits other than the Holy Spirit are seen as evil and to be vanquished in spiritual warfare. Chung’s liberal scientific education caused her to dismiss any reality in the spirits of shamanism⁷ but I think she would have got further if she had paid greater attention to them. [...]

The discussions at Canberra help us to see that the mission of the Holy Spirit takes place in the context of other spirits. In any truly missionary encounter, these spirits need to be recognised and their natures discerned to determine whether, as Christians, we support them or stand against them. We cannot live in this world without cooperating with some of the spirits of this world, if we do not do so consciously, we will be doing so unconsciously. At the same time the lessons of history and human sinfulness would caution us against identifying any movement uncritically as a work of the Holy Spirit. The model of Spirit and spirits used at Canberra allows for genuine plurality and distinguishes the Spirit of Christ from other spirits but also it enables co-operation of Christians with other movements by means of discerning whether the spirits that inspire them are for or against the work of the Holy Spirit. In order to discern the work of the Holy Spirit amidst the movements of our times, we need a deeper knowledge of the Spirit’s nature and a greater understanding of the way in which the Spirit is at work among the many spirits of our contemporary world.

Kirsteen Kim is Administrator of the Henry Martyn Centre, Cambridge, Secretary of the British and Irish Association for Mission Studies, and a doctoral student of the University of Birmingham.

⁴ Samuel Rayan, “The Basic Dilemma”, extract from longer paper on “Development and Evangelisation”, in Tony Byrne, *The Church and Development Dilemma* (Spearhead 50; Eldoret, Kenya: Gaba Publications, 1971?)

⁵ For the official report of Canberra, see Michael Kinnamon, *Signs of the Spirit* (Geneva: WCC, 1991).

⁶ Emilio Castro, Editorial, *ER* 43 (April 1991), 163.

⁷ For Chung’s de-mythologisation of spirits see Chung Hyun Kyung, “‘Han-pu-ri’. Doing Theology from a Korean Women’s Perspective”, *ER* 40 (Jan 1988). See also Paul G. Hiebert, “The Flaw of the Excluded Middle”, *Missiology* 10/1 (Jan 1982), 35-47. Cf. Aloysius Pieris, *An Asian Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1990), 71-74.

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

The new CCOM website well underway

Some of you will have noticed that as from the last issue you could actually download the entire issue of CONNECTIONS from the web, making it much easier to file. As also promised in the last issue we have started also to build up our internet presence. Extracts from our Annual Review 2000 give an impression of all the areas of CCOM's work. Making available articles and talks that were at some stage presented in the context of the Commission's work will be a major aim of the website. We thus wish to encourage theological reflection among the member bodies and the Forums. So far there are articles for download on the following topics: Decade to Overcome Violence (Barrow), Holy Spirit in Mission (Kim), We Need Africa – What For? (Funkschmidt), Trends in Evangelical Theology (Tiplady) and many more.

A members' list gives easy access to the websites of our member bodies. Some Forums have already been making much use of electronic communication (e.g. e-mail groups) in the past. All Forums now also have their own space on the CCOM website which they can use for publicising their work and improving their means of communication. Of course the CCOM page also links back to the main CTBI site where you will find further information on churches and ecumenical structures in England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales.

We shall from now on constantly further build on the website. We generally are moving into a direction where certain kinds of material are only presented in an abbreviated form in the printed version of CONNECTIONS – in order to raise interest – and a longer version will be available for download from the web. This should serve purposes of brevity and cost-efficiency.

So, come and check it out on www.ccom.org.uk. The site is growing slowly but steadily in steps about every two weeks.

CCOM's next Annual Commission Meeting

“Christian witness and the search for faith” will be the theme of the eleventh annual conference of CTBI's Churches' Commission on Mission, meeting at the University of Glasgow from 14-16 September 2001. Keynote speakers include the Rev Dr Carlos Emilio Ham (the new Evangelism Secretary of the World Council of Churches) and Dr Kate Hunt (University of Nottingham). Dr Ham was until recently a leader of the Presbyterian Church in Cuba. Dr Hunt has developed pioneering research with Professor David Hay on 'the spirituality of people who don't go to church'. (This report is downloadable from the BIAMS website: <http://www.martynmission.cam.ac.uk/BIAMSHay.htm>).

CCOM's annual gathering brings together representatives from mission departments and agencies across Britain and Ireland to discuss a major common concern and to hear reports on ecumenical mission collaboration with church partners in five continents.

This year's theme concerns the ways in which Christian faith encounters the spiritual search of those living outside traditional religious communities. This is now a global challenge. For further details email Eva Kisitu at CCOM: eva.kisitu@ctbi.org.uk.

New applications boost WCC's membership to 342 churches

ENI, 30/1/2001 Nine churches have been accepted as members of the World Council of Churches (WCC) at its Central Committee meeting in January. The smallest of the new member churches is the Eklesia Niue, to which about 75 per cent of the inhabitants of the Southern Pacific coral island of Niue belong. The island has a total area of 260 square kilometres and receives financial support from Aotearoa/New Zealand. The island's Polynesian population is overwhelmingly Christian. The other new members are: The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia, the Convention of Philippine Baptist Churches, the United Reformed Church (merged from Congregational Union of Scotland and the United Reformed Church in the United Kingdom), the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (merged from the Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa and the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa), the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ghana, the Africa Inland Church (Sudan), the Association of Baptist Churches in Rwanda (Association des Eglises baptistes au Rwanda).

The Mara Evangelical Church, Myanmar became an affiliate member and four councils of churches became associates: French Protestant Federation (Federation Protestante de France), National Council of Churches of Burundi, the Federation of Protestant Churches and Missions in Cameroon and the Malawi Council of Churches.

BBH

In the last issue we announced that the planning of BBH's 'Stage C' was about to begin. In the meantime further steps have been taken beginning with the recruitment of two consultants, Terry Tennens and Donald Elliott. Since their involvement the planning has progressed and the nearer future of BBH has begun to take shape.

