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of the United Evangelical Mission

Volume 18

“Mission still possible?”

Global Perspectives on Mission Theology and Mission Practice

Contributions to a Conference
of the United Evangelical Mission
20 Years after Internationalization
Dumaguete, Philippines, June 26th – June 30th, 2016

Edited by Jochen Motte and Andar Parlindungan



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Introduction

Mission still possible!

Global perspectives on mission theology and mission practice, twenty years after the internationalization of the United Evangelical Mission

“...that all may have life in abundance” (John 10:10)

In 2015, with the twenty-year anniversary of the 1996 internationalization of the United Evangelical Mission approaching, the Council of the UEM expressed the need to discuss the common challenges to mission today and to reflect on the impact of the mission statement and mission practice of the UEM as expressed in the UEM Constitution of 1993/1996. In order to enable such a process, the Council decided to conduct a mission conference prior to the 2016 General Assembly of the UEM.

The contributions, findings, and recommendations from the conference are to be brought to the attention of the delegates to the UEM General Assembly in Rwanda in October 2016, and will later be shared within the UEM constituency for further consideration, inspiration, and discussion within the UEM communion in the years ahead.

In response to the Council’s decision, about thirty people gathered for a conference at Silliman University in Dumaguete, Philippines from 25 June–1 July 2016: lecturers and experts on mission theology; church leaders; representatives of church diaconic and academic institutions from Asia, Africa, and Germany; and a Muslim scholar from Indonesia.

The contributions and reflections addressing various challenges to mission practice and missionary action today are documented in this publication.

In a joint statement, the conference participants expressed their conviction that in the twenty years following the internationalization, the intended communion of churches in the UEM has become a reality, characterized by solidarity, partnership, and encounters on equal footing. At the same time, the UEM’s holistic understanding of mission as expressed in the constitution from 1993/1996 and the Statement on Corporate Identity from 2008 has provided solid common ground for missionary understanding and action in the UEM into the present day.

The current core areas of missionary action in the UEM are evangelism; justice, peace, and the integrity of creation; development; diaconic action; and partnership. The participants in the mission conference believe that the contexts of missionary action have changed, however, and therefore they see a need for the reinterpretation and adaptation of missionary practice in the UEM.

During the consultation it also became obvious that UEM members have different approaches to and different priorities for missionary action, not only among the three regions but also within the respective regions. This diversity, which implies different interpretations of the UEM constitution from 1993/1996, mirrors the diverse theological and ecclesiological approaches of UEM members as well as their

different life contexts, for example the minority situation of Christians in Indonesia and Sri Lanka.

This is why the recommendations from the participants include giving more attention to the question of how to engage in encounters with people of other religions and faiths in a critical, sensible, and respectful way.

Furthermore, the participants encourage the UEM to continue to address gender justice and to strengthen the support and assistance for refugees in Africa, Asia, and Germany.

In view of the common goal to work for equality of opportunity in the UEM communion, further strengthening of the South-South exchange has also been suggested.

Even with all of the diversity in mission practice and mission action discovered during the conference, the participants also emphasized the common goal of mission for today, as expressed in John 10:10b: "...that all may have life in abundance" (John 10:10b).

Mission therefore is not only still possible, but urgently needed. The mission theology and practice within the UEM, as initiated and established through the internationalization of 1993/1996, has brought into being a living communion that acts in mutual respected diversity.

Jochen Motte

Andar Parlindungan

Appreciation

We express our deep gratitude and appreciation to the staff of Silliman University, the Faculty of Theology, and especially the preparation committee of this conference for their hospitality and commitment to make this conference successful. Explicit thanks go to Dr Ben S. Malayang III (President of Silliman University), Dr Jeaneth Faller (Dean of Silliman Divinity School), Dr Dennis Solon (Lecturer at Silliman Divinity School), and Bishop Norman Reuel Marigza (General Secretary of the Council of the UCCP Bishops).

We thank the staff at our place of residence, the Private Residence VIP Resort near Dumaguete, for providing such marvellous service.

We are also very grateful to the many people in the UEM office who supported our conference.

We would also like to thank all of the conference participants for their inspiring and challenging contributions on mission and mission theology.

We especially thank Ms Casey Butterfield for her excellent editorial work with regard to the English language.

Great appreciation goes to the Evangelisches Missionswerk and Dr Michael Biehl, who supported the conference as chairperson of the message committee and whose expertise and great experience contributed to a smooth process that resulted in the adoption of a joint statement on mission.

Finally we would like to thank Mr Wolfgang Apelt, head of the archives of the Archives and Museum Foundation of the UEM. Mr Apelt documented the results of the conference, guided the process to finalize this publication, and contributed to the success of the whole conference through his outstanding knowledge of mission history, especially with regard to the process of the transformation of the German UEM into an international mission organization from 1973 to 1996.

Jochen Motte

Andar Parlindungan

“Mission still possible?”

**Global perspectives on mission theology and mission practice: A conference of the United Evangelical Mission
20 years after internationalization
Dumaguete, Philippines, 26-30 June, 2016**

Statement from the participants

“... that all may have life in abundance” (John 10:10b)

Taking this as God’s promise to his creation and all humankind, we, the participants of the UEM conference, confirm our willingness to encourage our churches to continue to be united in mission. We, 27 representatives from the three regions of the UEM communion – Africa, Asia, and Germany – including one Muslim scholar, were hosted by the Silliman University in Dumaguete City, Philippines. Looking back on 20 years of internationalization of the UEM as a communion of 35 member churches in three continents and the von Bodelschwingh Foundation Bethel, we realize that together, we have grown closer. Over the years, the communion is no longer just a vision, but has become filled with life. Solidarity and equality have developed, and visiting ecumenical teams have strengthened the relations between churches. We are thankful for the sharing of prayers, ideas, and resources, and for the successful exchange of personnel. Partnership is being lived intensively, and we have reason to be grateful for what has been accomplished by our sharing and serving of one another during the last two decades. We recognize achievements in the struggles against human rights violations and in living out a common mission. We rejoice to see a generation emerging for whom our communion and its exchange and cooperation are a reality. This generation has been educated and formed through UEM programs and will continue the journey of internationalization.

Having listened to the contributions during the conference, we present some insights and recommendations to the General Assembly:

1. **Mission:** In our deliberations, we agreed that mission is still possible today and therefore we affirm to continue to be united in mission. The conference confirmed the UEM’s understanding of mission as it is spelled out in the respective articles of the constitution and Corporate Identity: Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation; Development; Diaconia; Evangelism; and Partnership (see appendix). However, the contexts for mission are changing, and consequently these concepts have to be developed and contextualized. Hence, we recognize a diversity of understanding and of interpretation of the Corporate Identity. In this perspective, the issues are approached by individual member churches within their respective contexts.

There is also a tradition of mission as defending and promoting justice, peace and the integrity of creation. Beyond that, some have highlighted mission as sharing the Gospel with all and an invitation to trust in Christ; others high-

light reconciliation, while still others stress journeying together with those of other faiths, e.g., Muslims or Buddhists, towards justice and a dignified life for all.

This diversity has to be further explored, and not in order to come to one understanding, but rather to understand better how the concepts presented are in response to the respective contexts and can enrich each other and our union in mission.

2. Life: A number of contributions referred to the promise of life in abundance and dignity for all. The salvific oikonomia of the triune God creates a space in which churches are invited to share with all among whom they live and serve in an inclusive way. Hospitality could be considered not only as describing an attitude lived out in relation to others, but also as a metaphor for our mission. For instance, it opens avenues to the issue of creation and climate justice as well as to human rights.
3. Journeying: We learned anew to look to those among whom the UEM churches live and serve. Three groups that came into focus during our discussion were the Pentecostal movement and its diversity, Muslims, and Buddhists, in their various contexts. We can journey with those who promote a dignified life for all and fight against poverty and injustice. In that regard, the dimension of interdenominational and interfaith dialogue and the threat of religious extremism were addressed as urgent issues for our mission.
4. Representing academic disciplines as well, we highlight the crucial role of theological education, not only for leadership training but for the whole people of God.
5. What should be developed further:
 - One of the cross-cutting issues is youth. The youth are not only our future, but also part of our present. There are strong programmes in the UEM by and for young people. We encourage the UEM to expand these programmes and allot as much space of possible to young people.
 - The other cross-cutting issue is the role of women and the question of gender justice – questions which have accompanied the UEM from its beginning. Where are the member churches on this today, and how has the communion contributed to further development in this regard?
 - We have the following questions:
 - How can we further develop a critical openness and sensitivity towards the new religious movements that continue to arise?
 - We have heard reports about members of our churches who have been killed as a consequence of their witness and mission. Do we pay enough attention to the dimension of suffering, experience of persecution, and martyrdom?
6. We encourage the UEM:
 - To pay more attention to mission spirituality in our discussions on mission.
 - To explore evangelism as living the Gospel in globalized contexts and in popular culture.
 - To foster empowerment and development, particularly of South-South exchanges.

- To encourage the sharing of power in partnerships between member churches, including at grass-roots level.
- To address the issue of refugees in all affected regions.
- To initiate programmes that assist UEM Churches in becoming more inclusive towards marginalized and discriminated people in all three regions.
- To enjoin UEM member churches to do more to prevent the degradation of ecological systems and to minimize the effects of climate change.
- To carry out more research in the years leading up to the twenty-fifth anniversary. The research, preferably done in intercultural teams, should focus on:
 - o Pentecostal and charismatic movements and charismatization.
 - o Interfaith relationships.
 - o Intercultural topics/cultural identity.
 - o The relation between diaconical work and church/congregations in the three regions (from the mission era to contemporary diaconia).
 - o The virtual presence of faith/religions through the Internet and the media as missionary tools.
- We would like to express our gratitude to our hosting institution, Silliman University, to our hosting member church the UCCP, and to the UEM for inviting us to this conference.

UNITED EVANGELICAL MISSION (UEM)

From the Constitution (1996)

§ 1 Name and Registered Office

The Rheinische Missionsgesellschaft, which, by way of Cabinet Decree issued by King Friedrich Wilhelm III on the 24th June 1829, received official recognition as a missionary society and was constituted as a legal person, and which, following the dissolution of the registered association known as Bethelmission, the aims and objectives of which it continues to pursue, conducted its activities under the name Vereinigte Evangelische Mission, is as from the 5th June 1996 known as United Evangelical Mission. Communion of Churches in Three Continents (UEM). Its registered office is located in Wuppertal, Germany.

§ 2 Mission, Objects and Purpose

- (1) The United Evangelical Mission is founded on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, and shall serve the purpose of joint action in mission.
- (2) a) The United Evangelical Mission operates within a network of churches in Africa, Asia and Europe and wherever it may be called upon to serve.
 - b) Together these churches shall proclaim Jesus Christ as the Lord and Saviour of all people and shall face the challenges of present-day mission.
 - c) In a world torn apart, they commit themselves to remain members of the one Body of Christ, and therefore to:
 - grow together into a worshipping, learning and serving community;
 - share gifts, insights and responsibilities;
 - call all people to repentance and new life;
 - bear witness to the Kingdom of God in striving for justice, peace and the integrity of creation.
- (3) The UEM shall take part in the missionary responsibilities of its members by
 - providing opportunities for encounter and dialogue, sharing of experience, open discussion, as well as joint reflection on mission history and present-day tasks of the mission;
 - promoting the training, sending-out and exchange of personnel for the missionary and diaconic service in the churches and in new areas of united mission;
 - encouraging the sharing of gifts received, and by providing financial support for missionary, diaconic, humanitarian and social functions of the individual churches and the joint programmes of several churches and ecumenical organisations.

- (4) The UEM fulfills its tasks on behalf of the members belonging to the missionary community, and in co-operation with groups and individuals associated with them. The UEM also co-operates with organisations operating within the sphere of ecumenical diakonia and church development service, as well as other ecumenical missionary associations and networks.
- (5) The UEM shall fulfill the aforesaid objectives *inter alia* through the functions and activities described in § 3 (1).

§ 3 Charitable Objects

- (1) The UEM exclusively pursues church-related, public welfare and charitable purposes by promoting church-related aims, further education and training, development co-operation, international understanding, children and youth assistance, the public health and welfare system, as well as by charitable support of needy persons within the meaning of § 53 of Abgabenordnung (AO). These aims may also be pursued in and in relation to foreign countries.
 - a) Church-related aims, within the meaning of § 54 of AO, are attained particularly against the background of § 2 (2), by fulfilling the objects under § 2 (3) and (4) and by the promotion of partnerships particularly between church-districts of the members.
 - b) Further education and training, and understanding among nations are particularly promoted by arranging and implementing educational courses, workshops and seminars, the operation of conference centres particularly in Wuppertal and Bethel as well as through the award of scholarships.
 - c) Development co-operation and international understanding are particularly promoted through diaconal emergency assistance during disasters, the planning and implementation of projects for the sustainable improvement of living conditions in developing countries, the sending of volunteers, human rights work, the arranging of partnerships between church-districts, congregations and church institutions in different countries, as well as by arranging and implementing exchange programmes.
 - d) Children and youth assistance are particularly promoted by the awarding of scholarships and the arranging and implementation of educational programmes for children and youth.
 - e) The furtherance of the public health and welfare system is particularly promoted by the planning, arranging and implementation of preventative measures against illnesses and diseases.
 - f) A further objective of the UEM is the acquisition of resources, within the meaning of § 58 (1) of AO, for the promotion of church-related aims, further education and training, development co-operation, understanding among nations, children and youth assistance, the public health and welfare system, as well as for charitable support of needy persons through local or foreign legal bodies, or through a public body. The bestowing of benefits does not entitle beneficiaries to claim any further assistance from the UEM.

- (2) The UEM's activities are altruistic, and the UEM does not pursue any primarily self-serving economic aims. The assets and resources of the UEM may only be applied in pursuance of the objects of this constitution. The members shall not receive any financial assistance from the resources of the UEM.

UEM Statement on Corporate Identity (2008)

What is the United Evangelical Mission (UEM)?

Have reverence for Christ in your hearts, and honour him as Lord. Be ready at all times to answer anyone who asks you to explain the hope you have in you (1Peter 3:15).

Following the Biblical call we are a communion of 34 Protestant churches¹ in Africa, Asia and Germany and the von Bodelschwingh Institutions Bethel united in mission. Our roots are in the Rhenish Mission (founded 1828), the Bethel Mission (founded 1886), and the Zaire Mission (founded 1965). Since 1996, the UEM has been internationally organized and staffed with its headquarters in Germany.

What is our commission?

Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, so I send you (John 20: 21).

As a mission community we are taking part in God's mission on earth. Together we give witness to the message of the Father's reconciliation with all humankind through the Son Jesus Christ. We trust the power of the Holy Spirit, with whose help we work for justice, peace and for the integrity of creation. In this light we also acknowledge the responsibility to critically face the history of our mission work.

What are our tasks?

The spirit of the Lord is upon me ... (Luke 4:18-19)

We understand mission as a holistic commission, and we cooperate to carry out our task. Therefore, evangelism, diaconia, advocacy, development and partnership are integral parts of our mission to spread the gospel. The UEM is global and works locally – in Africa, Asia and Germany. To empower each other for mission we share our resources and gifts and exchange co-workers and volunteers.

○ **Evangelism**

We believe in the Gospel as God's power of salvation and renewal, therefore:

- we jointly strengthen our spiritual life and develop and promote evangelistic projects
- to share the gospel with all people and to invite them to trust in Christ
- we promote joint programmes
- we promote theological exchange.
- we encourage and support our members to learn mutual and respectful ways of encountering people of other faiths

¹ now (2017) 35 churches

○ **Diaconia**

We confess that all human beings are created in the image of God, therefore:

- we maintain grassroots networks to fight HIV and AIDS and to care for orphans, the widowed and for people infected with HIV.
- we work to improve peoples' living conditions, especially for those with special needs.
- we strive to improve medical care and to promote physical and psychological health for all people.
- we support churches as they assist people in need as a result of human made or natural disasters.

○ **Advocacy**

We believe that human beings are created in the image of God and therefore have inalienable dignity and rights. Therefore

- we promote and defend human rights.
- we support initiatives to solve conflict peacefully.
- we join efforts to achieve just economic conditions and good governance.
- we strive for the protection of the environment.

○ **Development**

We are convinced that God's love continues to empower people, therefore:

- we support programs that empower men, women and youth.
- we carry out training programmes.
- we offer scholarships for higher education to build capacity in our member churches.
- we contribute towards overcoming poverty in all its forms.

○ **Partnership**

We understand ourselves as parts of the one body of Christ, therefore:

- we foster and support various forms of partnership relations among our members based on respect, mutuality and transparency.
- we facilitate exchange visits for staff, experts and volunteers.
- we create networks of partnership to open up and strengthen multilateral relations

How do we work together?

Two are better than one, because they have a better reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up the other, but woe to one who is alone and falls and does not have another to help. (Ecclesiastes 4: 9)

Our members from Africa, Asia and Germany have equal rights in governance. Our decision makers – women, men and young adults – come from all three continents.

All decisions about our work are taken on the basis of our common rules and regulations and our joint budget.

We manage the resources entrusted to us transparently and conscientiously and account for them together in faithful stewardship. In working and living together we learn from each other and are willing to be transformed and renewed as we experience that our partaking in God's mission also changes our lives and our work.

Report on the Conference

Wolfgang Apelt

“Mission still possible?” Global perspectives on mission theology and mission practice” was the topic for this gathering of twenty-seven people from Africa, Asia and Germany in Dumaguete City in the Philippines. The conference was prepared by members of Silliman University and staff from the United Evangelical Mission (UEM) in Wuppertal, Germany. This report is being written after the conference, so it will not repeat the message of the conference, but rather offer some words on the speeches given.

The first day of the conference, at Silliman University, included a reception, keynote speeches, and a cultural evening. The keynote speeches were open to the public and very well attended. After a welcome speech by the president of the university, Dr Ben S. Malayang, the retired bishop Erme Camba talked about the foundation of the UEM and the bringing of the “Third World” to the “West”.

The three keynote speeches touched on various issues. Dieter Becker gave an overview of the changes in mission theology over the years and stated that mission involves participating in a new community of life. The people living at the margins have to be taken especially seriously. He also said that Europe has to respond to several new challenges in mission theology; hospitality, solidarity, witness, and dialogue are some of the issues for the future. The themes of reconciliation and healing will also be relevant for *life in its fullness*. Jozef Hehanussa, meanwhile, spoke of mission in the context of religious fundamentalism and used the experience of his country, Indonesia. He asserted that the aim of all mission work should be to celebrate life together. Véronique Kavuo Kahindo talked about the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements. She called for cooperation between mainline churches and neo-Pentecostal churches in the African context, as well as an authentic African mission theology.

In the programme section on advocacy and on justice, peace, and the integrity of creation (JPIC), we heard three speeches that again dealt with very different issues.

Jochen Motte spoke about advocacy within the UEM since the internationalization and about how the commitment to advocacy has strengthened the solidarity among the member churches of the UEM. Pascal Bataringaya talked about the role of the churches in the context of Rwanda after the genocide and recounted the establishment of a unity and reconciliation commission within the Presbyterian Church in Rwanda. Victor Aguilan spoke about climate justice within the work of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines. The mission of the UCCP is theocentric and earth-oriented. The questions and answers on these speeches showed that advocacy has many faces that all have to be taken into account.

The programme section on development illuminated a variety of challenges. Faustin Mahali spoke about church leadership in the African context and explained

that leadership is either pastor-centred or evangelism-centred. The priesthood of all believers should be used more often as the concept of leadership. Rainer Neu's topic was mission history; we learned that our local experiences were and are important. Anyone dealing with people of different cultures should be concerned with developing an interest in the way of life and thinking of the other. Bishop Reuel Marigza then spoke about the social theology and its development within the United Church of Christ in the Philippines. He stated that love, justice, truth, and compassion are at the heart of the witness to the world and the service to the church. The conference participants stressed the importance of love and called for a strengthening of dialogue and exchanges of people, especially South to South.

Diaconia was the topic of the next three lectures. Willbrod Mastai spoke of the Tanzanian perspective; he said that the church must take seriously the issues of ecosystem destruction, family violence, female genital mutilation, poverty, and corruption, among others. The Lutheran Church in Tanzania has taken the initiative on some of these. Sujithar Sivanayagam then talked about the Sri Lankan context. For him, diaconia and advocacy are very much connected: as he said, "each and every diaconal activity/mission must have the idea of sustainability, justice, and corporate social responsibility". Caroline Shedafa looked at diaconia from an international perspective, based on her experience in Germany and Tanzania. She spoke about the UEM diaconia programme and especially the sectors of health care, disability, ageing, and capacity-building.

The group of lectures that followed were on the theme of evangelism. Faith Luzgazia talked about the African Pentecostal and Charismatic churches' treatment of subjects such as healing, reconciliation, and prosperity. Her opinion was that some of these topics are also relevant for the mainline churches and should be taken into account in the work of the church. Syafiq Hasyim, a Muslim scholar, spoke about multicultural *dakwah*, which "can be defined as religious activity devoted to propagate community under the belief of Islam". He advocated a multicultural approach that he described as an alternative model of *dakwah* for all Muslim people in a globalized world. Werner Engel's lecture was on evangelism and mission in the German and European context. He discussed various contexts such as secularization and youth culture. As a church, he said, "not only do we beckon others to come, but we also get out, get up, and go". The church has learned "to cope with small things: small budgets, small numbers of volunteers, small numbers of full-timers".

The last talks were on the topic of partnership. Willem Simarmata spoke about partnership within the UEM in general and in North Sumatra, Indonesia, in particular. He said that challenges for the church are automatic, but that we can meet them if we work together with partners. Xolile Simon, from South Africa, talked about power relations and their transformation. He referred to the experience of the African Independent Churches with the concept of *ubuntu* and stated that the UEM can make a significant contribution to setting trends in transforming power relations in future years. Josephat Rweyemamu shared his experience as a mission worker in the Philippines coming from Tanzania.

After the lectures, participants exchanged ideas inspired by four questions. Most of the ideas were part of the message of the conference, so only the ideas that were not part of this statement will be mentioned here.

1. What achievements of the UEM can you identify twenty years after internationalization?
 - The work of the regional offices (Dar es Salaam and Medan) brings the UEM closer to the grass-roots level
 - Very qualified staff are working at the UEM
 - The intercultural understanding has improved
2. Which questions should be discussed and which issues addressed in the UEM in the years ahead, in order to lead the communion into the next phase of its existence?
 - There is still a need for better connection with local congregations
 - The emphasis on diaconia needs to be reflected in the UEM structure
 - The exchange of leaders from different denominations should be encouraged
3. With whom – other faiths, Pentecostals, civil organizations – can we journey and cooperate for a dignified life for all of creation?
 - UEM should work with open-minded Muslim organizations
 - UEM should **not** cooperate with extremists and groups that violate human dignity
4. How do you see the UEM's understanding of mission today, in the context of other understandings of mission (such as those of Pentecostal movements, Charismatics, Christian extremists, other religions, etc.)?
 - The UEM is taking a non-denominational path; many Protestants can work together on this

In addition to the answers above, there was one further issue mentioned for the UEM to take up: the UEM should look into the role of theological institutions.

The formulation and discussion of the message, an exposure day to Apo Island, and a sending prayer closed the conference.

The result of the conference, besides its message, was that twenty-seven people from three continents came together with all their differences, which included quite a number of cross-cultural experiences. The sharing and discussions showed clearly that there is not only one understanding of mission within the UEM, but many. We learnt also that we are able to work together and to agree on the statement of the conference, as well as on the UEM's understanding of mission as expressed in the UEM constitution and corporate identity.

Keynote Speeches

Changing Paradigms in Mission Theology in View of global Challenges, interreligious Conflicts, and secular Scepticism towards religious Institutions and Movements

Dieter Becker

Respected authorities of Dumaguete City,
distinguished members of the Faculty of Theology of Dumaguete University,
dear colleagues in mission studies from different parts of the world,
ladies and gentlemen,

I deem it a great honour to have been invited to deliver a lecture at this international ecumenical symposium. It gives me great joy to join all of you. This symposium, so well organized, offers me an opportunity to reflect with you in the spirit of intercultural theology on the topic of mission theology. I hope my reflection will fit in with the major theme of this symposium: “Changing Paradigms in Mission Theology”.

It is my task to look upon this “shift of paradigms” from the perspective of “global challenges, secular scepticism and interreligious conflicts” and I will do this “towards religious institutions and movements”.

Mission is no longer the “conversion of the heathen”, the “worldwide propagation of the Christian faith” or “the founding of new churches” – but mission remains in the firing line. Whatever, whoever, wherever anything is said about mission, it causes discussion and trouble. Mission is a “taboo word”.¹

Let me, in a first step, explain what we call the “old paradigm” of Western mission, then move forward to the challenges coming from what is called “mission from the margins” and afterwards reflect upon what might be given the title “mission as the search for new community”, as an ecumenical perspective for today.

1 For an historical overall study, compare David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991).

Paradigm I

Mission of Western Christendom as extension of the Kingdom

Beginning with the Columbus project of 1492 and the Vasco da Gama epoch starting in 1498, Western Christendom experienced a huge increase in geographical extension and in numbers of adherents. The modern missionary movement was both a response to and a product of a phase of globalization brought about by Western colonialism and imperialism. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, when the Protestant missionary movement started, lots of new territories had been discovered and new maps of the world had been created. Within three centuries, newly established mission societies would substantially change the global cartography of Christianity. During the twentieth century, the number of Christians worldwide increased in absolute figures from approximately 521 million adherents to approximately 2.5 billion. Christianity has unfolded its missionary dynamics with impressive staging that has continued into the present day.

Why has Western Christendom engaged in this activity? A keyword in this context is surely the term “Kingdom”, the “Kingdom of God”. In the first chapter of the Gospel of Mark, we read Jesus’s words: “The time is fulfilled and the *kingdom* of God has come” (Mark 1:15). Jesus articulated his understanding of this kingdom and of his mission when he quoted the words of Isaiah 61:1-2, which read: “The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.” (Luke 4:18f) Jesus clearly identified his mission with a message to those at the margins of society who were suffering discrimination in various forms. This was a transformation that turned the values of the existing order of the world upside-down.

In the history of Western Europe, there was a long-standing period during which strong and close ties linked the leaders of the institutions of the church and those in positions of political power. The surrounding world was divided into Christian and “pagan” territory. *Christendom*, the marriage between the altar and the throne, is a phase in the history of the church that lasted for more than a thousand years. Western missionaries of the last three centuries tried to meet people who were at the margins of political, social, cultural, religious and/or economic life in faraway continents and countries.

Christendom narratives shaped European thought, culture, politics, and identity consciousness. The basic distinction between “Christian” and “non-Christian” worlds prevailed in the West for a long time. The missionary movement from the sixteenth to the early twentieth century was deeply permeated by it. Mission was seen as a project of spreading *Christendom* to the ends of the earth as a modern civilized form of the *Kingdom* Jesus had proclaimed. Many people in the West stress today that this project was characterized by violent politics, aggressive and self-centred economics, and fierce militarism (“conquest”, “crusade”). And it is true that in one way or another, Christian mission was too narrowly linked with colonialism and empire-building.

Aloysius Pieris argues that Christianity's contact with Hellenistic culture at the roots of its existence coincided early on with the religion's rise as a political power. The spread of Christianity happened at the same time as the Roman Empire was expanding. Rooted in the centre, the church spread its branches all over ancient cultures and destroyed their ancient pagan religions. Influenced by the emperor-centred religion of Rome, the church eventually became authoritarian and monolithic. When the imperial power was destroyed by barbarian attacks, the citizens of the Roman Empire turned to the new religion, Christianity, for a revival of culture and empire. In other words, Christianity saved the Greco-Roman culture from extinction.² Anton Wessels argues that right from the beginning, in ancient times, the conversion of the pagan world into Christendom took place on the battlefield. Even Roman Christianity had its origin in war – *Christus victor!* The Christian God was revealed as a “God of war” and a conqueror.³

As insiders of the *ecumenically shaped mission scene* of today, we cannot deny what many people in society and the church have in mind when they regard mission as a “taboo word”, marked by a dark history full of bloody conflicts and intercultural misunderstandings. We even have to admit that “powerful neo-Christendom” still prefers violence as an effective means of insisting that its will be done on earth. It is disheartening to observe how utterly reliant on violence and its terrible instruments that Western societies and their institutions have become. Neo-Christendom seems to be the primary beneficiary of violence around the world.⁴

However, with regard to the work and individual personality of concrete men and women doing mission,⁵ many Christians of the global South take a different stance, tell other stories, and even feel that there is much to be grateful for in how these messengers brought the gospel to their local world.⁶ Lamin Sanneh argues that it was the translation of the Bible into the local languages that helped to stabilize the older local cultures and, in the long run, to get rid of the colonial regimes. Certainly there were missionaries who were supported by and benefited from the colonial enterprise, but we should also keep in mind the perspective of the local Christians of today.

Several doctrines shaped the mission paradigm during the nineteenth century in the realm of *Christendom*. In his “Protestant Doctrine of Mission” (1892–1905), Gustav Warneck argued that the world of religions was waiting for Christendom.

2 Aloysius Pieris, *An Asian Theology of Liberation* (Edinburg: T & T Clark, 1988), 53.

3 Wessels refers to the decisive battle at the Milvian Bridge in Rome on 28 October 312 AD. Compare Anton Wessels, *Europe: Was it Ever Really Christian?* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1994), 51.

4 Compare Jonathan J. Bonk, “Europe: Christendom Graveyard or Christian laboratory?”, *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, Vol 31, No. 3 (July 1, 2007), 113f.

5 The contribution of women in mission work was and is extraordinarily important. To highlight this would, however, go beyond the limits of this paper.

6 Fidon R. Mwombeki, *Begegnung auf Augenhöhe? Mission seit der Entkolonisierung und im Zeitalter ökumenischer Netzwerke*, in: *Interkulturelle Theologie – Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft* Heft 1 (2010), 72 – 85, 72f.

He expected Christendom to “become the general religion of humanity”.⁷ Christendom should “pervade the whole of human personal and social life”, which was “to take on the same popular, civic, social, and cultural forms.”⁸ Christian mission was understood by Warneck as “the entire activity of Christendom ... directed to the planting and organization of the church of Christ among non-Christians.”⁹ Mission was the *planting of churches* in non-Christian environments, and the instruments of mission were individual Christians who had experienced personal conversion, had been called, and had committed themselves to this huge task. With respect to the church, this model showed a somehow *triumphalist* focus; with regard to the single missionary, reference can be made to Philippians 2, where the path Jesus took is described as kenotic and humble.

After the Second World War, the reputation of the civilization of the West was deeply damaged. Another paradigm of mission theology found wide acceptance at the time: the concept of *missio Dei*. Karl Hartenstein, Georg Friedrich Vicedom, and others underlined that mission does not take its origin from human beings, from the church, or from Western nations, but from God. “It is God who sent Jesus, who is the first, the archetypal, the ‘real’ missionary.”¹⁰ In a specific variation of this thought, Johannes Christian Hoekendijk and others stressed that the goal of evangelism must be the proclamation of “shalom” for the whole world. The *missio Dei* concept became the comprehensive paradigm for God’s salvific action in history. The church was no longer the subject in this process, but was allowed only to participate. The church was not to distribute salvation through preaching and sacrament, but instead existed only in the realization of “pro-existence”. Mission became more and more associated with human development, with humanization and active participation in struggles for justice and liberation. The church was expected to be primarily the “church for others” (Dietrich Bonhoeffer). From here the links to Latin American liberation theology are obvious.

The modern missionary movement drew much of its strength and much of its persuasive power from political predominance and later from the Western perception of historical development.¹¹ In the next chapter, we will see that Western ideas of being at the centre of the globe have today become objects of sceptical scrutiny. They underline that what emerged from the modern missionary movement is not a global type of Christendom, but a *polycentric, pluralistic world-Christianity*.

Beginning in the middle of the last century, Mission theologians have underlined that all theologies have to respond to local needs while at the same time searching for their relation with ecumenical perspectives. “The universal theol-

7 Gustav Warneck, *Evangelische Missionslehre. Ein missionstheologischer Versuch*, 5 Bde., 1892-1905, I, 96.

8 *Ibid.*, I, 292.

9 *Ibid.*, I, 1.

10 Theo Sundermeier, *Theology of Mission*, in: *Dictionary of Mission: Theology, History, Perspectives*, Karl Müller, Theo Sundermeier, Stephen B. Bevans, Richard Bliese (eds) (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books 1997), 429–451, 434.

11 David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 262ff.

ogies ... were in fact *universalizing* theologies; that is to say, they extended the results of their own reflections beyond their own contexts to other settings, usually without an awareness of the rootedness of their theologies within their own context.”¹² Today there is a growing consensus in mission theology that plurality is normative.¹³

No longer is any confessional version of Christianity – no Lutheranism, Anglicanism, Methodism or any other Christian denomination, not even Roman-Catholicism – in a position to present itself as if it were the normative model and as such should dominate. However, as Christianity unfolds its intercultural dynamics and establishes itself in a multitude of local Christian dialects, the debate as to what constitutes an “authentic”, proper response to the Christ event is heating up, and the identity of Christianity remains a contested concept.

For the moment, however, it is worthwhile to focus on a second parallel process. Since the time of Enlightenment, European Christianity has been facing a decline in plausibility and a *recession* in membership, its biggest since the rise of Islam.¹⁴ Christian dogma no longer defines the belief of the people, and its divisions no longer excite Westerners. In Germany, church membership and attendance have been shrinking at an increasing rate in recent decades. At present, only about 25 per cent of the population still belongs to the Protestant Church and another 25 per cent to the Roman Catholic Church. Those who regularly attend services are usually in the older age range, whereas younger people rarely attend. Some churches outside the Catholics and the Protestants fare a little better, partly because of immigration, but they do not reverse the overall trend. It may be a matter of dispute whether Germany ever was a “Christian country”, but at the beginning of the third millennium, at least attendance-wise, it is certainly not. There is already a severe debate as to whether Christianity is still the unifying basis of national culture.

Christianity suffered disproportionately high losses in the global North, particularly in Western Europe: not only in traditionally Protestant areas like Sweden, Norway, Denmark, northern Germany, and the Netherlands, but also in places where traditionally the Roman-Catholic Church had been strong or even dominant, e.g., in Italy, Spain, Portugal, the Czech Republic, and Poland, as well as in Canada and the United States. Christianity also suffered great losses in Russia. Nowhere has Christianity been weakened as much as in those regions where it is still in the shadow of its former “state-church” relationships and in fact was constituted as a state church, i.e., in Scandinavia, Germany, Italy, Spain, and Portugal. While these churches are

12 Robert J. Schreiter, *The New Catholicity: Theology between the Global and the Local* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), 2; 49.

13 Ambrose Ih-Ren Mong, *Dialogue derailed: Joseph Ratzinger’s War against Pluralist Theology* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick/Wipf and Stock Publications, 2014), XXVII – XXVIII; Ambrose Mong, *Are Non-Christians Saved?: Joseph Ratzinger’s Thoughts on Religious Pluralism* (London: Oneworld Publications, 2015), XVI – XVII.

14 Change and oscillation between *advance* and *retreat* seems to be a continuous phenomenon in church history. Compare Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity*, 7 vols. (New York: Harper & Brothers), 1937–1947; *A History of Christianity*, 2 vols. (New York – London: Harper & Row), 1953.

financially still very powerful, they are fighting a losing battle for the allegiance of their constituency.

The Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor argues that the phenomenon of modern *secularity*¹⁵ is one of the products of a long history of reform movements within Western Christianity. These reform movements had as their intention a continuing “purification of thought” and a greater commitment to a Christian life. But they also set in motion the anti-religious attitudes of others. Churches in Western Europe have been fighting embittered battles for two centuries to try to come to terms with the Enlightenment and to make a stand in an increasingly secularized society. Protestantism seeks to be answerable to modern secular society. Secular society seems to have no use for religion, with the exception of its contribution to the field of ethics. Official statements from the churches often limit their contribution, in its main substance, to this field.¹⁶ Many Christians react by withdrawing themselves into fully privatized, individualistic spirituality.¹⁷

From the Renaissance onward, and increasingly during the Enlightenment, Western Christendom saw its thought-world repeatedly challenged on many fronts. For instance, with the rise of industrialism and urbanization, a changing world presented new problems to European societies and cultures. Ideologies, some of them avowed “god-killers”, rose up to challenge Christendom’s deepest beliefs. The economic theorist Karl Marx, the evolutionary theorist Charles Darwin, and the philosophical nihilist Friedrich Nietzsche, to give only three examples, were thoroughly acquainted with Christian worldviews and were able to use them as a foil to develop many of their own views. On the other hand, Christian traditions are deeply integrated into so many elements of Western culture that they can be expected to continue to assert subtle influence. Besides these major trends, there are countering phenomena that contradict all of the language about decline. One is the strength of conservative and missionary forms of Christianity; the other compensatory force is the growth of Christianity in many parts of the globe.

It seems that secularity in Europe or the West is in a special way “post-Christian”.¹⁸ Through its rejection of “mystery, miracle and magic”, Christian theology may be seen as a secularizing force in itself.¹⁹ Today, belief in God is understood to be one option among others, and frequently not the easiest to embrace.

15 Compare Stefan Paas, Post-Christian, Post-Christendom, and Post-Modern Europe: Towards the Interaction of Missiology and the Social Sciences, in *Mission Studies*, vol. 28, No. 1 (2011), 3–25, especially Parts I-II.

16 Another form of withdrawal can be seen in that “give me back my old-time religion” mentality which, when carried to the extreme, might end in fundamentalism.

17 An epiphenomenon of this reaction is the current wave of mysticism.

18 For example, India and China may be “secular” in some senses, but they are not “post-Christian”. On the other hand, it does not make much sense to call countries “post-Christian” when they have a large churchgoing and praying population, like the US or Poland. Countries like Great Britain and Denmark may be called post-Christian, however, even when there is a privileged national church.

19 Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York: Doubleday, 1967), 111.

Paradigm II

Mission from the margins

Following the Second World War, the imperial dreams of Europeans faded and – as Andrew Walls puts it – the “empires struck back”.²⁰ New challenges began to arise.²¹ I limit myself to a quick survey.²²

A *first challenge* arose from the renewed affirmation of **cultural identity** among those churches and communities which had received the gospel through missionary efforts. New indigenous forms of church life and liturgy began to emerge, and the development of contextual theologies became the centre of attention. This led to a lively discussion about the dynamic interaction between gospel and culture, raising new questions about how to incarnate the gospel in each culture while acknowledging the power of the gospel to challenge and transform all human cultures. The presentation by the Korean theologian Chung Hyun Kyung at the Canberra assembly of the WCC in 1991, and the subsequent controversial debate focusing on the presence and work of the Holy Spirit, brought many of the issues dramatically to the fore.

A *second challenge* emerged with the **theologies of liberation**. These theologies are some of the most important developments in the history of the twentieth century. After the disastrous experiences of colonialism, liberation theologians enabled Christianity to recover credibility in suffering societies of the global South. In many village homes, the Bible began to be greatly cherished and valued because it contained such inspiring stories of liberation and salvation. If hermeneutical theology had traditionally excluded the voice of the “wretched” of the earth, liberation theology helped the poor to discover their own experience in the message of the gospel and find an appropriate approach to theology.

A *third challenge* concerned the relationship between mission and **interreligious dialogue**. Traditional mission communities held on to the claim of the Christian faith to be absolute truth. They feared that interreligious dialogue would open the door to syncretism and relativism. At the other end were those theologians, mostly from Asia, who promoted a “wider” or “macro-ecumenism” that included peoples and communities of other faiths. They found that we should not set limits to the saving power of God. In particular, Indian theologians were calling for a “de-dogmatization” of theology, questioning the presuppositions behind some of the church doctrines that have had a negative impact or influence on the lives of the faithful.²³

20 Compare Andrew F. Walls, *The Cross-cultural Process in Christian History* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002).

21 Compare Werner Kahl, *Migrants as Instruments of Evangelization: In Early Christianity and in Contemporary Christianity*, in: Chandler H. Im, Amos Yong (eds), *Oxford Centre for Mission Studies* 2014, 71–86.

22 Compare Stefan Paas, *Mission from Anywhere to Europe: Americans, Africans, and Australians Coming to Amsterdam*, in: *Mission Studies*, vol. 32, no. 1 (2015), 4–31.

23 Considering Christ as the cosmic Lord, an intelligible understanding within the context of Hinduism and Buddhism, they did not want Jesus to be limited to a human person born at a particular time and place. Balasuriya from Sri Lanka, for instance, suggested that we should rethink the traditional dogma defined by the synod of Chalcedon in the year 451. Tissa Bala-

A *fourth challenge* was the rapid growth of **Pentecostalism** in its various manifestations. Pentecostalism was beginning to shape the face of Christianity. Its voice was different from the socially and politically engaged ethos that had been developed in ecumenical circles. It was a new Christian culture, strict about issues of personal morality, affirmative of authoritative leadership, committed to active and sometimes aggressive evangelism, and cultivating an individualized spirituality with a weak sense of the catholicity of the church. The proselytizing forms of Pentecostal evangelism created defensive reactions and placed on the agenda the question of mutual accountability of churches in mission.²⁴

As an inescapable legacy of the colonial past, European countries acquired a substantial new population from their former colonies. Many in this group were Pentecostals. Their influence began to engender momentous consequences, changing the older mission paradigm. Now, people from the so-called dark side of history were going to present themselves as agents of Christian mission in the Western world. They belonged to a Christianity that in terms of numbers had already gained significant gravity.²⁵

The rise of these churches, and their networks stretching out into the West, are among the important developments that have occurred in the more recent history of world mission. In Europe, these churches are among the few expanding sectors of Christianity, and they feel that they are beginning to have an impact on the indigenous Western population.²⁶ In Britain, some people already fear that Christianity will more and more be associated with immigrants: for Westerners untouched by traditional Christianity, immigrants from Africa or Asia sometimes provide the first contact with Christianity as a living faith. In some German towns, it is the African, Asian, and Latin American presence that reveals the church in the heart of the city.²⁷

There are mega-sized Christian churches of this type in **Eastern Europe** as well. Although founded by Africans, they have proved able to attract a membership that includes large numbers of native-born Eastern Europeans. Field studies done in the Ukraine, for instance, talk of membership over ten thousand with most members telling dramatic conversion stories of having turned away from hard drugs, alcoholism, prostitution, and/or gangs.²⁸

Jehu Hanciles is right in saying that these churches significantly affect the geo-

suriya, An Asian Perspective, in: K.C. Abraham, ed., *Third World Theologies* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 114.

24 Compare Claudia Währisch-Oblau, *The Missionary Self-Perception of Pentecostal/Charismatic Church Leaders from the Global South in Europe: Bringing Back the Gospel* (Leiden: Brill 2009, paperback edition 2012).

25 The following impressions concentrate only on the Pentecostal movement and churches.

26 Compare J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, "To the Ends of the Earth": Mission, Migration and the Impact of African-Led Pentecostal Churches in the European Diaspora, *Mission Studies* 29 (2012), 23-44.

27 Building networks across the world, this new diaspora is maintaining its ties with its places of origin. Almost everyone in Accra or Lagos seems to have relatives in London, Hamburg, or Berlin.