The outcomes of Stage B's detailed observation supported seven key indicators that emerged when churches are engaged effectively in the mission of God

1. Focusing Vision
2. Building Local Partnerships
3. Sharing Faith and Values
4. Nourishing Daily Living
5. Developing Shared Leadership
6. Becoming Communities of Learning
7. Being Accompanied

BBH's task in Stage C, is establishing action-research pilots that will range from dioceses, deaneries, provinces, clusters, action zones, training seminaries, trial emergent groups as well as creative local initiatives.

To,

- *test ideas*, aiming to see how the seven BBH learning indicators can be applied and what learning stems from these. For example, sharing faith and values, considers what does it mean to be Christian in the 21st century? How do we communicate, evangelise and demonstrate the Christian gospel in different settings?
- *support initiative*, aims to develop a network of ground-up enterprise in new ways of being and living church.

- *challenge institutions*, aims to discover ways in which resources, structures and agencies of the wider church (denominational and ecumenical) can be encouraged to enable mission.
- *break barriers*, aims to demonstrate, emergent and developmental ways forward in bridge building and mission for local, regional and national churches.

What are the anticipated outcomes from the pilots in Stage C?

They will include,

- Measurable benefits in learning, confidence and attainment for the pilots and observers.
- Stories, ideas and models to be shared in and beyond the BBH project (stories of good practice).
- New insights concerning church resourcing and structures for mission.
- Effective links and collaboration with complementary initiatives.

The Revd. Terry Tennens, Development Associate – BBH, CCOM/CTBI (terry.tennens@tesco.net)



CCOM Forum Reports

MTAG: Report on the meetings December 2000 and March 2001

The Christmas season was celebrated by the Mission Theology Advisory Group looking at a video excerpt from *The Muppets' Christmas Carol*. Gonzo (as Dickens) and Rizzo (as his sidekick) oversaw the transformation of Michael Caine (Mr Scrooge) from a miserly skinflint into a loving and generous man. We noted that the Hay-Hunt research had picked up the significance of Christmas for many people, though it is couched in precisely such sentimental and nostalgic terms: the cute furry animal syndrome. We are so used to a sophisticated discourse about the Incarnation and so busy with the liturgical tasks of the season that we may miss the mission opportunities, the stirring of powerful feelings for "the memory of a time when all was well" which take place in people's hearts and minds. Beyond that, we all had a good laugh when Miss Piggy stormed out to confront Scrooge....

We continued to oversee the writing up of the "mission in theological education" material and discussed the future of MTAG as the five year process begins to recycle.

To complete our look at curriculum subjects we invited Kirsteen and Sebastian Kim from Cambridge to talk to us about their experiences of mission teaching in different parts of the world. Sebastian and Kirsteen had gone from All Nations Christian College to Korea and India, then on to Fuller in the USA before returning to India. They traced for us their developing understandings of mission and how mission teaching changes its emphasis according to context and expectation. They came back to Britain to work for their doctorates – Sebastian studying the notion of "conversion" in India and Kirsteen looking at Pneumatology from an Indian context. They showed for us how this work, combined with their experience led them to address established "Western" theological concepts in a new way. This was also a direct challenge to MTAG members to consider how far we are repeating Western theological paradigms in our own material. Though we pay lip service to the "world context" we still think, work and act within our Western perspectives, modes of discourse and ways of doing theology. This is a matter which we will have to address. Kirsteen and Sebastian left us with the idea that focused mission study can be annexed to other disciplines which sharpen critical dialogue with mission theological



principles. This too is a matter which we cannot afford to ignore.

At the March meeting recently, we began by discussing images from *The Poisonwood Bible* (Barbara Kingsolver [reviewed in CONNECTIONS No 9]) and addressed some questions posed by the use of the images. We found much of our subsequent discussion reflected straight back to our work on mission in theological education.

We hope to have a more or less finished text for our final document by the time of our May meeting, which is also likely to be Bishop Michael's last as chairman.

Anne Richards (MTAG Secretary)

A longer version of this report is available from the MTAG section of www.ccom.org.uk.

Middle East

The continuing conflict in Israel and Palestine and the lack of any credible move towards establishing the basis of a just and durable peace have been commanding the attention of the Forum. An e-mail list for the sharing of information is in operation. Four members of the Forum attended the conference in Jerusalem in February organised by Sabeel, the Palestinian

Ecumenical Liberation Theology Centre. Other members were part of the CTBI delegation to the Middle East in March. Reports from them as well as from the member agencies at work in the area tell of the increasing suffering produced by the illegal Israeli occupation and the Palestinian determination to be rid of it. It is good to hear of the surge of giving in response to the cries for help, but clearly more than charity is needed.

Throughout the region there is deep popular resentment at Western policies. These produce serious problems for some governments, slow the progress of civic and democratic institutions, have a particularly harmful effect on the Christian population and enhance the attraction of extremist movements. It is encouraging that churches, especially in Jerusalem, are working more closely together than ever before, and this makes it even more important that we build on the CTBI ecumenical visit and develop our ecumenical response along with our partners in the region and in the world church. To help this the Forum will be having a residential conference in Dublin in November on the theme "Being a Peace-making Church in a Conflict Situation."

Colin Morton (Focal Person)

Asia

In addition to the traditional areas of involvement in Asia (Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh) the last Forum meeting heard reports on the recent developments in Indonesia. The WCC convened several Round Table meetings on the issue that have been going through the press at regular intervals for over a year now. They were attended by the CTBI International Affairs Secretary Paul Renshaw. The 'hot spots' in Indonesia are Moluccas, Ambon, Borneo, Sumatra (Aceh), West Papua and still East Timor after the independence vote. While West Papua will be the focus of interest of the Pacific Forum in the time to come, the Asia Forum agreed to keep a watching brief on the situation in Indonesia. Although the British and Irish churches' involvement in the region is relatively low compared to the Netherlands and Germany the strategic significance of the events in Indonesia and their possible effect on the wider scene in South East Asia (inter alia interreligious tension) makes this necessary.

The **Sri Lanka** Group's activities focussed very much on the U.K. government's recent decision to ban the Tamil Tigers as a 'terrorist organisation'. Fears were that irrespective of the accuracy of this categorisation this step would put the fragile peace talks in jeopardy and latest developments seem to justify these worries. A delegation met with a government official and the Group's Secretary, Dr Elizabeth Harris, has been invited to a WCC consultation in Colombo in June.

Africa

The highlight of the Africa Forum's recent work was the Annual Residential Meeting in Wimbledon on 3-5 April. For the second time after 1993 this annual event focussed on the theme of HIV/AIDS in Africa. Some 45 participants from a wide range of UK and Irish denominations and aid or mission organisations attended. International visitors consisted of representatives from the Methodist Church of Southern Africa and four German partners inter alia from EMW and EKD. Speakers included among others Rev Dr David Evans (Tear Fund), Rev Dr Christopher Benn (German Institute for Medical Mission/DIFÄM) and Vickie Ehrlich (GlaxoSmithKline).

As many organisations are involved with care and prevention strategies in HIV/AIDS work it was asked what the distinctive role of the Church might be. The discussion touched upon the following issues.

Apart from dealing with prevention and drug issues it was stressed that the significance of *care* in the context of the HIV/AIDS crisis and the strain which the increasing demands through the HIV/AIDS epidemic put on traditionally relationship-oriented cultures. It was claimed that often the carers under pressure are being overlooked in Western aid programmes (David Evans). Christopher Benn differentiated several phases in dealing with the HIV/AIDS crisis, from the beginnings

as a medical problem for specialists (1987-93) to the development and ethical problem phase (1993-99) that touched upon questions of poverty, gender inequality etc. The churches often found it difficult to deal with the new challenge re their ethics. The question is whether a new phase is beginning in which cooperation between governments and non-government institutions (e.g. churches) will bring more success. Uganda is an example that this seems the best strategy.

The consultation also heard the testimony from two African immigrants who were HIV positive and described the personal, legal and medial challenges this meant for their lives. A representative from the Drug Industry was invited to present their view of the South African court case where the drug companies try to hinder the government from producing cheap copies of patent-protected drugs. The following discussion showed not only how controversial the issue was but also that for many churches the issue was rather new and complicated, so that it was too early to engage in campaigning. [Interestingly only two weeks after the consultation the South African court case was settled out of court in what newspapers variously described as a 'victory' of one side or the other or as a stalemate...]

An important goal of such a consultations is not reflected in the papers delivered but in the networking platform they offer. With the great variety of participating organisations, the wide scope of possible strategies in dealing with HIV/AIDS became clear and this goal certainly was reached although ever more co-ordination of respective work in Africa is still desirable. "If you want to go fast go alone, if you want to go far go together" (African proverb).

Kai Funkschmidt (CCOM)

China

Edmond Tang moved to the Centre for Missiology and World Christianity, Birmingham University in 1999, as Director of the Research Unit for East Asian Christian Studies. The initial two-year agreement with the University has just been re-negotiated and renewed for a further three years on terms very favourable to CCOM.

This move reduced Edmond's time available for the China Desk work to 40%, while also opening up new possibilities for networking in the academic world in China. There was therefore a need for some of the work to be 'devolved' to China Forum Member Bodies, offering them also an opportunity to own the work of the China Forum in a far more realistic way.

However, the success of devolved work requires a clear policy which is owned and adhered to by all parties involved, and to assist this process the China Forum have prepared a paper containing clear guidelines and a code of practice, which will be shared with CCOM and Forum colleagues. Since devolution from CCOM to the member bodies is an underlying principle of CCOM's working structures, these developments may prove paradigmatic for the future of Forum work in general.

These guidelines had been under discussion for some time, but the need became urgent after two visits which took place in the autumn of 2000.

In September, CTBI, through the China Forum, hosted a delegation from Hong Kong which included representatives from the Hong Kong Christian Council (HKCC) and the Catholic Bishops' Conference (CBC). A report has been received from the delegation which raises important issues and contains some critical comments, both of the organisation of the visit (with some justification) and of the structures of CTBI as they appeared to the group. After prolonged discussions, a response is under preparation which will, it is hoped, correct misunderstandings, face up to and seek to remedy possible shortcomings on our part, both in organisation and in communication, and contribute to continuing fruitful exchanges between CTBI and HKCC.

The second visit took place in November/December of a group of Chinese government officials who have responsibility for the organisation and control of religion in China. The invitation was issued at the request of the China Christian Council and was coordinated over all by the WCC, as they also visited Germany and Switzerland. The aim was to enable the group to study church-state relations, the involvement of the churches in society, inter-faith and ecumenical relations in Britain. While the visit broadly met the aims, there are still questions over the value of such visits which will be discussed by the Forum.

Margaret Allen (China Desk Co-ordinator)

Pacific

The Pacific Forum met in February and devoted most of the meeting to discussing the situation in West Papua. There was a full and informative presentation from Paul Barber of Tapol, a London-based organisation that monitors observance of human rights in Indonesia. Some members of the forum hope to meet again in June to try to draw up an information leaflet to help the churches. The Focal Person attended a consultation in Geneva in March with the Pacific Affairs officer of the WCC, representatives of German, Swiss, and French mission societies and members of ECSIEP, a Dutch NGO devoted to Pacific Affairs.