28 In Kyiv, Ukraine, the huge Pentecostal/Charismatic church of Sunday Adelaja is called the "Church of the Embassy of the Blessed Kingdom of God for all Nations".

graphic and religious contours of major religions and provide a vital outlet for proselytism and missionary expansion.²⁹ These churches advocate a new intriguing pattern of mission theology and have the vision to bring a particular type of transformative Christian experience into contexts in which Christianity is in decline. They try to give new life to the early experiences of Christians in biblical times, stressing that conversion is a transformative change that comes into a person's life upon receiving Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. They lay emphasis on the baptism of the Holy Spirit, with its accompanying "speaking in tongues" and signs and wonders. Pentecostals show great sensitivity for the powers of evil and oppression. They relate biblical stories about victories over the powers of evil to their own sickness of body and soul. When immigrants in Europe suffer from problems of legal documentation, employment, and security these churches provide help and a social safety net. They understand the evidence of salvation as something that is more than just spiritual; it must also bring material change within people's socio-economic circumstances. Such churches tell us that in the West as well, many members of the mainline churches are in favour of the accumulation of wealth and prosperity.

"A person must look well, take control of resources channelled away from previously wasteful lifestyles, seize opportunities in education and business, and be prosperous in life's endeavours through the application of the principles of 'sowing and reaping,' commitment and hard work."³⁰

What, in the eyes of these Pentecostals, is wrong with Western Christianity? It has been observed that people often express that they feel the Christian tradition is no longer "true". The exclusive claims of Christianity are only one possibility among the many valid options for faith, and often an unacceptable attempt at restricting the freedom of the mind. The texts of the Bible have lost their privileged position in Europe's cultural and religious life. Other texts have come in and found a home. All texts, however, religious or not, tend to be seen as products of human construction and history.³¹

Relations or even cooperations among these Churches and established church communities in Germany are quite diverse. A kind of conviviality³² may develop that includes having services and celebrations together. At its best, then, an elder of the German congregation could be a visiting member of the board of the guest congregation, and vice versa. Young people overcome cultural and spiritual barriers, and men and women of the congregations reduce prejudice and begin to mediate between the

29 Jehu J. Hanciles, *Migration and Mission: Some Implications for the Twenty-First Century Church*, *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, vol. 27, no. 4, 146-153.

30 J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, "To the Ends of the Earth": *Mission, Migration and the Impact of African-Led Pentecostal Churches in the European Diaspora*, 30.

31 Compare Werner Ustorf, *Reverse Mission – Treating Europeans as Africans*, in: Werner Ustorf, *Robinson Crusoe Tries Again: Missiology and European Constructions of "Self" and "Other" in a Global World, 1789–2010*. Selected essays edited by Roland Löffler (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010), 189–202.

32 Theo Sundermeier, *Konvivenz als Grundstruktur ökumenischer Existenz heute*, in: Wolfgang Huber, Dietrich Ritschl, and Theo Sundermeier (eds), *Ökumenische Existenz heute I* (Munich: Kaiser, 1986), 49-100.

different performances of the Christian faith. In many cases, however, no partnership between these different congregations can be identified. It may happen that a church of African origin rents a church hall and meets there Sunday after Sunday without any meaningful contact with the host congregation;³³ no communal events take place. The guest congregation's name does not appear in any space in the parish newspaper, or in a display case on the property. The rent the African church pays may be used to help reduce the budget deficit of the German church. Such a relationship has nothing to do with the partnerships between Christian congregations of different shapes.³⁴

Given this situation, Pentecostal theologians working with the Ecumenical World Council of Churches have given new meaning to the terms *diaspora* and *marginality*. A diasporic life as aliens and strangers is not just a marginal or incidental aspect of the Christian faith, but central to it. Christians from the margins of the Western world are more and more convinced that they should no longer be ashamed of their identities, neither as individuals nor as congregations or churches. It is the nature of the church, as the people of God, to often be found at the margins and not at the centre. Any centring of the church portends its ossification. When this happens, voices from the margins, from the diaspora wherein the winds of the Spirit blow, are called to infuse new life into institutionalized forms of faith. The diaspora can capture the very heart of God's saving work. People from the margins may represent the surprising work of the Spirit in anticipation of the coming reign of God.

In 2013, the World Council of Churches affirmed a declaration on mission and evangelism that is entitled *Together towards Life*.³⁵ The significance of the statement lies particularly in its concept of "mission from the margins". It is a statement that acknowledges a changing world and ecclesial landscape and asserts that mission can no longer be regarded as being centred in the global North with recipients in the global South, but rather is an experience that is multi-centred.

Together towards Life states in its introduction that in our present-day global landscape, there is a big disparity between those who control and are in possession of *wealth and resources* and those who are denied access to them. Many are constantly and systematically marginalized based on gender, ethnicity, skin colour, geographical location, even religion. Those at the margins are forced to live without choices and resources. They are often denied education, health care, daily food, safe drinking water, and/or healthy living conditions. *Together to-*

33 A caretaker of a Church of African Origin in the Diaspora (CAOD) once said: "At noon, the Germans go home preparing their Sunday meal, and at 2 p.m. the foreigners come and make noise". Benjamin Simon, *Identity and Ecumenical Partnership of Churches of African Origin in Germany*, in: Chandler H. Im, Amos Yong (eds), *Oxford Centre for Mission Studies* 2014, 166–174, 172.

34 A different model of integration is being worked out by the German Pentecostal Community (Bund Freikirchlicher Pfingstgemeinden – BFP), however. By integrating CAODs, this association has grown by 20 per cent. The outcome of this intercultural step is not yet clear.

35 The text of this declaration was designed by the WCC's Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) and is the first ecumenical affirmation of mission by the Council since 1982; it draws insight from Protestant, Evangelical, Orthodox and Roman Catholic mission theology.

wards Life clearly states that “mission from the margins invites the church to re-imagine mission as a vocation from God’s Spirit who works for a world where the fullness of life is available for all”.³⁶

Together towards Life shows Jesus and his mission emerging from the context of the margins. Because of the social and geographical location that determined his position and status in society, there was scepticism about *Jesus’s* mission and ministry during his time. The question that Nathanael posed when he was informed about Jesus, “Can anything come out of Nazareth?” (John 1:45-46), speaks clearly about how those who are considered to be at the margins of society are looked upon. Jesus challenged the scribes and Pharisees in whom political and religious powers were invested. He refused to submit before them – those at the centre of power – but instead confronted them and unmasked the oppressive structures they were promoting and upholding (Matthew 5:20).

Together towards Life states clearly that *mission spirituality is transformative*. Mission spirituality resists and seeks to transform all life-destroying values and systems wherever these are at work, challenging the self-interest of the powerful who desire to maintain the status quo.³⁷ Mission from the margins demands that the barriers and boundaries that have pushed the poor and the vulnerable to the edges of society be broken down, and doors and opportunities opened for those at the margins. There has to be a spiritual transformation on both sides at all levels. Those at the centre are challenged to share their privileged position and location with humility, so that all can enjoy the fullness of life. Those at the margins need to be transformed and challenged to have a vision of a life beyond the barriers and boundaries that imprison them at the margins, and to reach and fight for the fullness of life intended for all. *Together towards Life* expresses the opinion that people at the margins – through their longing and struggles for life with dignity and justice and to be treated as equals – offer and point towards an alternative vision of a world where there is justice, equality, and fullness of life for all, and where God’s will reigns.³⁸

Today, Christians in Europe can gain new insights into the Reign of God through dialogue with Christians from the global South in which they recognize the presence and activity of God’s Word and Spirit. Thus, mission does not equate to church expansion, but rather to “bringing the power of the Word to bear on any human situation to which it has a relevant message”.³⁹ The need to develop a Christian discourse appropriate to the pluralistic nature of German and European societies cannot be divided from the enriching input coming from theologies from developing countries.

36 *Together towards Life*, paragraph 37, p. 15.

37 *Ibid.*, paragraph 30, p. 13.

38 *Ibid.*, paragraph 35, p. 14.

39 Compare Paul F. Knitter, *Mission and Dialogue*, *Missiology* 33, no. 2 (April 1, 2005), 200-210.

Paradigm III

Mission as participation in a new *community of life*

Today, we in Europe⁴⁰ must respond to several new challenges in mission theology. The following proposals are an effort to mark some of the elements of such a new paradigm.

Mission as hospitality and search for new community

Taken from Paul's letter to the Romans, it reads: "*Welcome one another, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God*". Rom 15:7

Increasing forces that fragment communities and prioritize the values of individualism are shaping the structure of Western societies. To live a Christian life apparently means to understand that loving God and loving one's neighbour always go together. Hospitality includes the willingness to accept others in their "otherness". Community means that people share their joy and pain, laugh and weep together, share their common meals, etc.⁴¹

I was always happy when meeting brothers and sisters in the rural villages of the global South and experiencing how they often live a modest life and share their faith. But I always wonder how we in the North can really participate in an ecumenical encounter and intensify community in the "global village". Often I feel locked in a prison of wealth.

Practical hospitality and a welcoming attitude to foreigners create the space for mutual transformation and even reconciliation. Offering and experiencing community life helps to remove the causes of religious animosity and violence that often come with it.⁴² The central hermeneutical reason for this interpretation is the notion of "hospitality", i.e., of receiving the "other" as God has received and accepted humanity.

Welcoming those who come to us on risky passages across the Mediterranean or other European borders is a genuinely Christian responsibility. We are touched by pictures of bombed cities in Syria and of children crying among the ruins. We are challenged by the hundreds of thousands who set out to find refuge in Europe or flee to our country. Over one million men and women in Germany are active in a voluntary capacity in supporting refugees or visiting people in hospitals and hospices. These volunteers work until they are on the verge of exhaustion, but they are given the strength to help in a way that we would not have thought possible. A flourishing life in German society depends more than ever on the commitment of volunteers.

40 For the wider ecumenical context compare Stephen B. Bevans, Roger P. Schroeder, Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books 2004).

41 In the mission theology of Theo Sundermeier, this idea of community is described as "convivence", which describes a way of living together in working, sharing, and celebrating.

42 Religious Plurality and Christian Self-Understanding: A Resources Paper to the Mission Conference at Athens 2005, Section V.

I am happy that a term like hospitality can now be associated with the name of our country again. “Welcoming culture” – what a wonderful expression! Of course, there are also those who are frightened by it. And the appalling rise in violence against refugee hostels and their residents shows how much is still to be done. The churches have always promoted Europe as a peace project. Today they come out against the closing of Europe’s external borders. The continent of Europe divided by national borders secured by military force is a vision from a nightmare; the church can play a major role in shaping the way people live together in our country.

Mission as solidarity and sharing

“God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that everyone who has faith in him may not perish but have eternal life.” John 3:16

In Christ, God became one of us, sharing our lives, our joy, and our pain. In him and his cross, we discover God’s passionate and compassionate love. Just as God entered into solidarity with humankind by becoming human himself, we have to develop a theology of bringing mission and solidarity together. Solidarity starts with compassion and is our way to participate in the compassionate love of God revealed in Christ. Solidarity also leads us into prayer and intercession.

Mission therefore includes being actively engaged in *lobby and advocacy work*. Mission means becoming active members of human rights networks on a national and international level. Developing a culture of living together on equal footing is a Christian responsibility. Feeling accepted is one of the finest things people can experience. Thus, mission is much more than charity. Before God, all of us stand with empty hands. Each one of us is called to serve God with the gifts God has given him or her. We never can call ourselves “donors” because God himself is the donor, and we all are recipients first of all, sharing only what he has given. When talking about mission, we should eliminate the word donors. We all are partners in God’s mission.

Mission as witness and dialogue

“Always be ready to make your defence when anyone challenges you to justify the hope which is in you. But do so with courtesy and respect”. 1 Peter 3:15

All forms of religious expression can reflect wisdom, love, and compassion, but they can also function to support systems of oppression and exclusion. The mystery of God’s salvation is not exhausted by our theological affirmations. We do not stand in judgement of others. When witnessing to our own faith, we seek to understand the ways in which God intends to bring his purposes to fulfilment.⁴³ But it is also

43 Ecumenical Considerations for Dialogue and Relations with People of Other Religions, Statement of the Central Committee of the WCC, Geneva 2003. Compare The Global Charter of Conscience: A Global Covenant Concerning Faiths and Freedom of Conscience, www.charterofconscience.org. (12 May 2016).

helpful to look at different religious traditions as “spiritual journeys” informing and transforming each other in the process of encounter.

Interreligious dialogue is becoming more and more important in Europe. In our societies live increasing numbers of adherents of different religions. We as Christians are beginning to realize that the content of the Christian faith can be more deeply understood through encounters with other religious traditions.⁴⁴ Indian theologians have underlined that dialogue alludes to the promotion of human and spiritual values.⁴⁵ Through the power of the Spirit, God can establish his reign in ways unknown to Christians.

The pluralistic nature of our society demands that we respect the identity and freedom of others while, at the same time, not forgetting to affirm and to be faithful to our own identity.⁴⁶ We as Christians have to reflect on “religious plurality” and at the same time work on our “Christian self-identity” in a multifaith world. Dialogue that aims only to convert others to one’s faith is dishonest and unethical. The church has to proclaim not only the reign of God, but also the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ as part of its mission. Being a Christian is not just for our own salvation, but is a passionate commitment to the memory of Jesus.⁴⁷ We give witness to the beauty of our Christian faith, but we do not force adherents of other faiths to be baptized. The apostle says that they are human beings who have “the law written on their hearts” (Rom 2:15). All humanity is the creation of God and has a share in that image of God that is perfectly expressed in Christ.⁴⁸

“I struggle strenuously with how my Christian faith commitments are not exclusive of other faiths. Part of the challenge is that some traditions of Christianity consider any association with other religious traditions in negative terms ... While being for Christ will entail being against some aspects of other faiths, this does not necessarily involve complete repudiation.”⁴⁹

The dialogue here envisioned often takes place in “basic human communities”. There are many different associations in our society where the common work includes both Christians and non-Christians engaged in work for the welfare of society.⁵⁰

44 Paul F. Knitter, *Jesus and the Other Names* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 156-157.

45 Michael Amaladoss, *Making All Things New* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1990); Felix Wilfred, *Evangelii Gaudium – Reflections from Asia*, in: *Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft*, vol. 1-2, no. 98 (2014), 138–141.

46 *Ibid.*, 110.

47 Michael Amaladoss, *Making All Things New* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1990), 108, 110.

48 Compare John Macquarrie, *Christian Unity and Christian Diversity* (London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1975), 24.

49 Amos Yong, *From Every Tribe, Language, People, and Nation*, in: Chandler H. Im, Amos Yong (eds), *Oxford Centre for Mission Studies 2014*, 253–261, 257f.

50 Paul F. Knitter, *Introducing Theologies of Religions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 96-97.

Mission as taking a stand against Islamophobia

Interreligious dialogue is becoming even more important because of the arrival of refugees who are of the Islamic faith. Congregations not previously involved in Christian-Muslim relations should now take an interest in these refugees and their religion. Any creative engagement in interfaith work will pretty soon bring us to reflect on Christian attitudes towards Islam. Dialogue with Muslims in Germany presupposes a distinction between Islam as a religion and the abuse of that term. Using the name of God for terror and violence is blasphemy; there cannot be a shred of doubt about that. This differentiation is all the more necessary now in view of the unprecedented numbers of openly xenophobic and Islamophobic groups that are making themselves heard on the political scene.

Certain political parties in Germany have tried to placate public fears about floods of asylum seekers by announcing stronger controls. Control of immigration has suddenly become a major issue in politics. Anti-immigration parties have entered the governments of several European countries and are becoming powerful political forces. They have frightened political representatives almost everywhere into making similar noises.

Germany is currently home to a discussion of whether Christians and Muslims both believe in the same God. When Muslims worship *Allah*, are they worshipping *God*? When officials of German churches argue that the word *Allah* only refers to the radically different God of the Qur'an,⁵¹ the prospects for respectful, trusting cooperation between Christians and Muslims diminish. However, if Christians and Muslims hold that the God of the Bible and the God of the Qur'an are one, then when reasoning with one another they will be able to appeal to arguments about the character of God. Since theological reasons are highly important to both Christians and Muslims, being able to deliberate theologically together is a significant aid to efforts at cooperation.

Christians claim that there is one and only one God. As a consequence of this claim, if Christians hold that Muslims do not worship the one God, we must hold that they worship nothing, an empty created idol, or else something demonic. But Muslims also claim that there is one and only one God. So for Christians to deny that Muslims worship the one God is to deny the heart of their confession of faith. No matter how respectfully Christians try to communicate that denial, many Muslims will undoubtedly receive it as deeply disrespectful.

Some Christians claim that Christians should not refer to God as "Allah" because Muslims reject that Jesus was and is the incarnate Son of God and because they deny that God is a Trinity. I agree that these are two of the most important claims of the Christian faith. Without them, we Christians miss the decisive revelation of God and the very heart of who God is. However, when someone denies these claims, that does not by itself mean that he or she does not believe in or worship

51 Christian Faith and Religious Diversity – A Protestant Perspective: A Foundational Text from the Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany (Hannover: Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland (EKD), February 2016).

God. We find an important proof of that in considering the vitally important case of Judaism. The Gospel stories about Jesus show him assuming that the Jewish religious leaders with whom he disagreed believed in the same God he proclaimed, even though many of them failed to understand God and God's relationship to Jesus in fundamental ways. When Jesus debates those leaders over his status as Son, he does so assuming that he and they are both talking about the God whom Jesus claimed to reveal (John 5).

Importantly, Jesus extends his assumption about common ground to people other than his fellow Jews. In John 4:1-42, Jesus discusses with a Samaritan woman the right way to worship God. He assumes that he and the woman are talking about one God, even though he affirms the superiority of the Jewish understanding of that God: "You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews" (4:22). The woman worships God, Jesus says, even if she does not understand God as well as the Jews. Consequently, there is good reason to treat Muslim beliefs in and claims about Allah in the same way Jesus treated Jewish and Samaritan beliefs.⁵²

Mission as participation in God's life-giving work

"I have come that they may have life, and may have it in all its fullness." John 10:10

The growing domination of global capitalism in the area of finance and economy also has an ideological dimension and presents a kind of "secular eschaton". There is a quasi-religious message of universal salvation through the global market and advanced technology. This ideology contrasts with the Christian vision of faith and solidarity through an alternative way of life in community. In Germany today, there is a widening gap between the rich and the poor, between those in political power and those who elect them. While some have benefited from the current economic climate, the lower classes are struggling in the face of rising prices and fewer opportunities. If the church is to become a lighthouse or beacon in society, there are difficult choices it needs to make, choices that are uncomfortable and sacrificial.

The paradigm of *life in its fullness* includes the theme of reconciliation and healing for a sustainable community, for the healing of memories, for overcoming violence, and for resisting the tendency to instrumentalize religious loyalties in the struggle for power.⁵³ To announce the kingdom of God as the gift of salvation and to

52 But even granted Christian and Muslim agreement on the claims of monotheism, some would raise the objection that the character of *Allah* in the Qur'an and Islam radically differs from the character of God as revealed by Jesus. Monotheism aside, they would say, it is misleading to treat these two concepts as the "same" in any practically important sense. There is no way to answer an objection like this definitively here in brief, but there are good reasons to reject this argument. Compare the document "A Common Word between Us and You", issued by many of the world's leading Muslim scholars and clerics in 2007, which points out how central a love of God and love of one's neighbour is to Islam. Compare further Miroslav Volf, Ryan McAnnally-Linz, *God and Allah: What's in a Name*, 7-8.

53 There is a need to take seriously the influence of "wounded" memories on relationships

call people to faith in Christ is the mission of the church. But mission and evangelism aim at more than the call to conversion and faith in Jesus Christ as the only way to salvation. Salvation belongs to God; we only participate in it. We only witness to it. We do not decide who will be saved; we leave it to the providence of God.⁵⁴ The proclamation of God's kingdom looks for the establishment of God's reign over all creation. It embraces all of history. God's action in history extends beyond the limits of the church.

Lifting up the healing ministry of the Christian community opens new opportunities for sharing with marginalized communities. Marginalization has many configurations. Humans at the margins are those who are left behind, people whose lives have been curtailed by oppressive constraints and life-denying forces, those who had been denied opportunities to move forward or upward in life, and those who suffer injustices simply because of who they are. They are left outside of the power structures and remain outsiders, excluded from enjoying the *fullness of life* that God has envisioned for all.

The WCC document *Together towards Life* affirms that Jesus Christ's ultimate concern and mission is life in all its fullness (John 10:10) and that we are all invited and empowered to participate in the "life-giving mission of the Triune God" and "bear witness to the vision of abundant life for all in the new heaven and earth."⁵⁵ Authentic mission takes place when humans encounter God and receive the fullness of life that he offers.

We need to rethink how we include and embrace in our mission those at the margins. Jesus clearly understands the nature of being marginalised and how people are being systematically pushed to the edges. He identifies those who are victims and prisoners of their circumstances and therefore need to be freed in order for them to enjoy the *fullness of life* that is promised to all.

I hope that the last chapter of this paper in particular captures some of the main points of a renewed understanding of mission as it has emerged during the last two decades. It is my hope that this UEM consultation will serve to provide some helpful orientation for our common journey.

between the mission and the Pentecostal movements. Conversations have begun and must be continued.

54 Religious Plurality and Christian Self-Understanding: A Resources Paper to the Mission Conference at Athens 2005, Section V.

55 *Together towards Life*, paragraph 1, p. 4.

New Challenges for Christian Mission in the Context of religious Fundamentalism and Radicalism: Learning from the Indonesian Context¹

Jozef M.N. Hehanussa²

Understanding the context

The interpretation of religious teachings always gives the impression that religious teachings have two faces, namely, the face of love and solidarity and the face of disconnection and antagonism. These two faces can have a strong impact on the relationships among people in their own society, or relationships with people from different parts of the world. They can create tension between people of the same faith and between people of different faiths. The conflict between Sunni and Shi'ah Muslims; the tensions between conservative and liberal Muslims or between mainstream, evangelical, and Charismatic Christians; the conflict between hard-line Muslim groups and Ahmadiyah or the conflict between people of one religion and people of another religion are all examples of relationships caused by these two faces of religious interpretation. Winston David noted for example that the influence of the Shinto religion and the teaching that Japanese people are unique were used for propaganda during the Second World War. Japanese people then believed that they were different from other people, and this created the divisive concept of "us against them".³ Interpretation of the Muslim idea of jihad also brought Muslims into a divisive position. Conservative groups tend to look at jihad as a struggle against non-Muslims, while liberal groups tend to understand the idea as a war against poverty, insults, injustice, unrighteousness, etc., even within Muslims' own religion. During the Moluccas conflict in 1999-2002, which pitted Christians and Muslims against on another in Moluccas, Indonesia as a result of provocation from radical Muslim groups such as *Laskar Jihad Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jamaah*, many Muslims thought that killing their Christian brothers and sisters was legal and permitted un-

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3 As quoted by Satoko Fujiwara in Satoko Fujiwara, "Problems of Teaching about Religion in Japan: Another Textbook Controversy against Peace?", *British Journal of Religious Education* 29, no. 1 (2007): 54-55.

der Islam. Moluccan Christians also interpreted Deuteronomy 19:2, “Show no pity: life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot”, as permission to attack and kill their Muslim brothers who had killed their fellow Christians. Christians sang “Onward, Christian soldiers, marching as to war” (composed by Sabine Baring-Gould in 1865) as though they were sent by God to a war. This gave them the justification to kill Muslims.

In line with this is the interpretation of religious teaching as an effort to purify religious teaching. Purifying religious teaching is an idea behind fundamentalism, and fundamentalism is a source for religious radicalism.⁴ For centuries, religious adherents have believed that religious purification of their faiths was necessary. In the early history of Christianity, Christian leaders used councils to protect Christian teachings or doctrines, especially their purity. The Reformation movement pioneered by Martin Luther and other reformers can be understood as a kind of purification as well, since through the slogan *sola scriptura* (the Bible alone) they reminded church leaders to base their teaching on the Bible, rather than personal interpretation. The Pietism movement pioneered by Philipp Jakob Spener was a critique of Lutheranism that advocated more concern to a system of Christian doctrine as logical thinking and less importance to personal feelings or an intimate relationship between believers and God. After that came other movements such as the holiness movement in the nineteenth century through emergence of Methodism, and the Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements of the twentieth century. Those movements were also understood as a way to purify Christian teachings. However, the problem today is that religious adherents tend to understand the purification of religious teaching simply as bringing the understanding of religion back to its place of origin. For many Christians, purifying Christian teaching simply means doing God’s Word as it is written in the Bible. Some Christians refuse to use the word *Tuhan* to refer to the Lord and choose to use “Yahweh” instead. They forget that the people of Israel never utter the Tetragrammaton (YHWH) or call God by the name of Yahweh. For many Muslims in Indonesia, purifying the teaching of Islam is simply identical to Arabization. Many Muslims in Indonesia support the implementation of Sharia law as a way to protect the purification of Islamic teaching. Some regions in Indonesia such as Banda Aceh, Tangerang, Mataram, and Padang have implemented Sharia principles when drafting local regulation.⁵ In the Aceh province, Sharia law was applied to all religious believers.⁶ In my opinion, the idea of “Islam Nusantara”, or Islam in an Indonesian context, as campaigned for and promoted by the largest Muslim group in Indonesia, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), is an attempt against the Arabization of Islam in Indonesia.

The issue of minority versus majority is a challenge to the relationships among religious adherents as well. When one religion is the majority, minority adherents

4 See R. Scott Appleby, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence, and Reconciliation* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2000), 85-107.

5 “Many Sharia-Based Cities Not Truly Islamic: Maarif Institute”, *Jakarta Post*, <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2016/05/18/many-sharia-based-cities-not-truly-islamic-maarif-institute.html>, accessed 1 June 2016.

6 “Aceh Fully Enforces Sharia”, *Jakarta Post*, <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2014/02/07/aceh-fully-enforces-sharia.html>, accessed 1 June 2016.

will often be unfairly treated. The majority is not a matter of number only, but also a matter of power, especially the power to use violence. Here the majority becomes dominant or superior and the minority becomes powerless or inferior. ISIS is an example of a religious-based group which is a minority in number but a majority in power in the form of weapons and violence. They have become the dominant group, and others are powerless against them. In Indonesia, the members of Front Pembela Islam (FPI, the Islamic Defenders Front) are a minority compared to the number of Muslims who are anti-FPI. Yet they can close down a seminar, meeting, or scientific discussion if they regard it as inappropriate to their ideology, and police officers do nothing against them.⁷ Another example of this issue is the role of hard-line Muslim groups in the protests against building churches in some regions in Indonesia. Although Christians have gathered sufficient signatures from Muslim neighbours as required under Indonesian government law⁸ to build houses of worship, they still face difficulty in building their churches. Santa Clara Church in the city of Bekasi is one example. This church has acquired a building permit from the mayor of Bekasi and even has the support of the major party in Indonesian government,⁹ but Muslim people, supported by hard-line Muslim groups, have protested and refused the construction of Santa Clara church.¹⁰ It is only in Indonesia that Christians worship in front of the presidential building as a protest against the refusal to grant a church worship permit to the GKI (Indonesian Christian Church) Yasmin in Bogor and the HKBP (Protestant Christian Batak Church) Philadelphia in Bekasi. In a focus group discussion about deradicalization,¹¹ Wahyunityas Woro, the NGO activist from Jaringan Kerja Lembaga Pelayanan Kristen Indonesia (JKLPK, Indonesian Services Foundation Network) reported that Gereja Betel Indonesia “Keluarga Allah” (a Charismatic church) in Surakarta, Central Java had refused to pay extra “security tax” to a Muslim group to guard and guarantee the church’s ability to carry out ac-

7 “FPI Bubarkan Diskusi yang Digelar HMI”, Tempo.Co, <https://m.tempo.co/read/news/2016/04/03/058759345/fpi-bubarkan-diskusi-yang-digelar-hmi>, accessed 1 June 2016.

8 See Chapter 14 of Joint Ministerial Decree No. 9 of 2006 and No. 8 of 2006 on Houses of Worship which were issued by the Minister of Religious Affairs and Minister of Home Affairs. These decrees applies to all religions in Indonesia, but in practice, where one religion is a majority, the minority religion will face difficulties. In Papua or Minahasa, where Christians are the majority, Muslims will also sometimes have difficulty building mosques. In reality, though, Indonesian Christians often have more difficulties in building their houses of worship, even when they have already obtained a building permit (Izin Membuat Bangunan, IMB) from the local authority.

9 “Gereja Santa Clara Ditolak, Wali Kota Bekasi: Tak Ada Cacat”, Tempo.co., <http://m.tempo.co/read/news/2015/08/10/078690682/gereja-santa-clara-ditolak-wali-kota-bekasi-tak-ada-cacat>, accessed 1 June 2016.

10 “Santa Clara Case Disheartens Other Christians”, *Jakarta Post*, <http://www.thejakarta-post.com/news/2016/03/26/santa-clara-case-disheartens-other-christians.html> accessed 1 June 2016; “Tolak pembangunan gereja, Ormas Islam geruduk kantor walikota Bekasi”, *Ucan Indonesia*, <http://indonesia.ucanews.com/2016/03/08/tolak-pembangunan-gereja-ormas-islam-geruduk-kantor-walikota-bekasi/>, accessed 1 June 2016.

11 The focus group discussion was held on 1-2 April 2016 and organized by the Faculty of Theology of Duta Wacana Christian University as part of a research project about de-radicalization.

tivities. Because of this refusal, the congregation is facing a difficult situation, since the group said that they cannot guarantee that the church will not be disturbed by Muslims.¹² Some churches in West Java have to pay money to radical Muslim groups if they do not wish to have any trouble.¹³ The case shows how important money is for such groups. These radical groups can exist because they get funding for their activities and to help build their networks; Indonesia has been known as one of the countries to fund or support terrorism.¹⁴

The twenty-first century marks a new era and change in religious relationships around the world, especially in connection with the emergence of religion-based radical groups. Radical religious groups that in the twentieth century tended to act secretly and locally now have the fearlessness to commit violence or crimes openly and cover a larger area. Connections and networks among radical religions are now even easier to identify and map. People are realizing that globalization is not a matter only of economics, but also of religion. Globalization has become a medium to spread the ideology of religious fundamentalism and radicalism. Not only has religion itself been globalized, but also religious radical groups. Globalization makes it easier for those groups to spread their influence and fear to people around the world. The attack by the Islamic terrorist group al-Qaida on the World Trade Center towers in New York City and the Pentagon in Arlington County, Virginia on 11 September 2001 was a clear sign of this change.

All of the situations mentioned above are a challenge for Christian mission today. They mean that Christian mission in such a context will be more difficult. Dealing with the issue of religion in the twentieth century was not complicated compared to the situation today because of the emergence of much religious fundamentalism and radical groups, especially the violence and spreading ideologies of those groups. Such situations are faced not only by Christians, but also by adherents of other religions. All religions deal with the issue of poverty and economic difficulty and do their best to bring prosperity to the poor, but radical groups take advantage of this situation by spreading their ideology and recruiting those facing economic difficulties, who are promised money if they join. The religions in Indonesia are struggling together to protect our younger generations from the influence of the ideology of religious radical groups. We have to make the learning process in our children's schools free of the ideology of religious radicalism, since propaganda from some of

12 This case reminds me of the *jizyah* (fee protection) that is supposed to be paid by non-Muslim permanent residents (*dhimmi*) in Muslim lands and under Islamic law. Only by paying such fee protection can non-Muslim permanent residents practise their faith and be protected by local rulers against any type of threat from Muslims or non-Muslims. See Ibrahim Kalin, "Islam and Peace: A Survey of the Sources of Peace in the Islamic Tradition", *Islamic Studies* 44, no. 3 (2005): 352-53.

13 "Komnas HAM: Ada Pemerasan terhadap Gereja di Jawa Barat", *Tempo.co*, <https://nasional.tempo.co/read/news/2016/06/05/058776953/komnas-ham-ada-pemerasan-terhadap-gereja-di-jawa-barat>, accessed 4 June 2016; "Komnas HAM: Tempat Ibadah di Sekitar Bandung Raya Suka Diperas Ormas", *Tribun Jabar*, <http://jabar.tribunnews.com/2016/06/04/komnas-ham-tempat-ibadah-di-sekitar-bandung-raya-suka-diperas-ormas>, accessed 4 June 2016.

14 Rachel Ehrenfeld, *Funding Evil: How Terrorism Is Financed – And How to Stop It*, (Chicago: Bonus Books, 2003): 1-2. 173-74.

them has been found in student textbooks.¹⁵ Religions cannot always think about this mission themselves, and therefore should work together to overcome such issue. Christianity in particular cannot just address the contradiction of “us and them”, since all religions face the same challenge linked to the emergence and influence of religious radical groups.

Building God’s *oikos* for all religions in the Indonesian context

Religious radical groups always focus on their own ideology and mission. They are disrespectful not only of other religions, but also to their fellow believers who do not support their ideology or regard it as an obstacle to their mission. ISIS is an example: they want an Islamic state, but they kill more Muslims than non-Muslims.¹⁶ They commit to their own ideology, which causes violence and harms more than the religion of Islam. They are building a territory that is not for all people, but only for themselves and their loyal supporters. This makes it impossible for them to live side by side with others. The idea of our planet as a home for all living faiths will hardly become a reality in this context. Yet it relates not only to ISIS, but also to the fundamentalist ideas all around us.

People around the world, but especially US citizens remember Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump’s anti-Muslim campaigning in New Hampshire and some national TV channels. He used the accident or terrorism in San Bernardino by a Muslim, the issue of illegal immigrants, and the terrorism of radical Islamic groups in his campaign to ban the religion. Many Americans, especially Muslim-Americans consider Trump’s rhetoric to be fascist. Trump forgets that there are many Muslims who have been part of the US community for many generations. As a result of the incident in San Bernardino and Trump’s speech, some mosques have been victims of vandalism, and Muslim prayers have been interrupted by disrespectful actions.¹⁷ This is why the radical ideology of ISIS and the fundamentalist thinking of Donald Trump will never give space or possibility to making the idea of earth as a home for all living faiths into reality. They will never respect religious plurality, much less carry out Raimon Panikkar’s idea of respecting and preserving the incommensurable differences of religions.¹⁸

15 “Buku Pelajaran Agama Rawan Disusupi Paham ISIS”, *Tempo.co*, <http://www.tempo.co/read/news/2015/03/23/058652024/Buku-Pelajaran-Agama-Rawan-Disusupi-Paham-ISIS>, accessed 2 June 2016; “Pesan dalam Buku Pelajaran”, *Kompas*, <http://print.kompas.com/baca/2015/04/07/Pesan-dalam-Buku-Pelajaran>, accessed 2 June 2016.

16 “Muslims Are the VICTIMS of Between 82 and 97% of Terrorism-Related Fatalities: US Government”, *GlobalResearch*, <http://www.globalresearch.ca/muslims-are-the-victims-of-between-82-and-97-of-terrorism-related-fatalities-us-government/5516565>, accessed 3 June 2016.

17 Jessica Glenza and Ryan Felton, “Muslim Americans Call Donald Trump’s Remarks ‘Fascist’ Hate Speech”, *The Guardian*, 11 May 2016, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1789526117?accountid=40625>.

18 Paul Knitter, “Dialogue and Liberation: What I Have Learned from My Friends—Buddhist and Christian”, *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 34 (2014), 76.

The ISIS efforts and Donald Trump's campaign remind me of the story of the Tower of Babel (Gen 11). If we read the story from a postmodern viewpoint, it becomes a critique of every human's effort to build a comfortable room or space for oneself, for uniformity, for one ideology without involving others in diversity. There is no room for an encounter between different cultural entities in such a comfortable room. Taken as a full narrative, the story of the Tower of Babel seems to become an antithesis to the story about the descendants of Noah from Shem, Ham, and Japheth (Gen 10), which informs us that through Noah's descendants many nations were established, each with its own language. The very next story that of the Babel tower, tells us about people's efforts to build a city with one language and to be a distinctive people. Rabbi Daniel Lapin, the president of the American Alliance of Jews and Christians, has said that the story of Babel can be read as a way of spreading secularism and fundamentalism. In such a way of thinking, people who focus more on human nature tend to be tyrants, and God's will tends to be forgotten in these situations: God is not important; human ideology is more important. Hence, materialism is more important than common spiritual purpose.

When God scattered the people over all the earth, he wanted them to live together with others in the concept of social justice, to accept and respect each other and to help one another.¹⁹ The story of the Tower of Babel is a demonstration of building a community that is more exclusive than inclusive, in which one culture imposes its control on other people.²⁰ World history has also shown that human efforts to build exclusivity by creating a universal culture often fail, and never fully succeed. The collapse of the Soviet Union and of Yugoslavia are examples of unsuccessful human efforts to maintain a universal culture. The Tower of Babel story should not be read as opposing one-culture thinking, however, but as a proposal to build the world with more space and possibilities for intercultural encounters.

Building the world with more space and possibilities for intercultural encounters is a challenge for Christian mission today, as well, in particular in the context of religious fundamentalism and radicalism. This is what I mean by building God's *oikos* for peaceful religious encounter. *Oikos* (*oikos*) generally means homes or dwellings of very different types, including the temple, but *oikos* in the New Testament has at least nine different meanings as described by Gerhard Kittel in his *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*.²¹ Some important meaning can be mentioned here in relation to this topic. First, according to Kittel, *oikos* is mostly used in LXX for the Hebrew *bayit*, meaning "family". Second, another parallel word of *oikos* is *oikia*, which also means house, but in Prov 9:1 it is the house built by wisdom. Mary L. Coloe has said that *oikia* has a full range of meanings. In John 14:2, the word is used to express the phrase "Father's house", not meaning building, but rather to describe a quality of

19 "The Hunter; Modern Tower of Babel", Finance Wire, 16 Nov 2010, *Finance Wire*, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/792952174?accountid=40625>.

20 See Theodore Hiebert, "The Tower of Babel and the Origin of the World's Cultures", *Journal of Biblical Literature* 126, no. 1 (2007), 34.

21 Gerhard Kittel (ed.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Volume V, (Grand Rapids, MI: 1968), 119-134.

personal relationships.²² Korinna Zamfir, in her interpretation of *oikia* in 2 Tim 2:20, has said that the term is a metaphor for the community, in which the house in this verse is host to different members (vessels).²³ Third, the philosopher Philo of Alexandria used *oikos* to describe the house of God as a divine house, not as an object, but to express God's care. Cosmos is also an *oikos* for Philo. Fourth, there is a concept of community when *oikos* is related to God (*οἶκος το θεο*, God's *oikos*). God's *oikos* presupposes community, or that the community is the house of God. The idea of community as God's house is related to the idea of community as the temple of God. In this idea, *oikos* is not only a house, but also a religious community. The idea of a house as community reminds us of the early structure of Christian congregations, when the congregations were structured in families, groups, and houses. The house is a place for Christians to gather together. The house becomes a part of community identity (cf. 1 Cor 1:16; Acts 2:46; 5:42; 20:20). Fifth, *oikos* also refers to the house of family or house of race, for example the house of Jacob or house of Israel.

The explanation above makes it clear that *oikos* should be understood not as an object, but more as a live unit or unity. Hence, the concept of family, community, or society generates a meaningful understanding of *oikos*. Zamfir connected *oikos* to *ekklesia*. *Oikos* is understood metaphorically as a broader social entity or community, and this concept goes beyond the limits of the private sphere. God's *oikos* is even understood as cosmic space. Zamfir used cultural context as a tool to understand the relation between *ekklesia*, *oikos*, and *polis*.²⁴ Here I prefer to understand *oikos* as a family. It is hard to understand a house without an associate family; a house is meaningless without family. Therefore, creating God's *oikos* for all religions means creating a society or community where all adherents of a religion can feel that they are family to one another. Children at Sunday school in Indonesia have a nice song to explain the idea of a house as God's family. The lyrics of the song are: "I love the family of God. The family is very friendly. They love one another, so how I love to be part of God's family." The important thing here is that the meaning of God's family not be limited only to Christians.

I also remember the experience of Catholic Pastor Father Kirjito when he became a pastor in a small parish in Sumber village on the slopes of the volcano Mount Merapi. His church functioned as a house for villagers from all different religions. The village did not have a large event hall village activities involving many people, so Father Kirjito gave his permission to use the church. Villagers used the church for a village meeting, traditional dance practice, house tutoring for children to learn together and do their homework, and even for a wedding reception. Only on Saturday evenings and Sunday mornings is the church used for Mass. The villagers felt like the church belongs to them in the same way as their own house.

22 Mary L. Coloe, *Dwelling in the Household of God: Johannine Ecclesiology and Spirituality*, (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2006), 109.

23 Korinna Zamfir, "Is the *ekklesia* a Household (of God)? Reassessing the Notion of *οἶκος θεοῦ* in 1 Tim 3:15", *New Testament Study* 60 (2014): 512.

24 Korinna Zamfir, *Men and Women in the Household of God: A Contextual Approach to Roles and Ministries in the Pastoral Epistles* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH, 2013), 70, 84.

In the Indonesian context, house (*oikos*) is identical to family. A house can be a representation of the family. For Indonesian ethnic groups that are known from their family name, the same family name can be identified either as an Islam family or a Christian family. For example, Situmorang, one of the Batak family names of the Batak people, can be found in both Christianity and Islam. Hehanussa, a Moluccan family name, can also be found in both Christianity and Islam. The family system binds all people together as brothers and sisters before they know of religions; it is religion which then distinguishes them one from another. For the Dayak people in Kalimantan, the Indonesia house is not only a symbol of the family, but also of unity. Many nuclear families live together in the house called *rumah betang* or *rumah panjang* (long house). In this house, families live under the principle of unity and equality, respecting one another and working together. They use the same house for routine daily activities, informal meetings, family meetings, and village meetings. *Rumah betang* is part of the cultural identity of the Dayak people. In the Moluccan tradition, the history of brotherhood traditions of *pela* and *gandong*²⁵ is a history of people as a family. A community (*Uli*) consists of several villages, while a village consists of several *soa* (a group of clans). A *soa* consists of several *mata rumah* (clan; literally house), while a *mata rumah* consists of several nuclear families.²⁶ The history of *nunusaku* (place of origin) is an expression of people's belief that they come from one community, one family, one *ina* and *ama* (mother and father). People believe that they are Moluccans first, not Christians or Muslims. Once they have their own religion, as Christians and Muslims, they still believe that they are brothers and sisters. Christians cannot live without Muslims, and vice versa. Muslims could not build their mosques before their Christian brothers and sisters came; likewise, Christians should wait for their Muslim brothers and sisters before building their church.²⁷

Promoting the concept of Islam Nusantara by Nahdlatul Ulama should be understood as an effort to make Islam more acceptable and respectable in the house of Nusantara, especially by members of other religions. K.H. Mustofa Bisri, one of the NU leaders, has always said that Islam in Indonesia should be an inspiration to Muslims around the world. Indonesian Muslims should not imitate what other Muslims are doing, like bombing, killing and doing other violence. Muslims in Indonesia should not be the cause of threatening feelings or Islamophobia among other religions' adherents, especially among minorities. Such feelings will create a feeling of anti-Islam. Islam should be the religion of *rahmatan lil 'alamin* (benefit or blessing), not *laknatan lil 'alamin* (cursing). Islam should bring peace, not conflict.²⁸ Through the idea of Islam Nusantara, Indonesian Muslims are reminded to

25 Jozef M.N. Hehanussa, *Der Molukkenkonflikt von 1999: Zur Rolle der Protestantischen Kirche (GPM) in der Gesellschaft*, (Muenster, LIT Verlag, 2013), 55-63; Jozef M.N. Hehanussa, "Understanding Relationship Between Moluccans, in Images of Enmity and Hope: The Transformative Power of Religions in Conflicts", eds Lucien van Liere and Klaas Spronk (Zurich and Muenster: LIT Verlag, 2014), 89-95.

26 Jozef M.N. Hehanussa, *Der Molukkenkonflikt von 1999*, 43-45.

27 Jozef M.N. Hehanussa, "Understanding Relationship Between Moluccans", 84-85.

28 "Gus Mus: Kaget Soal Islam Nusantara Berarti Tidak Pernah Ngaji", NU, <http://www.nu.or.id/post/read/60914/gus-mus-kaget-soal-islam-nusantara-berarti-tidak-pernah-ngaji>, accessed 6 June 2016.

maintain harmony and tolerance as social values. Hence, Islam in Indonesia should give priority to and maintain togetherness and unity among the Indonesian people. Learning from such Indonesian local wisdom, it was our calling to build a house of peace and harmony for all religions in Indonesia. It was an unending mission for all religions in Indonesia.

The challenge for Christian mission in such a context is not to think of mission as church planting, but rather as an effort to build a house where all adherents of all religions can live as one big family. In this house, members of all religions will live together like brothers and sisters, as in *rumah betang*, by accepting, respecting, and helping each other. Moluccans' conflict in 1999-2002²⁹ involving Christians and Muslims is an example of religions' failure to build God's *oikos* for all religions in Indonesia, in particular in the Moluccas. Religious fundamentalism and radicalism have destroyed the brotherhood relationship between Christians and Muslims in the Moluccas.³⁰ The religious tendency of purification seeks to distinguish Christian and Muslim and to ignore the brotherhood tradition of Moluccan Christians and Muslims. Such thinking was a cause of this conflict. We should recall that God has created earth as an *oikos* for all creatures, in particular for all humankind. Building God's house means constructing an open house for all people. It should not be a house only for certain religions or certain peoples, but a house where people can live together without worry about their different identities.

Yogyakarta is a city in Indonesia known for its plurality and tolerance, but the existence of fundamentalism and radical groups in the city has always been a threat to the plurality and tolerance that have existed for a long time. When lesbian, gender, bisexual and transgender (LBGT) concerns became a hot issue in Indonesia, those radical groups attacked the Waria Al Fatah *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school for transgender people) in Yogyakarta and closed down the *pesantren*.³¹ Another intolerant tendency in Yogyakarta has manifested in the boarding houses for students from certain religions. Many students from all parts of Indonesia and overseas come to Yogyakarta to continue their studies; Yogyakarta is also known as the "city of students" since there are high-quality universities in Yogyakarta. Such students usually rent a room at one of the boarding houses provided by families in Yogyakarta. However, many boarding house owners nowadays rent rooms only to students of one religion. They put banners or big papers in front of the boarding houses to let people know who they will rent rooms to. Many activists of pluralism and religious tolerance worry that such tendencies will destroy pluralism and religious harmony in Yogyakarta. Christian mission should respond to such tendencies by seriously aiding communities in becoming more tolerant of other people and accepting them as part of the community without discriminating based on religion.

29 See Jozef M.N. Hehanussa, *Der Molukkenkonflikt von 1999*, 107-178.

30 See Sumanto Al Qurtuby, *Religious Violence and Conciliation in Indonesia: Christians and Muslims in Indonesia. Christians and Muslims in the Moluccas*, (Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2016), 46-92.

31 "Yogyakarta transgender Islamic boarding school shut down", The Jakarta Post, <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2016/02/26/yogyakarta-transgender-islamic-boarding-school-shut-down.html>, accessed 4 June 2016.

God is the God of all mankind, not the God of a certain religion or certain race group. All humankind are people of God. The concept of people of God in the Old Testament, for example, is not limited only to Israel. God is often called the God of All Nations, as well. The history of Israel is one example of how a community can be open to anyone, since the history of Israel as a nation is not only about the history of a people who left Egypt under God's promise of a new land, but also includes other people who later joined those people from Egypt and built a nation, namely Israel.³² When the Old Testament talks about God's people of Israel, it is not only about Jacob's descendants, but also about other people who later became part of Israel. It is like how when we talk about Israel nowadays, it is not only about Jewish people, but also about Muslims and Christians. In this house of God, we recognize and celebrate diversity. This is what Theo Sundermeier means by "convivial theology", in which religious people must give priority to their religious pluralism context. In this way, a religion's adherents have to use each opportunity to share through learning, by helping one another and by celebrating life together.³³ This will allow members of a religion the new experience of living together peacefully.

Important to notice here is that building God's *oikos* in the twenty-first century should not be limited to real or physical life only, but also virtual life, i.e, the Internet. In March 2015, the Indonesian government, through its Communications and Information Ministry, decided to block 22 internet sites that were regarded as containing radical views. Most of these 22 internet sites were created by Muslims, so such action raised controversy, especially among Muslims. But the Indonesian government realized that the deradicalization effort could not be done in physical life alone, but also must happen through the Internet, since much religious fundamentalism and radical groups spread their ideology through the Internet. I often found in social media that Christians and Muslims were posting how exultant they were when an Indonesian celebrity or popular figure converted to their religion. They wanted to show that their religion was predominant. Indeed, the Internet and social media doubtless play an important role in spreading an idea. Nowadays there are more people connected by the Internet, and by social media in particular, than by cable telephone, letter, or fax. According to internetlifestats.com, more than three million people use the internet every day. Every second, more than 124,000 people view YouTube, and more than 7,000 people send tweets. Social media like Facebook and Twitter function as a house where many people can gather together every day, every hour, and every minute, just to react to a posting, talk informally, or even discuss a topic seriously. Spreading an idea through the Internet or social media is more effective than a conventional way like a printed newspaper, and religious fundamentalism and radical groups are using this media to spread their ideology and influ-

32 See Song-Mi Suzie Park, "Israel in Its Neighboring Context", in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Ancient Israel*, ed. Susan Niditch, West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell, 2016, 32; Sigmund Freud, *Moses and Monotheism* (London: the Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1936), 60-61.

33 Theo Sundermeier, "Konvivenz als Grundstruktur ökumenischer Existenz heute", in *Ökumenische Existenz heute*, eds W. Huber, Dr Ritschl and T. Sundermeier, (Munich, 1986), 49-100.

ence. Young religious adherents, who are more easily influenced, are their target. Most suicide bombers in Indonesia are young people. They become the attractive targets for religious radical groups because on the one hand, they are psychologically unstable or still looking for an identity, and on the other, they are the most prevalent users of Internet and social media. For these reasons, using the Internet should be part of the method of Christian mission to build God's house for all religions. Christian mission should focus on using the Internet to help adherents of all religions, especially Christians, to celebrate diversity and to learn and respect one another. Christian mission should not use the Internet merely to teach Christian faith or doctrines, but also to help members of other religions to understand and respect Christianity. Through the Internet and social media, Christians can learn and know the teachings of other religions and learn to love other members of other religions as they love themselves. The internet and social media can help Christian mission and mission from other religions to introduce and spread not only their own doctrine, but also Indonesian local wisdom, which hitherto played an important role in maintaining the peaceful relationship between religious adherents.

Supporting God's *oikos* through *oikonomia*

Besides its religious pluralism, another context or reality of Asia is poverty. Aloysius Pieris said that true followers of Jesus are called to struggle to be poor and to struggle for the poor.³⁴ Such thinking is not only biblically right, but also contextually right, since in reality the majority of people in Asia are poor. Asian contextual theologies like Dalits' theology and Minjung theology clearly express Pieris's thinking of the struggle to be poor and the struggle for the poor. These theologies have the same spirit, with their idea of a "preferential option for the poor" as first used by the Jesuit Father Pedro Arrupe and popularized by Gustavo Gutierrez. In the Indonesian context, poverty is another factor that cannot be ignored by the Indonesian churches. Economic injustice and corruption in today's Indonesia exacerbate the conditions of poverty there. The Papua province of Indonesia is a clear example of economic injustice in the country. Papuans have many natural and mineral resources, and through PT Freeport Indonesia, a world-class mining company of American origin, they pass along huge revenues to the United States. However, according to 2013 data from Indonesian Central Bureau of Statistics, Papua Province was ranked eighth of thirty-four provinces in the number of poor people, thirty-fourth (last) on the human development index, and first for illiteracy in children up to fifteen years of age.

The issue of poverty has recently become a more serious problem as religious fundamentalists and radical groups have taken advantage. Corinne Graff, for example, has written about the Republic of Yemen, where radicals have taken advantage of the situation faced by most young Yemeni, who have no prospects in life. She said that in some countries radical groups have recruited uneducated and often impover-

34 Aloysius Pieris, *An Asian Theology of Liberation* (London and New York: T&T Clark, 1988), 15-23.

ished young men with few employment prospects to join their group in committing terrorism, offering to meet their financial needs as a reward. Such radical groups have also used the incapacity of government to deal with poverty in order to attack the government or commit more terrorism.³⁵

Indonesia as a country is facing the same situation as Yemen. There is a wide gap between the poor and the rich. Many people feel that they have been economically discriminated against. Lower incomes, especially the gap between employers in the private sector and civil servants, are a serious problem for Indonesia, as is unemployment. Every year a large labor demonstration takes place in Jakarta to demand higher salaries or wages. The Indonesian Central Bureau of Statistics has reported that as of early 2015 there were about 27 million poor people and about 7 million unemployed in Indonesia. Religious radical groups can take advantage of such situations by recruiting these people as members and promising them a better life as a reward. One of the bombers in the terrorism in Jakarta in January 2016 came from a poor family in Subang, West Java. He decided to join the radical movement in order to get money to finance his family's needs.³⁶ It is actually a religious responsibility to help the poor to overcome the weakness that comes from poverty, rather than unilaterally manipulating them for the sake of religion or allowing them to be exploited by religious radical groups.

Christians need to get serious about dealing with poverty in mission. To take it into account, Christians must look to Jesus as a role model. God's solidarity with the poor is manifested through Jesus's ministry. Jesus's command to "give them something to eat" (Mark 6:37) unites his teaching and his practice. The command plays an important aspect in Christian teaching, as it reminds his followers that you cannot teach people about God's love without showing them God's love. When he talks about the coming of the Son of Man in Matthew 25, he also talks about offering something to eat as one criterion of the final judgement. However, showing God's love in practice cannot be limited to offering something to eat. Matthew 25 give more examples of bringing God's love into practice. The important part of this command is to take care of each other. Matthew 25 make this idea clear: to live together in God's house, we need more than just food, since "man shall not live by bread alone" (Luke 4:4). Aristotle said that the human being needs more than food, shelter, defense, and protection. If humans needed only these things, they would be no different from animals, since animals have the same needs. The human being also needs communication, education, and cultivation.³⁷ Herein Aristotle helps us to understand Jesus's words that human life does not depend on bread alone. Poverty is not always related only to food or money. We have to realize that people may be poor

35 Corinne Graff, "Poverty, Development, and Violent Extremism in Weak States", in *Confronting Poverty: Weak States and U.S. National Security*, eds Susan E. Rice, Corinne Graff, Carlos Pascual, (Washington, D.C.: Brooking Institution Press, 2010), 45-46.

36 Menkopolhukam: Kemiskinan Salah Satu Faktor Aksi Terorisme," ANTARA Sumbar, <http://www.antarasumbar.com/berita/175122/menkopolhukam-kemiskinan-salah-satu-faktor-aksi-terorisme.html>, accessed 6 June 2016.

37 As quoted by Claus Dierksmeier and Michael Pirson. Claus Dierksmeier and Michael Pirson, "Oikonomia Versus Chrematistike: Learning from Aristotle About the Future Orientation of Business Management", *Journal of Business Ethics* 88 (2009): 419.

because they have been discriminated against, treated unjustly, or marginalized. We can never overcome poverty completely, but it is more important that the poor be educated and encouraged to bring about a better life for themselves.

With this in mind, it is important for Christian mission to think about *oikonomia* as part of building God's *oikos*. Building the house without doing *oikonomia* is like not caring about the future of the house. *Oikonomia* is important because something can happen in this house and influence the relationship of all family members. In this *oikos*, people are acting to bring life and prosperity to themselves and their house. But each family member has a different capacity to fulfil his or her needs. One family member may be better able to get something than the others, perhaps even more than he or she needs. Such a situation can cause tension in the house or even conflict among family members.

Through *oikonomia*, Christians are showing their responsibility to God's *oikos*. Here *oikonomia* means managing the house by bringing peace and justice for all, but with priority given to the weak. It is what Pedro Arrupe and Gustavo Gutierrez meant by "preferential option for the poor". In 1 Corinthians 9:22, the apostle Paul said that "to the weak I became weak, to win the weak". It is the parallel to Aloysius Pieris's statement above. *Oikonomia* should be a way of life for Christians, one in which they show their care for the entire *oikos*, rather than being limited to the Christian community.³⁸ Orsy has argued that if *oikonomia* is practised, a solution will be found when conflict happens in the house, and healing will be happen when there is a wound.³⁹ Hence, *oikonomia* is the work of salvation,⁴⁰ not in a limited meaning – about *parousia* or life after death – but as meant by Psalms 12:5, i.e., protection. Salvation will be presented where there is plundering of the poor and groaning of the needy.

In doing *oikonomia*, churches and especially Christians are *oikonomos* (stewards) who are representative of God in organizing and managing God's *oikos* according to God's will. Christians are willing to hear and approve what is really God's will for each member of his house (cf. Rom 12:2). In this sense, the Bible makes it clear that God's will is to be righteous and to do justice for all people, especially the weak and the poor. In the Indonesian context, there are many poor Christians, but the number of poor Muslims is higher, since Muslims are the majority in Indonesia. This means that Christian mission should not focus only on helping poor Christians, but also poor Muslims. For this reason, more aid and assistance should be given to Muslims.

When I was writing this paper, some Indonesian television channels and social media outlets were discussing a regulation by the local government in Serang, Banten, West Java that concerned the Muslim tradition of fasting. This regulation prohibited people in Serang from selling food at midday during Ramadhan. A

38 Cf. Ladislav Orsy, "In Search of the Meaning of Oikonomia: Report on a Convention", *Theological Studies* 43, no. 2 (1 June 1982): 319, 312-319.

39 Ladislav Orsy, "In Search of the Meaning of Oikonomia", 317.

40 Tamara Grdzeldze, "Using the Principle of Oikonomia in Ecumenical Discussion: Reflections on 'The Limits of the Church' by George Florovsky", *The Ecumenical Review* 56, no. 2 (2004): 235-236.

53-year-old Muslim woman fell victim to this regulation. The woman was illiterate and did not know about the regulation, but staff from the Satuan Polisi Pamong Praja (Satpol PP, Public Order Agency) nonetheless took away all the food she was selling. The woman was crying and begging for their charity since she needed to sell the food in order to survive.⁴¹ The action of the Public Order Agency and the regulation by the Serang government were criticized and protested by many people, especially intellectual Muslims and Vice President Jusuf Kalla. The ban on the sale of food at midday during Ramadhan was regarded as a violation of human rights and Islamic law, and proved the intolerant attitude of religion. In a response to the intolerant treatment of the old woman, a campaign was conducted through social media to collect donations to help the woman. The campaign resonated greatly with the public and has collected more than 80 million rupiahs to be donated to the woman. The quick response of netizens against such intolerant and unjust action is a model or example of real *oikonomia*. Christian mission has to take such examples into account when doing mission against the intolerant and unjust treatments that happen in God's house. Many churches in Indonesia nowadays are running development programmes, especially economic programmes, in order to help not only church members but also people in their community who face difficulties caused by economic privation. Some Christian NGOs like JKLPK are engaging in community development and advocacy to help people who have been discriminated against, treated unfairly, or subjected to violence from intolerant groups. The Communion of Churches in Indonesia, through the XVI General Assembly in 2014, reminded all churches and Christian organizations to have concern for poverty, injustice, and radicalism in their regions. Churches and Christians cannot think only about their own salvation, but must keep in mind the salvation of all members of God's house as well.

Celebrating life together – more than just dialogue

On 1 June 2016, Christian congregations in Utrecht, the Netherlands invited two Islamic scholars, Dr Sahiron Syamsuddin from The Sunan Kalijaga Islamic State University in Yogyakarta and Dr Yaser Ellethy from The Frei University in Amsterdam, to share their understanding and interpretation of texts from the Qur'an. According to Prof. Gerrit Singgih, who participated in the programme and shared this experience with his colleagues in the Faculty of Theology at Duta Wacana Christian University, Yogyakarta, the programme was well received by all participants. Inter-

41 "Intelektual NU: Hukum Islam Tak Melarang Warung Buka Siang Hari pada Bulan Puasa", Kompas, <http://nasional.kompas.com/read/2016/06/11/18583451/intelektual.nu.hukum.islam.tak.melarang.warung.buka.siang.hari.pada.bulan.puasa>, accessed 11 June 2016; "Aturan Penutupan Warung Selama Ramadhan Dianggap Menabrak Nilai Kemanusiaan", Kompas, http://nasional.kompas.com/read/2016/06/12/08343121/aturan_penutupan.warung.selama.ramadhan.dianggap.menabrak.nilai.kemanusiaan., accessed 11 June 2016; "Netizens Donation to Victim of Satpol PP Raid Scores New High", the Jakarta Post, <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2016/06/11/netizens-donation-to-victim-of-satpoll-pp-raid-scores-new-high.html>, accessed 11 June 2016.

esting programmes of this kind give people the chance to learn about Islam directly from Islamic scholars, and the scholars can learn how members of other religions understand Islam. Not many Christian congregations are willing to carry out such programmes. In Yogyakarta, the Center for Interreligious Study (Pusat Studi Agama-Agama, PSAA) of the Faculty of Theology at Duta Wacana Christian University, together with the Institute for Training and Development of Synod Javanese Christian Churches (Gereja-Gereja Kristen Jawa, GKJ) and Central Java Regional Synod of Indonesian Christian Church (Gereja Kristen Indonesia, GKI), have organized an annual programme since 2002 called “Intensive Study about Islam” (Studi Intensif Tentang Islam, SITI). Participants are church leaders and activists, both men and women, while the speakers are Islamic scholars from The Sunan Kalijaga Islamic State University in particular. During the programme, participants have a chance to live at an Islamic boarding school in Yogyakarta for three days. At these Islamic boarding schools, participants can learn about Islam and how the boarding schools teach their students about religious tolerance. The Indonesian churches have been enthusiastic about the programme because they found that the programme helped them to have a better understanding of Islam.

Since the mission conference in Edinburgh in 1910 and the Vatican Council II in 1962-1965, Christians have addressed the issue of respecting and working together with other religions not only for the purpose of Christianization, but as a common people of God. Religious dialogue has become an important and central issue concerning the relationship between Christianity and non-Christian religions, including local or indigenous religions. It was people in Asia and missionaries at work in Asia who realized the great importance of dialogue between Christians and members of other religions. Early proponents of religious dialogue such as Karl Rahner, Stanley Samartha, and John Hick have reminded us to involve adherents of other religions in Christian dialogue, and in particular to talk about our mission. Yet dialogue will be meaningless if the dialogue is only a way to know each other. It was Raimon Panikkar who showed that dialogue is not just a process to know and understand each other: in his opinion, religious dialogue should lead to inter-religious practice and being. Panikkar looked at the possibility to produce through dialogue pluralists who are both Christian and Hindu, Buddhist and Christian. It is what he meant by saying that dialogue can produce new religious identities, multiple identities.⁴² As Christians, we can still be Christian, but at the same time, we will be transformed. We are not the Christians we were before dialogue.

Following Panikkar’s idea, we need more than just dialogue, particularly more than just dialogue behind a table or between religious leaders. We need dialogue out in the world, at every different level. People, especially those at the grass-roots level, need encounter each other through real and lively dialogues to have a better understanding about members of other religions and to build mutual understanding among them. This is important since such people are sometimes easily influenced by religious leaders, and by also intolerant groups, to do violence against other religion in the name of religion. They need to have their stereotypes about other religions disproved and to renew their understanding of other religions.

42 Paul Knitter, “Dialogue and Liberation”, 175-76.

In the Indonesian context of history, the spread of Islam and Christianity to Indonesia has left many prejudices related to both religions. Christian charity and diaconal ministry are suspected as Christianization, while Muslims have feelings about Indonesian independence and want to dominate strategic or key positions in the government. Many Muslims have refused to receive Christian aid or assistance, while others have considered militating against Christian ministry and permission to build a church. The rise of fundamentalism and radical groups can further cement stereotypes about other religions. However, such stereotypes can be minimized when people are willing to engage in intensive encounters between religions, not only through dialogue around the table but also active dialogue, i.e. by working together.

In Indonesia, there is tradition called *Gotong Royong* that is expressed through a variety of community activities like *gugur gunung* (Java), *masohi* (Maluku), *masi-urupan* (Tapanuli), *mapalus obeng* (Minahasa), *liliuran* (Java Barat), *long tinolong* (Madura), etc. For example, Christians and Muslims in Tual, South East Moluccas built a mosque together based on *Masohi* tradition and principles of brotherhood. When Christians in Saparua, Central Moluccas built their church, they waited until their Muslim brothers from Rohomoni could come to build the church with them. The Muslim brothers will bring the main pillar of the church from their village to be erected in the church. The name of the village, Rohomoni, will be written on the pillar. In Javanese society *nyumbang* (literally giving something) is a tradition that binds Christians and Muslims together as one big family. When a Christian or Muslim family organizes an event, whether to celebrate childbirth, marriages, circumcisions, or *kenduri* (*slametan*, prayer-meals), their Christian and Muslim neighbours will come and contribute something, either money, rice, vegetables, etc. to support the event. During the Javanese (Islamic) tradition of *kenduri*, usually to remember a family member who has passed away, Christians and Muslims come to pray, eat, and celebrate together. Through such traditions, members of various religions overcome the religious differences that exist between them. They are bound together in tradition and celebrate these traditions together as a community. Adherents to religions learn to accept and respect the differences that exist and to put emphasis on unity as one big family. The church or mosque is not a house of worship that distinguishes and limits relationship among members of various religions. To enter a church and to take part in church ceremonies, for example, is not taboo or prohibited. Houses of worship are not regarded as limited to their religion's adherents. Through these traditions, people want to show that they are one family and that their relationship should not be restricted by religious differences. Those traditions show that whoever or whatever our religion is, we need each other, and therefore we ought to live together and celebrate our life together.

Other countries in Asia also have cultural traditions that are a tradition of unity. The presence of religions has indeed influenced tradition, especially when a religion or its members have the idea that their cultural tradition is different compared to their religious teaching and that they tend to be more on the side of their religion than their culture. Members of religious fundamentalist groups tend to prioritize their religious teachings more than their cultural traditions. Contextualization of religious teaching is regarded as contrary to the purification of religious teaching, and

other religions are also contrary to their own religion. These people always spread the idea of “religion over culture” as explained by Richard Niebuhr in his work *Christ and Culture*. This puts members of various religions into tension with one another and causes them to build a wall against each other. Christians, therefore, are called to do Christ’s mission of destroying the wall of hostility that separates adherents of different religions.

The relationship between the Mennonite congregation and Laskar Hizbullah in Solo is a good example of breaking down the wall of hostility and building God’s house for all. People in Solo identified Laskar Hizbullah as an Islamic radical group, always thinking about *jihad* against Christians and closing down churches, since Christians are regarded as doing Christianization. In their mind, Christians are the enemy. However, that was ten years ago. The encounters between Laskar Hizbullah and Mennonite people through dialogues in Solo and disaster mitigation programmes after the tsunami in Aceh in 2004 and earthquake in Bantul, Yogyakarta in 2006 made Laskar Hizbullah not only friends but also brothers for Christians in Solo. Laskar Hizbullah even asked to join peace for reconciliation training organized by the Center for Study and Promotion of Peace at Duta Wacana Christian University in Yogyakarta. They nowadays protect churches that are to be closed down by Islamic radical groups. Yanni Rusmanto, the leader of Laskar Hizbullah, said that such relationship actually should have happened earlier, so he would not have led his Laskar to attack Christians or close down churches.⁴³ The relationship between Laskar Hizbullah and the Mennonite congregation in Solo makes it clear that re-creating new relationships between members of different religions is a challenge for Christians in doing their mission in the context of religious fundamentalism and radicalism. It is better for Christians to think about mission in which they help Muslim become more Islamic and live their religious teaching than just to Christianize them. When this happens, we have destroyed the wall of hostility among members of different religions.

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Changing Paradigms in Mission in View of Changing global Christian Landscapes and growing pentecostal and charismatic Movements: An African View

Véronique Kavuo Kahindo

The context(s) in which we affirm our faith in Christ and engage in the mission decides the agenda for the mission of the Church. The specific but varied characteristics of that context set the pace of its momentum (Prasad 2010:99).

Introduction

1. Background situation

The twenty-first century has been marked by global challenges such as social and economic crises, interreligious conflicts, growing fundamentalism and extremism based on religious ideologies, secular scepticism towards religious institutions and movements, and even the growing Pentecostal and Charismatic movements, to mention just a few. As regards the fast growth of these latter movements, the phenomenon has been experienced almost everywhere in the world. Sometimes, traditional mission churches (in the West¹) and particularly churches born from Western missions (in Africa) find themselves overwhelmed or suppressed in the midst of these diversified, even competitively challenging Pentecostal/Charismatic movements. In the present paper, I have chosen to address the above-mentioned issue in an African context. This question indicates that I am following the same path as other African theologians in the search of a model for mission theology and the praxis of evangelization in Africa (Oborji 2008:1) and everywhere else in the world where Africans live.

It should be pointed out that Africans are deeply religious people. They belong to three important religious traditions: indigenous religions, Christianity, and Islam (Ukah 2007:1). In this period of rapid social change with its extraordinary distortions of economic, social, and political lifestyles, and with “the global demographic trends of internal migration to the city and international immigration to countries of the Northwest region” (Wan 2010:7), for many Africans today religion offers a veritable means of anchoring and stability, and a pathway to meaningful social ex-

1 Here the West refers to Western Europe and North America.

istence. As a result, Africa (and Africans wherever they are) represent the fastest increase in Christian population worldwide, but through Pentecostal and Charismatic movements. On the one hand, this increase is being witnessed among young, educated, urban, upwardly mobile segments of the population. On the other hand, however, in Charismatic movements the poor and those who are in so many ways underprivileged and deprived of their rights figure particularly strongly. Regardless of this difference, all African Pentecostal and Charismatic movements are dynamic, vibrant, and multifaceted. Increasingly, scholars have come to accept them as a basic religious revolution of the twenty-first century, as well as the “shift in the centre of Christianity” from Europe and North America to the poor global South of Latin America, and Africa (Ukah 2007:1). Even nowadays, the term “Diaspora missiology” has been used to refer to “a missiological framework for understanding and participating in God’s redemptive mission among people living outside their place of origin” (Wan 2010:7).

The info graphic below powerfully depicts the dramatic shift in the population centres of the global Church.²

2. Challenge

Alongside the previously mentioned growth of Christianity in Africa, the most widely known things about the continent are the “breaking bad news” that the global media disseminates about the continent and its many peoples. Africa is presented as a continent of poverty, disease, corruption, wars, political instability and repression, inequitable treatment of workers in the public and private sectors, dysfunctional health care services and wages, ethnic (tribal, clan) disunity, etc. (Vumisa 2012:121; Ukah 2007:1). In such a paradoxical context, new models for an African missiology need to be formulated. This formulation depends largely on the answers one can give to the following questions: Why do the Pentecostals and Charismatics keep growing in a paradoxical African context (religiosity and crisis)? Is this fast growth the result of a holistic evangelisation on the continent? Has this growth had any impact on improving the multidimensional African crisis? How can traditional churches in Africa be full participants in the holistic evangelization of the continent and the world?

In exploring the above questions, I have chosen to approach the topic in the following order:

1. Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements in Africa: An overview
2. Growth of African neo-Pentecostal movements in the context of multidimensional crisis
3. Towards new paradigms for mission theology in Africa
4. Conclusion

2 Included at the end of this paper.

A. Pentecostal and Charismatic movements in Africa: An overview

For a non-African, it is difficult to distinguish with precision classical Pentecostal churches from the Pentecostal/Charismatic movements (neo-Pentecostals) in the African context. The two are sometimes viewed as one and are labelled and perceived as being the same. Nevertheless, it is important to identify the fundamental dissimilarities and similarities of the two movements.

First, classical Pentecostal churches in the African context are Protestant churches, which are a product of Western Pentecostal mission enterprises (eighteenth and nineteenth century). Missionaries sent from Pentecostal churches from America, Europe, and South Africa established them. Second, classical Pentecostal churches, like many other traditional Protestant churches born from Western missions, are organized as denominational structures, which, according to their tradition, were mission-sending churches. Their liturgy, constitution, and training of clergy are inspired by their parent churches and connected to them in the Western world. They are also locally connected to each other, and even to other Evangelical (Protestant) churches. For example, in the DR Congolese context, classical Pentecostal churches, together with other Protestant churches (Lutheran, Reformed, Baptist, Methodist, Anglican, etc.), recognize each other as partners on the regional and national levels through the association of Protestant churches in the DR Congo. The association is called Church of Christ in Congo (CCC).³ Third, most of the classical Pentecostal churches in Africa have a history of over eighty years. In addition, they have spread into many countries and cultures, and are represented internationally, either on their parent boards situated in the West, or in international religious associations. Like other churches born from Western mission, they try to accomplish an integral (holistic) mission of the church that *includes evangelistic as well as social responsibility* (Padilla 2004:15). *This holistic mission is aimed at the converting souls (quantitative evangelization), strengthening of Christians' faith (qualitative evangelization), and improving the lives of Christians (evangelization through diaconal and social action).* Moreover, such churches function as denominations led either by leaders elected by their denominational representatives or by those appointed by peers to serve for a certain period. In addition, Lumbe (2008:21) adds as follows:

The appointed leaders function within the confines of a team with much consultation and consensual decisions are commonly reached. Authority of leadership is not invested in any one individual but as much as they recognize the authority of the position occupied by the person, checks and balances are in place in order to prevent any abuse of power or unbridled authority.

On the other hand, and unlike the mission-based Pentecostal churches, African Pentecostal/Charismatic movements are new entrants in Africa. Their precursor is the "African indigenous Christianity" initiated by African indigenous prophets or religious leaders upon whom separatist churches were founded at the beginning of

3 The Church of Christ in Congo (CCC) is the English translation for the French *Église du Christ au Congo* (ECC).

the nineteenth century (Asamoah-Gyadu 2006:1). However, the young neo-Pentecostal movements known as awakening, revivalist, or neo-Pentecostal churches (less than fifteen years old) are mostly specific African initiatives. In several cases, they will begin as a breaking away from the mission Pentecostal churches⁴ and revolve around individual leaders who claim to have received from God a special “vision” that must be fulfilled by them only. These indigenous founders of African Pentecostalism call themselves prophets, apostles, bishops, or even archbishops. Those who come alongside them (ten to fifty members) are merely helpers in this regard.

In most cases, when these churches start, they do not have their own acquired land, but start by meeting in school classrooms and public buildings. Some that are organized and well-resourced (with 100 to 200 members) function in tents placed on acquired land, or hire decent rooms in buildings located in public areas. Many of them have started building churches. With regard to the administration of the church, in many instances they do not function according to “formal” structures and processes. They are independent churches, and most of them do not work under any other external authority except the founder’s leadership and loose “fraternal” forums (Lumbe 2008:21). To allow for rapid growth, Charismatic leaders breed an atmosphere of acceptance and welcome for those who feel condemned by the teachings of their churches, and leaders therefore emphasize miracles, healing, prosperity gospel, and so on.

In spite of everything, it is also important to note that classical Pentecostal churches and African Charismatic movements (neo-Pentecostals) have certain major similarities. They have in common the profession of Christianity with an emphasis on supernatural signs: the Holy Spirit’s work in the life of the believer, miraculous healing, exorcism, and the gift of tongues, which they consider as one facet of total salvation. With few theological academics in their movements, some of them develop a culture of non-theological ways of dealing with spiritual realities. They also develop a culture of spiritual ways to deal with every problem emerging in society and believers’ lives, even though dealing with more challenging issues requires theological or intellectual intervention. In view of this, Anderson (2003:209) says:

Indeed, in many cultures of the world, and especially in Africa, a major attraction for Pentecostalism has been its emphasis on healing. In these cultures, the religious specialist or “person of God” has power to heal the sick and ward off evil spirits and sorcery. This holistic function, which does not separate the “physical” from the “spiritual”, is restored in Pentecostalism, and indigenous peoples see it as a “powerful” religion to meet human needs. For some Pentecostals, faith in God’s power to heal directly through prayer resulted in a rejection of other methods of healing. The numerous healings reported by Pentecostal evangelists confirmed that God’s Word was true, God’s power was evidently on their efforts, and the result was that many were persuaded to become Christians. This emphasis on healing is so much part of Pentecostal evangelism, especially in Africa, that large public campaigns and tent crusades preceded by great publicity are frequently used in order to reach as many “unevangelised” people as possible.

4 In a very limited number of cases, Charismatic movements will break away from non-Pentecostal churches.

The proliferation of African Pentecostal and Charismatic movements would lead one to think that the holistic mission and evangelization in Africa is going well. The next section shows whether the growth and proliferation of the African neo-Pentecostal churches today is having a positive or negative impact on African development.

B. Growth of African neo-Pentecostal movements in the context of multidimensional crisis

It must be acknowledged that today there is a paradoxical issue as to why, in many parts of the globe and especially in Africa, the greatest church growth is not a result of Christian mission or evangelism, but is happening through the neo-Pentecostal and Charismatic movements. In Africa in particular, the uncontrolled proliferation of these movements and the huge interest of the public towards them gives the impression that these movements have succeeded in the integral missions and evangelism on the continent. Nevertheless, you will agree with me that while the number of these communities and their believers is growing steadily in Sub-Saharan Africa, Islamic fundamentalism is on the rise in many countries of North Africa, West Africa, and even Northeast Africa. Moreover, the deplorable condition of the Africans who are the most abandoned by their governments is not improving, and for some it is getting worse. In many parts of the continent, African populations are facing higher rates of poverty, unemployment, and widespread human rights abuses as a result of political instability and poor governance, wars, and conflicts.

On the other hand, while many traditional mission churches (in the West) and churches born from Western missions (in Africa) are focusing on bringing about the transformation of the lives of men and women through the gospel as the goal of Christian mission, the number of believers is declining. Moreover, in Africa today, in the very presence of traditional churches and the growing neo-Pentecostals, the notion of justice has been woefully violated in various ways. These include the operations of social structures (for example racism, tribalism, and ethnic group manipulation), economic structures (such as global economy, international trade, and transnational corporations), and political institutions (for example military dictatorships, unjust changes to constitutions, and one-party states). These “structures of injustice” cause massive human suffering and hunger (Nebekukwu 1992:273) without being denounced by either traditional churches or the neo-Pentecostal movements. In the DR Congo, for instance, the ongoing lethal violence against civilians, humanitarian disasters, and the incalculable toll of human suffering that has been present for more than two decades now is a result of the above-mentioned structures of injustice in the country. Even though some traditional churches (for example the CBCA in DRC) have tried to reduce human suffering by initiating social and diaconal services, many of them (except the Catholic Church), together with African neo-Pentecostal movements, have kept quiet concerning the aforesaid basic causes of civilian misery. Instead, they erroneously interpret some biblical passages⁵ in relation to the current situation of violence, and mislead their congregations

5 For example Isaiah 9:5: Jesus, the *Prince of peace* in human-generated conflicts, is sup-

into spiritualizing the causes of their enduring misery. Consequently, congregation members pay little or no attention to the real underlying causes, and they engage less in the search for peace and stability in the war-torn country. They become apathetic about being implicated in solving their social, economic, and political problems, in denouncing crimes, and in fighting for their rights. As a result, violence and oppression have gained ground and gone unchecked, planned with the connivance of national and foreign plunderers. The paradox is that while the neo-Pentecostal churches are growing in the DR Congo, the sociopolitical injustice and insecurity are growing too, and the socio-economic life of the community is being placed at the mercy of criminal invaders.

With awareness of the above-mentioned paradox, there is the question of whether the churches born from mission, especially UEM church members, will contextualise the understanding and practice of Christian mission in the African context. The aim is to reach more people in view of the vast multiplication of the neo-Pentecostal churches and the enormous growth of the Charismatic movements, which unfortunately are blindly misleading their followers into apathy about getting involved in fighting the underlying causes of the misery in Africa.

C. Towards new paradigms for missiology theology in Africa

Referring to Vumisa (2012:117), an “African missionary is God’s chosen vessel to take His message to the lost world”. He or she is a Christian believer who takes the gospel to those who have never heard it before. And yet, the missionary work must first reach the lost African continent before sending out missionaries to the new frontiers. The following paradigms are to be followed for successful African mission:

1. African religious paradigm⁶

Classical churches must be aware that Africans consider important the theology that addresses their religious needs. Encounters with the spiritual world, whether as malicious powers seeking to destroy people, marine spirits negating efforts at public morality, or the performance of ritual in order to solicit help from the powers of beneficence, are important elements in African religiosity. In continuity with the African religious paradigm, the neo-Pentecostal movement has proven successful in Africa because of its openness to the supernatural and through its interventionist and oral theological forms that resonate with traditional African piety. This theology is expressed in three ways:

porting his people and he will bring peace. People do not have to fight for peace because Jesus himself will bring an end to armed violence at the right time (Ex 14:14). On the other hand, the reading of 2 Chr 6:24-25 has resulted in prayer groups of believers who spend their time praying and fasting, confessing their sins and worshipping. The aim is to seek the face of their lord, the *Prince of peace*, so that he may restore peace in their region.

6 The content presented in this section is largely drawn from Asamoah-Gyadu’s article “African Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity: an Overview”, pp. 3-4.

a. *Keen emphasis on transformation*

If traditional churches are to reach and evangelize African peoples, they have to offer a direct and particularly intense encounter with God that introduces profound changes in the life and circumstances of the person who experiences it. The Holy Spirit is the one who facilitates the direct character of the encounter. In the African context, participants in Pentecostalism keenly testify not only about their new lives, but also about the transition often made from spiritual resorts to traditional religious resources in order to be sincere Christians believing in God alone.

b. *Theology of empowerment (Ephesians 6)*

An emphasis needs to be put on the empowering effect of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and the relationship between transformation and empowerment. The African Pentecostal insistence that it is possible to be a Christian and be dominated by desires of the flesh and demonic influences has led to the provision of ritual contexts in which people could renounce such obstacles through healing and deliverance in order that they may be empowered to victory in life. Classical churches in Africa are also expected to deal with the effects of evil caused by demonic spirits and witchcraft by providing the ritual contexts for prayer and exorcism to deliver the afflicted. These effects include all sorts of misfortunes: sickness, failure, childlessness, and other setbacks in life.

c. *Good health, success, and prosperity in life make possible the realization of God-given abilities*

Thus, it is possible to view deliverance theology as a response to, or the mutation in the face of, the shortfall of faith preaching. When things are not going well, appeals to the work of demons and witches come in handy as explanations. African Pentecostal prosperity theology may have some ground to recover with respect to its weak theology of suffering. Nevertheless, the cross of Christ is not just a symbol of weakness, but also one of victory over sin, the world, and death. Pentecostals draw attention to the fact that the gospel is about restoration, so it is expected that the transformation of the personality would be manifest in personal health, well-being, and care; in short, salvation is holistic and includes spiritual as well as physical abundance.

2. Spirit of cooperation as paradigm⁷

Christians in Africa should address the question of why many churches in Africa, even communities and nations, are greatly disunited, fractionalized, and disorganized (Oborji 2008:8). For some people, it is because the African communities and countries have the largest number of tribes, ethnicities, dialects, and language groups. They link these cultural diversities to the fact that Africans are often incapable of working as a group (Ayinmode 2001:2). I think that it is wrong to affirm that they are incapable of working as a group, but this factor made and still makes Africans vulnerable to internal and external forces of *divide and rule*. In reference

7 The contents of this subsection are freely inspired by the contributions of Oborji to the "African Model and New Language of Mission" (2001).

to Ayinmode's claim, Oborji adds that African cultural diversities may also probably explain why Africa was (and still is) the continent most susceptible to external forces and oppression as suggested by historical and contemporary facts. Therefore, in the context of this absence of spirit of cooperation among the Africans, classical and neo-Pentecostal Churches need to focus on *cooperation* as a new missiological paradigm in the continent.

3. Self-esteem for the Africans

The accomplishment of a degree of self-esteem for the Africans depends on their identifying themselves with their own culture and rediscovering deeply rooted traditional values in the light of the Gospel. Africans must look to the riches of their own traditions, to the faith which they are celebrating. There they will find genuine freedom – they will find Christ, who will lead them to the truth.

4. Re-education of Africans

Using the available resources God has blessed Africa with, African theologians must do this work of re-education of their people with the great sense of responsibility based on the love of God and neighbour. They need to appreciate Africans first, to love their brothers and sisters before they can expect others to appreciate and love them. Let them make their people their friends and develop the all-important spirit of cooperation. They need to re-educate themselves and the people on how to stop the fighting and seeking of ways to destroy one another. Since individualism and intolerance have been identified as the major weakness of contemporary Africans, the re-education must aim to correct the excessive intrigue and antagonism that is often the lifestyle of many today. Theologians must tackle the question of eradicating the dependency syndrome that has eaten deep into the fabric of their continent. This implies that from now on, seminaries and houses of formation in Africa must stress self-confidence, hard work, self-reliance, self-sacrifice, and uprightness, along with an intensive spirit of collaboration.

D. Conclusion

Mission is still possible in the midst of growing Pentecostal and Charismatic movements. I suggest that traditional churches critically revisit and evaluate their missiological and theological understandings and practices in order to see how they can adopt new orientations in developing models for the holistic evangelization of Africa. In addition, they need to move away from the “speculative mission reflection” that has been developed in some influential African universities and seminaries, and to correct the “superficial mission action” that has characterized many African churches (Lygunda li-M 2010:1), towards the construction of an authentic African mission theology capable of dealing with African challenges (cf. Oborji 2001:1-13; Vumisa 2012). In the specific case of the United Evangelical Mission (UEM) twenty years after its internationalization, the African church members of the UEM need to engage in the same way as well.

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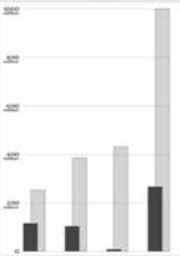
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Advocacy
(Justice, Peace,
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Advocacy for Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation as an Element of missionary Activity from 1993/96 to the present Day

Jochen Motte

1. The “conciliar process” as an impetus for joint missionary advocacy for justice, peace, and the integrity of creation

Twenty-three years ago, in October 1993, at an assembly in Ramatea, Botswana of all UEM partner churches and the von Bodelschwingh Foundation Bethel, the draft constitution for a new form of collaboration by churches in mission was unanimously adopted. This cleared the way for the legal transformation of the United Evangelical Mission, a German missionary organization, into the international community of churches in Africa, Asia, and Germany that was finally implemented in 1996 in Bethel, Germany, after a three-year ratification process.

The constitution was preceded by an advisory and consultation process of over twenty years, in which the question of new forms of ecumenical missionary cooperation was posed to “partner churches” in Africa and Asia. The usual relations between the partners in the global South and the German UEM, with its German members, did not satisfy the claim of an equitable partnership in which the partners met on equal terms.

The constitution adopted in 1993 was particularly targeted at enabling a new form of partnership, in which fair participation, shared responsibility and joint action in reciprocity were to be expressed in the by-laws, structure, and programmes of the new UEM. Against the background of the churches in the south of Germany that had achieved independence in the twentieth century, the structural dichotomy of donor and recipient churches that was a defining factor until 1993 had increasingly been viewed as ecclesiologicaly questionable and outdated.

Above all, then, this was a matter of holistically equitable forms of cooperation in mission. One necessary part of this discussion process on the road to the internationalization of the UEM was also to come to an agreement about how the new members from the three continents understood mission.

The most important shared foundation for this is §2 of the constitution adopted in 1993, which enumerates the “Mission, Objects and Purpose” of the UEM.