Rt Rev Paul Richardson (Focal Person)

Church of North India and Church of South India Relationship Committees

The India Relationship Committees met in March at Alnmouth. Apart from dealing with several financial requests and their implications, the future role of the Committees was discussed. With the approaching retirement of the Committees' Secretary, Gordon Shaw, there is a question as to the future shape of India Relations in

Britain, the Netherlands, Germany and North America, if possible taking into account the wider question of not just relations to the CNI and CSI but also to other churches which have relations to UK churches. A review group is currently being set up to prepare proposals for the future.



A.D. Thomas: Mary Washing the Feet of Jesus



Let's Go Surfin'

Continental school children are taught that an English conversation invariably begins with the weather and from there gradually turns to anything in this world except for religion, sex and politics. Today however British transport has thoroughly replaced the weather as topic No 1. It is just as unpredictable but instead of heavenly powers you can blame the Government / the Unions / the Mayor of London / the wrong kind of snow on the tracks / the EU (tick as you like). This shift of interest is just another a form of secularisation. Unpredictability is not generally much appreciated and it was on **12 May 1692** that the first weather forecast was published – some things have been wrong for centuries – in the “Journal for the Progress of Agriculture and Commerce” (<http://www.met.fu-berlin.de/de/wetter>,

German). Research in meteorology also was a field of particular interest in the late Soviet Union where one was not very keen on anything unpredictable and eventually developed a chemical that allowed the prevention of rain for special days of Red Army parades. All that was necessary was to force approaching clouds to empty themselves at a safe distance from Moscow. It is questionable if there would be enough planes to perform this trick in British climate that certainly does not lack in unreliability.



The birthday of one who totally exposed himself to the unpredictable we celebrate on **21 May** (1832). Hudson Taylor set out to China in 1854 to evangelise in the unknown and inaccessible inland provinces and, unwilling to collect money for his mission enterprise, he spent almost his entire life without a safe source of income. He will also be remembered as one of those many people setting out to convert the poor heathen only to find himself so impressed with the ‘heathen’s’ culture that he had to reassess his understanding of the gospel in the light of demands of inculturation (www.whole-somewords.org/echoes/taylor.html). Another pioneer of the ecumenical missionary movement was the American Methodist John Mott (***25 May** 1865) (www.christianitytoday.com/ch/2000/001/9.36.html) who never worked abroad as a missionary. Had he had the same exposure to foreign culture and religion as Taylor – who knows if Edinburgh 1910, the conference which he so admirably masterminded, would have come up with the optimistic but completely erroneous notion of “evangelisation of the world in this generation”.

The idea to evangelise the world as quickly as possible might have seemed not just unrealistic but even not so desirable if one had taken into account the writings of a courageous Spaniard who 350 years before had described the somewhat unpleasant ‘side effects’ of a rather vigorous attempt to make the world Christian in less than a generation – either by baptising the heathen or getting rid of them. And often both, one after the other. On **31 July 1566** we remember the death of the author of a *Journey to the West Indies*, Bartolomé de las Casas (<http://www.gonzaga.edu/faculty/campbell/enl310/casas.htm>) one of few 16th century priests who can even boast his very own website (www.lascasas.org).

The computer is very helpful for the church. It can even help promote Christian unity – according to WARC. This actually is exactly what the Reformed churches are doing: A new internet project – “Reformed Online” – has been launched to help promote unity between the world’s more than 700 denominations in the Reformed tradition. The project – with the website www.reformed-online.net – provides information about Reformed churches worldwide, permitting them to communicate directly with one another. It complements the official website of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (www.warc.ch) which was re-launched at the beginning of this month. Furthering unity through communication without actually having to meet face to face any more. Who knows, maybe unity becomes easier if we do not have to physically bear each other any more. Already online confessions are possible if you know your computer and German (www.beichte.de, unfortunately the absolution you receive is not officially recognised by the Roman Catholic Church) and when one day Eucharist can be had in virtual cyberspace we do not need to meet in real life at all any longer...

Coming back however to the unpredictability of life and other unreliabilities: 50 years ago, on **12 May 1941** a new kind of problem came into this world: the first computer, harmlessly called “Z3” was switched on by Konrad Zuse in Berlin (www.konrad-zuse.de, German/English). Allied bombs did what they could by hitting this first edition in an air raid. Zuse however soon was back with ‘Z4’ and other computers and today its great-grandchildren can even produce a weather forecast. In terms of unreliability this seems like a perfect match.

News, Resources and Events

5th Leuenberg General Assembly in Belfast

The Leuenberg Church Fellowship (www.leuenberg.net), will hold its 5th General Assembly from 19-25 June 2001 in Belfast. The theme will be “*Reconciled Diversity – The Mission of the Protestant Churches in Europe*”. The Leuenberg Church Fellowship is an alliance of 102 European Lutheran, Reformed, United, Methodist and Hussite Churches as well as the related pre-Reformation churches, the Waldensian Church and the Church of the Czech Brethren, including also 5 South American churches. It endorses the Leuenberg Agreement adopted in Leuenberg (CH) in 1973 and the common understanding of the Gospel expounded therein, and grants one another the pulpit-and-table fellowship. After Sigtuna (SVE 1976), Driebergen (NL 1981), Strasbourg (F 1987) and Vienna (1994) this is the first General Assembly to take place in the U.K. The conference programme and further information on the Leuenberg Fellowship are available from their website.



“Mission and Spirituality”: BIAMS Conference 25-28 June

Shortly after the papers of the last conference were published (see the review by Martin Conway below), the next one is approaching. “Mission and Spirituality” is the theme of the biennial conference of the British and Irish Association for Mission Studies in Cardiff. Some of the talks: Mission and Spirituality (Brian Stanley), Mission and the Spirit (Robert Kagawa), Celtic Spirituality and the Southern African Situation (Esther de Waal). For further information and registration go to the BIAMS website (www.martynmission.cam.ac.uk/BIAMS.htm) or contact: Kirsteen Kim, Secretary, BIAMS, Henry Martyn Centre, Westminster College, Cambridge CB3 0AA, Tel: 01223 741088, biams@martynmission.cam.ac.uk.

World Mission Essay competition

This, unfortunately is not for hardened mission experts but for the young missiological talents still at university. Please distribute this information to any students you think might be interested. It is not often that one can win money with writing on mission!

Prizes of £1000 and £500 have been offered for winners of the William Carey Essay Competition on world mission. There are two categories, one for theology students, the other for arts and science students. The competition is organised by the Wycliffe Bible

Translators, Frontiers and SIM. Guidelines and entry forms are available from: William Carey Essay Competition, Whitefield Institute, Frewin court, Oxford OX1 3HZ or from www.williamcarey.org.uk. The closing date is 1 September.

‘Transformation’ – ECONI Summer School 2001

From 10-14 July 2001 in Belfast will take place the Summer School run by *Evangelicals Concerned Over Northern Ireland* (ECONI). Four days that are designed to help participants consider the relationship between Christian Faith and the issues of cultural identity, spirituality and politics.

It will work in three independent strands: 1) ‘Back to the Future’ considers the positive and negative aspects of the relationship between Protestant faith and culture in the context of Northern Ireland. 2) ‘A Spirituality for Social Engagement’ seeks to define the nature of Biblical spirituality and how this should inform prophetic witness in society. 3) ‘Faith and Politics’ offers a justification for Christian involvement in politics and suggests ways in which Christians can bring their faith to bear on the political life of the community. Registration is until 15 June only. Contact: Transformation 2001, Belfast, Tel: 028 9032 4156, e-mail: admin@econi.org.

World Evangelical Fellowship

Richard Tiplady, Associate Director of *Global Connections*, gave a very concise introduction to current trends in evangelical thinking on missiology at the CCOM Standing Committee in April after his recent return from a *World Evangelical Fellowship* conference at Iguassu (Brazil). The paper, called ‘Trends in evangelical missiology – the Iguassu process. Paper presented to the Standing Committee of the Churches’ Commission on Mission on 24th April 2001’ is downloadable from the CCOM website (www.ccom.org.uk).

Sri Lanka booklets

The CCOM office still has got about 100 booklets “Sri Lanka. Making Peace Possible”, ed. by Elizabeth Harris in 1999. They are obtainable from the office if you want to distribute them. Contact eva.kisitu@ctbi.org.uk.

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

C. Wigglesworth: A Note on the Relevance of Globalisation to Christian Unity and Mission

Memories of trailing through identical international air terminals, staying in identical hotel rooms, and eating identical chickens or pizzas – these experiences of global travel mean that globalisation is often equated with a homogenising process, driven by free-market neo-liberal economic ideology. Many who believe that the Christian faith has the central role in making the world a better place agree with those who fear that globalisation threatens a monotonous global uniformity which benefits only the rich. But we need to look a little deeper.

There is, in fact, plenty of evidence that globalisation has more to do with the juxtaposition and celebration of diversity and heterogeneity, and the production of hybridised cultures. It undoubtedly has major economic elements driven by technological change. Yet the evidence of rapid change taking place in a globalising world need not be regarded as “a threat to a Christian worldview”, or to what is sometimes called “the uniqueness of Christianity”. It may in fact challenge us to abandon false quests.

“...the relationship between Christianity and other religions has to occupy the central place in current discussion of mission in a global age.”

This issue of the relationship between Christianity and other religions has to occupy the central place in current discussion of mission in a global age. The terms exclusive, inclusive, and pluralist are already unhelpful, even if familiar, in describing the possible options. Pluralism is used to label the view that all religions more or less equally contain truth about the supernatural. Most Christians disagree with this understanding of pluralism, since it seems to deny the centrality of Christ as the Word of God. In Britain, rejection of pluralism and the equal status it grants to all religions has often been linked with the desire to defend our Christian, or even our Protestant, heritage.

In fact, it is now important to begin our approach to mission with the recognition that an increasing number of the world's people live in pluralist societies, in the important sense that people of many faiths live alongside each other and are treated equally regardless of their religion. To regard our own group as the only enlightened ones, with all around as reprobate, or as needing frantic attempts at their conversion before it is too late, is getting increasingly to seem like some form of gnostic belief. To argue that accepting pluralism and

life in coexistence is tantamount to believing that it doesn't matter what people believe is to trivialise both our own faith and that of others in a deeply interconnected world.

“... some ‘global syncretised faith’ is no more desirable than the project of winning the whole world for Christianity”

True, there are areas like Afghanistan where one faith tradition asserts exclusive rights to exist. This is the underlying idea behind every fundamentalism. But in almost every city of the world only a very privileged minority can retreat into exclusive housing areas, and send their children to exclusive schools, where they mix only with “their own kind”. Christians need to think very carefully before assuming that an exclusively or largely Christian society would be the ideal situation to which we should all aspire, and that this is what mission is really about. Such a view harks back to the Crusades. It is simply deluded to imagine that we can persuade people to adopt one faith, or else be satisfied with second-class citizenship. This may be the case in the state of Israel, and in some Islamic states, but the impact of globalisation is making it less and less sustainable for Islam and for Christianity to try and seal off any society against alternative ideas. It is much more sensible to start from the fact of pluralism and work out what that means for Christian witness today.

Exactly the same comment can be made about our approach to unity. In relation to ecumenism there is a growing need to start from its widest meaning, which is an immediate concern for the whole of humankind. The traditional view of ecumenism relegates this to an unlikely second step, only to be considered after ecclesial unity has been secured. But if we take today's diversity seriously, it means that we can have no illusions, either about the possibility of achieving some organised Christian unity, or still less, some “global syncretised faith”, through our engagement with other faith traditions. These are no more desirable than the project of winning the whole world for Christianity, which is what many Christians still assume to be the aim of mission, harking back to Edinburgh 1910. Maybe all three projects are relics of the dated worldview of modernity.