- (1) The United Evangelical Mission is founded on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, and shall serve the purpose of joint action in mission.

- (2) a) The United Evangelical Mission operates within a network of churches in Africa, Asia and Europe and wherever it may be called upon to serve.
- b) Together these churches shall proclaim Jesus Christ as the Lord and Saviour of all people and shall face the challenges of present-day mission.
- c) In a world torn apart, they commit themselves to remain members of the one Body of Christ, and therefore to:
 - grow together into a worshipping, learning and serving community;
 - share gifts, insights and responsibilities;
 - call all people to repentance and new life;
 - bear witness to the Kingdom of God in striving for justice, peace and the integrity of creation.¹

Given this context, it seems significant that the new UEM Constitution, completed in 1993-1996, had as one of its objectives a community that would allow more equitable forms of cooperation than had previously been the case, as well as the creation of equitable relationships on a global scale. On the other hand, it also enumerated a commitment to joint missionary action in the external world.²

Section 2b of the constitution qualifies this external world, one characterized by the fact that it has been torn apart: a world of violence and of economic and social disparities, whose borders mainly run between the global North and the global South. The new form of community in the UEM therefore implicitly targeted overcoming this separation within the UEM community first, to set an example, as well as joint action for just and peaceful relations among human beings across the globe.

Section 2 (2) b references the shared commitment to justice, peace, and the integrity of creation as a part of the missionary activity of the UEM community, implying that responding to current missionary challenges is not a one-off task, but a continuous duty. In this way, over the past twenty years the UEM has been compelled to face diverse challenges time and again in its advocacy for justice, peace, and the integrity of creation. Some of these challenges will be detailed below.

In my view, with reference to the understanding of mission that was formulated twenty-three years ago and finalized three years later, it is of fundamental importance that the insights from the conciliar process of the ecumenical movement were not set alongside or kept separate from the core issues and content of mission, but rather turned into an integral component of mission. Indeed, they even became a commitment pledged by all of the participants of this new community.³

1 United Evangelical Mission, Constitution, (2008), (excerpts cited are identical to current Constitution), cf. http://www.vemission.org/fileadmin/redakteure/Bilder/Newsbilder/010_UEM-Constitution.pdf.

2 Cf. Jochen Motte, „Auf dem Wege zur mündigen Partnerschaft“. Hinweise und Bemerkungen zum United-in-Mission-Programm, in: Zeitschrift für Mission 22, no. 4, (1996), p. 228 – 248.

3 Whereas the first two bullet points cited under § 2 (2) c are directed inwards, bullet points three and four are directed outwards. As already indicated above, the fourth bullet point from 1993 still appears groundbreaking today in its understanding of mission, and will continue to be. With respect to the third, christologically accentuated bullet point, “call all people to repentance and new life”, the UEM community should be asked whether this requires a read-

Although some UEM members, particularly in Africa and Asia, had few points of contact with the issues of the conciliar process in the nineties, it appears to me that the then-groundbreaking formulation of this understanding of mission has now become common sense in the UEM community. Churches in all regions of the UEM represent the issues from this process in their programmes: they actively seek out and use the opportunities for networking, exchange, and joint advocacy work in the UEM and beyond. This development was made possible largely because UEM member churches in Asia and Africa were able to know each other better through the new forms of collaborative work in the UEM. They were confronted with examples of dedicated and professional work for justice and human rights in their own regions, such as in the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP), where the churches have been championing human rights since the Marcos dictatorship. More than 25 of their pastors have been victims of political violence since 2005. Another example worth mentioning is the ELCRN, which did most of the development and start-up work on the Basic Income Grant project to reduce poverty.

2. The biblical image of humanity, and God's law to benefit the weak, as the basis for a justice advocacy that is committed to human rights

The commitment to joint advocacy for justice, peace, and the integrity of creation expressed in the constitution led to the establishment of a JPIC programme division by the now-defunct United in Mission Committee, a group that had included international members. The JPIC division was created after approval from the German mission administration of the UEM. The stated commitment was to be fulfilled as soon as possible, even before the full legal transformation into an international community of churches. This made it clear that the commitment was not just lip service, nor was it a particular interest of the German members of the UEM.

From the beginning, the advocacy for justice, peace, and the integrity of creation took a rights-based approach based on universal human rights. This development was influenced by the following factors:

- Biblical theological reasons for a human-rights approach within the missionary action for justice, peace, and integrity of creation;
- The orientation towards developments in UEM member churches from the perspective of the victims of human-rights violations;
- The general debate on human rights in the context of the Vienna Conference on Human Rights of the United Nations.

justment, in view of the current missiological discussions and statement by the WCC from 2012/2013, "Together Towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes". Cf. <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/commissions/mission-and-evangelism/together-towards-life-mission-and-evangelism-in-changing-landscapes>

2.1. **Biblical theological reasons for a human-rights approach within the missionary activity for justice, peace, and the integrity of creation**

In Nairobi in 1975, the former general secretary of the World Council of Churches (WCC) Emilio Castro identified the connection between mission and human rights in a pointed manner. “Human rights are not the ‘context’ of our [Christian] mission but its very ‘text’ and the heart of the freedom-bringing Gospel. ‘Human rights’ is not just the slogan of the political activist; it sums up the Christian missionary imperative.”⁴

Human rights have been important tools in anti-colonial struggles, the anti-apartheid struggle, and a formulated option for the poor, and the World Council of Churches played a major role in their development and implementation. Even beyond this historical context, human rights were taken up by the churches and reflected upon theologically in new ways following the Second World War.

The concept of inalienable human dignity, placed at the beginning of the preamble to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 as the justification for its establishment, thereby forms a bridge to the biblical image of humanity and the dignity conferred on humanity by God, which is reflected in people’s divine creation in God’s image. In addition to the justifying contexts in creation theology, natural law, and Christology that go unmentioned, the importance of the Old Testament version of God’s law also seems to be too little appreciated in the justification of universal rights as were made manifest in universal human rights beginning in 1948.

God makes the covenant with his people on the path from slavery in Egypt to freedom. Life in liberty is only possible as long as those living on the margins of society are not ostracized and can come into their own. The paramount importance of this right is described vividly by the prophet Amos in chapter 5:24, in the image of essential elements of life: “But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!” (NIV).⁵

The commandments given with the covenant have not only a functional character, but also form part of God’s revelation of the standard for good governance (according to the covenant and God’s will) by which the kings and the political and economic elites of the country must be measured. Although not directly derived from God’s law in the Old Testament, the modern universal individual human rights that reference the Old Testament in their belief give us inspiration and direction for a commitment to implementing universal rights.

This advocacy work is performed on the basis of the inherent dignity of every human being. It protects and defends the rights of each and every person, especially those who are vulnerable and whose rights are being violated.

4 Emilio Castro, *Human Rights and Mission*, in: *IRM* 56/263, (1977), p. 215f.

5 Cf. Jochen Motte, *Our Common Mission: To Protect Human Dignity by Promoting Human Rights and the Rule of Law*, in: *Mission Continues. Global Impulses for the 21st Century*, eds Claudia Währisch-Oblau and Fidon Mwombeki, *Regnum Edinburgh 2010 Series*. vol. 4 (2010), p. 119.

2.2. The orientation towards developments in UEM member churches from the perspective of the victims of human-rights violations

Along with the biblical and theological grounds, the reason for a human rights-based approach to advocacy for justice, peace, and the integrity of creation can be found in the current developments and events underway in the member churches of the UEM and the “challenges of present-day mission” as stated in §2 (2) b of the constitution.

The schism in the Christian Protestant Toba-Batak Church in **Indonesia** that occurred under the government of President Suharto in 1993 brought government encroachment and violence with impunity. Human rights organizations in Indonesia documented these incidents. The UEM and other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as Watch Indonesia publicized them in the international community.

Against the background of the dictatorship in the **Philippines** under Ferdinand Marcos, and his removal from office in 1986 during the EDSA Revolution (in which the church played an active part), the United Church of Christ in the Philippines developed high-profile national and international work on human rights in collaboration with the National Council of Churches and many non-governmental organizations. This is also reflected in article 2, paragraph 11 of the church’s constitution: ”In accordance with the biblical understanding that all persons are created in the image of God, the Church confirms and upholds the inviolability of the rights of persons as reflected in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other agreements on human rights, the international covenants on economic, social and cultural rights and on civil and political rights, the 1984 Convention against Torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, and those that relate specifically to refugees, women, youth, children, minority groups and other persons who cannot safeguard their own rights.”⁶ Since 2005, there has been a cluster of political killings, disappearances, and criminalization that has resulted in the UCCP requesting support from their ecumenical partners and the UEM. The UEM obliged this request and is supporting the UCCP in their human rights work, including the Philippine Action Network for Human Rights that the UCCP co-founded.

The end of the dictatorship of President Suharto in 1998 offered the first-ever opportunity for the Protestant Church in **West Papua, Indonesia** to speak publicly about the years of oppression, racism, and serious human rights violations against Papuans committed by Indonesian security forces. This included their wish to put the issue of self-determination on the ecumenical agenda. Since then, the UEM has supported the GKI in its advocacy for the rights of indigenous peoples. The GKI has established a renowned Office for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation known beyond Papua, whose reports and record-keeping are finding their way into the publications of the West Papua Network, co-founded by the UEM, and the International Coalition on Papua (ICP).

Following a consultation process of over ten years among the UEM member churches in Asia, a project was developed by the Chinese Rhenish Church (CRC) to

6 United Church of Christ in the Philippines, Amended Constitution and By-Laws of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines, (2008), 2nd Edition, p. 7. - <http://uccpchurch.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/UCCP-Constitution-and-By-laws.pdf>

protect and care for Indonesian migrants at the suggestion of churches from Indonesia and the Philippines. Young women who are working as household help in **Hong Kong, China** often face violence and abuse from their employers and can defend themselves only with difficulty. For many years, the CRC has employed pastors from the UEM member churches in Java, who offer counselling and support to migrants, as well as opportunities for exchange with one another, and provide protection and legal assistance as needed.

From 1993 to the present day, the Methodist Church in **Sri Lanka** has been campaigning for peace and the rule of law, as well as the recognition of minority rights. The Methodist Church has appealed for international solidarity and assistance in light of the war and the destruction of the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) in 2009, as well as the many victims among the civilian population. Church leaders from Africa, Asia, and Germany were invited to a pastoral visit during the final phase of the war. The Methodist Church continues to serve as a bridge between the diverse ethnicities and is a living example of cooperation, since both Tamis and Sinhalese are members.

After the genocide in **Rwanda** in 1994, with more than one million victims, one year after the General Assembly of the UEM in Ramatea, Botswana, and amid the ongoing and still unfinished unrest, wars, and violence in the **Democratic Republic of Congo** in the meantime that are estimated to have killed more than five million people, the churches in the African Great Lakes region have continued to express a need for support for reconciliation, peace, and human-rights work. They have called for international aid in overcoming violence and preventing illegal trade in raw materials. The UEM co-founded the “Ecumenical Network” in Central Africa in 2002, which has raised awareness in Germany and Europe of the problems in the region, as well as the needs and demands of civil society there.

Germany’s responsibility for the 1904 genocide in Namibia of large numbers of the Herero, as well as the Nama and Damara tribes, was communicated to the German members of the UEM in 2004 by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in **Namibia**. Through its political lobbying, the UEM has at least contributed to the German Development Minister Heidemarie Wieczorek-Zeul issuing a personal apology and expressing her regret for these crimes. An acknowledgement of the genocide by the German Bundestag, as in the case of Armenia (resolution of 2 June 2016), remains pending.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (ELCRN) initiated an internationally recognized project to assert economic and social human rights in collaboration with the UEM and German member churches such as the EKIR and EKvW: the Basic Income Grant (BIG). A pilot project coordinated and implemented by the ELCRN and other coalition partners from civil society in Namibia should convince the Namibian government of the merits of this model to combat and overcome forms of extreme poverty.⁷

The list of concerns from the UEM member churches could go on, with references to initiatives by the churches in **Tanzania** against land grabbing, and the church-

7 On this see: Jochen Motte, Theodor Rathgeber, and Angelika Veddelar (eds), *Think BIG: Inputs and Reflections on Social Justice and the Basic Income Grant*, (2010).

es in **Indonesia** advocating for workers' rights in free trade zones⁸ and opposing human trafficking (especially the trafficking of women and child labour) as well as fighting against land grabs caused by palm oil cultivation.

Civil and political human rights, such as the right to religious freedom, have also repeatedly been brought to the attention of the UEM community as concerns. This has happened against the background of the harassment of Christians and followers of other religious communities in **Indonesia**, **Sri Lanka**, and **Tanzania**, as well as in the face of extremist violence, for example Boko Haram and its impact on the churches in Cameroon.

The member churches of the UEM in **Germany** have also increasingly indicated to the UEM community in recent years their interest in providing support and exchanging information on human rights issues. This has happened, for example, with the issues of stopping human trafficking (especially the trafficking of women), combating racism and discrimination, protecting refugees and their rights, and protecting people with disabilities.

2.3. The general debate on human rights in the context of the Vienna Conference on Human Rights of the United Nations

Even after the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 and the adoption of two major pacts on civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights in 1966, the universality and indivisibility of all human rights as established in 1948 has repeatedly been called into question.

The controversy about the universality of human rights also shaped the discussions during the UN Human Rights Conference in Vienna in 1993. The basic criticism by many states was directed against the presumably Western and individualist image of humanity underlying human rights, which they claimed contradicted the collectivist legal traditions that had developed in, e.g., Asian societies. The critics were not able to prevail in the final Vienna document, contrary to initial fears. This is how the basic principles of universality and indivisibility were reaffirmed, and the equivalence of the two covenants stressed.⁹

It is a coincidence that this important human rights conference in 1993 was held in the same year as the founding assembly of the international UEM, where the common foundations for the statutes of a church community in Asia, Africa, and Germany were resolved. Starting from Vienna, it appears logical that, against the background of the proprietary faith traditions explained above (on the image of humanity and the role of the law, as well as the current challenges concerning the issue of justice within the UEM community), we take the universal values and legal foun-

8 Cf. Jochen Motte, Challenges to the Churches in a Changing World: Churches in the United Evangelical Mission striving for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation, Challenges to the Churches in a Changing World: Texts from the 4th International Consultation in Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation – Batam, Indonesia, February 2008, eds Jochen Motte and Thomas Sandner, (2008), p. 9-12.

9 On this see Jochen Motte, Entwicklungen und Herausforderungen im Bereich des Menschenrechtsschutzes seit der Wiener Menschenrechtskonferenz 1993 in zivilgesellschaftlicher Perspektive, in: Digitales Handbuch der Menschenrechtsarbeit, eds Felix Kirchmeier and Michael Krennerich, (2015), p. 29 - <http://www.fes.de/handbuchmensenrechte/>

dation of human rights as a reference framework on which we base the work for justice, peace, and the integrity of creation in the new international church community.

The commitment to human rights was explicitly adopted in 2008, at the General Assembly of the UEM in Borkum, Germany, as part of the Statement on Corporate Identity. The following specific objectives for the work of the UEM are named:

“We believe that human beings are created in the image of God and therefore have inalienable dignity and rights. Therefore we promote and defend human rights, we support initiatives to solve conflict peacefully, we join efforts to achieve just economic conditions and good governance, we strive for the protection of the environment.”¹⁰

3. Twenty years of UEM human rights campaigns – Christians advocating for human rights on behalf of the victims of injustice and violence in the UEM community of churches in three regions

The human rights orientation of the work for justice, peace, and the integrity of creation is also reflected in the themes of the actions for International Human Rights Day that have been carried out in annually in Germany since 1996. Posters, resources for devotions, and informational materials, combined with a request for donations, are sent to all regional congregations of the UEM member churches in Germany. Beginning with words from the Old and New Testament, and against the background of the aforementioned challenges in the UEM member churches, fundamental human rights were and are being addressed today. Specific human rights projects and initiatives from UEM member churches were presented as part of these actions, first from the regions of Africa and Asia, and now from Germany as well for the last several years.

The UEM actions have included the following topics: women’s rights; economic and social human rights in connection with the debt relief campaign; children’s rights; the right to food; the right to housing; the right to life, liberty, and security of one’s person (protection from violence); life without poverty; climate and human rights; impunity; religious freedom; land rights; the human rights of people with disabilities; the right to education; human trafficking; asylum; and human rights. The topics of the more recent actions – on education, religious freedom, the rights of persons with disabilities, human trafficking, and asylum – demonstrate that the issue of human rights and their enforcement no longer describes only problems and challenges largely limited to the global South, i.e., Africa and Asia. In a globalized world, the issues of justice are relevant in all countries. This is also reflected in the projects of the UEM, which increasingly also include support for German organizations and churches.¹¹

10 See United Evangelical Mission, Statement on Corporate Identity. - <http://www.vemission.org/fileadmin/redakteure/Dokumente/Corporate%20Identity.pdf>

11 The following verses guided the human rights campaigns from 1996-2015: “For all the boots of the tramping warriors shall be burned as fuel for the fire” – Isaiah 9:5; “Do justice and righteousness, and do not wrong or violence to the resident alien, the fatherless, and the

4. Peace and the Integrity of Creation

Peace and reconciliation work, dealing with civil conflict, and protecting the climate and the environment are all a part of advocating for justice. They also constitute priorities in their own right that cannot be addressed in detail in the present context. For this reason, reference is also made below to works on these topics that have been published elsewhere.

4.1. Peace and reconciliation work, and civilian crisis prevention

Given the many armed and violent conflicts within countries of the UEM community in the past twenty years, as well as the conflicts that go back to Germany's colonial past (cf. Namibia), questions of peaceful conflict resolution, reconciliation, and the role of the churches are a continuous presence on the agenda of the UEM community. For example, regional and international conferences and workshops on the topics of "Reconciliation" and "Justice and Reconciliation" took place in Rwanda in 1997 and Namibia in 2000.¹²

In the context of the commemoration of the beginning of the anti-colonial liberation struggle in Namibia and the genocide of large numbers of the Herero people, as well as the Nama and Damara, conferences were held and an exhibition about the role of the churches in this period conceived. The travelling exhibition was shown in Namibia and Germany. In addition, the UEM teamed up with churches in Germany to call upon the German Federal Government to acknowledge the genocide and take visible steps towards reparations. This was to be done *inter alia* through support for land reform in Namibia, which would overcome the unequal division of land among blacks and whites that has historical roots in colonial rule and contains the potential for conflict to this day.¹³

In addition, between 2000 and 2010 the UEM trained over 25 people from member churches in Africa, Asia, and Germany in basic and advanced conflict analy-

widow" – Jeremiah 22:3; "You cannot serve God and Mammon" – Matthew 6:24; "And I will grant peace in the land, and you shall lie down, and no one shall make you afraid" – Leviticus 26:6; "Seek the welfare of the city" – Jeremiah 29:7; "Share your bread with the hungry" – Isaiah 58:7; "Bring the homeless poor into your house" – Isaiah 58:7; "He bandaged his wounds, brought him to an inn, and took care of him" – Luke 10:34; "He judged the cause of the poor and needy" – Jeremiah 22:16; "Let justice roll down like water" – Amos 5:24; "I was a stranger and you invited me" – Matthew 25:35; "As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease" – Genesis 8:22; "Justice will return to the righteous" – Psalm 94:15; "Live in peace with all" – Romans 12:18; "The land will yield its fruit, and you will eat your fill and live on it securely" – Leviticus 25:19; "When God created humankind, he made them in the likeness of God" – Genesis 5:1; "How much better to get wisdom than gold" – Proverbs 16:16; "When some traders passed by, they sold him for twenty pieces of silver" – Genesis 37:28; "You shall love the alien as yourself" – Leviticus 19:34.

12 See, among others, the articles in: *Justice and Reconciliation: Contributions to a Workshop on Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation*, eds Jochen Motte and Thomas Sandner, (2000)

13 Cf. Jochen Motte, Foreword and Statement, in: *100th Anniversary of the Beginning of the Colonial War of Liberation in Namibia: Documents - Texts - Pictures*, ed. Jochen Motte, Wuppertal 2005, p. 7-11.

sis, conflict processing, and mediation, and has sent peace experts to Tanzania and Rwanda as part of the staff exchange programme. The UEM is sponsoring a regional peace network of churches and youth projects for reconciliation work in the African Great Lakes region.

Human rights and peace work, moreover, form an inseparable link in the international advocacy work of the UEM – especially in the country-related networks with other church organizations and non-governmental organizations in West Papua, Indonesia; the Philippines; Sri Lanka; Rwanda; Burundi; and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

4.2. Integrity of creation, climate and environmental protection

Within the UEM community, the issue of climate justice and protecting the environment and natural resources continues to be a special focus of the work of the UEM because of a 2008 resolution in the General Assembly. A comprehensive approach has been developed that the churches should be able to facilitate and support in their climate and environmental work, through the following means and others: awareness; advocacy work; the appointment of climate/environmental consultants for the regional work of the churches in Africa and Asia; networking at the ecumenical level, including with the WCC and its Environmental Working Group; focus work on theology and spirituality; publications on the subject of climate and human rights; sponsorship of climate and environmental projects; implementation of climate protection targets within the UEM through CO2 offset projects for flights; development of a CDM (Clean Development Mechanisms) project in cooperation with Bread for the World and the Anglican Church in Rwanda; collaboration on climate pilgrimage routes in the context of the Paris summit on climate change in December 2015.¹⁴

5. From a conciliar process for justice, peace, and the integrity of creation to a pilgrimage for peace and justice

As stated above, the churches' commitment to advocacy for justice, peace, and the integrity of creation laid down in the UEM Constitution is well in line with the tradition of the ecumenical movement. For example, the Sixth Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Vancouver in 1983 resolved to oblige churches through covenants to engage in a conciliar process to advocate for justice, peace, and the integrity of creation. In a time of nuclear armament and threat, and an unprecedented number of people living with poverty and oppression, the WCC called upon the churches to resist the forces of death that had been made manifest in racism, sexism, class- and caste-based oppression, economic exploitation, militarism, human rights violations, and economic and technological abuse.¹⁵

14 For more details see: Jochen Motte, *Climate Justice and Environmental Protection: A Challenge to Churches in Africa, Asia and Europe*, in *Making Peace with the Earth*, ed. Grace Ji-Sun Kim, (2016) p. 97-108.

15 D. Preman Niles, *Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation*, in: *Ecumenical Dictionary*, "Article of the Month Series", (11/2003)

The WCC World Convocation on Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation took place in Seoul in 1990. Here the conciliar process reached its zenith: the delegates reaffirmed in their message (“An act of covenanting”) that the time had come “to commit ourselves anew to God’s covenant”.¹⁶ Injustice, war, and environmental destruction were interpreted theologically as consequences of people breaking the covenant. From a Christian perspective, the appropriate way to counter these consequences is to confront them: “Now is the time to consolidate all struggles for justice, peace and the integrity of creation.” Christians were also called upon to free themselves from “bondage to power structures which blind us and make us accomplices in destruction”.¹⁷

This spirit of shared commitment to resist the destruction of nature and to oppose oppression, economic and social inequality, and other forms of injustice remained vibrant at the Seventh Assembly of the WCC in Canberra in 1991. It continued until the Eighth Assembly in Harare, where the assembly in its message deplored the catastrophic effects of globalization, which casts the countless people living in poverty onto the margins of society and renders them “invisible”. The assembly called for the safeguarding of human rights, especially those of the poor, and for respect for the dignity of all people. But by now the conciliar process had been reinterpreted and somewhat transformed, with the resolution in Harare for a Decade to Overcome Violence. No longer was fundamental resistance and shared commitment and covenanting first and foremost; instead, emphasis was put on the many concrete steps to be taken by the churches to overcome violence in all its dimensions. This shift of emphasis continued in Porto Alegre at the Ninth Assembly of the WCC, at which the churches were again called upon to take part in the Decade to Overcome Violence. Struggle and resistance are being superseded by concrete action that is changing the world and constitutes a sign of hope.

The resolution in Busan 2013 for a pilgrimage of justice and peace represents a further step towards the transformation of the original conciliar process. Commitment is no longer the issue here: instead, the member churches and the recipients of the message are invited to join this journey. The path is not described; instead, God is called upon to show the pilgrims the way. Above all, however, the chosen image of the pilgrimage – an original element of Catholic tradition rejected by the Reformation, a path to a holy site for the purpose of atonement or the fulfilment of a vow – shifts to become the focus here. Elements of spirituality, meditation, and contemplation come to the fore. Struggle, resistance, and protest against the system transform into a decidedly spiritual movement of Christians in the world advocating for justice and peace. How justice and peace will specifically be realized is not defined from the beginning; the reply is requested of God, and must spring forth anew in each process of pilgrimage.

16 WCC World Convocation, Message of the World Convocation on Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation. (1990) - <http://oikoumene.net/eng.home/eng.global/eng.seoul90/eng.seoul.1/index.html>

17 Ibid.

6. Human rights and traditional values – New controversies about the universality of human rights inside and outside the churches

The previous section outlined developments in view of the changing importance and role of the conciliar process and its topics – justice, peace, and the integrity of creation. As for the reception of human rights, there are new lines of discussion and trends that can be identified inside and outside the ecumenical movement. The churches must be aware of these and able to deal with them.

Although the churches took a critical view of human rights until the mid-twentieth century, the World Council of Churches was instrumental in the discussion around the formulation and adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. Human rights had already been a fundamental component of ecumenical convictions long before the emergence of the conciliar process, as is reflected in a resolution by the Fifth Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Nairobi from 1975: “Our concern for human rights is based on our conviction that God wills a society in which all can exercise full human rights. All human beings are created in the image of God, equal and infinitely precious in God’s sight and ours. Jesus Christ has bound us to one another by his life, death and resurrection, so that what concerns one will concern us all.”¹⁸

With the modified and more assertive role of the orthodox churches in the WCC after the end of the East-West conflict and the collapse of the Soviet Union – as well as many global South churches’ critical position on LGBTI rights and the efforts to integrate these into the legal canon of human rights – the question of the universality and indivisibility of human rights has been a subject of renewed controversy and discussion in the past fifteen years. The West’s lack of credibility following 11 September 2001 has also been a contributing factor. During the course of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, human rights were declared irrelevant, particularly by the United States, and torture was considered permissible when one’s own security interests were threatened.¹⁹ Another possible contribution to this development has been the attitude of some churches from the West to declare values such as those on the question of sexual orientation as self-evident, values that a few years earlier in Europe would have been unthinkable and carried criminal consequences. There have also been calls for the immediate implementation of these values, even by churches and partners in very different cultural spheres.

A resolution in the UN Human Rights Council on “traditional values of humankind”, brought forward by Russia in 2009, reopened debate at the international level about the universality of human rights. The recognition of traditional cultural values is aimed at restricting the validity of universal human rights, since traditional values

18 Cited in: Executive Committee of the World Council of Churches, Statement on Universal Declaration of Human Rights, (2008), <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/executive-committee/2008-09/statement-on-universal-declaration-of-human-rights>

19 Cf. Jochen Motte, Entwicklungen und Herausforderungen im Bereich des Menschenrechtsschutzes seit der Wiener Menschenrechtskonferenz 1993 in zivilgesellschaftlicher Perspektive, in: Digitales Handbuch der Menschenrechtsarbeit, eds Felix Kirchmeier and Michael Krennerich, (2015), p. 29-40 - <http://www.fes.de/handbuchmensenrechte/>

such as family, religion, etc. then make up a filter for the implementation of these rights. Critics fear that this will be a means of legitimizing discrimination against women, acts of racism and xenophobia, and religious discrimination. Those criticizing the proponents of traditional values demand that priority be given to human rights and the obligations that follow from them for the UN member states. The support Russia has received for its initiative includes that of a number of African countries. The Russian Orthodox Church has expressly welcomed and supported it.

After the WCC assembly in Porto Alegre in 2006, the Russian Orthodox Church spokesperson responsible for ecumenical relations, Bishop Hilarion, talked of a schism between the “churches of tradition” and the “churches of the liberal belt”. In 2011, at the peace convocation of the World Council of Churches in Jamaica, he criticized the churches’ joint advocacy with civil society to support human rights and called for human rights work to be restricted to religious freedom in order to protect persecuted Christians.²⁰

Although human rights remain high on the agenda of the WCC, there is no denying that their significance is receding ever more into the background given the controversies described here.²¹ This is particularly the case when it comes to sticking to the universality and indivisibility of these rights and defending them from all attacks by states that would like to restrict the validity of human rights to only those that reference traditional values.

This discussion has not yet had any direct effects within the UEM community of churches. Even so, the subject of “sexual orientation” has also been taken up at the level of the General Assembly, and a procedure has been elaborated by the council on how to handle it with sensitivity. This looming conflict has not materialized in the community to date, nor have the fundamental confessions in the constitution and the Statement of Corporate Identity been called into question.

7. 1993/96 – 2016 – Twenty years of globalization – A change of perspective for missionary activity in the conciliar process for justice, peace, and the integrity of creation

The establishment of the international UEM in 1993-96 was carried out with the declared aim of a basic change in perspective. No longer would donors and recipients, deciders and non-deciders, the North and the South face off against each other; instead, all members of the new community were to have full participation in the planning and decision-making processes in the community. Similarly, all members in their regions were to share their “gifts, insights and responsibilities” with one an-

20 Hilarion Volokolamsk, Address, (2011) - <http://www.overcomingviolence.org/en/resources-dov/wcc-resources/documents/presentations-speeches-messages/iepc-address-by-metropolitan-hilarion.html>

21 The last time a WCC assembly passed a fundamental declaration on human rights and their significance with an unqualified confession of their universality and indivisibility was in Zimbabwe in 1998, at the Eighth Assembly of the Council. Cf. <http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/assembly/hr-e.html>

other (UEM Constitution § 2 (2) c). This change in perspective required time and the establishment of new structures, such as the regional assemblies, regional committees, and regional offices in Africa and Asia. Equally important was the systematic restructuring of the UEM programmes in personnel exchange and volunteer service in all directions – North-South, South-South, and South-North – as well as the introduction of regional programmes in all three regions.

This change in perspective had a series of effects on the joint advocacy for justice, peace, and the integrity of creation, with its human rights orientation.

Regional and international ecumenical visits to churches that had been affected by violent conflicts created opportunities for solidarity, exchange, and support among churches that faced the same challenges. Churches that shared the same continent designed and implemented learning opportunities to fight poverty, document human rights violations, mediate in armed conflict, and bring about interfaith dialogue and political advocacy work. In Germany, churches from the South observed the challenges of globalization in an industrialized country and posed questions from their particular perspectives. Advocacy for justice, peace, and the integrity of creation is not the task of German churches in aid campaigns for others; rather, all members embrace their own responsibilities in each of their respective contexts.

Similar learning processes can now be ascertained in the international debate at the state level as well, as two more examples show.

After completion of the fifteen-year implementation period of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) adopted in 2000, which were meant to reduce global poverty by 50 per cent, the UN Member States passed its Sustainable Development Goals for 2030 (SDGs) in 2015. For industrialised countries in particular, the MDGs constituted a commitment to make relevant contributions to the implementation of the development goals in countries of the global South; the newly adopted sustainability goals include commitments affecting all signatory countries and require each state to act on its own.

The goal is to completely eliminate poverty and hunger, manage the earth sustainably, enable prosperity for all, and “foster peaceful, just and inclusive societies”.²² The Agenda envisages “a world of universal respect for human rights and human dignity, the rule of law, justice, equality and non-discrimination”.²³ The agenda is explicitly based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the international human rights treaties, and the Declaration on the Right to Development.

A comparable change in perspective occurred at the level of the United Nations Human Rights Council in 2006. With the instrument of a “universal periodic review”, all UN member states – including the countries of the West – have been obliged to present a report every four years on the implementation of human rights in their country and to face critical parallel reports from civil society as well as questions from the international community.

22 General Assembly of the United Nations, *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. Preamble, (2015) - http://www.un.org/pga/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2015/08/120815_outcome-document-of-Summit-for-adoption-of-the-post-2015-development-agenda.pdf

23 Loc. cit., p. 4 pt. 8.

With respect to the UEM member commitments to advocacy for justice, peace, and the integrity of creation, as mentioned in the UEM Constitution, there are no reporting requirements as yet. However, the change in perspective implemented in 1993-1996, from a German mission society to an international community of churches and the v. Bodelschwingh Foundation Bethel, has had sustainable effects on cooperation, exchange, and the content of topics from the conciliar process, as well as advocacy for human rights, as explained above. The question is whether this model does not also represent a request to continue with conventional bilateral forms of church cooperation, like those in church development cooperation.

8. Bearing witness to the Kingdom of God in a world torn apart – Churches in the UEM team up on the path to inclusive community

In the movement initiated by the General Assembly of the UEM in 2014, UEM member churches discussed at a meeting in November 2014 how Christians can create and be living examples of inclusive communities as models for their churches and societies.²⁴ It became clear in the process that advocacy for justice and human rights, peace, and the integrity of creation that harks back to Jesus's proclamation of the coming Kingdom of God is possible, beginning with strong personal relationships. Jesus also and especially turned towards people on the margins of society, thereby overcoming boundaries of tradition, culture, and religion. He spoke God's blessing to them, even though they lived outside or on the fringes of established religious, economic, and social structures. The idea of inclusion, as has interestingly been explicitly taken up in the 2030 UN Agenda, as well as by the WCC in the mission statement from 2013 adopted in Busan, opens up new perspectives on injustice, violence, and poverty.²⁵ Based on the biblical traditions of Jesus, and given the life he led, from a Christian perspective it is not enough to consider the issues

24 Jochen Motte, 'I was a stranger and you invited me': Inclusive Communities and the Churches – Realities, Challenges and Visions, in: *Inclusive Communities and the Churches – Realities, Challenges and Visions*. Documentation of the UEM International Conference in Stellenbosch, South Africa. (2014) p. 11-14.

25 Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME), *Together Towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes*, <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/commissions/mission-and-evangelism/together-towards-life-mission-and-evangelism-in-changing-landscapes> ,

p. 18 - "The good news of God's reign is about the promise of the actualization of a just and inclusive world. Inclusivity fosters just relationships in the community of humanity and creation, with mutual acknowledgement of persons and creation and mutual respect and sustenance of each one's sacred worth. It also facilitates each one's full participation in the life of the community." In my opinion, the concept of "mission from the margins" introduced in the context of the affirmation on mission and evangelism merits discussion, but to engage in such discussion would go beyond the context of this article. The internationalization of the UEM in 1993-1996 illustrates the altered landscapes in the mission, in that the partners formerly "on the margins" became full members of the community.

of justice, peace, and responsibility for creation from a purely political, legal, or social science framework. Jesus lived and acted in an inclusive manner by meeting with people on the margins, establishing ties to them and overcoming exclusion that way.

9. Conclusion

It has been shown here how the commitment to defend justice, peace, and the integrity of creation formulated in the UEM Constitution of 1993 is to be understood in the context of the ecumenical discussion, and in what way this discussion has evolved.

It became clear that, in the context of the internationalized UEM community, the former commitment has been clarified in practice from the beginning – because of an orientation to universal human rights and the inalienable dignity of all people that is grounded in theology and occasioned by members' respective realities. This clarification was included in the UEM Statement on Corporate Identity of 2008.

The context of the advocacy for justice, peace, and the integrity of creation is on the one hand a world that has been torn apart and is no longer primarily understood as a North-South disunity, as it used to be, but rather one whose fragmentation is evident in all regions. On the other hand, the context of the advocacy is also the coming Kingdom of God, in which God puts us and all people into an inclusive community and gives us all ties to one another.

As part of this community of the body of Christ, members face both new and continuing missionary challenges in their advocacy for justice, peace, and the integrity of creation.

They do this not with a know-it-all attitude, or by making demands on others without accepting responsibility themselves, but by sharing gifts, insights, and responsibilities with one another, reminiscent in some ways of the image of a pilgrim-age for justice and peace.

The commitment to advocacy for justice, peace, and the integrity of creation resolved in the UEM Constitution of 1993-1996, in connection with the entire § 2 of the constitution and the clarification of human rights in the Statement on Corporate Identity of the UEM, remains groundbreaking and current to this day.

Against the background of the internationalization of the UEM, these commitments have contributed to strengthening solidarity in the UEM community, helping members to stand by those whose dignity and rights are being violated and to invite them into inclusive communities where the presence of God and his Kingdom are becoming a reality.

The Role of Churches in the Process of Justice and Reconciliation: Justice and Reconciliation as a fundamental Mission of the Churches in the African Context and the Case of Rwanda

Pascal Bataringaya

Introduction

We are living in a world whose people cry for peace almost every day. Through the media, we learn that more countries have no peace because of various conflicts, even though the central message of all religions is peace among the people. The conflicts and wars in the world continue to challenge Christians to view peace as their central task.

Because the Gospel is peace, and Christ himself is peace. Jesus came to bring about peace between humans and God. This kind of peace extends to peace among humans and between humans and nature. So the task of Christians, as far as peace is concerned, is therefore of vertical and horizontal dimensions.

But peace without reconciliation is not possible, and in the case of Rwanda, where we experienced the genocide against the Tutsi in 1994, the process of reconciliation will show us how the Christians take reconciliation and peace seriously as their central task and message. That is why the churches in Rwanda have to play a central role in the process of reconciliation.

The complicity of the churches in the genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda

Rwanda has gone through a history of political violence that culminated in 1994 in a genocide against the Tutsi. It is estimated that more than one million people were killed in a period of a hundred days. Besides the loss of human lives, the genocide caused considerable damages to socio-economic structures, properties, and family and community cohesion.

Social relations were destroyed, the sense of community was not taken into consideration, and the cultural orientation was without meaning as the genocide was committed.

In 1994, most observers considered Rwanda to be the most Christian country of all the African nations. Some 90 per cent of the population self-identified as Chris-

tian, and of this number 65 per cent self-identified as Roman Catholic (based on 1991 census data).

However, more Rwandese citizens were killed in churches and parishes than anywhere else (The case of Nyange or Kibuye). The genocide revealed the saint and sinner in everyone involved, including Christians in general and clergy specifically.

The observers admit that the Christian church lost any credibility it had before the 1994 genocide because of its complicity in that atrocity. As Tom Ndahiro said, the church has failed in its mission and lost its credibility, particularly during the genocide. Ndahiro also has said that the church needs to repent before God and Rwandan society, and to seek healing from God (Tom Ndahiro, *Genocide in Rwanda*, p. 237).

After the genocide, in 2005, the South African Council of Churches led an interfaith delegation to visit the country of Rwanda at the invitation of religious leaders, to discuss “the role of faith communities in facilitating national reconciliation”. The visit coincided with the Day of Reconciliation in Kigali organized by the South African embassy. The delegation met with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Gacaca court officials, the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission, and church leaders from the Roman Catholic and Protestant churches.

The delegation reported that their “meetings with Rwanda’s faith communities were the least satisfying and hopeful aspect of the experience”. The delegation reached the conclusion that the churches in Rwanda “have lost their credibility”. (SA Interfaith Delegation Explores Reconciliation in Rwanda).

The need for reconciliation

While there are numerous consequences of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, the major consequence is that the genocide fractured families, business partnerships, government coalitions, neighborhoods, civic organizations, churches, friendships, social relations, and even marriages. That is why reconciliation is very necessary and the basis of life in this country.

The Christian origins of reconciliation

The concept of reconciliation has its origins in the Bible and in Christian theology. In particular, it has its origins in Old and New Testament theology (it is the central message of the Gospel) and especially the theology of the Apostle Paul. Karl Barth defined the Christian doctrine of reconciliation as “the restitution, the resumption of a fellowship which once existed but was then threatened by dissolution”. (Barth: *The Doctrine of Reconciliation/Continuum International Publishing Group*, 2005).

The theology of reconciliation: The context of Rwanda

The Christian concept of reconciliation refers to a process whereby humanity is reconciled to God through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Paul understood reconciliation as both a restoration of a broken relationship between God and humanity and a “ministry of reconciliation” that attempted to bring human enemies together and create a state of sustainable peace. Paul understood the vertical reconciliation offered through Christ that brings the possibility, the power and hope for a social reconciliation between estranged and divided groups. This shows us the effectiveness of reconciliation across divisions of nations, cultures, and classes.

Actualizing social reconciliation

While there are already governmental and NGO reconciliation efforts underway in Rwanda, including the creation of Gacaca courts in 1996 and the Presbyterian Church Unity and Reconciliation Commission, there is also a role for the church in Rwanda to play in bringing about reconciliation: The church's role in Rwandan reconciliation may need to begin with a humble admission of moral failure and complicity in the genocide, where appropriate.

Reconciliation in the context of Rwanda

For more than twenty years, Rwanda has been and is still embarking on the path of reconciliation after many decades of divisionism, which culminated in the genocide against the Tutsi. Even though our past tragedy is over, we as Rwandans have to heal the trauma of the past. We need to do more in rebuilding the necessary social cohesion and commendable humanity.

The reconciliation process in Rwanda focuses on reconstructing the Rwandan identity, as well as balancing justice, truth, peace and security. The Rwandan Constitution now states that all Rwandans share equal rights. Laws have been passed to fight discrimination and genocide ideology. The church is very involved as well, and very committed to the reconciliation work that includes the teaching of the Bible.

The role of the government and the Rwandan tradition/culture

Primary responsibility for reconciliation efforts in Rwanda rests with the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission, established in 1999, that makes use of the Gacaca courts. It was decided during the national consultations that it was necessary to conceive an alternative approach that would provide justice for the people during their natural lifetime.

It was concluded that the Rwandan Gacaca process should be applied and complemented by the necessary laws, in order for its proceedings to be conducted as judgement.

The process resulted in the passing of an organic law rehabilitating, structuring, and giving mandate to the Gacaca tribunals. Gacaca became a combination of the traditional and modern legal system: a voluntary process, set up in all villages across the country, for a limited period of time.

Most of the work was done on the local level where the genocide was committed. Nine judges were elected by the population from among people of integrity (*Inyangamugayo*). Judges were trained to know the cases of three of the four categories of the perpetrators of the genocide and to pronounce judgement.

Prisoners and their files were transported from the central prison to a former communal prison where they had supposedly committed genocide; they were returned to the communal prisons after the audiences.

One day per week was set aside to allow the villagers to attend the Gacaca. The law made provisions for the community work of those who confessed and requested forgiveness. As the call for repentance and forgiveness was being preached in prisons, many suspects started to give testimonies about genocide and about where they put the bodies of their victims. Thousands of prisoners have now been released from prisons and reintegrated to their communities.

The Gacaca courts officially closed in 2012, after doing the interesting work of dealing with thousands of cases that would have taken two hundred years for the normal courts to process. Other programmes include:

Ingando: A programme of peace education. It aims to clarify Rwandan history and the origins of division among the population, promote patriotism, and fight genocide ideology.

Itorero: Established in 2007, the Itorero programme is a leadership academy to promote **Rwandan values** and cultivate leaders who will help in the development of the community.

Seminars: Training of grass-roots political and ecclesiastical leaders, political party leaders, youth and women in trauma counselling, conflict mitigation, and resolution. **National summits:** Since 2000, several national summits have been organized on topics related to justice, good governance, human rights, national security, and national history.

All of the churches in Rwanda are fully committed to the process of reconciliation. The churches have been involved in developing teaching God's word on confessing and repentance and forgiveness as a way to reconciliation and peace.

Different church-related organizations like African Evangelical Enterprise (AEE), Prison Fellowship, and groups like the Detmold Confession (of which I am also a member) have worked hard to bring about confession, repentance, and forgiveness.

- The Church has a place in the reconstruction of a reconciled Rwandan society. The first step was to reconstruct the basic structures and to provide the basic necessities. Churches needed to find paths to reconciliation through active participation in the life of the society.
- Churches have been instrumental in peacemaking, the term for the promotion of constructive dialogues at all levels among parties involved in violent conflicts in Rwanda. The church in Rwanda is better equipped than any other single actor to consolidate the current peace gains through a reconciliation process.
- Churches have played the role of capacity builders and institutional moralizers. Today churches have increased their awareness and capacity about the role they could decisively play in peacebuilding. Using their extensive educational facilities (60 per cent of schools in Rwanda) and training centres, churches are becoming increasingly better equipped at analysing and understanding the causes of conflicts and their dynamics.
- The education of the young is the key to the future of a country where the population is renewed rapidly. It is therefore the duty of the church to educate children and young people in the values of the Gospel that will be, for them, a compass to show them the way. It is necessary for them to learn to be active members of the church and society, as the future is in their hands.
- Churches are building the capacity of their members and the society at large to prevent violent conflicts and sustain peaceful interactions among their believers. Another indispensable contribution of the church to the reconciliation process is its contribution in the sector of healthcare.

Challenges and recommendations

- The first challenge is to set up adapted post-genocide pastoral work for peace-building that is rooted in basic moral values, memory purification, and reconciliation with our past.
- Research in Christian theology would be also useful in developing a means to make relations between Rwandans stronger in baptism than in ethnic relations.
- All churches must have programmes in their liturgy to commemorate the genocide, so as to enable their full and active involvement in both preparation and implementation of commemoration actions.

In addition, we recommend that church members participate actively in commemoration actions, especially young people.

The EPR Commission of Unity and Reconciliation

In order to face the challenges of the consequences of the genocide against the Tutsi, after the genocide the Presbyterian Church in Rwanda established the Commission of Unity, Reconciliation, and Fighting Against Genocide Ideology, which has enabled it to implement its activities successfully in the domain of unity and reconciliation.

The general objective of this commission was to analyse the consequences of genocide and to think about the contribution of the church to unity and reconciliation in the commemoration of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi.

The specific objectives were:

- To promote unity and reconciliation among people who were traumatized by the genocide against the Tutsi in 1994;
- To identify various understandings of genocide commemoration and explore its significance in Rwandan society;
- To establish the impact of the church in communicating the message of unity and reconciliation through the commemoration to affect the social relationships in the post-genocide country;
- In short, it aims to clarify Rwandan history and the origins of divisions among the population, and to promote unity, reconciliation, and peaceful cohabitation, but also to fight against genocide ideology.

The commission's responsibility was also to point out a link between commemoration and reconciliation in order to generate some suggestions and recommendations for the reconstruction of Rwandan society.

This means that when we commemorate, we remember our children, parents, neighbours and friends killed during the genocide. This commemoration is defined as a remembering that allows us to learn from the past in order to prepare successfully for our future. That is the global objective of the commemoration.

Reconciliation means a restoration of friendly relations; conciliation or rapprochement.

- Remembering means speech, to talk about the situation and to facilitate life
- Forgetting means silence and death

Through the activities of the commission, the church has started to organize memorial sites where all bodies that were found are buried.

Twenty-two years after the tragic events, reconciliation and the healing of memories remain without doubt the priority of the Presbyterian Church in Rwanda. The forgiveness of sins and reconciliation might seem impossible from a human point of view after so much suffering. But it is like a gift to receive it from Christ, on the basis of reconciliation with God. Jesus Christ has assigned the Christians the ministry of reconciliation for God's creatures. Reconciliation takes place in:

- Listening to the stories of others
- Taking part in suffering
- Sharing emotions with deep respect
- Respecting the personally oriented experiences of others
- Accepting different views of the importance of historical identity

In this way, the work and the role of the Commission of Unity and Reconciliation has shown that reconciliation in Rwanda is possible. But it requires patience, mutual respect, and dialogue, which is why we say that it is a long process.

The work organized and done by the church is the key function in the healing of memories to achieve better and peaceful relationships. This is how human beings find security and orientation in their personal lives.

All preachings and teachings given in the church are prepared with consideration for the past history, meaning that the past has a big role in correcting the present and planning for the future. To commemorate the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi is our life's work as Rwandans. Because commemoration is one answer to enable human beings to continue to live: if you stop remembering, you also stop existing.

Reconciliation and social justice belong together. So there can be no forgiveness and no reconciliation if there is no justice. That forgiveness, reconciliation, peace and justice belong together is an interpretation of the teaching of the Bible. But it is important to understand that reconciliation is a process, because although it is a long path, it is the centre of life in a country like Rwanda.

The reconciliation process must be supported by many people, and the majority of the population in Rwanda have expressed their willingness to accompany this process through the Gacaca courts. For this reason, political and religious education about the relationship of social life plays an important role.

In this context, the Presbyterian Church has so far:

- Formulated the guilty confession: case of the EPR in 1996
- Restored confidence among people
- Played a large role in the good progress of the Gacaca courts (on the path to justice)
- Been present at the Gacaca courts (in order to tell and to know the truth)
- Inspired the Gacaca courts by the light of God's word
- Organized the annual remembrance service and accompanied people on the path to healing and reconciliation

The commemoration of the genocide against the Tutsi encourages community relationships in unity and reconciliation. Community relationships are often still weak because of memories of the atrocities committed during the genocide.

So the mission of the churches is to change people's bad behaviours into good ones, as the mission given by Jesus Christ says. Some of the ways in which that mission is being carried out are:

- The creation of the Commission of Unity and Reconciliation at the national level, as well as at the level of parishes and communities
- The construction of the genocide memorials at Remera and Kirinda and the organization by the church of the week of remembrance in all parishes
- The assistance from the church in bringing the perpetrators and survivors together on the path to reconciliation and its continued accompaniment of them, e.g., the case of Remera Parish (Light Group and Peacemakers)
- Standing by both perpetrators and survivors to perpetuate healing for all and enabling dialogue for reconciliation and peace to be conducted
- Organization by the church of workshops about sociotherapy for all categories of the population (including widows and orphans) that continues into the present day
- Organization of various seminars about conflict management, peacemaking, and reconciliation that have played a major role in the politics of reconstruction of the country and society
- Assistance from the Presbyterian Church for survivors of genocide in facing their challenges, and the Church's crucial role in the reconciliation process

The Kinyarwanda concept of Gacaca is one of the very culturally rooted strategies of reconciliation in neighborhood. The term means the grass around the residences in villages where people would gather to listen to different parties involved in the conflict and let themselves be organized by the most trustworthy elders of the community.

The Gacaca courts process was initiated with the following objectives:

1. Identifying the truth about what happened during the genocide
2. Speeding up justice for the genocide
3. Fighting against the culture of impunity
4. Contributing to the national unity and reconciliation process
5. Demonstrating the capacity of the Rwandan people to resolve their own problems and conflicts

It was rightly pointed out that only after fair justice had been administered would the reconciliation and unity of Rwandese society that was broken by the genocide be possible.

In this way, Gacaca served to promote reconciliation by providing a means for victims to know the truth about the deaths of their family members and relatives. These courts also gave perpetrators the opportunity to confess their crimes, to show a feeling of remorse, and to ask for forgiveness in front of their community.

Church campaigns were organized countrywide, including in prisons, and this (especially the preaching to prisoners and others) helped to emphasize the importance of telling the truth, confessing when guilty, and asking for forgiveness.

Finally, the use of repentance and forgiveness for reconciliation and healing of memories means the reconciliation with oneself, with God, and with others. This is how the Commission of Unity and Reconciliation was able to develop a faith characterized by justice, trust, brotherly love, and peace that could overcome the fear of the other. Twenty-two years after the genocide, we hope that this will continue to help us achieve our goal. Together in communion it will be possible, and we are capable of doing it.

May God bless you.

Mission and Climate Justice: Struggling with God's Creation

Victor Aguilan

Today, churches are facing a challenge that threatens humanity and creation. This is the challenge of climate change, or as some prefer to call it, climate justice. This paper will focus on the possible convergence between mission and ecology to deal with the challenge of environmental degradation and climate justice. It will identify responses from the church and the theological themes that warrant such response to climate change.

The injustice of climate change

Earth's climate is changing. What is climate change? The IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) says that climate change “refers to a change in the state of the climate that can be identified (e.g. using statistical tests) by changes in the mean and/or the variability of its properties, and that persists for an extended period, typically decades or longer. It refers to any change in climate over time, whether due to natural variability or as a result of human activity.”¹

Natural processes such as changes in the sun's energy, shifts in ocean currents, and others affect Earth's climate. However, natural causes alone do not explain all of these changes that we have observed over the last half century. In a 2014 report the IPCC stated that Earth's climate system is warming, and that human activities have contributed significantly to the warming.² A study released by the U.S. National Academy of Sciences in 2010 said, “Climate change is occurring, is caused largely by human activities, and poses significant risks for – and in many cases is already affecting – a broad range of human and natural systems.”³

The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) defines the phenomenon as a “change of climate which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition

1 Observed changes in climate and their effects - IPCC, https://www.ipcc.ch/publications_and_data/ar4/syr/en/mains1.html, accessed 27 January 2016.

2 IPCC, 2014: Climate Change 2014: Synthesis Report: Contribution of Working Groups I, II and III to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [Core Writing Team, R.K. Pachauri and L.A. Meyer (eds.)]. IPCC, Geneva, Switzerland, 151 pp.

3 National Academy of Sciences (2010). *Advancing the Science of Climate Change*, Washington, DC.

of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods.⁴ Human activities are contributing to climate change, primarily by releasing billions of tons of carbon dioxide (CO₂) and other heat-trapping gases, known as greenhouse gases, into the atmosphere every year.

Climate scientists agree that humans are driving climate change. About 97 per cent of scientists agree not only that climate change is a fact, but also that human activity is causing global warming.⁵ Changes in the climate system affect our well-being, environment, and economy. Some of the impacts of climate change are:⁶

1. Warmer temperatures increase the frequency, intensity, and duration of heat waves, which can pose health risks, particularly for young children and the elderly.
2. Climate change can also impact human health by worsening air and water quality, increasing the spread of certain diseases, and altering the frequency or intensity of extreme weather events.
3. Rising sea levels threaten coastal communities and ecosystems.
4. Changes in the patterns and amount of rainfall, as well as changes in the timing and amount of stream flow, can affect water supplies and water quality and the production of hydroelectricity.
5. Changing ecosystems influence the geographic ranges of many plant and animal species and the timing of their life cycle events, such as migration and reproduction.
6. Increases in the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, such as heat waves, droughts, and floods, can increase losses to property, causing costly disruptions to society.

Changes brought about by global warming will affect us all, but the major negative impacts will not be evenly distributed. Some places, such as poor communities, low-lying deltas, and communities dependent upon glacial melt and snowpack for their water, will be hit harder than others. Greenpeace has identified several vulnerable communities in the Philippines. The rise in sea levels could submerge coastal communities in over 700 municipalities covering Sulu, Zamboanga del Sur, Northern Samar, Zamboanga Sibugay, Zamboanga del Norte, Maguindanao, Davao del Norte, Basilan, Tawi-Tawi, Cebu, Bohol, Negros Occidental, Capiz, Catanduanes, Samar, Masbate, Palawan, Camarines Sur, Camarines Norte, and Quezon, including Manila, the capital city.⁷

4 <https://pubfiles.pagasa.dost.gov.ph/climps/climateforum/ClimatechangeinthePhilippines.pdf>, accessed 26 January 2016.

5 What We Know, <http://whatweknow.aas.org/get-the-facts/>, accessed January 27, 2016.

6 Climate Change US EPA, <http://www3.epa.gov/climatechange/science/overview.html>, accessed 27 January 2016.

7 Greenpeace Philippines. Maps Show RP on Road to Climate Change Catastrophe. <http://www.greenpeace.org/seasia/ph/News/news-stories/on-the-road-to-a-climate-catas/>, accessed 16 April 2016.

The Philippine government has “estimated the annual cost of disasters to the economy to be between 0.7 and 1 percent of the gross domestic product and an average of P15 billion a year in direct damage”.⁸ Whether climate impacts for a certain place are worst or mild, one thing will be certain: the poor will suffer more than others. The reason is simple and straightforward: they are poor. This by itself makes them more vulnerable. Climate change becomes a question of climate justice.⁹

In addressing the challenge of climate change, UN member states have agreed according to the 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change to limit global warming to “well below” 2 degrees Celsius or 1.5 degrees Celsius if possible, “recognizing that this would significantly reduce the risks and impact of climate change”.¹⁰

Aggravating circumstances: Degraded environment and government policy

The impact of climate change is compounded by the current state of environmental degradation and the government’s misguided development agenda. According to the IBON Foundation:¹¹

- Forested lands, which covered 70 per cent of the Philippine land area of 30 million hectares in the last century, have fallen to less than 6 million hectares. Other data states that only 17 per cent of the country’s forests remain. Philippine coasts are degraded and have been left with less than 3 per cent of their coral reefs in good condition.
- More than 70 per cent of mangroves in the Philippines have been lost in recent decades. Unsafe river systems are at a high of 67 per cent, while more than half of all groundwater is contaminated. It is thus not surprising that the Philippines has the fourth-highest number in the region of the most threatened species.

The development plan of the Philippine government appears to be dissonant in dealing with climate change. Similar to other Asian countries, the Philippines has embarked on a development agenda that made mining a vital component of national growth. According to the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB), the archipelago is second in the world in gold and third in copper resources. The Mining Act of 1995 (RA 7942) allowed mining projects and applications to venture into environmentally critical areas all over the archipelago, including geohazard sites, watersheds, freshwater systems, indigenous peoples’ ancestral lands, biodiversity conservation areas, and agricultural lands. Mining is a source of carbon emissions. Mining also creates adverse direct and indirect impacts on the ecosystems and communities that will be facing greater challenges from climate change. These include the downstream impacts of deforestation during clearing and mine-construction phases, reduction of the freshwater supply for agriculture and domestic use, contamination and siltation

8 Is the mining sector prepared for climate change? <http://business.inquirer.net/208943/is-the-mining-sector-prepared-for-climate-ch>, accessed 16 April 2016.

9 Theodor Rathgeber. *Climate Justice, Human Rights and the Role of Churches*. (WCC Publications. 2012). See also WWC Care for creation and climate justice. <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/what-we-do/climate-change>, accessed 16 April 2016.

10 <https://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2015/cop21/eng/l09r01.pdf>, accessed 27 April 2016.

11 IBON. *Earth Day 2013: PH Environment in Peril* Apr 01, 2013.

of nearby water bodies, and acid mine drainage. It is ironic that the share of mining in the gross domestic product has been only 1 per cent, while its contribution to employment has been only 0.6 per cent. Government shares from mining in taxes, royalties and fees amounted to P22.83 billion in 2013, or a measly 1.33 per cent of total tax revenues.¹²

Furthermore, a growing economy requires energy. The Philippines has targeted an increase in the country's energy production by constructing new power plants. However, the type of power plants being constructed is contributing much to carbon emissions. According to Greenpeace, there are sixteen coal-fired power plants operational in the country.¹³ Twenty-three new coal-fired power plants are to be established by 2020.¹⁴ This is despite the fact that coal-fired power plants are the largest producers of human-generated CO₂ emissions.¹⁵

Increasing poverty and unemployment in the country exert much stress on natural resources as people are forced to exploit them, forcing them to go farther upland, to scour the forests for fuel and food, to engage in illegal fishing and other desperate and destructive means of survival. As the World Commission on Environment and Development explains:

Environmental stress has often been seen as the result of the growing demand on scarce resources and the pollution generated by the rising living standards of the relatively affluent. But poverty itself pollutes the environment, creating environmental stress in a different way. Those who are poor and hungry will often destroy their immediate environment in order to survive: They will cut down forests; their livestock will overgraze grasslands; they will use marginal land; and in growing numbers they will crowd into congested cities. The cumulative effect of these is so far-reaching as to make poverty itself a major global scourge.¹⁶

Hence, responding to the challenge of climate change cannot be divorced from the question of social justice and development. Therefore, climate change cannot be divorced from issues such as foreign domination and the inequitable distribution of and access to wealth and power.¹⁷

12 Bienvenido S. Oplas, Jr. Taxation and Regulations in Philippine Mining Industry (<http://www.bworldonline.com/content.php?section=Opinion&title=taxation-and-regulations-in-philippine-mining-industry&id=115703>, accessed April 26, 2016; and <http://www.manilatimes.net/mining-chips-in-only-3-to-gdp-research-group/219466/>, accessed 26 April 2016.

13 Greenpeace. Existing Coal Plants in the Philippines to date. <http://www.greenpeace.org/seasia/ph/PageFiles/440331/PH-Coal-Plant-List.pdf>, accessed 25 April 2016.

14 <http://www.bworldonline.com/content.php?section=Economy&title=coal-fired-plants-to-boost-philippine-power-supply&id=110846>, accessed 25 April 2016.

15 <http://www.greenpeace.org/international/en/campaigns/climate-change/coal/>, accessed 25 April 2016.

16 Gro Harlem Brundtland, *Our Common Future*, (1987: The World Commission on Environment and Development,) Oxford University Press. pp. 28f.

17 WCC. Budapest Call for Climate Justice. <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/public-witness-addressing-power-affirming-peace/pover->

Missiological challenge

Churches in Asia, Africa, the Americas and Europe should not close their eyes to the ongoing degradation of our environment. In responding to this challenge, the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP) has made integral to its mission the struggle for justice, peace, and the integrity of Creation (JPIC).

The UCCP's involvement in the world finds authorization in the doctrine of creation. God is the creator. Moreover, creation is good. This doctrine is based on the biblical creation story (e.g., Gen 1&2, Ps 24, John 1, Romans 8:22-24). What is the implication of this doctrine for the mission of the Church? It is what makes our mission theocentric and earth-oriented.

Our mission is theocentric because the very source of our mission is God. The imperative to do mission comes from the divine.¹⁸ It is earth-oriented because the mission of the church is not other-worldly but rather in this world. Hence, we are to discern what God is doing in the world.¹⁹ It entails an ethic that is "earth-honouring". I take this phrase from the title of Larry Rasmussen's book, "Earth-Honoring Faith: Religious Ethics in a New Key". Earth-honouring faith is discipleship, a calling and a praxis. In other words, it is a "shift from the human subject to nature comprehensively as the starting point and measure".²⁰

All species, the earth, the waters, and the air are good, since they are integral parts of the planet which sustain their shared existence. This is how God created the universe and declared it good. The goodness of creation implies the integrity of creation. The various creatures, the land, the waters, and the air are all interconnected. Moreover, humans are part of and integral to God's creation. When all parts function in relation to one another as intended by God, the universe is indeed good, manifesting God's highest goodness and divine glory.²¹ This interaction among created beings includes sustaining other creatures. Disrupting the integrity of creation diminishes its goodness.

Since creation is good, God entrusted it to human beings. Humans are God's stewards. Central to the theology of creation is the notion of stewardship. If all of God's creation is "good", then his followers must have the same regard for it that he has. This is to counter the tendency among pious Christians to withdraw from the world thinking that it is evil, corrupt, and hopeless. For some, the world is so evil that we have to avoid it so as not to get contaminated. However, God declares that creation is good. There is a divine imperative for humans to take care of creation.

ty-wealth-and-ecology/neoliberal-paradigm/agape-consultation-budapest-call-for-climate-justice, accessed 27 April 2016. See also Theodor Rathgeber. *Climate Justice, Human Rights and the Role of Churches*. pp.13-22.

18 James Gustafson. *Ethics from a Theocentric Perspective*, Volume 1 (University Of Chicago Press; Reprint edition 1983)

19 Norman C. Habel. "Earth-Mission: The Third Mission of the Church." *Currents in Theology and Mission* 37, no. 2 (1 April 2010): 114–25.

20 Larry Rasmussen. *Earth-Honoring Faith: Religious Ethics in a New Key*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press. 2014) p.24. See also Larry Rasmussen, *Earth Community Earth Ethics* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1997)

21 Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* 1, q. 65, a. 2.

Christians are called to witness the goodness of creation by caring and valuing the earth, the waters, the air, and all God's creatures.

In Article II, Section 11 of the Church Constitution, the UCCP declares that "as steward of God's creation, the United Church of Christ in the Philippines shall protect, promote, and enhance the ecological balance and the integrity of creation."²² This understanding of mission has guided the UCCP in its response to the challenge of climate justice. We can categorize the UCCP response in two modes: prophetic witness and diaconic engagement.

Prophetic witness: Survey of selected statements

The 1990 General Assembly of the UCCP made the stewardship of creation a major theme of the assembly: "*The Church for the Life of the World: Called to Be Stewards of God's Creation.*" In fact, the assembly approved two statements on ecology and protecting the environment.

The General Assembly approved a landmark statement of the UCCP on 21-26 May 1990 – "A RESOLUTION ON ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS". In this document, the UCCP expressed concern regarding the continuing destruction of the environment. It called upon the local churches "to be vigilant to defend God's creation, if not for us then for our children and their children" and encouraged the entire constituency: 1) to educate our people on the root causes of such destruction and suffering; 2) to formulate development policies which consider the principles evoked above and give due consideration to such issues as rational land use, genuine land reform, and forest land reform, and to formulate such plans and programmes for all levels of the life of the church through a process of research and consultation; 3) to support the call for a total logging ban in the country, and to formulate an action programme that includes a massive tree-planting programme.

In another document, entitled "**A Statement of the Preservation of the Integrity of God's Creation**" and approved by the General Assembly on 21-26 May 1990, the church affirms that "his creation [i]s very good."²³ This view of creation engenders hope that a good world is possible. Moreover, since creation is good, God entrusted it to human beings including the church. The Statement also acknowledges that "Human beings failed miserably as stewards. Through indifference and neglect or deliberate, inconsiderate and greedy decisions, they defaced and destroyed the earth to enhance personal profits at the expense of God's good and beautiful creation. Through their lust to possess and to amass for themselves the wealth and bounty of the earth, mixed with total abandon and disregard for the welfare of creation, human beings committed disastrous acts." The church as steward of God's creation is called upon to defend God's creation against mining and logging activities. The UCCP understands that the mandate placed upon humans to assume responsibility for helping to preserve God's creation is a fundamental Christian theme. The divine command in creation that humanity rule over the earth (Gen 1:26; Ps 8:6) testifies to this mandate for the human stewardship of creation. Since violence and abuses threaten creation, which is created as good, the church is mandated to preserve creation.

22 UCCP Constitution and By-Laws, 1993.

23 A Statement of the Preservation of the Integrity of God's Creation, GA 21-26 May 1990.

The UCCP remains critical of government policy that threatens the integrity of creation. When the Philippine Congress passed the Mining Act of 1995, the UCCP national leadership issued a statement of concern on the **Effect of the Philippine Mining Act**. The church opposed the passage of the Mining Act because it “opens the era to unprecedented exploitation of the mineral resources of the country ... This law provides the unhampered entry, control and exploitation of big foreign mining companies to the Philippines. ... The Church stands by its prophetic task and calls on the State not to sell our birthright for a bowl of porridge. Not to sell our dignity for some pieces of silver or even gold. The Church stands by its mandate as a steward of God’s creation and therefore makes known its opposition to the Philippine Mining Act of 1995.”²⁴

Diaconic engagement: The UCCP in solidarity with communities’ struggles

The UCCP mission is not limited to making statements. Church leaders have become advocates and defenders of the environment in solidarity with the local communities and other religious groups. You have heard about the UCCP solidarity work with the Lumad in Mindanao, the human rights violations against indigenous peoples, their displacement from their lands, and the attacks on their evacuation centre – the fire at the Haran shelter. The attacks against the IP communities have been perceived as part of the effort to pacify the communities to accept the mining operations. According to one report, “the Haran Mission Center has sheltered around 700 Lumad or indigenous people who have sought sanctuary there. They have been displaced from their communities in Talaingod, Davao del Norte, because of heavy militarization...the Lumad live in mineral-rich areas coveted by foreign mining companies. There is massive militarization in these areas to protect foreign mining interests.”²⁵

This is the latest incidence of harassment against the church because of its diaconic engagement and solidarity with the struggling communities. Some have sacrificed their lives. To mention just a few:

24 UCCP. Stop the Plunder of Our Natural Wealth: A Unity Statement for the Protection of the People and the Environment; statement calling for the scrapping of the Mining Act of 1995 and to stop mining exploration in Region 8 (Rev. Jerome Baris. SAMAR ISLAND DISTRICT CONFERENCE United Church of Christ in the Philippines, 18 November 2010.) The UCCP leadership has called upon the government to do the following: 1) Scrap the Mining Act of 1995 and stop the government’s Mining Revitalization Program. 2) Stop foreign and large-scale mining operations and projects. 3) Nationalize the minerals industry. 4) Defend our communities against human rights violations and militarization. 5) Pass the proposed Philippine Mineral Resources Act of 2012 and declare a moratorium on mining operations and processing of applications. 6) Expose the deceptive “greenwashing” offensive being done by mining TNCs. 7) Support the grass-roots initiatives against large-scale and destructive mining.

25 Bishop Hamuel Tequis and Bishop Melzar Labuntog. “Haran Mission Centre of UCCP in Davao City (Philippines) Set on Fire.” <http://www.ve mission.org/en/home/news-detail-view/archive/29/february/2016/article/anschlag-im-haran-mission-centre-der-uccp-in-davao-philippinen.html>, accessed 27 April 2016.

- Samson “Mike” Rivera, an anti-mining advocate and an active member of the United Evangelical church in Calapan City, Oriental Mindoro, was shot and killed in May 2010.²⁶
- Rabenio Sungit: 44 years old, summary execution, 5 September 2011. An active lay leader of the UCCP in Quezon, Palawan. Interpreter of the Palaw’an tribe, leader of the indigenous group Pagsambatan (Unity of Indigenous People). His brother Avelino Sungit was the victim of an extrajudicial killing in 2005.²⁷
- Abundio Mantugohan and Datu Erning Mantugohan were extrajudicially killed on 11 January 2012 and 10 October 2012, respectively.²⁸
- Datu Jimmy Liguyon was killed on 5 March 2012. Datu Jimmy Liguyon was both a Barangay Kagawad and the UCCP Dao Council Chair.²⁹
- Fidela “Delle” Salvador y Bugarin, an engineer and a member of the UCCP, met her death at the hands of the Armed Forces of the Philippines during their military operations in Lacub, Abra, in September 2014. She was not and had never been a member of the New People’s Army (NPA).³⁰

Working with communities that are protecting their environment is a dangerous diaconic ministry in the Philippines.

Despite the risks, the UCCP continues with its mission. I would like to mention the current engagement of two of our local pastors: Rev. Junwel Bueno is actively involved in opposing the construction of the coal-fired plant in Batangas province in the island of Luzon. He is a member of the “*Piglas Batangas! Piglas Pilipinas!*” campaign that is part of a global campaign, “*Break Free from Fossil Fuels 2016*”, a movement against fossil fuels that supports accelerating a just transition to 100 per cent renewable energy.³¹

26 Another UCCP member shot dead in front of UCCP Church in Mindoro Oriental. <http://www.globalministries.org/news/eap/uccp/another-uccp-member-shot-dead.html#>, accessed 1 May 2016.

27 Church worker and brother of EJK victim also gunned down by suspected state security forces in Palawan, Philippines <http://www.karapatan.org/UA+Church+worker+gunned+down+by+suspected+state+security+forces+in+Palawan>, accessed May 1, 2016.

See also Philippines: indigenous activist killed in the latest of a series of deadly attacks - See more <http://www.minorityvoices.org/news.php/en/829/philippines-indigenous-activist-killed-in-the-latest-of-a-series-of-deadly-attacks#sthash.1iB5Yqrp.dpuf>, accessed May 1, 2016.

28 UCCP Bishops’ open letter to President Aquino dated 7 December 2012. <http://davaotoday.com/main/inbox/uccp-bishops-open-letter-to-president-aquino/>, accessed 2 May 2016.

29 Ibid. Killings of Environment Advocates Unpunished, 18 July 2012 <https://www.hrw.org/news/2012/07/18/philippines-killings-environment-advocates-unpunished>, accessed 2 May 2016; see also Jimmy Liguyon <http://www.menschenrechte-philippinen.de/index.php/en/jimmy-liguyon/>, accessed 2 May 2016.

30 Statement of the Family of Engr. Fidela Bugarin–Salvador dated 16 October 2014.

31 Interview of Rev. Junwel Bueno (Facebook private message: 17 May 2016). See also Batangas Priests Lead Fight Vs Coal-Fired Power Plant. <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/688636/batangas-priests-lead-fight-vs-coal-fired-power-plant#ixzz49i1PMjWA>

Another local engagement is the UCCP Mission Climb, led by Rev. Arturo Dodong Veladiez of **Bukidnon Area Conference and an alumnus of the Divinity School**. In my interview, Rev. Dodong said that the “UCCP mission climb is an outdoor ministry of the church organized in 2002 in Bukidnon Area Conference whose mission aims are: 1) professing creation spirituality by reaching out to the indigenous peoples; 2) conduct relief, medical, and alternative agricultural support to farmers; 3) study-exposures with IP communities; and 4) research. Their activities include but [are] not limited to [a] Basic Mountaineering Course, orientation on the protection of the environment; training on disaster management and emergency response.” The main goal is to promote mutual solidarity with the lumad while at the same time “exposing members to the actual struggles of Tri-people³² in defending the land, life, and culture.”³³

Another local campaign we have is the “Save Mount Talinis” action in Negros Oriental. Mount Talinis, also known as the Cuernos de Negros, is a complex mountain range about 1,903 metres above sea level, it is the second highest mountain on Negros Island after Mount Kanlaon. The campaign is opposing the Energy Development Corporation’s 60-megawatt expansion that would not only cut down 576 century-old trees, disrupting the ecology, but also threaten watersheds and the lives that depend on them.³⁴

These actions are some of the diaconic engagement of the UCCP in defending, promoting, and advancing the basic human rights of communities for a balanced and healthy ecology in accord with the rhythm and harmony of nature (Section 16, Article II of the Constitution of the Philippines). However, it should be mentioned that the church needs to do more. There are still church members who need to be educated and encouraged to engage in this ministry.

Conclusion

To do mission today requires the integration of justice, peace, and respect for the integrity of Creation (JPIC). The mission of the church is derived from the mission of God that includes honoring and caring for creation. God created the universe. God sent his Son into the world that God created. Our mission is theocentric and earth-oriented. This is the basis of why the church cannot separate its mission from God’s creation. The UCCP strives to remain faithful to this mission. The church has concretized its JPIC mission in two approaches - prophetic witness and diaconic engagement. The church has issued statements for the protection, realization, and advancement of the rights of the communities for a healthy environment. The church endeavors to engage in diaconic work with communities in solidarity with their

32 People from northern Mindano

33 Interview of Rev. Arturo Dodong Veladiez (Facebook private message dated April 25, 2016)

34 <http://act.350.org/sign/save-mt-talinis>, accessed 25 April 2016. See also Alcala, Ely. *A call to save Mt. Talinis forest* <http://dumaguemetropost.com/a-call-to-save-mt-talinis-for-est-p5520-196.htm>, accessed 30 May 2016.

struggle to protect their lives, rights, and the environment. The UCCP is paying a high price for doing God's mission. Church members have been harassed, intimidated, arrested, and some have been killed. Despite these, the UCCP continues with God's mission. It may despair. The church may find the challenge overwhelming. However, like St. Paul, the church can claim to be "persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed." Thus, our mission continues.

Development

Leadership in Protestant Churches and its Contribution to socio-economic Development in Africa

Faustin Leonard Mahali

Introduction

From the second half of the twentieth century to the present day, Protestant churches¹ in Africa have registered significant growth. Moreover, in the same epoch, African countries south of the Sahara have experienced enormous social, political, and economic transformations. Most of the promises of these political and economic reforms have not been fulfilled, since most Africans live in abject poverty.² This is the context where Protestant churches and their affiliated institutions live and fulfil their commission of spiritual and diaconal services.

Being part of these communities in Africa, Protestant churches and their respective institutions need visionary leaders to make them agents of social and economic change. A strong leadership in Protestant churches is needed to meet the theological and pastoral demands of the recorded growth of the church. In a context where many states are blamed for having failed to sustain the livelihoods of their people, churches remain their only hope. Ultimately, good leadership of churches is needed to spearhead and revitalize a spirit of good governance and accountability in order to set a good example for other religious and secular institutions to follow suit.

However, it is unfortunate that Protestant churches are in either a latent or explicit leadership crisis. The growth in members of the church has been in those of whom the majority are poor and cannot recruit and sustain qualified theologians and church administrators for the ministry. As a result, the church is led by under-educated ministers who cannot interpret their environment well or turn challenges facing the church into opportunities.³ Poor leadership is the very root cause of

1 By these I mean strictly those African World Council of Churches members that trace their origins to Reformation times, namely those related to Lutheran, Reformed, Anglican, Methodist, and Presbyterian churches (<https://www.oikoumene.org/en/member-churches>).

2 Few African countries, viz., Botswana, Egypt, Gabon, South Africa, Cape Verde, Morocco, Namibia, Congo (Brazzaville), Zambia, and Ghana, exhibit medium human development, while the rest of African countries are low human development, *Human Development Report 2015* (New York: The United Nations Development Programme, 2015), 234-237, accessed 2 February 2015, http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/2015_human_development_report.pdf.

3 Hans-Martin Wilhelm Jr., "Walking Far Together: Theological Education and Development in African Pastoral Formation", (Pretoria: University of South Africa, PhD Dissertation, 2003), 20, accessed 2 February 2016, <http://uir.unisa.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10500/1207/Thesis.pdf?sequence=1>.

problems such as ethnic and sectarian conflicts, financial crises, ethical and moral problems among Christians, unnecessary power struggles, and decelerated social and economic development.

These complexities of leadership in Protestant churches in Africa need a clear theological framework. Protestant churches are by nature supposed to be participatory churches in decision making.⁴ The theory of universal priesthood mandates all Christians to participate in building the body of Christ. However, this also encourages disorganization.⁵ It makes churches sometimes fail in their task of providing quality spiritual and diaconal services that lead to holistic development.

This paper surveys the establishment of Protestant churches in Africa and the way they are organized and led to fulfil their objectives. It also features a discussion on the crisis of leadership in Africa and how it implicates the stagnation of social and economic development of the churches and communities in Africa. Third, it appraises the Protestant theory of justification by faith and discusses how this can best be adopted in the African context to speed up accountability and development in Africa.

The organization and leadership of churches in Africa

The establishment of Protestant churches in Africa went hand in hand with the proliferation of African states. In the nineteenth and early twentieth century, churches were founded as centres led mostly by missionaries from Euro-American Protestant countries. Many mission centres were established along Western colonial territorial boundaries.⁶ Thus, in their early stages of establishment, Protestant churches largely practiced an authoritarian style of leadership, with the power centred on a missionary.

Early church historians affirm this when describing the crisis of leadership experienced during and after the First World War, and confirm the orphanage of the churches because of repatriated and interned missionaries.⁷ From this experience, missionaries returning to these stations after the First World War began to make initiatives of training indigenous catechists and pastors.⁸ These ministers were pioneers in planting, governing, and sustaining these churches. However, the structures

4 Paul Kohls, "A Look at Church Leadership in Africa", in *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology*, 17 (2), 1998, pp. 107-126, retrieved from http://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/ajet/17-2_107.pdf.

5 Cf. Gustav Bjoerkstrand, "Changing Challenges of Church Leadership", *Church Work and Management in Change*, eds Kati Niemelä, (Porvoo, Finland: Church Research Institute, 2012), 19.

6 Robert Strayer, "Mission History in Africa: New Perspectives on an Encounter", *African Studies Review*, vol. 19, no. 1 (1976), 1, accessed 25 December 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/523849>.

7 John Baur, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa: An African Church History*, 2nd ed. (Nairobi, Kenya: Paulines Publications Africa), 404-406. Cf. Jonathan Hildebrandt, *History of the Church in Africa: A Survey* (Achimota, Ghana: Africa Christian Press, 1981), 226-227.

8 Baur, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa*, 408.

of organization of these churches remained authoritarian, as it were. The role of church elders as members of the governing instrument of the church was reduced to diaconal support.

The establishment of theological education was reactively mission-based. The theological and Bible schools founded were meant to introduce Bible knowledge and evangelistic skills to cater to the needs of mission fields.⁹ Biblical-theological doctrinal instructions have stigmatized attempts to critically study and contextualize local customs and beliefs into Christianity. Fragmented Western theological-philosophical ideas have been taught as representative of the logic to arrive at the absolute truth of Christian faith without proper customization. Thus, the mission fields have been superfluously studied, and largely foreign theological paradigms have been used to introduce Christianity in Africa.¹⁰

The nature of ecclesial and theological foundations cultivated in the African context has also affected the concept of priestly office. This office's position as the focal point of any congregation or institution determines the kind of infrastructures for church leadership and management. However, pastoral formation became affected by the emergent ordination of theologically uneducated personnel. Moreover, the baptising of the priestly office as pastoral and not as a priestly office uprooted its African cultural roots. The adoption of the pastoralist concept of church leadership produced asymmetrical conditions between missionaries and ordained pastors. Moreover, ordained pastors assumed a high responsibility of tending the sheep (Christians), and hence usurped power for themselves.¹¹ Christians, who are led by a pastor, should listen to a pastor, like a flock of animals obeying a pastoralist. Thus, the hermeneutical consequence of priestly office through pastoral office, while sounding accommodative of universal priesthood theory, contributes to unnecessary bureaucratic features in the church.

Emergent pastors also assumed a lot of power based on the example set by chiefs and missionaries. When missionaries established centres, they managed everything. They conducted evangelistic and financial management. Finances were often shouldered by a missionary or a leader of the station. In such a situation, the introduction of democratic styles of leading a congregation becomes dysfunctional because of the legacy of authoritarian leadership left by missionaries and the misinterpretation of the priestly office. Even the above-mentioned metaphor of a pastor as a leader who tends a flock definitely does not give a pastor and a congregant the same status.

Another area that is often overlooked is social stratification during the missionary-colonial epoch. African historical books report ethnic conflicts before and after the arrival of missionaries. Rivalry groups stigmatized each other. Each group

9 Andreas Hirsch, "Protestantische theologische Ausbildung in Tansania: Deren Geschichte, Hintergründe, und Gestalt in den Anfängen", (Dillenburg: Universitaet Suedafrika, 2002), 67-71.

10 Kwame Bediako, "The Roots of African Theology", *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* (1989), 64, accessed 24 December 2016, <http://www.internationalbulletin.org/issues/1989-02/1989-02-058-bediako.pdf>

11 The biblical idea of Jesus as the good shepherd, while seeming to challenge a pastor to become a servant, encourages a hierarchy with a pastor as a representative of God.

tried to win support from missionaries or colonial superintendents or governors. They all had the intention of protecting or expanding their territories. Apart from other traditional ways of marriage, exchange of hostages, and frequent raids, allying with foreign forces was another strategy to those ends. Thus in forming early preaching centres and congregations, mistrust and hypocrisy among members became an issue and stringent church discipline became a tool to keep the order of the church.

Last but not least, in the African context there is no clear line between the office of a diviner or healer and that of a leader of an ethnic group. Redefinition of this office into that of a mere “chieftain” by secular institutions or a complete stigmatization of it by Christians has reduced the value of this office. In other words, new forms of priestly office and leadership have not found roots in the African context because of the introduction of new forms of leadership and priestly office.

Leadership and development in Africa

There is a leadership crisis in Africa in both secular and religious institutions. Disturbances of sociopolitical identities through the slave trade, colonialism, and hegemonic systems from Western and Eastern countries have caused persistent instability in Africa. The partition of Africa along colonial and ethnic boundaries has caused animosities among ethnic groups that once existed peacefully. The introduction of new governing systems that have seen the replacement of kingdoms with chiefdoms that by force became part of colonial governing systems disturbed the leadership system that was meant to protect these communities and their natural environment and resources. A king, who was once considered to embody divine power to perform divination, was reduced to a mere chief and an instrument of the colonial master. Hence, African leadership systems influenced by colonialism were trapped into tyrannical, irresponsible, and unaccountable governing styles.

The same applied to the church’s organizational structures. There are too many structures in the church in comparison with the resources to sustain them. Churches are organized from the grass-roots to the national level through structures that need qualified human resources: pastors/priests, deacons, administrators, members of councils, and church elders. Different systems are adopted on how to recruit and retain them. In the case of pastors, evangelists, and administrators, some structures centralize their administration of remuneration, while others leave the pastors to look for their own remuneration from their particular congregations. This has caused pastors to compete for rich congregations and parishes or to lobby higher authorities to be placed at a rich congregation or parish.

Another problem is that many churches are situated in rural areas where most members face extreme income poverty. Most mission centres were established in rural areas. With African economies remaining agriculturally based, many current congregations suffer from income deficits to run their congregations. Congregations cannot support the work and projects initiated by their councils. This has caused a dependency syndrome of church administration by sister churches, which in turn weakens the accountability of leaders to the grassroots.

Lastly, ideological reasons enlivened by Marxist theories have caused religious institutions to be generally stigmatized. The role of religion in social and economic development is overlooked. Hence many people who could have had a call to serve in the church abstain from these services for social and economic reasons. As a result, people who devote themselves to church work are denigrated, considered irrational and second-class citizens. This has forced the church to engage untrained clergy and administrators in order to fulfil necessary evangelistic and developmental tasks.

Universal priesthood and participatory leadership

Reflection and reinterpretation of the Reformation discourse offers a chance for African Christians and theologians to arrive at a meaningful transformation of leadership. There is a need for African churches to go back and discuss early traditions of reformation and see how they can be transferred into our contexts. Thus, recalling the standpoints of reformers in relation to the universal priesthood theory is inevitable. Like the reformers who called for a return to scriptures, Africans should call for a return to the same, and to traditions that make the very nature of the universal priesthood.

One of the ingenious tools of Luther's Reformation was his theory of a "priesthood of all believers". This tool is shown clearly in his work, *An Open Letter to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation: Concerning the Reform of the Christian Estate*, when he breaks through what he calls "the three walls" that gave the pope the absolute power to decide on all matters related to the church.¹² Of the first wall, which assumes clergy to embody the "spiritual estate [walk of life]" against the "temporal estate" of the laity, Luther says that there is no such dichotomy, since all baptized Christians "are consecrated into priesthood".¹³ What make Christians distinct from each other are their specialized carriers (office), through which they are still consecrated priests and bishops. From those offices they serve and compliment the body of Christ, since they are all members of this one body.¹⁴ The other two walls, of attributing the power of interpretation of scriptures to the pope and of the calling of councils to be approved by the pope, become automatically broken.¹⁵

Luther further contended that "[Christ] takes from the bishops, theologians and councils both the right and the power to judge doctrine, and confers them upon all men, and upon all Christians in particular".¹⁶ He insists that a Christian through the Gospel has the right, power, and is "duty bound, according to the obedience it

12 *Works of Martin Luther*, Vol. II, "An Open Letter to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation: Concerning the Reform of the Christian Estate", (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania, A. J. Holman Company and The Castle Press, 1915), 65.

13 Luther uses a quotation from 1 Pet 2:5.

14 "Letter to the Christian Nobility," 69.

15 *Ibid.* 73-79.

16 *Works of Martin Luther*, Vol. IV, "The Right and Power of a Christian or Community to Judge All Teaching and to Call, Appoint, and Dismiss Teachers, Established and Proved From Scripture" (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania, A. J. Holman Company and The Castle Press, 1915), 76-77.

pledged to Christian Baptism, and under pain of forfeiting its salvation, to shun, to flee, to put down, to withdraw from, the authority which bishops, abbots, monastic houses, foundations, and the like exercise today..."¹⁷ However, for a proper ministry of the Word in a congregation, the same scriptures endow Christians to appoint some with the required gifts to do the work.¹⁸ Therefore, Luther attributes priesthood to all Christians, and that appointment to the office, although originating from the baptism that enshrines a believer with the divine power to perform it, becomes just a functional office like any other office.