The way forward is surely to consider the work of the Holy Spirit in making connections between the faiths – see below. I believe that this follows from the

recognition that a proper understanding of globalisation encourages us to recognise that today pluralism is basic. We need to go further and see that this plurality contains a future-related, or eschatologically-oriented, promise. It should lead us to abandon any quest for organisational unity, either for the churches or even less feasibly, for the religions. Yet such unity has been one of our preoccupations when faced with rival Christian denominations competing for “market share”. It has certainly been right to move on from the assumption that our own tradition has a near-monopoly of the truth, but now, instead of working for a centralised ecclesiastical system as a pragmatic necessity, we should accept diversity. With that comes the challenge to work for cooperation on the big issues. Failing that, we are in danger of regarding unity as something that will prove that Christians have a bigger version of the truth, as some kind of “self-redeeming achievement”.

Of immediate importance is taking the opportunities now possible to help as many Christians as possible to receive from each other’s traditions what we lack in our own. This happens through experiences which relativise our own tradition for us, through practical cooperation, and is a foretaste of the unity we will find in Christ when we see face to face (as St Paul puts it in 1 Corinthians 13). All our denominations can do more about this through bodies like World Exchange, with its global, ecumenical programmes.

“All this challenges us to work for a fuller globalisation in which worldwide interdependence, cutting across cultures, helps us to a clearer vision of Christ.”

Such an approach of mutual acceptance amongst Christians globally immediately has to extend to our relationships with people of other faiths. We require a concept of inclusion in our thinking about mission. That means discarding any lingering notions of an exclusive conquest achieved by “the Christian world-view”. Prior organisational unification will certainly not make an inclusive mission of the Church more “efficient”. Seeking the conversion of others to Christ, which is a central aspect of the religious dimension of mission, presupposes a willingness to risk conversion ourselves. Churches change their identity through sharing the Good News with others. That was the case at the critical stage, described in the Acts of the Apostles, where Gentiles were welcomed into the early Christian fellowship.

It should not be beyond Christians to admit that all churches are unredeemed communities, but that in the

light of the Redeemer, we catch glimpses of future perfection as we obey the Spirit’s prompting. “The Spirit is the connecting link between the unity of humankind and the world of today, between the redeemed communion of the human family and the many unredeemed and unreconciled communities – including churches and denominations – in which humankind lives. Mission is the effort to make this connection visible and understandable.” (Bert Hoedemaker, 2000 p.181).

All this challenges us to work for a better and fuller globalisation in which worldwide interdependence, cutting across cultures, helps us to a clearer vision of Christ. We share this with others through our actions, in the hope that they will catch it, but meanwhile we are denied any final answers, certainly to questions of baptism, Eucharist and ministry! We do not have a mission to communicate which we are fully in control of, any more than we can claim to have a monopoly of truth.

In other words, too many current unity and mission efforts are in danger of being projects captive to the dated beliefs of modernity. The churches should be responding to the diversity recognised by both postmodernity and globalisation. In short, it means a holistic mission, in the sense that a whole range of interconnected problems need to be faced, often in practice by different groups, sometimes with overlapping agendas at best. This is preferable to engaging in time-wasting debates about which project, eg evangelism, or justice, is primary. Holistic mission does not mean that we have to devise a comprehensive, pre-packaged, and united concept of mission. Likewise, schemes for a united church are less relevant than far more effort for better relations between the world faiths.

Rev Dr Chris Wigglesworth, CCOM
Moderator, April 2001

For further reading:

Gavin D’Costa’s critique of John Hick, Radhakrishnan &c, and the illusion of finding a higher, inclusive form of religion, in “Meeting of Religions and the Trinity”, T&T Clark, Edinburgh 2000.

Bert Hoedemaker: Mission, unity and eschaton in Reformed World, 2000 vol. 50, no 4, and ibd.: Mission beyond modernity, in: *Christian Mission in Western Society*, CTBI, London 2001.

Rowan Willams, 1990, essay on “Trinity and Pluralism”, reprinted in: *On Christian Theology*, Blackwell, Oxford 2000, which provides a useful theological basis, using thoughts on Pannikar’s important essay (1973) on the Trinity, which points to ethical initiatives that are needed.

Book Reviews

Daniel O'Connor et al.: Three Centuries of Mission

Three Centuries of Mission. The United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel 1701-2000, Daniel O'Connor et al., London, xvi + 421pgs + notes + bibl., Hb. & Pb.

Mission by Royal Charter is not a concept, which sits easily with the guilt of post-colonialism. USPG was, however, established by Royal Charter and, as Dan O'Connor and his colleagues ably illustrate, that sense of being "the imperial Church in mission" has often been a controlling influence over Society policy during the past three hundred years. The high proportion of resources committed to North America, the Caribbean, Australasia and Southern Africa is clearly indicative of a Society, which understood itself as being in the vanguard of a civilising Christian empire. Support for Bishop Broughton in Australia and the leadership of Bishop Montgomery, described by Stephen Maughan as, 'An archbishop of Greater Britain', both tended to "make explicit the connection between English religion and imperial duty". The USPG may have escaped 'imperial duty' but what is its relationship today to 'English religion'?

This intriguing volume has wisely, in a mere four hundred pages, not attempted to provide us with a complete history of England's oldest Anglican mission agency. In his first half of the book, Dan O'Connor has focused on the eighteenth and twentieth centuries only, whilst the essays which make up the second half of the volume cover a wide range of issues both historical and missiological. Like Eugene Stock writing the history of CMS some hundred years earlier, O'Connor suffers the disadvantage of being a little too close to recent history to write entirely objectively. This limitation is most evident in the section on the College of the Ascension of which he was himself principal. Of particular importance are O'Connor's reflections on the struggles of indigenous church development, and the role in the early twentieth century of the "Atheists of Empire". He also has a powerful section on the scholarship of Krishna Mohan Banerjea and John William Colenso.