John Calvin was thinking in the same line as Luther when he asserted that "all Christians are called 'a royal priesthood' because by Christ we offer that sacrifice of praise of which the apostle speaks, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name" (1 Pet 2:9; Heb 13:15). He further appeals, "We do not appear with our gifts in the presence of God without an intercessor."¹⁹ Calvin emphasizes that we all have become priests in Christ, who has offered himself as the expiatory means for our reconciliation, and that what is needed of us is "to offer praise and thanksgiving, [...], ourselves, and all that is ours, to God."²⁰ Our *imitatio Christi* is not only based on identity, but also "that there is an efficacy in it which should appear in all Christians if they would not render his death unfruitful and useless."²¹

Both Luther and Calvin advocate that through baptism all Christians are priests or are endowed with the power to discern and service the Word of God. Both were aware of the gifts of some Christians to be ordained for the function of the office of a priest, like any other Christian who would have a gift as a carpenter, tailor, smith, etc. and through baptism could also render service to the body of Christ.

When missionaries went out into the world to make disciples in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the theory of a priesthood of all believers had already taken on another shape of individualistic paradigm because of the developments of the Enlightenment and Pietism. Mission centres had to be led by missionaries who claimed not only to be pious, but also to be civilized against natives who were considered primitive.

Universal priesthood and management for development in the church

In order to unpack the challenges facing our churches' leadership today, churches need well-trained leaders with attributes of beliefs, good values and ethics. Effective leadership is indispensable for inspiring followers and for building teams and establishing the network required to achieve the desired goals of institutions.

17 Ibid., 79.

18 Ibid., 79.

19 John Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal, 1509-1564), 875, accessed 29 January 2016, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/institutes.html>.

20 Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 893.

21 Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 316.

Management refers to planning, mobilizing resources, and coordinating implementation of planned activities. In today's management for value, "spirituality in management perspective extends traditional reflections on corporate purpose and focuses on a self-referential organizational-existential search for meaning, identity and success".²² It is said that spirituality, and not necessarily religiosity, gives a "focus on basic, deep-rooted human values, and a relationship with a universal source, power, or divinity".²³

Considering the management theory preceding this paragraph, it seems that in terms of management, churches have been overtaken by events, viz., by secular institutions, in conceptualizing their very nature of spirituality and management. An African way of thinking, where inherent divine force in a human being intends progressive and transcendental good life on earth and all its creatures through ancestral divine mediation, partly appeals to this development. However, this view has been distorted by other views and needs remedial construction. For instance, diviners and healers received only gifts for their professional work. Today, sacrifices, healing, sorcery, etc., are commercialized and strongly associated with superstition.

The reformers' theory of universal priesthood, though it cannot be interpreted anachronistically, still entails values that are timeless, viz., priesthood as something to be identified with the embodiment of divine qualities of Jesus Christ as the prototype priest. This theory challenges the personification of priesthood, as has been the practice of African leaders and diviners for their own ends, and also critiques the individualistic piety of today that usurps divine power for self-human demagoguery. A theological and pastoral turn is needed to reclaim the driving spirit of reformation into our churches so as to make our institutions effective, efficient, and successful.

Conclusion

It was found in this paper that the foundations of pastoral formation for competent leadership in African churches were weak. As a result, the leadership of institutions has been pastor-centred or evangelistic-centred in the name of spiritual inspiration. Moreover, misinterpretation of African divinities has distanced churches from rich resources for contextualizing the priestly office.

The discussion on the theory of universal priesthood reaffirmed its potential in contextualizing participatory leadership in Africa. Its paradigm of regarding priesthood as a God-instituted office is inevitable in an African context where the priestly office is increasingly privatized and usurped for power and economic ends. Moreover, this theory criticizes the manipulation of African religiosity for individuals' gains and calls for a religiosity that supports sustainable life for humanity and creation.

22 Laszlo Zsolnai, "Spirituality and Management", *Spirituality and Ethics in Management*, 2nd ed. Revised edition, ed. Laszlo Zsolnai (Springer, 2011), accessed 2 February 2016. http://europaes.org/sites/default/files/pdf/book%20samples/contents_and_introduction.pdf.

23 Ibid.

Effective leadership in churches is a necessary requirement to make these churches become real agents of change in African communities. It will catalyze development with churches and set an example for the surrounding communities too.

Mission and Ethnography

Rainer Neu

1. Introduction

My assignment as a missionary to the Philippines ended in August 1996, twenty years ago. Looking back and asking what has been – next to my theological studies - my best qualification for this task, it seems to me that my education in sociology and cultural anthropology was my most important requirement. I had attained a PhD at the Institute of Sociology and Ethnology at the University of Heidelberg and had done some further research in comparative cultural anthropology. So, my assignment to Laoag City, Ilocos Norte, in the Northern Philippines, close to the Cordillera Mountains and the Igorot tribes, made my vocation quite attractive to me, and I was quite curious about the encounters to come.

Our college in Laoag City had a number of Igorot students; some of them, coming from poor families, lived with us in our home, and from my first days in the Philippines I had to realize that the Philippine society was composed of a number of different ethnic groups. The surrounding Ilocano culture and the vicinity of the Cordillera Mountains with their ethnic minorities challenged my ethnographic curiosity, and soon I started my literary study of cultures and religions in the Philippines.

I found that most of the early ethnographic studies were written by Christian missionaries trying to understand the ways in which "their" people perceive, interpret, evaluate, make decisions, and act upon their experiences of life.¹

2. Anthropology's debt to missionaries in the Philippines

As a matter of fact, the Philippines have seen a remarkable number of missionaries from different churches and congregations who have done outstanding ethnographic studies in the course of their missionary work. These missionary-ethnographers have devoted their lives in ways that have not only enriched the communities where they worked but the academic community in general. They have, in immersing themselves in languages and cultures, produced important records of ethnic and religious traditions now vanishing or already vanished. They have, for the first time in history, brought to the world an appreciation for the cultures of the ethnic minorities of the Philippines. Even more, by valuing their ways of life and seeing Chris-

1 Traditional handbooks for the introduction of Christian missionaries to the use of ethnographic methods have been E. A. Nida, *Customs and Cultures: Anthropology for Christian Missions*, New York 1954; Lothar Käser, *Fremde Kulturen. Eine Einführung in die Ethnologie für Entwicklungshelfer und kirchliche Mitarbeiter in Übersee*, Bad Liebenzell 1997.

tianization as a challenge to create syntheses of the old and new, these missionaries have helped to enrich human lives and provide effective bridges to participation in a world community. Last but not least, they unintentionally may have helped in boosting Philippine tourism.

The extensive writings of these scholar-missionaries have created a whole library of books and articles. Out of their numbers I want to remember the lives and works of five missionary-ethnographers who have enriched ethnographic knowledge on the Philippines and anthropological teaching in the Philippines.

First, I want to introduce the Belgian missionary **Francis Lambrecht** (1895-1978) from the Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. In 1924, Lambrecht was posted to the Catholic Mission at Kiangang and afterwards was parish priest at Banaue, both in Ifugao. He soon concerned himself in a highly professional manner with the tasks of understanding and reporting on Ifugao customs. Although he never gave his career exclusively to the Ifugao, he maintained a close association with that community over many decades. In brief, the missionary-ethnographer Lambrecht has conducted an unusually long and competent monitoring of the culture and religion of the Ifugao. His work has produced information, understanding, and – at times – controversy.

The Belgian missionary **Morice Vanoverbergh** (1885-1982), like Lambrecht a member of the congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, arrived in the Philippine Cordillera in 1909. When he ended his earthly life in 1982, at the age of 97, he had spent 73 years in the Philippines. Amidst his numerous duties as missionary, parish priest, social worker, and teacher, he still found time for his fieldwork among the Negritos of northeastern Luzon. His findings and statements about the religious beliefs and practices of the Negritos have been his most important achievements. Furthermore, he learned the languages of the people among whom he worked, and published dictionaries and grammar books on Iloko, Lepanto Igorot (*kankanay*) and Isneg, as well as lexical lists of various languages. To these studies he added collections and detailed descriptions of the songs, tales, prayers, riddles, and other types of oral literature of these ethnic groups. Thanks to his ethnographic efforts, much of their traditions has been saved from total loss.

The American missionary **William Henry Scott** (1921-1993), sent by the Episcopal Church, lived for nearly four decades in Sagada and became well established as a historian and anthropologist in the Cordillera mountain region. He was described as “the foremost student of Philippine social and cultural history in his generation” (H. Conklin, *Festschrift*, ed. by J. T. Peralta, 2001, p. 15). Scott contributed immensely to our understanding of pre-Spanish Philippine society and to the ethnology of the peoples of Northern Luzon. His publications, amounting to more than 240 books and articles, reveal a missionary-scholar who had been deeply enculturated in the ways of life of the people among whom he lived. He observed that the Igorot people of the Cordillera region had preserved elements of pre-colonial culture to a greater degree, and over a wider area, than could be found elsewhere in the Philippines. He was able to write a history of the Cordillera mountain region over several centuries of Spanish contact. And he tried to glean a picture of pre-colonial Philippine society from early Spanish sources.

The German scholar **Rudolf Rahmann**, a member of the Divine Word missionaries, the so-called Steyler Missionaries, was originally assigned to China. After

WWII, he had to leave China and came to the Philippines, where he served as dean of the Graduate School and later as a professor of social anthropology at the San Carlos University in Cebu City. For some years, he became the editor of *Anthropos*, a journal published since 1916 by the repudiated Anthropos-Institute, founded by Father Wilhelm Schmidt, and later, Rahmann became the founder and editor of the *San Carlos Publications* as well as of the *Philippine Quarterly of Culture and Society*. He was also able to research extensively and to publish on the Negritos in Mindanao, Negros, and Panay. With the *Philippine Quarterly* he founded one of the finest academic magazines in the Philippines.

Like Rahmann, the American Presbyterian missionary **Hubert Reynolds** was originally assigned to China. After the Second World War he was sent to the Philippines and became a faculty member of the Sociology-Anthropology Department of Silliman University. He established the Anthropology Museum of SU and published on the Isneg in the Cordillera mountain region and on the Negritos.

The period of these missionary-ethnographers also witnessed the emergence of departments of anthropology and sociology in a number of Philippine universities, especially in the Ateneo of Manila University, the University of the Philippines (Manila), the University of San Carlos (Cebu), the Xavier University (Cagayan de Oro), and Silliman University (Dumaguete City).

These missionaries spent most of their lives in the Philippines and in their mission fields. Because of their long stay, missionaries became insiders and felt themselves to be so. Their interest lay in the community. Their destiny partly overlapped with that of the local population, and they had to establish lasting relationships with the people around them. Usually, they had a good, sometimes even excellent command of at least one of the local languages. A stay of ten years or more in the same area, even up to forty years, was normal. The term "participant observation" is especially relevant to this type of missionary-ethnographer. They were tied to the area and the culture, whereas an anthropologist would leave after one or maybe two years or so. Most anthropologists resembled visitors. The shortness of their stay influenced the character of their experiences and publications.

3. Anthropologists vs missionaries

In the 1970s, the work of these missionary-ethnographers was more and more denigrated and blamed for being ethnocentric or even colonialist. The relationship between anthropologists and missionaries became increasingly ambivalent.² Missionaries apparently personified what anthropologists found most distasteful - ethnocentrism - for they proclaimed their own way of thinking and living. Missionaries were seen as people who brought about change, whereas anthropologists liked to see themselves as custodians of culture. Missionaries were accused of destroying culture and of making traditional knowledge, beliefs, values and practices, rituals, and objects of art disappear. Mission was said to lead to alienation, anthropology

2 Cf. C. E. Stripe, Anthropologists versus Missionaries: The Influence of Presuppositions, *Current Anthropology* 21/1980, pp. 165-179.

to recognition. Anthropologists considered themselves to be rational and critical scientists, whereas missionaries were suspected of being imprisoned in their own religious worldview. The missionary was seen as the the professional knower, the anthropologist by contrast as the professional doubter. To quote the French anthropologist Bernard Delfendahl: "A missionary, as such, invites himself to teach mankind, convinced that he is endowed with what others lack and that it is his mission to convert them to it The anthropologist, as such, goes to learn from mankind. The two attitudes are essentially opposed, even though in individuals, they may be mingled."³

Now, after about fifty years of polemics and controversies, we may come to a more balanced assessment. Missionaries have been quite successful in coming to terms with their colonial past and have made considerable progress in the decolonization of their profession. Some Christian churches now play a leading role in struggles against repressive regimes, and in international theological discussions Third World theologians form the avant-garde of their profession. Representatives of liberation theology and black theology are indeed setting trends in modern theology and mission studies. This cannot be said, in like manner, of Third World anthropologists.

Nevertheless, we will not withhold some limitations of the early missionary-ethnographers. They still had – according to their time – a somewhat limited understanding of cultural anthropology. The first four decades of Philippine anthropology are characterized by a nearly exclusive concern for two primary interests, cultural history and non-Christian ("pagan") ethnic communities, especially the so-called tribal peoples. A glance at any bibliography of anthropological titles for this period makes these points quite clearly. The bibliography which accompanies the Lynch and Hollnsteiner review article of 1961⁴ is a case in point: among the 142 titles appearing for dates prior to 1950, 130 (92 per cent) deal exclusively with the customs and origins of tribal minorities. But this is not surprising because this has been the dominant interest of cultural anthropologists in the first half of the twentieth century.

It may be too early to draw clear conclusions about recent developments in anthropology, but it seems to me that anthropologists are shifting their position towards Christianity and mission. Christianity in Asia and Africa is no longer a missionary enterprise nor an imposed Western ideology and way of life. The tables are being turned: Christian churches in many African countries have now reached an autochthonous identity and status while they are growing more and more "exotic" in the old world of Western Europe, once the main supplier of missionaries. As a result, Christian beliefs, practices, and functionaries are no longer taken for granted; they now raise curiosity among anthropologists of religion, both at home and abroad. One can therefore say that the anthropological interest in "vernacular" or "native" Christianity grew with the waning of Christianity in the society where most anthropologists hailed from.

3 B. Delfendahl, *On Anthropologists vs. Missionaries*, *Current Anthropology* 22/1981, p. 89.

4 Lynch, Frank, and Hollnsteiner, Mary, 1961. *Sixty Years of Philippine Ethnology: A First Glance at the Years 1901-1961*. *Science Review* 11/1961, pp. 1-5.

This means that modern cultural anthropology is no longer limited to ethnic minorities respective to “pagan” tribes. Nowadays, anthropologists are doing field-work among Christian believers, among “dissident” groups as well as among the mainstream churches. One can, therefore, safely say that Christianity, both abroad and at home, has become a flourishing study field in anthropology. The younger generation of anthropologists – although usually agnostic – is well aware of the effect of religion, including Christian beliefs, on people’s ability to come to terms with the problems they face and to change their life condition.

This can be illustrated in the field of health and illness, in particular the case of HIV/AIDS. Missionary churches have always played a prominent role in health care. Meanwhile, the contribution of faith-based organizations to the prevention of HIV/AIDS is widely recognized. That contribution includes counselling and support for people with HIV/AIDS, peer-educator programmes, medical care for sick people, educational activities to inform the public on the disease, and mitigation of the stigma attached to HIV/AIDS. Christian churches are “strong players” in that field thanks to their central position in society and their efficient network in local communities.

Christian churches and communities in Africa, Asia, and South America attract the attention of modern anthropologists more and more, and some of them are sincerely interested in and fascinated by Christian beliefs and practices.

This new interest of cultural anthropologists in religion and Christianity gives us as mission theologians a new opportunity to make their issues and methods our own.

4. Modern trends in cultural anthropology

This new trend started with a dramatic change in ethnographic research: cultural anthropology is no longer understood as the study of “pagan” ethnic minorities dwelling in remote areas. Already in the 1950s in the Philippines, long before the outset of colonial criticism, there started a trend towards studies of lowland communities, rural lowland communities, and lower-class urban communities. While prior to 1950 more than 90 per cent of all titles on Philippine ethnography dealt with tribal societies, between 1950 and 1960, already 50 per cent of the pertinent books concerned lowland peoples.⁵ This was a dramatic and pathbreaking shift in the strategy of ethnographic research and led, in the end, to a much broader and more applicable understanding of cultural anthropology.

Soon, a new generation of Filipino academics educated in Philippine universities entered the field of ethnographic research, and research was undertaken along different aspects of social and cultural life. The new stress on lowland studies produced a more reasonable balance of effort, for the great majority of Filipinos are, of course, lowland people and Christians, most of them being rural smallholder-farmers or members of the urban working class.

5 Davis, William G., and Hollnsteiner, Mary R., Some Recent Trends in Philippine Social Anthropology, *Anthropologica*, New Series 11/1969, pp. 59-84, p. 64.

As a result, ethnographic research comes close to the reality of our church communities, and cultural anthropology is not only a useful tool for missionaries to understand their field of work, but for church workers in general to understand what is going on in their congregations.

Modern applied anthropology is a useful tool to learn more about our mission fields, congregations, and residential neighborhoods. Missionaries and church workers alike should do their own ethnographic surveys before starting their work. In a country like the Philippines, comprising about 180 ethnic groups and about 200 languages and main dialects, every church worker who is not just assigned to his home area has to work in a cultural context that is at least slightly or sometimes dramatically different from his/her own cultural background. Church workers should be prepared for that and should have some basic understanding of ethnographic or sociological research.

5. Ethnographic approaches for missionaries and church workers

Let me draw now a short sketch of how to make use of applied anthropology in mission and church work. Let us imagine a missionary or a church worker is assigned to a new place. He/she should take time and go out to join in the life of people where they live. This might require learning the local dialect of the people or living in difficult circumstances. Such research may require long hours of careful listening to people's lives. Such listening cannot simply be structured by a narrow set of predetermined questions, as was done in the past by traditional ethnography, but should lead to open-ended interviews. Questions should emerge in response to the salient points raised by the person interviewed. Most of the time, such interviews take a narrative form, allowing the highways and byways of life lived to unfold.⁶

The researcher needs a spirit of openness to what others have experienced, what they know and live. He or she is a learner who wants to be taught. A posture of humility and friendly curiosity is needed. The researcher needs a desire to learn and to be taught by others. People who are the subjects of interviews often possess very different kinds of knowledge and expertise. Related to learning from the lives and wisdom of others is the willingness to being changed by what one observes and learns.

Ethnographic research is a self-critical and reflexive process. The researcher is part of these enquiries and dialogues. Ethnographic research does not stand outside that which it explores. Ethnographers need to interrogate themselves as much as they seek to learn from the people with whom they want to work. Ethnography is a process of attentive study and learning of people – their words, practices, traditions, experiences, insights, beliefs – in their specific times and places. The ethnographer tries to understand how these people make meaning and what they can teach us about reality, truth, responsibility, the divine, etc. Ethnography takes people seriously as a source of wisdom and a way to correct our own assumptions and evaluations.

6 An inspiring introduction to the modern use of appropriate ethnographic methods in church work is presented in C. Scharen, A. M. Vigen, *Ethnography as Christian Theology and Ethics*, London – New York 2011.

Ethnography seeks to discover what truth or valuable insight is found within specific locations. Ethnographic methods provide a path by which truth emerges, rather than a way to apply truth.

At its best, ethnographic work embodies an engaged dialogue with others. “Informants” begin to be considered as partners who speak in their own voices. Informants are experts in their own right who have valuable knowledge of their own traditions, beliefs, and community. The ethnographer becomes a witness of human expectations, sufferings, and struggles. The dialogue between the partners can offer insights and corrections through reflection and critique. In this way, research can be transformative. At least, it can be a vehicle for positive change. It should identify the “on the ground” needs and challenges a community faces, and by this, it can contribute to the material social, psychological, and spiritual development of a community.

6. A lesson learned

Since we are asked to share our own local experiences and lessons learned while doing mission and church work in our home region, let me share this experience:

In 1979, I was assigned as a young pastor to a rural parish in the Lower Rhine area close to the German-Dutch border. I was in charge of three villages with far-flung farmlands and plenty of farms. The farms were apparently flourishing, and I had a somewhat romantic idea of farmlife. Since my Protestant church members were living within a Catholic majority, most of them had a strong affiliation to their church. I was quite eager to visit them and to get to know their farms. In our dialogues I had to learn that although the productivity of these farms was high, prices were decreasing and in the long run farmers saw no chance to make a living out of agriculture. These years were the beginning of the so-called farm die-off (“Hofsterben”), and the farmers worried about the future of their farms and their families. It was the beginning of a real tragedy. In these years, the late 1970s, there were still about one million farms in Germany. Nowadays, in 2016, there are about 280,000. In the late 1970s we could not yet fully realize how badly farmers would be affected and that nearly three out of four farms would disappear. In my conversations with the farmers I understood their worries and anxieties. I also realized that these farmers had no chance to change their way of living. Since farming was all that they had learned, they couldn’t just look for another job. So, our conversations soon turned to the next generation, and we realized the urgent necessity of sending them to secondary schools for higher education. I took it as my urgent task as a pastor to encourage parents to send their children to secondary schools or to provide them with professional training. Since sufficient and adequate educational centres were in the vicinity, it was no problem to make the choice, as long as the parents realized that farming had no future. The problem was frequently with the grandparents, who couldn’t or didn’t want to realize that their traditional way of life was bound to come to an end. Under these circumstances, pastoral counselling could be quite helpful and encourage people to look confidently to the future.

Now, 35 years later, I may say that many peasant families made the right decision, and out of the ranks of these families came quite a high number of professionals.

7. Conclusion

Mission is largely an intercultural encounter and presupposes an applied anthropology for understanding a foreign culture or unfamiliar social milieu. A prospective missionary or church worker should learn to do some ethnographic research. If inculturation is one of the main objectives of mission, it is necessary that the one who preaches the gospel and proclaims the Good News must make this message accessible to its listeners. To do this, the person preaching must take the audience seriously and must try to appreciate them in their cultural setting. This attitude should characterize missionaries and church workers in their efforts to communicate with people. Ethnographic research embodies, as I said earlier, an engaged dialogue with others, who are considered as partners who speak in their own voices. This method offers essential insights and assistance to all those who are engaged in the effort to “inculturate” the Gospel. It should be an integral component of education in mission theology. By this I do not mean that every missionary must be a professionally trained ethnographer. What is meant, however, is that anyone who deals with people of different cultures should be concerned with developing a basic and sincere interest in the way of life and thinking of the other. In this regard, each student of theology should have some basic knowledge in cultural anthropology and methods of ethnographic research. He or she should learn to be sensitive to the local dialect, customs, religious beliefs, economic concerns, and social stresses. He/she should be able to identify the basic needs and challenges a community faces and in so doing, to contribute to the material and spiritual needs of this community.

Abundant Life for All: Mission and Development Perspective from an Asian Church (UCCP)

Reuel Norman O. Marigza

From its beginnings, the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP) has taken on development issues and concerns as part of its mission. Today, the UCCP is known for its progressive stance on issues such as justice, peace, and human rights; climate justice; and pro-people development.

But to understand how it arrived here, we must go back to see how its understanding of mission and development has developed, in the same way that we need to look back at the twenty years of the UEM's internationalization in order to be able to chart the course forward. The Chinese have a quaint way of putting it: "one step backward, two steps forward."

Let me take you back to 1960, when the UCCP Statement of Social Concern was issued. This was a landmark statement, in the sense that it provided "a guide for Christian thinking and action in meeting the present problems of Philippine society" and dealt with issues in a comprehensive manner not done before.

Prior to this, the resolutions and statements of the UCCP tended to be on an issue-to-issue basis. This new statement signalled the start of a shift in the generally collaborative partnership the church had with the government.

The statement reflected on the church's role in society, noting that "throughout Asia ... people and their governments are in the midst of a political, economic and religious upheaval", shaking "the old foundations of Asian culture and making way for the building of new political, economic and religious structures".

It is in the midst of such a context that the church must reflect on its mission and role, for, as the statement noted, "the Church cannot hold itself aloof from the world in which it lives". The UCCP realized that while individual Christians may be "dwarfed by the enormity of social evils and confused with the complexity of the issues of life ... [they know they] can neither abdicate [their] responsibility to face social evils, nor can [they] comfort themselves with easy answers to difficult social, economic, and political problems."

On the whole, the statement has a generally positive outlook on governmental reform efforts. The section "The Church and Economic Development" notes that "immediate economic development is today a pressing problem for all Asian countries. To meet the demands of their people, the governments of Asia have concentrated their energies [o]n discovering the right economic formula for increasing national income and alleviating their nations' economic poverty."

The Statement of Social Concern was an initial attempt by the UCCP to do social analysis:

- it recognizes that economic poverty is a reality in the nations of Asia;
- it raises the question of the ability of the earth's resources to meet the demands of an ever-growing world population;
- it calls for the necessity and healthy balance of both agricultural development and industrialization.

The statement warns of neglecting the nation's agricultural base in favor of industrialization. It sees the correlation of productive and efficient agriculture with industrialization: the income from the former can provide the capital for the later. But statement's solution seems to border only on increasing the productivity and income of the agricultural areas.

The analysis by the UCCP at this time did not go deep enough to see the cause of the endemic poverty in rural areas. To avoid the "urban pull" and urban blight, the church proposed the decentralization of industry over a wider area and provisions for addressing the social problems (e.g., low-cost housing, social welfare).

As industrialization was becoming a major force in the development of Asian life, the church saw the value of trade unionism as a vehicle to make benefits more inclusive: "benefits of the industrial system are more equitably distributed to those who help produce these benefits". Responsible trade unions were "not only a means for seeking justice, but also provide[d] a new social grouping for workers drawn away from the older social patterns of the countryside". The trade unions were also seen as a means of educating workers, not only in the discipline required by the new industrial society but also in responsible citizenship. As a mission impetus, the UCCP in its statement encouraged Christian labourers to "support the trade union movement and to provide the responsible participation and leadership necessary to achieving the goals of freedom and justice in society".

While the church anticipated that "in a commercialized society, things become more valued than people and that [sic] religion may be pushed in a corner, relegated to the practice of ancient rituals & special observances", the church reminded its lay members "of their obedience to Jesus Christ in all areas of life". "We recognize", the statement further stresses, "the importance of the layman's witness in his work and call upon our people to live out their Christian calling responsibly in the political, social and economic realms of daily life. We declare that the Lord of the Church is also the Lord of the factory, the farm, and the office, and is sovereign wherever men live and work."

The 1960 Statement of Concern, while tame by today's standards, was quite ahead of its time and set the ground for the deeper involvement of the church in the affairs of Philippine society: by the mid-sixties, there seemed to be emerging some disenchantment with the ability of government and private agencies, namely the business sector, to address the burning issues of the day.

In the Statement of Responsibility Concerning Economic Development, issued by the 1964 General Assembly of 31 May to 5 June 1964, the UCCP observed that the poverty it had hoped would be addressed by the governments in Asia had actually worsened and that the miracles promised by industrialization and modern technology were not filtering down to the majority of the people.

The statement noted that "the development of a sound economy is a major con-

cern of the Filipino people. Three-fourths of the people receive less in goods and services than is necessary to live in health and decency. The maintenance of a democratic system depends upon an economy that will provide for the needs of all people.”

The church saw that the following components would promote responsible economic development from the perspective of Christian stewardship:

- the introduction, development, and use of modern agricultural methods and techniques;
- the protection of the forests from abuse and misuse, allowing this rich resource to continue to be available to Filipinos in years to come;
- the conservation of water resources, and their development for irrigation and power generation;
- development for economic enterprises that can generate employment opportunities for the growing labour force, addressing both unemployment and under-employment;
- the formation of Filipino capital;
- the encouragement of foreign investments and joint ventures, within constitutional and legal limits;
- fair distribution between labour and capital of the fruits of economic enterprises; the adoption of practices and principles such as profit-sharing that are conducive to the just and fair distribution of the fruits of investment to both labour and capital;
- the organization and development of free, responsible, and democratic cooperatives and credit unions in local situations;
- sound taxation and wise government investment;
- the formation of community organizations aimed at uplifting the standard of living for low-income groups;
- a free, responsible, and democratic trade union movement.

At the 1970 General Assembly in Baguio City (24–28 May), the UCCP reissued the Statement of Concern. What was telling, though, was what the 1970 General Assembly added to the statement: it included in-depth social analysis that was not present in the earlier version. Whereas the previous statement had a guarded optimism about the government effort and the progress that could be brought in by development, the 1970 statement presented a negative diagnosis of what was happening in Philippine society. “More than ever, the Christian Church must actively engage itself in the task of bringing about social justice”, the statement enjoined. “Development and progress have been impeded because of the imbalance existing in all sectors and levels of Philippine society. This has resulted in the virtual oppression and deprivation of the many and the abusive affluence and preferential treatment of the few.”

For the first time, the UCCP officially and directly addressed the issue of land monopoly and land grabbing: “Where the land is concentrated in the hands of the few, the Church must seek all available and appropriate means within the structures of government and society to cause [the] bringing about [of a] fair and equitable distribution of land resources. Where people are being dispossessed of their land holdings by unscrupulous entrepreneurs and speculators, the Church must

join the ranks of all those seeking justice and reforms to help people hold on to their lands.”

The 1970 statement posited that education was a tool of empowerment, needed by peasants so as to ensure that land acquired or protected would not be sold back to smart manipulators. It asked the government to award lots to the settlers of the Tondo Foreshore land and to improve the living conditions in the Sapang Palay and Carmona resettlement areas, providing such basic services as light, water, and transport. The UCCP said that the solution to the squatting problem was not simply a matter of resettlement, but should also include extensive technical and vocational training, as well as an effective job placement programme.

The church also positioned itself with the youth and student protest movements of the times: “We are in accord with the student population in demanding for just reforms. We unconditionally give our backing for their [the students’] demands.” These demands included:

- just wages for all workers,
- speedy implementation of the land reform programme,
- the application of single standard in the administration of justice, etc., and
- the adoption of a constitution responsive to the Philippine situation and needs.

In the 1978 General Assembly, from 21 to 26 May, the UCCP approved the position paper “On Church and Development”. Reflecting on the “Christian presence in the last quarter of the century”, the church asserted that “the process of development must have meaning only if set into motion by the direct participation of people themselves”. Awareness of the concrete situation leads the church to repentance, and the experience of forgiveness must result from “definite action to change de-humanizing situations, the brutal effect of which are significantly felt by the poor, oppressed and the dispossessed”. Development becomes a continuous liberating process wherein God’s children respond to and participate in God’s redemptive plan for the world.

In the same statement, the UCCP adopted two documents that it recommended as guidelines in the quest for solving social problems and in any development programmes and projects the church might undertake: “The Epistle to the Christians of Today” and the NCCP Executive Committee’s “The Statement on Priority and Strategy on Development”.

The church reflected on the following development-related issues in the 1978 statement:

- the increasing concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a few;
- the preferential treatment accorded multinational corporations, resulting in the exploitation of our natural resources for the benefits of these foreign interests;
- the irreparable damage inflicted on our environment due to the uncontrolled operations of agricultural and industrial corporations;
- political and economic inequality as the primary divider, particularly in Mindanao and Sulu, rather than the cultural religious differences that are often over-emphasized;
- the reinforcement by the institutionalized Church of the unjust social structure;
- the political climate, described as the violation of the basic human rights of “the greater majority of our people”, including the right to food, clothing, and shelter.

The social climate was described in the following manner: “The sense of helplessness and despair of the greater majority of our people, resulting from and reinforcing their powerlessness”, and “the enslavement of the greater majority ... producing crippled beings, not creatures of God, enmeshed in a culture of silence”.

The statement went on to declare the position of the church in the light of the foregoing realities:

- The “stand for genuine human development seeking solidarity with the people in their struggles for justice and liberation”;
- The stand for the protection of the environment “from agricultural and industrial exploitation and desolation”;
- The advocacy for the formation and consolidation of “people’s organizations to ensure popular participation in decision-making”;
- A call for identification with those who suffer – a preferential option, so to speak: “We call upon the institutional church to fulfill its commitment of identification with the deprived, the enslaved, the accused and the despised.”;
- A pro-people development agenda and a peace based on justice: “We seek the peace that can only spring from the situations where ‘justice rolls like a mighty stream’ and development [can] take cognizance of the dignity of people.”

Open Letter to President Cory Aquino (1987)

- Call for genuine land reform: “Knowing that more than 70% of our people are tenant farmers, we exhort and enjoin you to approve a just and equitable land distribution program effective January 1988”;
- Call for nationalist industrialization: “Knowing that management, labor and industry are key factors to our nation’s self-sufficiency progress, we enjoin you to adhere to a nationalist-oriented industrialization scheme, the implementation of which will contribute to a massive employment of our people”;
- Call for the protection of workers’ rights: “The government should ensure and defend the rights of workers to just wages and benefits, and to self-organization to redress of [sic] grievances.”

Integral Evangelization 1966 (Policy Statement on Evangelism)

This policy statement asserted that, while the decision for Christ is primarily an individual matter, “evangelism also has a social concern”. The statement recognized that God is concerned about human life in society, that “part of evangelism [is] to declare judgment and love of God upon the structures of contemporary life which keep men from being the free, truly human persons God intends them to be.”

It is the conviction of the UCCP in this statement that proclamation goes beyond verbalization: “We can proclaim God’s love for men in Christ not only by word (which is undeniably important) but also by deeds and actions. These deeds, which may also be described as Christian love in action, are ways of declaring the nature of God in living terms so that the outsider may perceive the meaning of the Gospel. When seen in this light, there is a direct connection between social service and evangelism, although evangelism may be different by virtue of its specific goal”, that of making the individual respond to Jesus as Lord and Savior.

Under the section “A Life of a Citizen”, the statement asserted that “to witness to

the concerned love of Jesus Christ is to live a life in the given world of God. Participating in human development and nation-building is the Christian's witnessing life. As Christians, our earthly citizenship should be a manifestation of our citizenship of the Kingdom of God. This is made clear and known in our being good citizens of our country.

"We are to be deeply involved in the ongoing social process of needed changes in our society and nation, that man may become fully human and that our nation share in the humanization of all humankind."

Shifts happen in the social thoughts of the church because the church exists not in a historical vacuum, but right in the midst of history. The church must use resources of its faith to speak out to the reality it faces and confronts even as that social reality faces and confronts the church. The church does so not only to respond and confront, but also to be able to understand its faith and what that faith demands at a particular specific historical time and space.

As the UCCP faces the challenge of its context, its mission and development work today, and other issues, it has stated the following in its Declaration of Principles:

- "The fundamental values of love, justice, truth and compassion are at the heart of our witness to the world and our service to the Church" (Sec. 5);
- "As steward of God's creation, the United Church of Christ in the Philippines shall protect, promote and enhance the ecological balance and the integrity of creation" (Sec. 12);
- "In accordance with the biblical understanding that all persons are created in the image of God, the Church affirms and upholds the inviolability of the rights of persons as reflected in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other agreements on human rights, the international covenants on economic, social and cultural rights and on civil and political rights, the 1984 Convention against Torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, and those that relate specifically to refugees, women, youth, children, minority groups and other persons who cannot safeguard their own rights" (Sec. 11);
- "The United Church of Christ in the Philippines affirms its historic faith and its pastoral and prophetic witness in the life and culture of the Filipino people. The Church supports the people's aspirations for abundant life and holistic redemption from all forms of bondage, in accordance with the vision of the reign of God" (Sec. 8).

Diaconia

The Role of Diaconia from the African (Tanzanian) Perspective and how it contributes to the global Situation

Willbrod Mastai

Conceptual understanding of diaconia

The concept of diaconia has evolved across time and space within the socio-economic and spiritual life of humankind. The etymological originality of “diaconia” emanates from the Greek verb *diakonein*, meaning to serve the poor and oppressed. Serving the socio-economic needs of people and preaching the gospel do complement one another in crafting the essence of the Christian church. According to Matthew 25:31-46, “all the nations” will be judged based on whether they have fed the hungry, given drink to the thirsty, clothed the naked, taken care of the sick, and visited the imprisoned. Walter Altmann stipulates that mission without diaconia would easily turn into an arrogant and violent enterprise, not respectful of the culture, value, or identity of the addressees of the Christian message

The African theological precept on diaconia

In the African context, it is perceived that a human person has several levels of being. These include physical, psychic, social, moral, and spiritual. Any need at any of these levels demands attention and a responsive reaction from health management groups. John Mbiti, an African writer, postulates to “aim because we are; and since we are, aim”; this idiomatic expression echoes with Archbishop Tutu’s theology of Ubuntu (“I am because we are”). Anyone who remains aloof is considered to be in disarray. In Kiswahili, we say “mtu ni watu”, literally “a man is people”, which essentially means that other people’s troubles are your obligatory affairs. Extended family is an inevitability for an African family. As is written in Isaiah 54:2, “make your tents larger, spread out the tent pegs, fasten them firmly”, so it goes in Africa: we are always the parents of many. This sociocultural framework of life makes a ministry of giving inevitable, and thus a true Christian message should address human needs at all these levels. Anything short of this and people would not abide in faith or be receptive to the Christian message. Diaconia is said to be the fifth Gospel after Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. And this fifth one is easier to read, understand, and follow than the rest.

Contextual description of our diaconia

Tanzania has been an independent republic since 9 December 1961; with a populace of 47.6 million, the country covers 945,087 square kilometres. Dodoma is the capital, and Dar es Salaam is the metropolitan commercial city. The city is a setting for many dialectically prototypical life contradictions: learned people alongside the grossest ignorance, wealth juxtaposed with extreme poverty.

With a populace of five million people, Dar produces 85 per cent of the national income per annum. This causes 28,100 people to immigrate to the city every year, making it Africa's third- and the world's ninth-fastest-growing city, with an annual increase of 8 per cent. As will be depicted, these and many more situations set an imperative for diaconia.

Although Tanzania dawned with great promise of prosperity and growth, presently it is swamped by many challenges, which include:

Violation of human rights

Tanzania has experienced various shameful episodes at different times and locations. These include the flaying of human skin, the cutting off of human genitalia, the beheading of people with bald heads, and more recently the killing of people with albinism or, in several incidents where the killing wasn't successful, the amputation of limbs such as arms before the attacker would flee with the chopped-off limb. This is due to beliefs in witchcraft that in these organs exist magical powers which can make one rich or inflict and harm people with their properties. Between 2008 and 2009 alone, 95 old women with albinism were murdered in Mwanza because of such witchcraft-related beliefs.

Witchcraft Act 69 Section 2 was first enacted more than 85 years ago. It has failed to eliminate belief in witchcraft in the country. The government has created a commission to investigate and fight against the killing of persons with albinism, comprised of members from the Tanzania Albinism Society (TAS, 12,000 members), police force, officials from the Regional Administration and Local Government, and traditional healers.

Deforestation and destruction of the ecosystem

Between 1990 and 2000, Tanzania lost an average of 412,300 hectares of forest per year, an annual deforestation rate of 0.99%. In 2000-2005, the rate of forest change increased by 11 per cent. Causes of deforestation include clearing for agriculture, overgrazing, wildfires, and charcoal-making, persistent reliance on wood fuel for energy, over-exploitation of wood resources, and a lack of training in land use. Mount Kilimanjaro is suffering the disappearance of many plant species that used to be common vegetation cover. The glacier of the mountain has shrunk by 90 per cent because of climate change that has been exacerbated by forest fires and atmospheric humidity. The same has also resulted in the upward migration of plants and animals.

Destruction of wildlife

Reports show that elephant population has declined by 60 per cent (from 109,051 to 43,330) just between 2009 and 2014 because of poaching. The Chinese demand

for ivory and the government's blind eye has turned the country into an epicentre of Africa's elephant poaching crisis. This is catastrophic to the existence of elephants, since their increase was only 5 per cent during the same period, compared to the 85,181 lost that amounted to 45 tons of ivory reaching the black market.

Family violence

Tanzania has a domestic violence problem, with a high rate of abuse of women and children. According to a WHO report for the period between 2000 and 2003 involving a study of women between the ages of 19 and 49 in the Dar es Salaam and Mbeya regions, 41 per cent of women in Dar es Salaam and 56 per cent in Mbeya had experienced physical and sexual abuse from their partners. 17 per cent of women in Dar es Salaam and 25 per cent in Mbeya had experienced severe physical violence (being hit with a fist or something else, kicked, dragged, beaten up, choked, burnt on purpose, threatened with a weapon, or attacked with a weapon. Of this number, 15 per cent of women in Dar es Salaam and 23 per cent in Mbeya had lost consciousness at least once as the result of a beating.

Pregnant women are victims of domestic violence in Tanzania as well, and are also a vulnerable group in terms of their health status. In this report (WHO 2000-2003), in Dar es Salaam about 7 per cent of women who had ever been pregnant reported having been beaten during at least one pregnancy, of whom 38 per cent reported being punched or kicked in the abdomen. In Mbeya, the numbers were 12 per cent and 23 per cent respectively. Consequently, such violence might lead to spontaneous abortion, miscarriage, or even death, to say nothing of permanently physical injuries and emotional trauma.

Yet regardless of all this harm, a high percentage of the victims are likely to not inform anyone of what has happened to them or to have sought help from any formal service. Many believe that the violence is normal and that its victims does not require help. This is due to the patriarchal social system.

Female genital mutilation

Demographic and health surveys from 2010, show that 15 per cent of Tanzanian women have experienced FGM.

The prevalence of FGM in girls/women between 19 and 59 years of age remained static between 2004 and 2010 at 14.6 per cent (DHS). In the regions with highest prevalence, four have seen an increase over six years.

A survey done by 28Too Many (2013), found that girls were experiencing FGM at younger ages, with those cut before the age of one year increasing from 28.4 per cent to 31.7 per cent in 2010. This practice is due to a belief that a bacterial infection called *lawalawa* is cured by FGM.

For some, FGM is a rite of passage, a practice reflecting ideological and historical situations of the societies in which they develop. Sociological reasons appear to be the dominant factor, wherein female circumcision is associated with cultural heritage, initiation to adulthood, social integration, and the maintenance of social cohesion and recognition in the community.

FGM results in irreversible life-long risks for girls and women: at the operation, and during menstruation, marriage, intercourse, and childbirth. The short-term

consequences of FGM relate to the procedure itself, where more often than not, crude tools are used without anaesthesia. There may be injury to adjacent organs, not to mention subsequent haemorrhaging that may lead to shock or even death. FGM also contributes to the spread of sexual, incurable, and life-threatening diseases such as HIV/AIDS, hepatitis, tetanus.

Economically FGM practices result in a loss of productive labour through increased mortality or morbidity as direct or indirect consequences of the operation. The World Bank Report 1994: III a denotes a decline in productivity due to disability linked to the long-term complications of the operations, the unproductive expenditure of financial resources through the FGM procedure and/or medical treatment for FGM complications, and finally the financial burden on the health system stemming from the cost of treating FGM complications.

Health

In this, sector indices point out that the under-five mortality and neonatal mortality figures are 81 per cent and 45 per cent per 1000 live births, respectively, against MDG (Millennium Development Goals) targets of neonatal mortality at 26 per 1000 live births and maternal mortality of 432 per 100,000 live births, while the total fertility rate in Tanzania is 5.2. Deliveries in health facilities under a skilled birth attendant are under 60 per cent, way off the 80 per cent target for 2015.

Malaria causes 30 per cent of deaths, and the second-worst killer is tuberculosis, then pneumonia, followed by diarrheal and skin diseases. For adults, diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, cancer, and road accidents are among the leading causes of death. Poor sanitation, shortages of safe drinking water, and malnutrition constitute another gap. The health workforce of three doctors, nurses and midwives per ten thousand people is far below the WHO minimum threshold of 23 per ten thousand. The annual budget for health care is 8 per cent, against target of 15 per cent as per the WHO Abuja declaration in 2001.

Tranquility and social harmony

Muslims and Christians each constitute 30 to 40 per cent of the population. The other 20 per cent is comprised of other religions. For many years we used to live together and share life burdens and blessings without taking stock of the particular religion of any societal member. In the recent past, hostility has grown from Muslims against Christians, resulting in the burning of churches, in priests and pastors being killed. Elements of social exclusion and discrimination have become evident. This is more so from Muslims hating Christians.

Poverty

Approximately 68 per cent of Tanzanians live below the poverty line of \$1.25 a day, and 16 per cent of children under 5 are malnourished. Poverty is persistent for reasons that include unsustainable harvesting of natural resources, unchecked cultivation, climate change, and encroachment on water sources.

Tanzania is expected to become a middle-income country by 2025, characterized by peace, good governance, high-quality livelihoods, and a healthy, wealthy, and educated society. A series of poverty reduction strategies, including the National Strat-

egy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty (NSGRP), has sustained a GDP growth rate of 6 per cent, but there is an apparent disconnection between GDP growth and poverty reduction.

According to the 2011/12 Tanzania National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), the official poverty lines for basic needs and food are estimated at T Sh 36,482 per adult per month and TSh 26,085.5 per adult per month, respectively.

Statistics show that 28.2 per cent of the population is poor, with monthly consumption per adult equivalent falling below the basic-needs poverty line, and that 9.7 per cent lives in extreme poverty, below the food poverty line, and hence cannot meet the minimum nutritional requirements of 2,200 kilocalories (Kcal) per adult. The international poverty line of \$1.25 per person per day, in 2005 purchasing power parity (PPP) exchange rates, is often used to evaluate a country's poverty. Using this dollar-a-day international poverty line shows that around 43.5 per cent of the population in Tanzania lived in poverty in 2011/12. This relegates the country to the low end of the scale, ranking 24th places from the bottom of the line.

Gender inequality

Tanzania recognizes that gender inequality is a major obstacle to socio-economic and political development. Development depends on the full utilization of human resources, both women and men. The patriarchal system of customs and traditions that discriminate against women continues to perpetuate gender inequalities in Tanzania, and efforts to promote gender equality and equity include the following goals and challenges:

- Empowerment of both women and men equally on the basis of merits
- Ensuring that macro and micro policies are gender-sensitive
- Ensuring that the legal framework is gender-sensitive
- Strengthening institutional mechanisms for gender development
- Ensuring sustainable partnerships and collaboration
- Ensuring that adequate resources are available to address gender inequalities and inadequate capacities for coordination, monitoring, evaluation, advocacy, and follow-up of implementation of policies, strategies, plans, and programmes

Education

Government education and training policies focus on access, equity, quality, and internal efficiency. Of the total population, 24 per cent have never been to school, and 40 per cent of those age 5 and above have completed various levels of education. Attending education are 30 per cent of the population, whereas 7 per cent have dropped out. Primary education enrolment is reported to have declined from 83 per cent to 80 per cent between 2008 and 2011. One study on the quality of education showed that of the children who finished primary education, seven out of every ten were unable to read basic Kiswahili, and nine out of every ten were unable to read basic English. Enrolment in tertiary education is low. More challenges are present in the area of retention, completion, and transition to the secondary level; other challenges include quality of education, actual learning outcomes, and the relevance of skills graduates bring to the rest of their lives.

The church's response

The above challenges have compelled the government to take them up and strive for solutions. As part of this effort, the government has issued a Public-Private Partnership policy and legal and regulatory framework as a scheme to engage the private sector in the same endeavour. Not only is this policy adapted for extended diaconia, but it has also set an imperative for our church to adopt a schematic framework to work in such an avenue.

Public theology

This is a new diaconia paradigm concerned primarily not with repentance and conversion, but rather with seeking the welfare of the public inclusively (Altmann). It investigates on the interface at which theological precepts underlie sociocultural and political discourses, and thus adopts the public agenda and strives to offer distinctive and constructive insights as for a way forward. This church caters for its secondary domain from its treasures of faith. This way our country partners with the government and other players in tackling domestic challenges, especially in bridging the gap overlooked by the government.

Social tranquility

Social science data has increasingly documented a strong antithetical correlation between religious commitment and social pathologies. The same is said to lessen the tendency of both children and adults to engage in counterproductive behaviours that range from delinquency to addiction and result from the dissatisfaction among many with the government's performance. Church counselling, preaching, teaching, and ministry of prayers for healing and exorcism are available to people of all religions and backgrounds, with all kinds of distresses, frustrations, and depressions.

Church services also help people to become more fully involved in various aspects of social, economic, and political life. Studies further show that students who frequently attend church have an improved ability to manage their time and achieve their goals. Religiously connected students are five times less likely than their peers to skip school. It has also been noted that parents with higher levels of religiosity raise children who more consistently complete homework, attend class, and complete degree programmes. In this manner, the church is thus fulfilling its role of providing an educational, psychological, and moral and ethical baseline to civil society. Because of its divine calling towards forgiveness and reconciliation, the church in Tanzania has not retaliated against Muslim extremists who in the past three years have burned down church sanctuaries and valuables and murdered priests and pastors as well. The ECD partnership established a programme and centre for interfaith dialogue in Zanzibar called Upendo (love) and Mbagala at the site of a previous parish fire. This provides a bulwark against civil unrest and war.

Governance and corruption

A survey conducted in Tanzania by REPOA in 2006 has indicated that corruption is a major challenge in Tanzania. The Tanzanian Parliament enacted Act No. 13, known as the Leadership Code of Ethics, in a vain effort to curb the improper con-

duct of public leaders in the high echelons of government. The government also developed the Public Procurement Act, 2004 for the same purposes.

Transparency International has been publishing a global Corruption Perception Index (CPI) since 2000. A CPI of 100 stands for very clean; and a scores of 0 indicates the country is highly corrupt. Tanzania is ranked 117th out of 167 countries in the world.

However, the trends in Tanzania in 2012 to 2015 showed a CPI of 30, 31, 33, and 35, respectively. Worldwide corruption has been considered a key contributor to poor governance and is a major cause of poverty. In Tanzania, 90 per cent of contractors pay 10 to 15 per cent of contract values in bribes (see *The Citizen*, Tanzania, no. 1163, Friday May 23, 2008, p.3). Corruption in the public service has become a threat to good governance.

Types of church services

Churches in Tanzania provide more than 50 per cent of the health care services in the country. The ELCT runs 20 hospitals and 120 primary health care centres. District designated hospitals are those jointly run by church and government. Services in these church-based institutions do not discriminate on the basis of a patient's religiosity. The church accrues trust, integrity, and security, as well as growth, from its health care services. Studies have shown that people seeking health care from a church hospital live an average of seven years longer than nonreligious individuals. In some areas, health services provided by the church have been noted to contribute to a decrease in alcohol abuse and drug use, increased self-esteem, mental well-being, and likelihood of participating in community health programmes, and this has contributed immensely to improving health outcomes and healthy communities even where the government cannot directly reach for various reasons, including strains on local resources.

These health care services are managed through dioceses and even parishes. Kimara parish, for instance, has spent \$22,000 in just the last 11 months assisting cancer patients at the national cancer institute who can't afford the fees for their care. More than \$15,000 has been spent by the same parish to renovate classrooms and buy desks for a neighbouring public primary school. About \$10,000 was spent on school fees and stipends for orphans and students from poor families. Such service is in response to our diaconia calling in the framework of public theology.

Promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women, the church creates avenues for education for girls at various levels:

- Widen the opportunities for decision-making by women (department for women, women's board and assembly)
- Increase women's participation in leadership
- Empowerment seminar/workshop/outreach
- Establish health facilities to help women and children
- Establish union of women and women's programmes

In the field of education, the ELCT runs more than fifty secondary schools, about twenty vocational training institutions, two colleges for teacher training, and one university with three colleges. The ELCT aims to keep together learning and faith in

God. As regards economic inequality, the church has assisted by improving micro-financing schemes that enable people at the grass-roots level to get small-scale loans to run their small businesses. These include VICOBA, SACCOS, and church-owned banks, which have a special scheme for lending money to such people inclusively.

The church has issued a policy that sets an imperative for all dioceses to engage in the planting of trees to restore forestry and nature. There are usually special programmes to sensitize people to the effects of cutting down trees in an unchecked manner without planting new ones. We have *kata mti panda miti*, literally, “cut a tree plant trees”. In partnership with aid from the YWCA and the Norwegian Church, the ECD of ELCT for instance has implemented a forest project covering about 508 hectares, full of different species of trees, as a response to this policy and as a counter to climate change. The diocese promotes and advocates for tree planting in its parishes under the motto, “Restore Eden”.

Advocacy also includes the area of family violence, in which different dioceses have different approaches. ECD for example runs a programme called “TAMARI”, in reference to the Biblical case of gender-based violence against the daughter of King David by his own son, Amnon, 2 Samuel 13:13-14. Under this programme, victims of violence are counselled, treated, and linked to the legal aid institutions Legal and Human Rights Centre and Women’s Legal Association Centre. The Diocese also walks these victims through any necessary processes and action to make sure they don’t lose their rights in unjust bureaucratic structures.

Conclusion

The above initiatives by the ELCT constitute much added value in the undertakings to fight poverty. It is also an unequivocal fact that the diaconia work by the ELCT in this part of the world has a massive positive impact on the global situation in terms of alleviating the affects of climate change, which are currently a cross-cutting issue. Intervention on advocacy and sensitization on issues like patriotism for the nation and the world using phrases like “love your neighbour as you love yourself” do undeniably save a lot of resources that would otherwise have been spent to curb the vices of terrorism and violent behaviour against other nationalities and religions from the increased hate.

However, the church still ought to do more than it is doing. Church deficiencies in the areas of skilled personnel, professionalism, and commitment, as well as the abuse of resources with a lack of transparency honesty, accountability, integrity, or respect for science are some of the reasons for the backlash against the church fulfilling its diaconia role and attempting to fast-track development processes for the people in collaboration with other stakeholders.

Mission and Diaconia in the Sri Lankan Context

Sujithar Sivanayagam

Directors of this mission conference, special speakers, organizers, friends and colleagues, it is my great privilege to be here with you to share some of my thoughts on mission and diaconia and some practical issues/challenges in the present context in Sri Lanka.

“We used to give to the people who asked for something when they were in need. But after the tsunami and conflicts, we have become a community that asks for everything for our daily survival.” This is a statement from a young widow with two children who lost her husband during the time of the conflict.

For the tourists, Sri Lanka has been known as an island of paradise, with its picturesque natural beauty. The island’s image as a paradise was shattered in 1983 with the escalation of the ethnic conflict. Thirty years of conflict and tsunamis have affected the people in Sri Lanka in various ways. The outcome of these calamities is a population of young widows, orphans, and people with disabilities (the other-abled people). This has made the mission of the church a huge paradigm in diaconic fields.

Diaconia is an essential expression of the Christian discipleship of every Christian and Christian community, and diaconia is an integral part of mission of God.

Diaconia must affirm the dignity of the people it seeks to serve. In a world where people are treated as commodities and are also mistreated on account of their identities such as gender, race, caste, age, physical and mental disability, and economic and cultural locations, diaconia must build persons and communities in ways that would help them to experience God’s gift of life. In other words, diaconia must not only heal and restore but also defend and nurture.

The churches today (the mission) need to find new possibilities for diaconia in actions and allegiances towards justice, liberation, and transformation.

Diaconia is not merely binding the wounds of the victims or doing acts of compassion. While such actions may be necessary, if diaconia does not challenge injustice and the abuse of power, it ceases to be diaconia. To that extent, diaconia is subversive, seeking the repentance and transformation of people and systems that cause evil and suffering while healing and restoring the victims.

It is not merely an act of service offered in humanistic or humanitarian concern, but an expression of faith that turns things upside-down (Acts 17:1-9).

These realities challenge the ways that the church has been carrying out mission in its limited understanding on diaconia.

There are many issues, ambiguities, and questions for the church to re-evaluate within itself in order for it play an active role in the society to which it has been called or sent to witness the mission of God and the God of justice.

The sad fact is that in Sri Lanka, following the thirty years of civil war in the north and east part of the country, there are still no stable communities. People continue to live in temporary shelters, with no infrastructure facilities to ensure their well-being. Many of these people are still traumatized by the war, and many households are headed by women. These women have very limited skills and resources to handle the role of both breadwinner and single parent.

The relief and rehabilitation services that were and are being carried out during the war and in the post-war context do not make a deeper or positive impact in the lives of the needy or victims, as these services have been carried out in a very narrow concept. It is exactly like the Samaritan's project we see in the Gospel of Luke: the Samaritan was only able to take care of the victim and did not even try to stop the thieves.

There is a need for the dynamic diaconic role of the church to generate an authentic or genuine solution. At the same time, the church should function as a diaconic corporation so that it can be strategic about taking the right actions and implementations within a sustainable ideology. These have become the main issues of the mission of the church in the Sri Lankan context.

I will also discuss diaconia and mission as integral parts of each other, diaconia as preaching and deed, and the faces of diaconia (individual, institution and advocacy) to give a wider understanding of diaconia.

The activity of diaconia is the responsibility of every Christian. Diaconia is not just a "humanitarian" act, or "charity", but brings the gospel into context to transform society. As Altmann says:

Diakonia is part of the essence of the mission; indeed, of the spiritual life of everyone.¹

Diakonia is a Greek word that could be translated as "service". The word "diaconia" refers to the ministry of Jesus and the various ministries of the early church. If we examine more closely how this word is used in the New Testament, we find both the verb "to diaconate" and the two nouns "diaconia" (service) and "deacon" (a servant). The verb describes serving in a broad sense (Luke 8:3, Matthew 25:44) but, more specifically, it describes preparing meals and waiting at table (Luke 17:8, John 12:12). The noun "diaconia" can also be used in several ways, but it seems to have become an accepted term for describing certain duties within the congregation, in particular duties of leadership (I Corinthians 16:15, II Corinthians 5: 18 – 19). The term also applies to particular support efforts organized by the congregation. The collection of money to support poor people in Jerusalem, for example, is referred to simply as "diaconia" (Romans 15:31, 2 Corinthians 8: 1 – 6, 9: 1, 12 – 13). In the early church, it seems that the responsibilities of all people undertaking leadership were described as diaconia, but as time went by, the term "deacon" was applied to a particular group of people among the leaders of the congregation (Philippians 1:1, Timothy 3:8 – 12). The word "diaconia" cannot be associated with the cult of power, exclusiveness, or the right to privileges. On the contrary, it is about "readiness to serve". At the same

1 Walter Altmann 2012, *Theology of Diaconia for the 21st century*, WCC Conference on Theology of Diaconia for the 21st Century, Colombo, 2-6 June 2012, pg. 8.

time, our concern with diaconia must not only be timely service but of continuity towards sustainability.

Aram Keshishian reflects on diaconia as God's love in action.

The diaconia of the church is rooted on the person and work of Christ. This Diakonia is essentially one of love and sharing that sustains the inter-Trinitarian relationship of God and discloses him to human being. Diakonia is not just a moral duty of the church in regard to the needs of society, but an indispensable expression of her being. It is sacramental action of the whole church for the whole of mankind, for the whole cosmos. Diakonia is not a human initiative, but God's grace (Charis), love (Agape) and mercy (Eleos) in action.²

Showing God's love in action is diaconia. It means "the mission".

God's love in action is always reflected in justice. Reinerio Arce-Valentin says:

Biblically speaking, to be prophetic is not only criticizing what is wrong, denouncing injustice and working for justice. The criticism of wrongdoings should come out of our total commitment to God's World and Creation. The Kingdom of God is the full and total realization of his Justice and of Life.³

Consequently, diaconia is an act of service for the promotion of a full life for all of God's creation. Diaconia should emphasize preventive action. Real interest in people or community makes one ask about the causes of people's needs. Diaconia is concerned with structural or political dimensions. When the diaconal task is seen as preventive, comprehensive, and holistic, it must pay attention to the structural political causes of misery, enslavement, or suffering, and take action in this respect where possible. The church must have a concern for justice. Diaconia is "humanitarian" (WCC), which means that it is not limited to churches and Christians. Human life and human dignity must be the ultimate value of diaconal mission.

Wati Longchar says:

Diakonia is a holistic principle which embraces justice, peace, equality, dignity and respect of all. Relocation of "Diakonia" in margin's context is not an option, but a divine mandate.⁴

As Keshishian says, diaconia is rooted in justice. It challenges all the unjust structures in society that oppress the poor. According to him:

Diakonia is not an act of charity but one of justice; as such, it has political implications. Diakonia, taken in its authentic sense, is not giving aid to the poor;

2 Aram Keshishian 1992, *The Christian Witness at the Crossroads in the Middle East*, Middle East Council of Churches, Beirut, p. 34–36.

3 Reinerio Arce-Valentin 2012, *Church, Mission and Diaconia*, WCC Conference on Theology of Diaconia for the 21st Century, Colombo, 2-6 June 2012, p. 2.

4 Wati Longchar 2012, p. 5.

but proving justice to those who are made poor, to those who are the victims of oppressive socio-economic structures.⁵

When Kjell Nordstokke sees the relationships between justice and diaconia, he says:

Diaconia is about action with a purpose: what has been broken can be restored; wounds can be healed; injustice can cease and, through reconciliation, be turned to peace and justice.⁶

Still, there is confusion about the proper understanding of “Diaconia and Mission” or about how we are to look at both at the same time. What is the relationship or the difference between them?

The mission of the church is, as has been said:

To continue the mission of Jesus Christ as defined in St. Luke, chapter 4:18-20. Mission belongs to the very nature and being of the Church.⁷

Doing mission in a holistic way encompasses proclamation, service (diaconia), and advocacy. It also has to do with the fact that for some, the word “mission” is used in a sense where proclamation is the primary focus point. Others understand mission as more comprehensively in line with the mission document to include both proclamation and service.

Keshishian says:

Diaconia is not an aspect of mission. It is the central intrinsic aspect of the mission of the church.⁸

The Lutheran World Federation found that diaconia and mission could not be separated, and they said:

One is that diaconia is a theological concept that points to the very identity and mission of the church. Another is its practical implication in the sense that diaconia is a call to action, as a response to challenges of human suffering, injustice and care for creation. Diaconia is seen to be an integral part of mission in its bold action to address the root causes of human suffering and injustice. A particular concern for many engaged in diaconal work is that its action has to be shaped according to the context and the nature of its work. These concerns should not allow for a separation between mission and diaconia, as has sometimes been the case, but should urge all of us to continue to reflect on how the different dimensions of mission are interconnected and mutually support each other.⁹

5 Keshishian 1992, p. 38-42.

6 Nordstokke 2000, p. 2.

7 Fernando Marshal (editor) 2011, p. 27-29.

8 Keshishian 1992, p. 40.

9 Lutheran World Federation 2009, p. 8-9.

Altmann says:

Mission without diaconia would easily turn into an arrogant and violent enterprise, not respectful of the culture, values and identity of the addressees of the Christian message. It would try to impose one's own faith upon others, instead of giving reasons for the hope that is within us (1 Peter 3:15) and respecting the others' own faith decision.¹⁰

Diaconia is part of a holistic understanding of mission and was already installed in the early church, when the apostles laid their hands on the persons chosen to become deacons, given the special task of taking care of the needs of the poor and vulnerable. Their task was spiritually grounded in the Second Commandment to love our neighbours as ourselves and in the teachings in the scriptures about taking care of the needs of the orphans, widows, and strangers. Mission of the church is mission of God. In this context, diaconia becomes the mission of the church.

Therefore diaconia is not an aspect of mission. It is the quintessence of the mission of the church.

In the Sri Lankan context, though we have successful achievements in diaconal engagements, we face challenges in sustainable missions.

Let me share some of those at this juncture to enhance our thinking about our own respective continents and discussion purposes.

- As our country is colourful, with a variety of religions and ethnicities, a suspicious mood always threatens to become part of diaconal engagements. The issue of religious conversion is one of those issues. How do we see and accept each other?
- The matter of multitudes is another challenge where the present church seems to lose interest in individuals. Whom do we serve?
- There is a lack of professionalism and human resources in mission fields and a tension between faith and intellectuals. Is praying enough?
- Note the lack of transparencies/openness within church structures (cultural sensitivity). The church must not have its own limits.
- Finally, there is the issue of funding agencies/donors (tension between concept and context).

In summary, as I mentioned in the beginning about the young widow's statement, each and every diaconal activity/mission must have the idea of sustainability, justice, and cooperate social responsibility to move forward.

When I think of mission and diaconia, I always remember the Chinese proverb that says,

Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.

We should look at this proverb carefully. Even if you give a man a net, this too will be an unsuccessful mission if you fail to teach him. There we do justice to his life.

¹⁰ Altmann Walter 2012, p. 2.

So let us not forget that mission is always present and should be present, to do justice in society and in creation.

Let me finish my talk with a small story.

A young girl was walking along a beach where thousands of starfish had been washed up during a terrible storm. When she came to each starfish, she would pick it up and throw it back into the ocean.

She had been doing this for some time when a man approached her and said, "Little girl, why are you doing this? Look at this beach! You can't save all those starfish. You can't begin to make a difference."

The girl seemed to surprised and deflated. But after a few moments, she bent down, picked up another starfish, and hurled it as far as she could into the ocean. Then she looked up at the man and replied. "Well, I made a difference to that one."

*In our global village, all must kindred be;
It's not good just talking – that's hypocrisy.
Join the faith with action, put your hand in too.
Grant us, Lord, the vision, of a world made new.
Here's my hand, co-workers, firm as Jericho;
Let us work together, there is much to do.
Thanks and may God bless.*

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Diaconia from an international Perspective – Opportunities for Cooperation among Churches from different Countries

Caroline Shedafa

1. Introduction - Diaconia in UEM member churches

All members of the UEM communion are doing diaconia work. There is no doubt that diaconia is among the core tasks of the church following the gospel and the life of Jesus Christ. If one would be asked to define the kind of job Jesus was doing in his life, one could say that Jesus – besides being a preacher and a teacher – was a deacon. He spent a large share of his time caring for people in need and healing them. He cared for the most vulnerable and marginalized and he asked us to follow his example and do as the Good Samaritan did.

Although all churches do diaconia work, the emphasis or importance given to diaconic activities varies among the UEM member churches. However, in many cases, the UEM member churches are key stakeholders in the provision of social services and health care services. Churches are running hospitals, dispensaries, and mobile clinics, e.g., for mothers and children or HIV/AIDS affected people. The churches also run elderly care centres and elderly care programmes, schools and other institutions for people with disabilities and for orphaned children. The churches also have programmes for street children, widows, prostitutes, drug abusers, prisoners, and other vulnerable and marginalized groups.

2. The UEM diaconia programme

Diaconia is one of the integral parts of the work of the UEM. The roots go back to the first missionaries from the Bethel Mission and the Rhenish Mission, for whom diaconia was an important pillar of their mission work, just like education. From the beginning, evangelism was combined with diaconia activities such as health care and meeting the needs of orphans and other marginalized people. In the Bethel Mission – one of the two first founding organizations of the UEM – mission was even understood and specified as “Diakoniemission” (diaconia mission). More than other mission societies of the time, the Bethel Mission, under the leadership of Friedrich von Bodelschwingh, sent out teams of missionaries with different professional backgrounds: nurses, pastors, doctors, teachers, deacons and deaconesses.

So from their early days until the present, the churches in Africa and Asia have

been strong in diaconia, and diaconia has been a pillar of the mission work. But in 2008, the General Assembly (GA) decided to strengthen diaconia as an essential part of the holistic understanding of mission by establishing a special programme for diaconia.

The main objectives of the diaconia programmes are:

- To facilitate exchange and cooperation between the different member churches around their diaconic work
- To build the capacity of the member churches in the area of diaconia work

3. International cooperation among UEM member churches – Opportunities and limitations

The UEM wants to facilitate mutual learning about the diaconia work of its member churches. But what are the concrete opportunities that lie in this? Who can benefit from it? In what way can the member churches benefit?

With regards to the experience from the UEM diaconia programme, the first step must be to do a situation analysis. This can be done in different ways. One commonly used way in the UEM is to bring the people who are concerned with the respective topic in the different regions and countries together. This enables the member churches to exchange experience. They learn from each other, they get to know each other, and therefore they get closer together. This is a very important aspect in all areas of the UEM.

But there is another important reason it is so important to bring people together: it allows us to find out where the common areas are. Cooperation in the diaconia sector can be very fruitful and effective when there is common ground, for example a certain challenge that the member churches have in common or challenges that are very closely related. An example is the challenge of street children. One will find that the challenges connected to street children in Berlin, Dar es Salaam, Manila, Jakarta, and Hong Kong are quite similar, although the settings are quite different. Compared to Dar es Salaam and Jakarta, the social service system in Berlin and Hong Kong is highly developed, well financed, and staffed with many well-trained experts, but there are street children in all these cities because their existence is a phenomenon connected to urbanization, and the challenges they represent are very similar. This can be a common ground on which all sides can learn from each other and cooperate.

If there is no common ground or the common ground is very limited, the exchange will stay at the level of getting to know each other, and therefore getting closer to each other and becoming friends. Or it may stay at the level of giving support in only one direction, e.g., sending funds from a “richer church” to a “poorer church” or sending well-trained experts to places where there are no experts. This does not mean that this sort of exchange is not valuable. It has a high value in that it widens people’s horizons and can also be the source of essential support. However, if the aim of the diaconia work within the UEM is to facilitate exchange and mutual learning, and through this to improve the diaconia work in its member churches, there must

be common ground. This is why it must be the aim of the UEM diaconia work to identify opportunities for common ground.

Sometimes this common ground is found more often within the regions of the UEM. Challenges faced by the Indonesian churches are more likely to be similar to the challenges faced in Sri Lanka and the Philippines. Or, for example, the HIV/AIDS epidemic is likely to cause similar challenges in Botswana and Rwanda, compared to the challenges faced in Germany.

But sometimes “common ground” is found among churches that are quite far from one another geographically, and in terms of their socio-economic status as well. Therefore, depending on the respective topic, fruitful cooperation among member churches can develop in many different ways and directions.

The following are some examples of how this exchange among UEM member churches has evolved in different working areas of diaconia.

a. Health care sector

Most of the member churches in the UEM run health facilities ranging from small dispensaries and community-based health programmes to big referral hospitals.

In Germany, the Protestant Church runs more than two hundred hospitals with more than a hundred thousand employees. These include general hospitals as well as all kinds of specialized hospitals. The Churches (Catholic and Protestant) are very important stakeholders and service providers in the German health care system.

In Tanzania, the Evangelical Lutheran Church is an important service provider in the health system as well. The ELCT runs 25 hospitals (including the zonal consultancy hospital KCMC) and over 150 lower-level health facilities (dispensaries and health centres) located all over Tanzania. Nearly 95 per cent of the health facilities are located in rural and hard-to-reach areas. The ELCT has managed to reach nearly all regions and districts with its health services, covering up to 20 per cent of the total national health services.¹

These are just two examples among the UEM member churches. There are also church-owned hospitals in our member churches in Cameroon, Rwanda, Democratic Republic of Congo, Indonesia, and the Philippines.

There is a long history of cooperation within the UEM in the medical sector. However, for a long time, this mainly consisted of sending, equipment and medical personnel from Germany to Asia and Africa, giving financial support to programmes in the health sectors in the global South, and inviting medical personnel for exposure and training to Germany.

In 2010, the UEM diaconia programme organized a consultation for medical doctors in charge of church-based hospitals. The consultation took place in Berlin at a large diaconic hospital owned by the v. Bodelschwingh Foundation Bethel. It was a platform to learn about the health services provided by the member churches in the different regions. It also showed the variety and the impact of church-based health care facilities all over the world. The doctors had the chance to learn about the German health care system and the interconnection between government and

1 Source: Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT), Health Department: Capacity Statement. 2015

church-run hospitals. They also undertook study visits of different medical specialty fields such as surgery, pediatrics, and obstetrics. This consultation and its accompanying activities are one of the ways of “bringing the member churches together” that I mentioned before.

In 2012, the second doctors’ consultation took place in Rwanda. This time, there were also some representatives from the churches in Asia and Germany, but the majority of the participants came from our African member churches in Rwanda, Cameroon, DRC, and Tanzania. The agenda of this consultation had a focus on the question of public-private partnership (PPP) between governments and church-based hospitals. This was a result of the first consultation in Berlin, which showed that one of the main challenges to the churches in Africa and Asia was the financing of hospital costs, especially at times when there was no longer the kind of continuous support of church hospitals from mission organizations that there had been in the past. And thus the common ground was found.

In this latter case, we learned that the exchange of doctors from the African countries was very effective because the setting was similar, and therefore also the challenges: health care services for the population that were generally still insufficient, especially in rural areas; the exodus of medical personnel looking for greener pastures in state-run facilities; and the challenges of financing the health services in the absence of a system of refinancing health services through social insurance schemes or taxes. We also learned, however, that there was an existing and growing concept of PPP in Rwanda and Tanzania, meaning the refinancing of services provided by church health facilities. However, in Cameroon and DRC this system of PPP is generally lacking, and it is putting the church hospitals in very dire financial situations. Because of the similarity in their backgrounds and settings, the doctors from DRC and Cameroon benefited greatly from the experience of the ELCT in Tanzania in negotiating with the government, and future bilateral cooperation and exchange between the three member churches was planned.

In this particular case, the exchange among the member churches from the Africa Region was more fruitful than the cooperation between Germany and Africa, for instance. There is a huge gap between the health care system in Germany and health systems in most African countries. The German health care system is among the best in the world. It is highly specialized and very cost-intensive, but on the other hand it is securely financed through a very effective social insurance system that is more than a century old. This makes it somewhat difficult for doctors from the two regions to relate to the situation in the German region; there is little common ground. But there is a lot of common ground for the church-based hospitals in African countries. And I know that following the international consultation in Rwanda, the UEM Asia Region also took up the topic of health services and facilitated several programmes for medical doctors and other staff from health facilities from different countries.

b. Disability Sector

Many of the UEM member churches run institutions for children and adults with disabilities. In many cases, these facilities are among the main service providers for people with disabilities.

Among the institutions for disabled children within UEM member churches

are the Alpha Omega Centre in Sumatra; the Irente Rainbow School, Irente Blind School, and Mtoni Deaconic Lutheran Centre in Tanzania; a centre for youth with physical disabilities in Cameroon; and the Amity Foundation in China, with its Amity Home of Blessings and Amity Bakery. The Protestant Church in Germany, through its diaconia, has more than three thousand institutions for people with disabilities.

The ELCT-North-Eastern Diocese established the Sebastian Kolowa Memorial University with a special focus on disability issues. Among their offerings is the first university programme for special-needs-education teachers in Tanzania.

In 2013, the UEM diaconia programme organized a workshop in Bethel, Germany for leaders of institutions for children with disabilities. And in 2015, there was a workshop about inclusion in Stellenbosch, South Africa.

One of the UEM member churches in Tanzania, the ELCT Eastern and Coastal Diocese, is in the process of establishing the first vocational training centre for youth with mental disabilities in Tanzania. The aim is to not only train them in different vocational fields, but also to facilitate future employment for the trainees, either on the regular labour market or at our own facilities. In Germany, most people with mental disabilities are working in special sheltered workshops. The Protestant Church in Germany runs more than 350 of those workshops. However, establishing exclusive and cost-intensive sheltered workshops is not an option in Tanzania. An idea was developed in the ECD to start a bakery to train youth and later to offer them employment in one of the branches of the bakery in Dar es Salaam. Through the UEM, the ECD learned that the Amity Foundation has a very similar programme through its Amity Bakery, so the UEM agreed to help initiate a cooperation or partnership with the Amity Foundation and learn from its experience in the city of Nanjing.

This shows that sometimes, common ground is not necessarily found through similar backgrounds or settings, but through similarities in the programmes and concepts of diaconia work.

c. Ageing

Ageing was identified as one of the main focus areas of the UEM International Diaconia Programme.

The world is witnessing a phenomenon unprecedented in human history: the ageing of the population. Today, there are about 800 million people worldwide at or over the age of sixty. That is about four times as many as in 1950. The number of older people is predicted to rise to 2 billion in the year 2050.

The ageing of the world's population is one of the great achievements of human history. Fewer and fewer people die in childhood or as young adults. More and more people have the chance to reach an advanced age. This increase in life expectancy is possible through increased living standards, food stability, hygienic standards, and advances in medicine.

The phenomenon of population ageing is already being seriously felt in highly developed countries. In Germany, more than 20 per cent of the population is age 65 or older, and this figure will increase to about 35 per cent in 2060. The percentage of people age 80 and older will increase from 5 per cent to almost 15 per cent. In

total numbers, this means that their numbers will rise from 4.1 million in 2010 to 10 million people age 80 or older in 2060.

In Hong Kong, over-65s make up around 13 per cent of the population today, and their share will increase to 30 per cent in 2050. The percentage of those age 80 or older will increase from around 4 to 13 per cent in 2050.²

Because of this demographic change, societies and churches in Germany, Hong Kong, and other highly developed parts of the world are preparing themselves. This change in population structure will have a substantial impact on all aspects of society, i.e., family structures, pension and social welfare systems, health care demands, politics, and economics.

However, population ageing is not limited to highly developed countries. In fact, the ageing of the population is happening at a much higher speed in low- and middle-income countries. In 2050, around three quarters of all people age 60 and above will live in low- and middle-income countries; that's 1.5 billion older people. Particularly in many countries in Asia, the share of older people as part of the whole population will increase at a high rate, and this includes the Philippines and Indonesia.

In 2013, a special report was prepared on the situation of older people and the role of the church in service provisions for all UEM member churches. The results show the variety of situations within the range of the UEM member churches. There are the highly developed countries like Germany and Hong Kong, where population ageing is already considered to be one of the main challenges for the society. Then there are middle-income country settings like the Philippines and Indonesia, with a rapidly ageing population and challenges connected to urbanization. In the African setting, older people remain a small part of a rapidly growing population, of which a large percentage is children and youth. Regardless of their numbers of older people, the societies and churches in all of the UEM regions face challenges connected to changes in the society through modernization and the erosion of traditional family and community structures. And all of the member churches are looking for new ways and concepts to provide services for older people. Despite the fact that the settings might be very different, the challenges are often similar. There is a lot of common ground. And this is exactly where the international exchange and cooperation facilitated by the UEM can bear important fruits for the member churches from all regions. Here the German member churches in particular can benefit from exchanges with other regions that have other experiences with intergenerational community.³

The first programme organized by the UEM diaconia programme took place in 2010. A group of 5 retired people from Germany between the ages of 67 and 80, all of whom had some sort of international experience in mission work, traveled to Bukoba in rural Tanzania and met with a group of older people from there, many of them former pastors and church leaders age 60 or over with international expe-

2 Source: United Nations Population Division – Online Data (http://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/unpp/panel_population.htm)

3 Source: United Evangelical Mission: Report Ageing in UEM: The Situation in Member Churches in Africa, Asia and Germany and the v. Bodelschwingh Foundations/Bethel and Proposals for Future Projects and Activities. 2013.

rience. In the workshop, the participants shared their perspectives on ageing and talked about its social, biblical, and socio-economic aspects, as well as the special challenges for older people in their respective countries. This exchange showed that besides the large differences in their levels of social security, older people face very similar challenges in both countries.

The participants formulated recommendations for future cooperation within the UEM communion. These include:

- Strengthening senior volunteer exchange to use the often-underutilized potential and resources of retired persons
- Facilitating the promotion of the rights of older people in church and society
- Training deacons and deaconesses in caring for the elderly
- Facilitating exchange and visitation programmes on caring for the elderly
- Encouraging the member churches to install and improve health services, including the provision of assistive devices for the elderly

The second international programme on ageing was a study trip with pastors from Germany to Hong Kong that was organized by the International Diaconia Programme in collaboration with the Chinese Rhenish Church (CRC). The idea for this trip was developed after the study visit by social workers from the CRC to Germany.

The objective of the study trip to Hong Kong was to gain insight into the situation of older people in a megacity like Hong Kong that has an increasingly ageing population. The programme included presentations from different experts, visits to congregations, homes for the aged (church-run as well as public or Buddhist institutions), and community centres for the elderly as well as home visits to older people. Hong Kong has a well-developed social security and elderly care system. The participants got a broad picture of the situation of older people in Hong Kong and of how the society and the church are reacting to the demographic changes.

4. Capacity-building

As stated before, capacity-building is the second major objective of the UEM diaconia programme.

Capacity-building has always been an important aspect of the diaconia work of the UEM – even before the internationalization. In Tanzania, there are quite a number of people working in the church, as well as retired church staff who were trained in Germany. Many of them were trained in Bethel as deacons and deaconesses. For many years, qualified staff, mainly from Germany, would facilitate short trainings in Asia and Africa.

The aim of the UEM diaconia programme is to support churches in mutual learning for their diaconic work, and to provide training. This training is at all levels, including at a more grass-roots level, e.g., from short trainings for community workers up to university-level programmes.

Nowadays, the capacity-building concepts for the diaconia work of the UEM reflect much of the internationalization of the UEM. The capacity-building is done

through international internships of students in the field of diaconia, workshops, and trainings on certain topics such as the International Conference on Ageing and Religion in intercultural perspective in Wuppertal in 2015.

Capacity-building is also organized at the university level, i.e., through the International Master's Course in Diaconic Management. Some of the alumni of this Master's course are among us here today. The MA in Diaconic Management was started in 2011. It provides an academic qualification for leaders of diaconic work. The curriculum is interdisciplinary, international, and combines theory and praxis. Presently, the third cohort of students is on the course. The graduates of the MA course meet annually. These meetings shall be open and will continue so that a close network of diaconic leaders can develop in UEM.

There are plans to start an international bachelor's degree programme in the future and to establish an international "Virtual Academy for Education and Training in Diaconia", which will compile and sharpen the profile of the capacity-building at the different levels.

Evangelism

The Relevance of some contemporary African Pentecostal/Charismatic Themes in African Christianity: A contemporary missiological Quest

Faith K. Lugazia

Introduction:

Mainline churches have been struggling to meet the challenges of the church in Africa through missiological methodologies of evangelism and social service (building schools, health centres, and pastoral care and counselling). These methods have constructed neither a redemptive and empowering theology nor a Christian Identity that could have helped alleviate pauperization¹ in the continent. Christians in Africa are still living with their existential questions. Questions like: How can we eradicate the poverty mentality of both mind and economy so that we can liberate our communities to be self-creative with the resources available? Or, how can we heal broken hearts, bodies tortured by demons, and other evil mystical powers? The above questions have remained untouched for a long time, especially in mainline Christianity. Christians consulting diviners and medicine men have been some of the reactions of dissatisfaction with mainline Christianity in the continent.²

Most Africans have opted to embark on contemporary Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity because it claims to have the answers to many pressing existential problems.³ This typology of Christianity has claimed “to respond to their indigenous explanations for misfortunes that have survived in the modern urban space or emergent culture, issues such as Demonic oppression, witchcraft activities, and the scourge of poverty. People want release from the untoward conditions through prophecy and word of knowledge.”⁴ Also at issue is “their pneumatic Christianity, which insists that belief must be proven by ‘experience’;⁵ and that “they sing their

1 Ruth Marshall, “Power in the Name of Jesus”, *Review of African Political Economy*, 52, (November 1991): 21-37.

2 Abednego Keshomshahara, “The Lutheran Doctrine of the Holy Spirit and the Challenge of the Traditional Spirit Beliefs among the Haya People” (MTh. Thesis, Makumira University College, June 2000).

3 Paul Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity: Pentecostalism in a Globalizing African Economy*, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004), ix.

4 Ogbu Kalu, “Sankofa”, Pentecostalism and African Cultural Heritage” in *Spirit in the World: Emerging Pentecostal Theologies in Global Contexts*. Templeton Foundation, 2007), 16.

5 Jahnson Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, “Neo-Pentecostalism and the Changing Face of

theology instead of arguing for it”⁶ In Welbourn’s words, in this typology of Christianity, Africans find “a place to feel at home”⁷

The question remains, however, that if the contemporary Pentecostal/Charismatic teaching answers the questions of the people, then why is the continent still plagued by poverty, disease, and injustice? Furthermore, how should African churches be doing their mission activities in the confronting oppressive issues that make their people captives or slaves? Is there anything to be learned or borrowed from contemporary Pentecostal/Charismatic groups?

This missiological paper seeks to question, critically analyse, and explore the relevance of some socio-economic themes addressed by contemporary Pentecostal/Charismatic groups in African Christianity. Since the themes are many, this paper will discuss only two, namely:

1. *Healing and Reconstruction*
2. *Prosperity as Doubling Material Possessions*

The paper argues that, unless the spiritual and social convergence instigated by modern contextual realities is addressed, genuine mission themes will continue to be sought in the continent.

Key Concepts: *Mission, Healing, Reconciliation, Borrowing, Current Pentecostal/Charismatic groups, Prosperity as doubling material possessions*

Healing and reconciliation in the missiological discipline in Africa

The Brandenburg Missionary Conference in 1932, through the work of Karl Barth, defined mission as “Missio-Dei”⁸ meaning that mission is God’s, but we are also participants. Our role is to do “everything that the church is sent into the world to do: preaching of the Gospel, healing of the sick, caring for the poor, teaching the children, improving international and interracial relations, and attacking injustice.”⁹

The mission of doing everything as defined above has been following Western patterns in the continent, however, and has failed to fulfil its call. Doing mission in Africa requires a specific contextual approach, because Africa has encountered slavery, colonialism, deadly diseases, demon possession, natural calamities, ethnic adversity resulting in civil wars, unstable political wars, poverty, and memories of both apartheid and genocide.

Mainline churches have done healing ministry, for example, including the prac-

Christianity in Africa,” Karen Bloomquist, (ed.), in *Lutherans Respond to Pentecostalism*, (Minneapolis: Lutheran University Press, 2008), 9.

6 Harvey Cox, *Fire from Heaven*, (New York: W.W Eerdmans Publishing, 1995), 15.

7 F. Welbourn, *East African Rebels*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 1.

8 David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, (20th anniversary edition), (New York: Orbis Books, 2012), 398.

9 Leslie Newbegin, *The Gospel in a Pluralistic Society (Grand Rapids 1969)*, 23.

tice of medicine (addressing of both physical and mental health), caring and counseling disciplines and spiritual practices, prayers, and repentance.¹⁰ But many of these mainline churches do not accept the mystical realities that oppress Africans as much as other oppressive realities proved scientifically. This is simply because the Western theological orientation and experience is based upon rationalistic demythologization. Many African ministers with Western theological orientations do not believe their existence. As one of these myself, I encountered a demon-possessed Christian during my theological studies. Let me share my story about encountering a demon-possessed Christian and my approach to mission.

I met a student at a Christian gathering who asked me to pray for her because she wanted to be saved. As a theologian, I took this on as my responsibility, so I called some of my friends to prepare for the ministry of prayer. While praying, the student fell down and then started to throw herself against the walls of the room, the bed, and the cupboard. I was among the first to open my eyes. Then one of my friends, Upendo, a nurse by profession who believed in the existence of demon possession, realized quickly that this person was possessed. I was against such beliefs due to my Western theological orientation. Upendo added words that made me frightened. She said, "This person is possessed, and we are going to pray for deliverance and exorcism. We kindly ask anyone in the room who is not saved to go out, because when demon moves from her, it most likely will come to reside in anyone who is not saved." Many of the students left the room. I remained there, wondering whether I was really saved and what I would do if the demon came to me. Instead of praying for exorcism, I was praying to God to not let this demon come to me. The prayer warriors continued to pray for almost five hours, asking the demon who he was, where he had come from, and why. The demon was an uncle who did not want her to be a Christian. At last, he left the girl, and she started to sweat and asked what was going on. She was not told, but then she felt tired, so she slept.