Amongst the fourteen essays, several by non-Western missiologists, I found most helpful that by Jerome Moriyama on 'Building a home-grown Church', and John Pobee's strong, but warm, critique of USPG in his analysis of the current situation in Ghana.

Canon Mark Oxbrow, International Mission
Director, Church Mission Society (London)

Timothy Yates (ed.): Mission – An Invitation to God's Future

Mission – An Invitation to God's Future, ed. Timothy Yates, Calver, Hope Valley 2000, 123 pages, £9.75 pbk

'Mission needs to be redefined as: **Me, Incarnated, Spent, Staying, Inserted, Open, and Naive.**' A winning touch from Jane Grinonneau, the Baptist minister at the Furnival, Sheffield, whose two-page, one-paragraph report (p.77f.) on this illuminating project is an anticipation of what the best of this book is about.

It consists of the papers of the 1999 biennial conference of the British and Irish Association of Mission Studies, for which the organisers had the exciting idea of inviting three of the outstanding missiological professors from the continent. Their addresses form the heart of the book, together with that of Prof Chris Rowland of Oxford, taking up Bonhoeffer's suggestion that 'the church must be a community which hears the Apocalypse (i.e. the Revelation of St John the Divine) and testifies to its alien nature, resisting the false principle of inner worldliness.'

Jürgen Moltmann (Tübingen, Germany) draws on his long struggle to interpret the central credal affirmations of Christian faith to suggest three key 'premises' for contemporary mission in Europe, of which the third is a disconcerting juxtaposition: "Without interfaith dialogue no one will understand anything. Through interfaith dialogue no one has ever become a Christian." For "Jesus didn't bring a new religion into the world. What he brought was new life." And so he explores the calling to mission in terms of new attitudes to life fitting all humanity for God's end-time.

Theo Sundermaier (Heidelberg, Germany) puts the calling to mission in relation to three constitutive dimensions of what it is to be human: eccentricity (having origins outside ourselves), relationality (being nothing in isolation) and orientation to the future – all things equally essential to Christian faith and the Christian church! Anton Wessels (Amsterdam, Netherlands) summons up key figures in European art and music as witnesses to the way God can awaken expectations of the divine even in our over-developed and complacently self-concerned culture.

Lots of good food for those who can cope with a lecture format. Pity that alongside these lectures much of the rest of the book is so secondary.

Martin Conway (Oxford)



Andrew Kirk/Kevin Vanhoozer (eds.): To Stake a Claim

To Stake a Claim: Mission and the Western Crisis of Knowledge, (eds) J Andrew Kirk and Kevin J Vanhoozer (Orbis, Maryknoll, USA, 1999).

Nothing signifies the gulf between missiology and theology in the modern West more than the failure of mission thinking to address the philosophical undergirdings of contemporary society. By 'engage' I mean something more substantially dialogical than a far-flung dismissal of 'secular reason' (John Milbank and the school he has generated), an affronted protest against 'Gospel unfriendly' assumptions (some of those who have followed Lesslie Newbigin), or a campaign against features of modernity which do not fit certain – ironically rather modern – preconceptions about the Bible or Christian orthodoxy (certain streams of conservative evangelicalism).

'To Stake a Claim' makes an important contribution towards reversing intellectual isolationism among some missiologists in the English-speaking world. Among its many strengths are its diversity of theological opinion (from the traditional to the experimental), its breadth of philosophical vision, and the fact that it has evidently evolved from a long process of conversation and engagement among the contributors. It re-opens a vital series of debates and makes a helpful contribution to them.

The central focus is epistemology: different theories about how we can know whether what we think we know is valid. The major concern is about how theological propositions can be understood in relation to these different categories of thought, and how the claims of the Gospel can be heard and validated in the midst of competing voices and arguments.

The first section, sets out to precise the history of epistemology in the West, and to assess the state of claims to both truth and rationality. It ends with a summary of what (in different ways) the authors believe to be a 'crisis of knowledge' within Western culture arising from a widespread attack in academic and cultural circles on both instrumental ('logocentric') rationality and any claims of a privileged access to knowledge.

This initial overview is useful, though some will find it dense and rather too casual in its scattering of names we are supposed to recognise. It is descriptive rather than prescriptive, though it ends by acknowledging that the logocentrism critiqued in contemporary (pragmatic, postmodern and deconstructive) philosophies directly calls into question the 'ology' of missiology. Also, I would add, the disavowal of privileged or universal claims to knowledge calls into question many of the various theories of 'revelation' upon which theology more generally depends.

These are the problems and challenges which the eight essays in part two seek to address. Here Andy Sanders argues for 'fallibilist traditionalism', Philip Clayton defends a non-absolutist but tradition-specific case for

'context-sensitive, sharing-based proclamation', Nancey Murphy suggests that the power-renouncing practices of Radical Reformation offer an antidote to the will-to-power, and Kevin Vanhoozer explores an epistemology of the Cross.

The polarities in this collection are perhaps clearest in the last three contributions – and in the two rather different summaries at the end. Andrew Kirk is trenchant in his critique of what he sees as the inherent contradictions of 'reason alone'. But he remains a modernist both in his disavowal of postmodernism ('pure escapism') and in his belief that rationality is a foundational part of revelation.

Lars Johansson, on the other hand, wants to bring together the personal, relational and experiential language which is currently mediated through New Age philosophies with the cognitive (and specifically Trinitarian) content of Christian faith, with an emphasis on the 'livability' of valid knowledge.

Last, but not least, Bert Hoedemaker, while sharing with some others in this collection a conviction that modernist conceptions of rationality and imperial, territorial forms of Christianity (Christendom) are reaching their limits, is much more positive about postmodern thinking as a challenge to missiology. His conception of mission beyond certainty is that it should be about 'eschatological performance' – ethical concern for 'the other', an acceptance of the limits of knowledge, and a permanent resistance of the temptation to usurp God's ultimate horizon. More than any other contributor, Hoedemaker emphasises the crisis of missiology alongside 'the crisis of the West'.

This is an invaluable collection which all seriously concerned with the present and future of Christian mission should read.

Simon Barrow, CCOM Commission Secretary

Simon Barrow/Graeme Smith (eds): Christian Mission in Western Society

Christian Mission in Western Society, (eds) Simon Barrow and Graeme Smith, (CTBI Publications, 2001).

This book performs a valuable function in bringing together a variety of good quality essays from prominent writers on different aspects of Christian mission in the West, both past and present.

The contributions are organised into three sections. The first two look back at missionary inheritance (especially the contributions of Augustine and Columba) and survey examples of theological challenges to Christianity in the present (politics as confession, evangelism and culture, and narrative approaches to mission).

In the third section the prospects of mission in Europe and beyond are explored -- with the expected themes of urbanisation, postmodernism and identity emerging strongly.

Graeme Smith's introduction was the last piece I read. It is an able summary of the coherence of the collection and some of the arguments in it, though not all will agree with his own conclusions. He seems to want mission to be cultural critique more than Christian performance. His co-editor, Simon Barrow, has a more hopeful view of the church as alternative community. His 'afterword' masterfully draws together some of the issues in the book and links them to key debates about the future in areas such as our images of God, Christology and globalisation.

Of the individual essays, the ones which stood out for me included Michael MacCraith's swashbuckling deconstruction of the myths of 'Celtic Christianity', helpfully set alongside Adrian Hastings' meticulous historical scholarship. Lynne Price was fascinating on Christian witness after Leslie Weatherhead and Sylvia Townsend Warner. Jay Kothare's take on plural, inner city mission was fascinating. The dialogue between Joe D Aldred and Allan Anderson on black churches and Pentecostalism introduced me to issues of which I will want to explore much further. And Bert Hoedemaker's demanding essay on mission after modernity is probably the most profound and original in the whole volume.

It was only when I got to the end that I realised that much of the material in this stimulating collection draws on papers from three past conferences. It is to the credit of the editors and contributors that the usual limitations of such an approach are not especially apparent. Occasionally one might have wished for further updating, and the absence of an index is a pity. Inevitably some contributions appeal more than others, too, though none are weak. But set against this are useful end notes, good organisation, an interesting general bibliography and (unusually for a 'serious' book) a colourful cover..

This is a strong collection on a topic area which lacks easily accessible general introductions. Those concerned with mission, students and scholars will find it equally provocative.

Karen Keys, Fife

Just briefly...

Aled Edwards: Transforming Power. A Christian Reflection on Welsh Devolution, 68 pp., £ 5.95

A reflection on the nature of power(s) and Christian attitudes to it in the context of the Welsh past and future after devolution. The book developed from the sermon that Aled Edwards preached on the occasion of the inauguration of the Welsh Assembly in 1999 and profits from the intimate insight he has into the Welsh Assembly as Cytûn's National Assembly Liaison Officer.

Robert Warren/Bob Jackson: in the face of declining church attendance – there are answers (Springboard resource paper 1), brochure 14 pp.

Drawing on various church censuses the authors make statistics come alive. They find expected and unexpected results and present them in clarity and brevity: Unsurprisingly only 1 in 8 churches with no one under 45 shows significant growth, but less to be expected: also few churches with no one over 45 are growing. Apparently it is less youth or age that matters but the mix. The same holds true for ethnic belonging: almost twice as many ethnically mixed churches as mono-ethnic churches are growing. The brochure is obtainable from springboard.uk@btinternet.com or Tel: 01235 553722.

Steven Finamore: Violence, the Bible and the End of the World (The Whitley Lecture 2000/2001), Whitley Publ. Oxford 2000

Exciting to read Finamore challenges the general Christian assumption that violence is inhumane, un-Christian and must eventually be 'overcome'.

However sociology, anthropology and ethology (whoever grew up with the Austrian Konrad Lorenz' books on the behaviour of geese and men will hardly be surprised) unanimously show that violence is an integral part of human society and man's and woman's very self, usually serving vital purposes for the survival of community and species. And therefore Christian thinking on violence must go beyond more or less complicated variations on "it should not be". Finamore draws on the thinking of René Girard to re-read the Bible (especially the book of Revelation!) without giving in to any illusions about the substantially violent nature of humankind.

A valuable and thought-provoking contribution to the WCC's 'Decade to Overcome Violence'.



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Churches' Commission on Mission
Churches Together in Britain and Ireland
35-41 Lower Marsh
London SE1 7SA

Phone: +44 (0)20-7523 2126

Fax: +44 (0)20 7928 0010

Internet: www.ccom.org.uk

E-Mail: kai.funkschmidt@ctbi.org.uk

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For reflection

"The military terminology used during and after the 1910 Edinburgh World Missionary Conference betrays much about us. Expressions such as 'soldiers', 'forces', 'strategy', 'crusade', 'campaign', 'tactical plans', 'marching orders', and the like abounded. The conference was praised as a 'council of war' and John Mott compared to a military strategist. Mott himself lent credence to this when he concluded his final speech at the conference with the words: 'The end of the conference is the beginning of the conquest...' [...] It is out of the ambience of this culture that at least till recently we sang hymns like 'Stand up, stand up for Jesus' and 'Onward, Christian soldiers, marching as to war...'"

(David J. Bosch, *The Vulnerability of Mission*, in: J.A. Scherer/S.B. Bevans (edd.): *New Directions in Mission and Evangelization*, Maryknoll, NY 1994 p.73-86, here p.83.)

The last word



"YOUR SERMON REMINDED ME OF
THE PEACE OF GOD — IT PASSED
ALL UNDERSTANDING..."