From that time on, I've been confessing that demon possession in Africa is a reality and have joined others in doing exorcism ministry.

John Mbiti also gave an anecdotal story that reflects the same negative effects of Western theological orientation on healing among the mainline churches.¹¹

Healing with regard to exorcism is far from being actualized, because Western education has created a denial of the mystical powers that have long been a reality in the lives of believers and unbelievers of Jesus Christ in the continent.

There are various spirits that can possess a person and need exorcism. When spirits of the dead visit the living, however, they are not meant to be cast out, but to be spoken with, reasoned with, and bargained with. The Western theology has neither vocabulary nor grammar for this. Even more seriously, Western knowledge denies the African reality.¹²

10 Jacques Matthey (ed.), *You are the Light of the World: Statements on Mission by the WCC: 1980-2005* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2005), 139.

11 For an explanation, see John S. Mbiti, "Theological Impotence and the Universality of the Church", in G.H. Anderson and T.F. Stransky (eds). *Mission Trends* no. 3 (New York: Paulist Press, 1976), 6-8.

12 Paul Isaak, "The Contribution of Missiological Theology to Theological Education in Af-

Contemporary Pentecostal/Charismatics are practising the ministry of healing. However, they reflect the selling of the grace of God. When one asks a Pentecostal or Charismatic for prayers of healing from sickness or other questions in life like passing an examination, putting an end to misfortune, or even getting a job, they are asked to give some amount of money as an endowment for the service rendered. Such ministry creates questions, like: Does money have a connection to the healing power of God? Or, when can an individual can be responsible for approaching God, since the ministry is operated in a hierarchical way by so-called “prayer warriors”?

The current strategies and approaches by contemporary Pentecostals/Charismatics lack convincing tools of the gracious love of God and do not work for other socially oppressive structures that still enslave Christians even after their salvation.

One of the indicators of these facts is the desperate situation found in our African churches today despite our numerical growth. Poverty, hunger, diseases, wars, ethnic killings, fears, and hatred caused by human beings and evil powers are escalating in the continent.

Instead of taking the Pentecostal/Charismatic approach, I suggest that we borrow this method in our understanding. Some examples include healing prayers and/or laying on of hands; divine healing; and rituals involving touch and tenderness, forgiveness and the sharing of the Eucharist. Not asking for money for these services in mainline churches can have important and at times even dramatic effects on the physical as well as the social realm of human beings.¹³ The main concern of this paper with regard to healing, then, is that mainline churches should help those people enslaved by evil demons instead of making this a concern of other churches. I now turn to reconciliation.

Paul Isaak advocates reconciliation, which he refers to specifically as the healing of broken relationships and the resolving of conflicts and wrongs from the past in order to re-establish restored relationships, by promoting peace, justice, and solidarity.¹⁴ Isaak's explanation is vital because today in African societies, especially among Christians, enormous hatred can arise among nuclear families, clans, and even societies that comes from the belief of being bewitched by relatives or covens of various kinds. Politically, ethnic groups have been hating each other for unpersuasive reasons. In most contemporary Pentecostal/Charismatic groups, victims' relatives have been accused of causing a lack of jobs because of technological advancement replacing human beings, the lack of a balanced diet due to poverty, a lack of children for couples, natural calamities, and demon possession. Their ministry ends up increasing hatred instead of solving it. For example, when a couple is having trouble conceiving children, the words of wisdom from a prophet could confirm that the problem comes from either in-laws, friends of the family, or ancestors. Such an approach is unchristian, since Christ came to reconcile human beings and not the other way round.

rica” in *Handbook of Theological Education in Africa*. Isabel Apowo Phiri and Dietrich Werner, eds (SA: Clusters Publication, 2013), 543-554.

13 Matthey, ed., *ibid*.

14 Paul Isaak, *The Contribution*, 543-554.

The ministry of reconciliation, therefore, is an urgent need in contemporary African Christianity, since existing approaches are not adequate to proclaim *Missio-Dei* as our call. The ministry of reconciliation, methodologically, should include listening. “The act of reconciliation should be an ongoing process and a combination of elements such as witnessing and telling of the truth, exposing lies, shaping and healing memories, and justice and forgiveness.”¹⁵ Robert Schreiter gives another approach in this method, that “the best approach is to merely outline elements that must be considered in any process of reconciliation.”¹⁶

Contemporary healing and reconciliation should be centred on the word of God as a transformative power to change the mindset of the African Christians, letting them be creative and responsible believers to solve their questions and realities as they participate in *Missio-Dei*. Churches in Africa should help Christians stop spending time with questions of “who” and move on to questions of “how”: how do I forgive so that I can live in peace with others, and with God as well.

Contemporary reconciliation themes should also create a space of dialogue among Christians where questions of “who?” and “why me?” can be transformed into “what” we can do for better relationships. Church preachers also need to convince Christians that God is present in their struggle, that they are not alone, and that being unhealed physically should also be a part of Christian expectation, because God’s will and time is God’s, not ours.

Prosperity as doubling material possessions

The Gnostic ideology tended to emphasize the spiritual realm over the material, often claiming that the material realm is evil and hence should be escaped.¹⁷ Christian traditional belief holds that a “lack of material things and poverty are considered a spiritual state of blessedness” (Luke 6:20).¹⁸ Taken together, these two ideas have led poverty to be accepted by the church and its people even today, especially since mission churches did not insist on how to eradicate poverty through the ethics of work¹⁹ or through community mobilization²⁰ strategies. Instead, people were simply prepared to wait for heaven. Protestants would criticize

15 Sebastian Kim, Pauline Kollontai, and Greg Hoyland (eds), *Peace and Reconciliation: In Search of Shared Identity*, (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008), 7-20.

16 Robert Schreiter, *The Ministry of Reconciliation: Spirituality and Strategies*, (Maryknoll Books, 1998), 13.

17 Stanley J. Grenz, et al., *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms*, (Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1999), 56.

18 James B. Shelton, “A Pendulum Swing between Prosperity and Suffering: What is the Role of Faith?” in Vinson Synan (ed.), *Spirit-Empowered Christianity in the 21st Century*, (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 2011), 358.

19 Wilson Niwagila, *From the Catacomb to the Self-governing Church* (Ammersbek 1988)

20 Faustine Mahali, “A Biblical Perspective on Mission Amidst Unsustainable Livelihoods in Africa” in Claudia Wahrlich-Oblau and Fidon Mwombeki, (eds), *Mission Continues: Global Impulses for the 21st Century*. (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2010), 28- 37.

this idea and attribute it to classical Pentecostal theology.²¹ But in reality, words of condemnation that the rich will not inherit the Kingdom of God, the denial of material wealth, and the picture of materialistic Jerusalem as a city in heaven for the chosen are recited in songs and sermons in these mission churches even today, especially in Africa. These mission churches forget to insist that the requirements for one to inherit the Kingdom of God according to Christian doctrine are faith in Jesus Christ and his grace, not the situation one finds him/herself in. The LWF consultation on “Poverty and Mission of the Church in Africa”, meeting in Arusha on 4-6 September 2006, confirmed the above claims when it stated that “poverty in Africa is still a challenge.... The Church herself has participated in the poverty condition of Africans by not giving prophetic voice and acting boldly in witnessing against all forms of social and economic injustice, corruption, and bad leadership, all of which perpetuate poverty.”²²

Contemporary Pentecostal/Charismatic groups teach that material wealth is a divine right. They have created a space to let believers be aware that material wealth is good and is a blessing from God. Their slogan, “claim it and get it”, requires two principles: First is engagement in the work that honours God and making a covenant with God through tithes and offerings. Second is a “positive confession of faith”.

Texts like Mark 10:30b are used, in which Jesus said that whoever left everything and followed him would receive a hundredfold. In Matthew 15:34, Jesus fed the multitude with three loaves of bread and two fish. The belief behind these teachings is that God cannot give you one material thing while you have dependents in your family. For example, the Pentecostals/Charismatics will say that God cannot give you one car when he knows that you need two as a family to be able to get to your workplace on time or to do two different activities at a go as family.

One must engage in work that honours God and make a covenant with God through tithes and offerings, say the Pentecostals/Charismatics. This means when starting any business, you must make sure that your business is transparent, that you pay your taxes and do not engage in corruption and bribery. Then you must promise a certain amount to the preacher/pastor as a tithe. In giving, they quote Genesis 28:20-22, which recalls what Jacob did when he was at Bethel: that if you work hard, God will confirm your covenant by giving you wealth (Dt 8:17-18). Also, during hardships in life, such as when one is hunting for a job or when one needs God’s accompaniment, one also must give.

Even more emphasis is given to 1 Kings 17:7-16, which deals with Elijah’s encounter with the widow of Zerephat, because the sowing was done at God’s command, and therefore “proves” that sowing in tithes and offerings and giving to the men and women of God is not optional when it comes to the principles of prosper-

21 See the interview of Frieder Ludwig and Protestant Church leaders in Tanzania in: Frieder Ludwig, *Church and State in Tanzania: Aspects of Changing in Relationships, 1961-1994*, (Netherlands: Brill, 1999).

22 Lutheran World Federation statement, “*So the Poor Have Hope, and Injustice Shuts Its Mouth*” *Poverty and Mission of the Church in Africa*. Karin Bloomquist, ed. (Geneva: LWF Document, 2007), 16.

ity. The woman in the story becomes an icon: her story provides the principle that even in deepest poverty, you still must give something to God in order to be blessed.

Adding to the above biblical teachings are the lyrics of a popular song in Africa: “Lord is good and gives double. Eh eh double eh the Lord is good”. The song is becoming a litany on the continent to support the theology of the doubling of material wealth.

In such teachings, unfortunately, there is no room for the people to be told that tithes were given to the priests, Levites, widows, foreigners, and orphans because they were poor (Dt 26:12ff). Rather, under this principle, even these needy poor are requested to give. Nor is there any teaching that prosperity is not only in material wealth but spiritual wealth as well, that prosperity is more about sharing these gifts than the individual embrace of them.

The other Pentecostal/Charismatic teaching is the “positive confession of faith”. To some extent, this relates to the principle of sowing the seed. The difference, however, is that with a positive confession, one can claim to get something through fasting and insisting in prayers that one gets it. Such positive confession can also come through dreams and visions where one nurtures his/her dreams and visions into effect. These groups quote Acts 2:17b as fulfilment of what Joel said in the Old Testament. As one example of inviting people to positive confession, Anthony Lusekelo²³ said on television that “dreams are about what happened in the past by old people; now you young generation of Christ need to have visions. Remember that the book is about acts, not words of the apostles.”²⁴ You act through ‘confessing’, because through daily confessions the dream and vision will ‘come to pass’.²⁵

Contemporary Pentecostal/Charismatic groups have tried to make their voices known through the prosperity gospel, because they know that for Africans poverty is not the will of God, but that “poverty is attributed to the evil”.²⁶ It is therefore necessary to cast out the “spirit of poverty”.²⁷ These groups have something relevant to say with regard to the plight of Africans. They are still full of many pitfalls, however, which this work summarizes in two points: First, they lack biblical hermeneutics, which take context and time into account to explain the text. Second, they lack a contextual approach in how their teachings deal with the socio-economical upheavals of the continent.

23 Lusekelo has refused to be called a pastor, bishop, apostle, archbishop, or evangelist with the claim that prophets and apostles were given those titles by God during their time and that the rest are worldly names, whereas he is anointed. When and where he was anointed, he knows, and he claims that no one needs to confirm this.

24 Lusekelo, Tutashinda, 23 Jan 2014.

25 Duncan Williams, *Destined to Successes*, (Tulsa: Harrison House, 1979) 41.

26 G.O. Florian, “Contemporary State of the Prosperity Gospel in Nigeria”. *The Asian Journal of Theology*, 21/1 (2007), (69-95), 73.

27 L.Togarasi, “The Pentecostal Gospel of Prosperity in African Contexts of Poverty: An Appraisal”, *Exchange* 40/4, (2011), (336-350), 340.

Biblical hermeneutics

Proponents of prosperity as the increasing of material wealth interpret the Bible literally to let it support their ideas. They select some text with “proof” and interpret it to tell their listeners that God wills all believers to prosper in this life, without taking into consideration the sovereignty and transcendence of God and the fact that in God’s will there are some who in this life, despite their deep devotion and sincere worship of God, will still live in poverty, pain, or sickness. As an example, they don’t touch on starving children, rampant diseases, oppression, or the ethnic wars that have arisen from the bad governance and leadership in many African countries.

Teachings like Mark 10:2-30, on “hundredfold” in a family, lack the flipside of the reward of Jesus’s disciples: that they must be accompanied by “persecution” in this life. In Acts 9:16, Jesus sends Ananias to a newly converted Paul to tell him how much he will be suffering for the sake of his name. Much of Paul’s theology is built on knowing Christ and the fellowship of his sufferings. For it is in becoming like Christ, in his death, that resurrection may be attained (Phil 3:10-11).

Contextual approach in dealing with socio-economic upheaval

Although these churches/groups are addressing the problem Africa faces, they do not dig up to its causes and link them to the transformative power of God. Neither do they emphasize the will of God, but rather insist on their own self-will. Spiritually, promoting materialistic prosperity as the prime indicator of faithful Christianity marginalizes the poor and vulnerable, and in some cases even the few material possessions that poor Africans have are taken as tithes.²⁸ K. Asamoah Gyadu said that contemporary Pentecostals have developed what he refers to as a “transactional” approach to giving...faithfulness in tithes and offerings virtually guarantees security and protection to one’s endeavors.²⁹ Social economical upheavals must be addressed in a theologically sound manner that prioritizes the will of God, rather than the gifts of an individual, for transformation.

Way forward

In mission, African churches and groups should borrow the suggested titles, namely Healing and Reconciliation and Prosperity as doubled earnings of material wealth, but they should reform and modify these to fit the needs of the continent. Healing and reconciliation should expand church ministry to attend to all of the unhealthy problems in our continent. It should also engage in and advocate for an ethics of

28 Faith K. Lugazia, “Empires Export of Prosperity Theology: Its Impact on Africa”, in Karen L. Bloomquist (ed.), *Being the Church in the Midst of the Empire: The Trinitarian Reflections*. (Minneapolis: Lutheran University Press, 2007), 191.

29 J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, *Sighs and Signs of the Spirit: Ghanaian Perspective on Pentecostalism and Renewal in Africa* (Accra: Regnum Africa, 2015), 171.

work in eradicating poverty in order to retain the dignity of Africans. It should also teach about investing in both small and large business for a “Penny Capitalism”³⁰ in which Africans will seek self-employment, a more sustainable way than being employed. Furthermore, the approach should not be transactional, nor should it mention doubled earnings, since that would support the theology of miracles and suppress the theology of work. Our people should be taught to work hard and respect all jobs as important for the transformation to a better life. With respect to tithes and offerings, churches should insist that we give to God not in order to receive, but as a sign of thanks to God for what we already have: the joy, salvation and abundant grace that keeps us going in a life of faith. In other words, our *being* is in itself a blessing. What is happening to some through just spiritual, material, or economic gains are the fruits of Christian giving and not endowment done by a Christian, and therefore must be shared³¹.

Missiological themes with regard to prosperity in our churches today should not offer an eschatological hope of “building castles in the air”, or adopt the globalization-appropriate mood of doubling wealth, but instead should insist on an ethics of work for personal responsibility and accountability before all God’s creation.

The role of faith in trusting God’s intervention should go hand in hand with using all our God-given gifts and talents to make this world hospitable and sharing what God created for us. Our church’s teachings must unequivocally insist that prosperity in Christ goes beyond materialistic prosperity, since it is inclusive and attends to creation in a holistic manner.

Conclusion

I would like to conclude with the words of Kwabena that the Gospel of Jesus Christ must have content that speaks to the rich and the poor, the winners and the losers, the champions and the defeated, the successful and the struggling, those celebrating and those mourning. Jesus had a message for Nicodemus, but he also had a message for the woman who was haemorrhaging. Two families may appear in church on Sunday morning to worship: one to thank God for the gift of a new child and the other to attend a memorial service for the loss of a child of the same age. The Christian message must have something to say to them both.³²

30 David Maxwell, “Delivered from the Spirit of Poverty? Pentecostalism, Prosperity and Modernity in Zimbabwe”, *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 28/3, (1998), (350-374), 362.

31 Faith K. Lugazia, “The Gospel’s Promises of Fullness of Life and Critical Considerations of the Prosperity Gospel”, paper presented at AACC 6th Theological Conference, Nairobi, October 2015.

32 Kwabena, *Sighs and Signs*, 174.

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Multicultural Dakwah and its Challenges in Southeast Asia

Syafiq Hasyim

In this occasion, I would like to emphasize in my talk the importance of considering multicultural *dakwah* and how to deal with its challenges in Southeast Asian Islam. In so doing, I highlight how *dakwah* is understood, conducted, and also contested among different Muslim groups. I also include a shift of paradigm in conducting *dakwah* activities, from the traditional (exclusive) model of *dakwah* to a multicultural (inclusive) one. In this regard, some crucial issues are also taken into account as consequences of *dakwah* activities. Last but not least, I will also emphasize emerging challenges to the multicultural *dakwah*.

Definition of *dakwah*

The word *dakwah* is taken from the Arabic *da'watun*, literally meaning proselytization or call. In broad meaning, *dakwah* can be defined as religious activity devoted to propagate community under the belief of Islam. The activities of *dakwah* are considered an obligation for all Muslim people. In the discourse of Islamic legal jurisprudence, conducting *dakwah* is justified as a kind of compulsory collective endeavour (*fard kifayah*), meaning that all Muslims must engage in it; however, if one of them has engaged in it, other Muslims are no longer commanded to do it.

Frankly speaking, *dakwah* activity is actually not only common in the tradition of Islam, but also in that of other religions. Although there is similar activity to *dakwah* in the traditions of different religions, *dakwah* is usually only associated with and more popular among Muslim communities, perhaps because this term is taken from the Arabic language, the religious language of Muslim people. Sociologically speaking, the position of *dakwah* in Southeast Asian Islam is highly important, because the spread of Islam in this region is almost impossible without the activity of *dakwah*. Muslim traders from India were identified as the first group to conduct *dakwah* in Southeast Asia, especially Indonesia, Malaysia, and Brunei. This group landed in Aceh, currently one of the provinces of Sumatera, in the twelfth/thirteenth century, and from there disseminated Islam throughout Southeast Asia.

Methods of *dakwah*

Generally speaking, *dakwah* targets not only non-Muslim but also Muslim people. For the non-Muslim people, *dakwah* is aimed at attracting them to belief in Islam; for

the Muslim people, *dakwah* is conducted to improve the quality of their belief (Arabic: *iman*). In the tradition of Islam, *dakwah* is implemented with using two methods: first, *dakwah bi al-lisan*, and second, *dakwah bi al-hal*. The *dakwah bi al-lisan* is *dakwah* that uses oral and written discourse to disseminate the message of Islam for the aim of *dakwah*. In this method, Muslim preachers rely on the strength of their capability in making religious arguments and teaching through verbal discourse in order to convince those who become the object of *dakwah*. Southeast Asian Islam is very familiar with this method, which is evident in the establishment of Islamic propagation centres. In Indonesia, Malaysia, and Brunei, we can find many *dakwah* centres operating in both urban and rural areas. Institutionally speaking, the *dakwah* centres can be attached to mosques, but many of them become independent organizations and have nothing to do with the mosques. Following the establishment of *dakwah* centres, many associations of *dakwah* can now also be found. Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah, for instance, have established many *dakwah* centres. At the international level, the OIC (Organization of Islamic Conference) is responsible for consolidating *dakwah Islamiyyah* throughout the world.

Dakwah bi al-hal is *dakwah* that is implemented through real action. It consists not only of persuading and approaching others through talk, advice, and orders, but also of making a real intervention in their lives. In other words, the model of this *dakwah* is discursive as well as practical. *Dakwah bi al-hal* relies on some activities that seek to solve the people's problems through concrete action such as providing social and educational services. Honestly speaking, *dakwah bi al-hal* seems to be a newly invented term in the Muslim world, and I suspect that the emergence of this term has a connection to Christian missionary activities. I do not have yet scientific evidence for this, but it is based on my assumption that the invention of *dakwah bi al-hal* is stimulated by the fact that Islamic organizations have historically had a lesser role than Christian missionary organizations in solving the real problems of *umma*. On the basis of this, the *dakwah* organizations have tried to find a solution that will let them compete with the Christian missionary organizations. Various kinds of charity organizations have begun to emerge in Indonesia as a consequence of this paradigm shift in doing *dakwah*. One phenomenally charitable Muslim organization in Indonesia is Dompot Dhu'afa (Pocket for the poor and poorest). In the beginning, Dompot Dhu'afa was only for Muslim people, but now they also give charity to non-Muslims.

Exclusive Islamic proselytizing

Exclusive *dakwah* is a kind of *dakwah* activity that seeks to proselytize Islam to others who use the exclusive understanding of *dakwah*. In this regard, *dakwah* is only understood from the perspective of Islam. This *dakwah* wants to promote and convince believers or non-believers to become interested and finally to accept Islam as their religion. In this regard, any activities that have goals and objectives for converting other believers and also non-believers into Islam can be judged as part of the conducting of *dakwah*. The method of *dakwah* used here is of having a *mujadalah* (debate or polemical) and inviting others to join the debate in finding the truth of a

religion. The spirit in this debate is to conquer and convert the belief of the others to Islam. This method is used by Akhmad Deedad from India. He travels around the world, from India to Malaysia, Brunei, Indonesia and also Western countries, to invite non-Muslims to have debate with him. In this debate, his mission is to conquer non-Muslims. It seems that his main targets are mostly Christians. Ahmad Deedad is an obvious example of a person doing the exclusive *dakwah*, and I think that Deedad's way is no longer appropriate in the current days of Southeast Asian Islam.

To some extent, the use of violence in exclusive *dakwah* is acceptable. It is evident in the history of Islam that *jihad* (religious war) can be justified as a way of spreading Islam. In this regard, those invited to this kind of *dakwah* have only two choices: accepting it, and joining their Muslim brothers and sisters, or rejecting it and becoming an enemy that can be offended or killed. The activities of small groups of *jihadist* Muslim groups such as al-Qaeda, ISIS, and others are sometimes justified as part of *dakwah* activity on the basis of the above explanation. They argue that Muslims should support any activities related to *dakwah*. The support of such terrorist groups by Indonesian Salafi Muslim generations is evident in social media such as Facebook and Twitter. In Malaysia, the exclusive model of *dakwah* has a prominent place in the daily Islamic discourse of the Muslims in this country. As example, a few years ago we saw that Malaysian Muslims did not allow the use of the word "Allah" by other religious believers. This reflects the current *dakwah* situation in Malaysia, which is not inclined to the model of multicultural *dakwah*.

In short, the exclusive *dakwah* is no longer the way for most Muslims to disseminate their beliefs. It is no longer suited to the need of building mutual trust of religious mission in the world.

Multicultural *dakwah*

Despite discursive debates about when and where Islam came about and who brought this religion to Indonesia, we cannot deny that the spread of Islam in Southeast Asia is the result of *dakwah* activities. Interestingly, Islam in Southeast Asia is a homogeneous rather than heterogeneous phenomenon. Islam in Southeast Asia has its own dynamics that are different from Islam in the Middle East. Although Indonesian Islam often refers to Sunnis as the majority faction of Islam, the significant minority group of Shias is also part of Indonesian Islam. We can say that Islam in Southeast Asia is plural. The multiculturalism of Islam in this region is related to the actors, models, and strategy of *dakwah*. The actors in *dakwah* are not only dominated by Sunnis and Shias, but also by Ahmadiyyah spreaders. In Southeast Asia, Islam also merges with indigenous beliefs, as indicated by the *dakwah* of the Walisongo of Java, Indonesia. The model of *dakwah* is not conducted merely through religious and commerce activities, but also through cultural and social encounters and interminglings such as marriage and trade. The *dakwah* strategy is also mostly peaceful and therefore has an influence on the making of the multicultural identity of Southeast Asian Islam.

Reflecting on Muslim people's past experience in successful *dakwah* brings us to the role of the Walisongo (Nine Saints of Islam) in Java. Many historians state

that the first period of dissemination of Islam in Nusantara was not very successful in bringing this religion to the indigenous people of Nusantara. The early dissemination of Islam in the twelfth/thirteenth century concentrated only on the island of Sumatera and had very low progress. The unsuccessful spread of Islam was because of the nature of this *dakwah*, which was not understood or well perceived by the local people. They did not consider the importance of accommodating local tradition and culture in spreading Islam. The Walisongo have disseminated Islam differently from their predecessors. They adopted the tradition of indigenous people with Islam, which was very successful for the spread of Islam in Nusantara. It can be said here that the success of Islamization through the Walisongo strategy was because the process of *dakwah* was conducted through what I call the method of *multicultural dakwah*.

Multicultural *dakwah* should contain the fundamental elements of multiculturalism, as follows:

- A. It has to consider the diversity of culture of each community. In this regard, *dakwah* is not to impose one specific value on others, but also to consider the pre-existing values of those others. Southeast Asian countries are countries with rich cultural and religious diversity, and therefore the multicultural *dakwah* is the better approach in this context.
- B. It has to respect the beliefs of others. The multicultural *dakwah* assumes that the object of *dakwah* is not merely to convert other believers, but importantly that it should be done with respect and care for others. This is very difficult to implement, especially among those who have an exclusive understanding of Islam.
- C. It has to promote dialogue and peaceful coexistence. The multicultural *dakwah* is about prioritizing dialogue in order to establish peaceful coexistence among different beliefs and religions.
- D. It has to focus on solving the real problems of suffering and marginalized peoples, not on converting the beliefs of others.

Some Challenges

The multicultural *dakwah* of Southeast Asia remains significant, but some challenges have begun to appear in the last two decades. The significant challenges are from *salafi*, radical groups, and transnational movements of Islam. All these groups have a tendency to create the mono-features of Islam.

1. Public morality

Raising public morality in Southeast Asia is becoming a serious challenge for multicultural *dakwah*. Some Islamic groups in Indonesia and Malaysia, for instance, are moving to enforce public morality for their people, for which they sometimes use violence, leaving communities with only one option of public morality. These groups want to monopolize the definition of public morality so that it is only from the perspective of their own groups. One example is the enforcement of state law on

anti-pornography, which is only from the perspective of “Islam”. Moralists are those who wear dress that is prescribed by the Arab tradition not by Islam. Those who do not wear Islamic clothes are perceived as immoral groups. The monopolization of the definition of public morality is dangerous for multicultural *dakwah* because it is against the law of multiculturalism, which aims to consider the variety and diversity of social, political, and religious facts. When the Walisongo disseminated Islam in the island of Java, they did not impose their morality on the indigenous people of Java, but tried to learn from the existing morality. In this way, the Walisongo adopted and combined the existing morality with their own morality. This is actually the key to the success of Walisongo’s *dakwah* in Java, which was very fast in disseminating Islam.

2. Re-Islamizing Muslims (purification)

The second challenge is about jargon for re-Islamizing Muslims. This jargon is very close to the *dakwah* activity of Wahabi-Salafi groups. In this regard, instead of Islamizing non-Muslim believers, they Islamize their own Muslim brothers because they think that those who live in Islam outside their way of life have similar positions to non-Muslims. They consider Muslims from the non-Salafi groups as heretics who should be brought back to Islam. The heretical Muslim groups, in the perspective of the Salafi-Wahabi groups, are more dangerous than non-Muslims. The position of non-Muslims is clearly not Muslims, but those considered heretical Muslims do not have a clear position, because part of their tradition is justified in the Salafi opinion and part of it has no grounding in Islam: the Salafi-Wahabis state that unclear aspects of Islam should be avoided and eradicated by Muslims because Islam should be implemented through clear and pure conduct. According to the Salafi-Wahabi groups, the only true Islam is Islam that is strictly based on the literal interpretation of the Qur’an and Sunna (the tradition of the Prophet Muhammad).

3. Comprehensive *dakwah* (*dakwah al-shamalah*)

This concept was popularized by Hasan Turabi of Sudan. This movement is part of the Islamization project, Islamizing all aspects of social, political, and cultural life. Comprehensive *dakwah* has appeared in Southeast Asian Islam, but its popularity has waned among Muslim people in this region. In Malaysia, there was the project of the Islamization of science supported by the state of Malaysia, but it failed. Comprehensive *dakwah* challenges multicultural *dakwah* because the model of this *dakwah* assumes that Islam is the only religion that should be used as a reference. All realms of politics, social, culture, and theology outside Islam are imperfect; therefore, the imperfections should be replaced with perfection under the banner of Islam. Comprehensive *dakwah* is too normative, avoiding the real cases and problems of people who need something beyond normative issues. The last and most dangerous issue with comprehensive *dakwah* is its tendency to reject local tradition that has become a fundamental factor in the success of the spread of Islam in Southeast Asia. Given its inability to adopt and adapt to the local tradition of these nations, *dakwah* activity will be very difficult to implement in Southeast Asia.

Concluding remarks

Multicultural *dakwah* can be an alternative model for *dakwah* activity among Muslim people in the near future of this globalized world. However, the success of multicultural *dakwah* also depends on other factors: sociological, political, and legal. The serious challenges facing multicultural *dakwah* are actually not coming from external factors (others), but rather from internal factors: those doing multicultural *dakwah* are labelled as liberal and pro-Christianity. State actors have a very important role to play in creating favourable circumstances for multicultural *dakwah*. What we need from other believers is support in spirit and brotherhood. Last but not least, I believe that the prominent feature of Islam in Southeast Asia is not the result of an exclusive model, but the multicultural model of *dakwah*.

Together towards Life – Germany’s new Impulses for Evangelization and Mission

Werner Engel

1. Introduction

I would like to start with two snapshots:

Leipzig, February 2014: “I thought you would do better”, said Billy Hybels at the Leadership Congress here, reflecting on the past twenty years of encouragement from Willow Creek Community Church/Willow Creek International in our country. He’s not the only one with this point of view, as far as I can estimate the situation...

Leipzig, same congress, John Ortberg speaking of the resurrection of Jesus: “The Roman Catholics are still admiring and worshipping what happened, the Pentecostals are still celebrating and rejoicing – and the Lutherans are still thinking of it and trying to describe it” – John was smiling when he said this, and people were laughing of course, but hasn’t he got a point?

With these two statements in mind, let us begin:

At the “end of the Christian period” in Germany,¹ we are more than challenged to seek and find a way for Christianity and church life to grow or even to find its place in a new environment. It has to “pass the river Jordan”², as C. Hennecke says – not in the sense of dying, but in the sense of taking the riskier path to find out that God is faithful and that the proven land still lies ahead.

First I will try to show you where we as the EKD are coming from – with a short story and some facts to prove that we are indeed at the end of the Christian period. In my second point we will go into deeper detail – the context of present-day Europe. Third, we will talk about evangelizing and mission in the contexts presented – and about the impulses we can take from the ideas and suggestions demonstrated.

2. Where we come from (1996–2006)

In the early 1990s – Germany was still digesting the reunion of its formerly separated halves, now becoming more and more one state. Evangelization and mission came back into focus in Germany, mainly through “faith courses” (*Glaubenskurse*)

1 Paul Zulehner speaks of the “Ende der Christentümlichen Verhältnisse“ in: Huber W., Art. Volkskirche I, TRE 35 (2003), 249-254.

2 Hennecke C., Kirche, die über den Jordan geht. Expedition in das Land der Verheißung, Muenster 2006, 9ff.

like Alpha, Emmaus, and many others that became popular and widespread in many Lutheran churches during this time. In addition, larger evangelism efforts like Billy Graham's "Pro Christ" were still common in churches with an evangelistic focus, and so here and there people came to Christ and started believing. A "revival" was nowhere to be seen, but things were moving a bit more than they had been.

With this in focus, a new group of people came in sight, a group that had been easily overlooked in the Cold War era, but was now becoming more and more important: the so-called *Konfessionslose*, people who did not belong to any kind of church at all.³

In November 1999, a milestone for the history of evangelization and mission in Germany was set: at a meeting in Leipzig, henceforth referred to as the *Missionssynode* (mission synod), the EKD issued a clear statement to the whole church and all its members:

"Wenn die Kirche ein Herz hätte, ein Herz, das noch schlägt, dann würden Evangelisation und Mission den Rhythmus des Herzens der Kirche in hohem Maße bestimmen. ... Wer an einem gesunden Kreislauf des kirchlichen Lebens interessiert ist, muss deshalb auch an Mission und Evangelisation interessiert sein. ... Doch wenn Mission und Evangelisation nicht Sache der ganzen Kirche ist oder wieder wird, dann ist etwas mit dem Herzschlag der Kirche nicht in Ordnung." ("If the church had a heart, a heart that was still beating, then evangelism and mission would determine the rhythm of the heart of the church to a great extent. ... Those interested in the healthy circulation of ecclesial life, then, must therefore be interested in mission and evangelism. ... But if mission and evangelism are not, or again have ceased to be, a matter for the whole church, then something is wrong with the heartbeat of the church.")

After Leipzig, many things changed: *Glaubenskurse* were no longer suspicious to many people, and missionarily-oriented churches no longer had to explain themselves, their ideas, and their love for lost people to others over and over again. Mission, evangelism, and serving others (diaconia) were no longer seen as different and often offensive ways of building a church, but as equivalent partners⁴ that needed and continued to need each other in healthy church life. A new focus was set: the decline in church members and the increasing numbers of *Konfessionslose*. Hopeful plans were made, and people had big dreams of seeing a turnaround in church work – and in church membership.

The "mission-shaped church", "church-planting", and "Fresh X" initiatives brought new impulses from the Anglican Church to Germany and found their way into open-minded missionary local churches. These initiatives offered new ideas of praying and listening and of honouring volunteers, thoughts of new visions, and a passion for people far from Christ.

3 Now, in 2016, Germany is approximately 30% Catholic, 30% Protestant, and 34% secular – the rest are Muslims, other Christian groups and others. By 2030 the EKD expects membership to fall by another third (making it 21% in Germany) and its budget to fall by 50% from 2015 levels.

4 Cf. Luke 10:9: Heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you (KJV).

In the first decade of 2000, three new inventions emerged that moved the ideas from “Leipzig 1999”⁵ forward: the IEEG at Greifswald-University (Institut zur Erforschung von Evangelisation und Gemeindeentwicklung, Institute for the Exploration of Evangelism and Church Development), the ZMIR (Centre for Mission in a Region), and the establishment of the *Glaubenskursinitiative* (initiative for faith courses), with the goal of offering an annual faith course in every single church of the EKD.

Now, ten years later, we have to face the fact that the IEEG and the ZMIR will be closing in the next few years and that the initiative – although it really did make a difference and was very successful in some aspects, especially where churches worked together – has come to an end. The situation of the faith courses is back to how it used to be: some churches think and operate with missionary focus, seeking out and focused on the people outside – and others don’t.

Scientific research on the faith course Initiative has been conducted, especially by M. Herbst and his scholars in Greifswald, with surprising results for some of us.⁶ For example: German adults do come around to faith in Jesus Christ (which some scholars doubted was true) – but it takes them an average of twelve years to do so. Five circumstances are necessary for this to happen: a network of functionally and healthy relationships to people from the church – a communion, as it were, with which to share their questions and to hear from others; different opportunities to explore the church and church life; faith courses that meet their needs; experiences with (silent) prayer, which are often the first explorations on the path to faith; some adults are open to special liturgics, where they can – and do – show what is going on in their hearts.

3. What we see today – The contexts of present-day Europe⁷

God approaches people of all times and contexts. No context in itself is categorically closed to God or in itself particularly near to him. Every context has specific affinities to the Gospel and at the same time particular barriers to it. This ambivalence is plain everywhere, including the contexts of present-day Europe. We maintain that these contexts are not in principle resistant to the Gospel and in consequence we do not meet them with any pessimism about the culture or the *Zeitgeist*. In what follows, we will highlight some ways in which the European contexts challenge our churches to missionary activity and the new opportunities which they open up for the offer of the Gospel.

5 At the EKD synod in Magdeburg in 2011 (“What doth hinder me to be baptized?”), the ideas from Leipzig were again taken up and reconsidered. The title of the resulting document, translated to English, is “Listening – Breaking Up – Sharing”.

6 Cf. especially Herbst M., *Wie finden Erwachsene zum Glauben in: Elhaus P., Hennecke C. et al. (eds), Kirche² eine ökumenische Vision*, Würzburg, 2013, 239-256.

7 The fifteen points that follow are quoted verbatim from: Bünker M., Friedrich M. *Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE), Evangelising: Protestant Perspectives for the Churches in Europe*, Vienna 2007, <http://www.leuenberg.net/sites/default/files/publications/evangelising.pdf> (accessed 8 Feb 2017).

3.1. Secularization

European societies are largely shaped by a distinction between the religious and the secular sphere. The state, legal systems, science, culture and the economy have largely detached themselves from church control. Some people within the church interpret this development in negative terms and feel it to be godlessness, a denial of transcendence and a loss of the church's power. It is true that both in the West and in post-socialist countries – for different reasons – people have almost completely lost access to religious questions or categorically reject religious coinages out of an ideologised secularism.

However, secularization can also be understood as a process of emancipation. Indoctrination is rejected, ideologies are unmasked, comfort from another world and a flight into it have disappeared. Secularization is creating new room for an authentic rendering of faith, often with a biographical stamp. The churches are challenged by this to reflect on their specific calling in society, constantly to check their shape and give new expression and celebration to faith in an elementary form and in secular language.

3.2. New spirituality

A new religious longing is also becoming evident in parallel to secularization. The apparent “God-gap” is turning out to be a breeding-ground for a new flowering of very different, sometimes questionable, forms of religion and spirituality. However, this often presents itself in a purely individualistic manner, detached from social solidarity and responsibility, as for example in esoteric tendencies.

Public and private events are also increasingly given religious connotations, especially within the framework of sports events, other great happenings and life-history celebrations.

The churches see themselves faced with the task of bringing out the religious dimensions of such phenomena without condemning them over-hastily, and at the same time building bridges between people's religious longing and Christian spirituality

3.3. Breaking with tradition

To be a Christian today is no longer a “cultural destiny”. The break with tradition that goes hand in hand with secularization means a forgetting of history and a loss of what has been up to now a load-bearing foundation. At the same time it liberates from heteronomy through “imposed truths”. The individual really has the possibility of finding his or her own world-view or religious path, probably in greater freedom than ever before in Europe. On the other hand, the “agony of choice” also overburdens many and leaves them susceptible to new ideologies. As having to choose is taken for granted as a normal part of life, Protestant churches have no need to be afraid of offering the Christian life as a conscious option.

3.4. Useful truths

The post-modern “patchwork religiosity” often tends to regard truth only in utilitarian terms: “Truth is what helps here and now!” This utilitarian way of thinking is often bemoaned, because it contradicts the unconditional claim of the Gospel and

puts the binding nature of the community of faith in question. But it does keep the churches from making false claims about the absolute. It challenges them to describe the truth of the Gospel in terms of its everyday value, and to show how faith helps one cope with life.

3.5. Longing for community

The process of civilization in Europe has led to a high degree of legal and social regulation in European societies. These regulations aim at protecting and promoting people's freedom and independence. Coping with such freedoms often makes excessive demands and gives rise to anxiety about relationships and the inability to relate. This can lead to isolation and awaken a new longing for the experience of community, in which the solitary "I" can again experience itself as part of the whole.

The longing for freedom and for an experience of community is in accord with the offer of the Gospel. Evangelizing must show itself to be something that can give freedom as well as community.

3.6. "No more grand narratives"

The hopeful story of socialist liberation and the optimism about progress nourished by capitalist promises have not proved themselves to be sustainable. In the view of some observers, religions are also affected by the end of these "grand narratives" (Lyotard). Evangelising therefore has to reckon with Christianity also being declared irrelevant.

But the loss of this-worldly ideas about society can also make people receptive to the story of liberation in the Gospel. Life-stories of men and women can find their place in the great history of God with his world. The Gospel is an invitation to accept the fragmentary nature of one's own life-story and that of the world and to relate it to the great story of God and the coming of God's kingdom.

3.7. Performance-orientated society

It is a characteristic of modern European society that the capacity for particular achievements in an individual can contribute to the development of the personality. The result is technical, medical and social progress which we welcome both as individuals and as churches.

On the other hand, however, the pressure to achieve arising from the demand for continuous economic growth and increasing returns places severe strains upon our lives. Wherever the performance-orientated society has become the prevailing ideology, many people are showing reactions to stress. Some cannot keep up with the pace demanded and drop out of work and thus out of social integration.

The "tribunal" of the performance-orientated society brings all its members to the bar, and many feel devalued and condemned. In this regard the Protestant proclamation of justification by grace alone offers an important alternative and an opportunity, in several respects:

- churches in Europe can adopt a public, political commitment to ensuring that this social stance which rates people according to their performance turns into an attitude of solidarity stemming from the unlimited worth of every human being.

- The preaching of the church can give new encouragement for life to those who are overstressed or unemployed, irrespective of their achievement, through the message of their unconditional acceptance and appreciation by God.
- churches and congregations can make plain that they accept in their human dignity those who are threatened by breakdown under the pressure of the performance-orientated society, giving them material support and opening up new opportunities in life for them.
- People who are suffering from alienation or the loss of employment can discover a new meaning for their lives through their (voluntary) work in local churches and church-related institutions.

3.8. Change in the world of work in Europe

Europe is changing. More and more countries are becoming part of the economic “Europe”. That is changing the world of work in positive and negative ways. Markets are being newly opened up in one place and disappearing in another. Jobs are being newly created on the one hand and destroyed on the other. Moreover the gulf between poor and rich is widening: more and more people can no longer support themselves with paid work. This gulf is widening both within individual European countries and between them, but above all on the eastern frontier of the EU.

The churches are employers too, and see themselves increasingly compelled to shed jobs. The diaconal work of the church in particular is in a state of flux. The effects of globalisation and of harmonisation within the EU (under the heading of service sector guidelines) cannot yet be clearly seen.

Traditional parish structures are often in no position to react to these upheavals. Social, let alone political, engagement is often scorned. Unemployed people feel themselves unwelcome in many churches. The churches are experienced as part of the economic and political system.

But the churches can do more than lament the constraints of globalisation. If they can send creative stimuli into the labour market; if they champion a human right to work on biblical grounds; if in the light of the message of justification they give human beings back their dignity in the face of unemployment and impoverishment and proclaim God’s transforming righteousness, they take their place in God’s mission.

3.9. Leisure time and experience

Large segments of the population in many European countries now have more leisure time at their disposal than formerly. At the same time some have the financial means to make an “experience” of their leisure. This becomes a pressure on many people always to get the most up-to-date excitement or enjoyment out of their leisure time. But this tendency can also take on features which endanger the person involved and others.

For the churches, the changed leisure behavior of large parts of the population is a challenge, the consequences of which we have still to realize. To line up the work of the church with the ‘event culture’ would not be advisable: the latest fashion and continual intensification are the hallmarks of this culture, which thrives on constantly looking for new experiences.

Nevertheless it is important also to create possibilities for participation at particular times. Through “event-type” activities with a high publicity appeal, churches can also reach people who are otherwise distanced from Christianity. In this way participants can have their attention drawn to Gospel content and come into contact with local churches.

3.10. The cult of health

One of the hallmarks of present-day Europe is the religious colouring of the theme of health. The postmodern “religion of health” is characterized amongst other things by the idolization of youth, the fitness culture with its sacrificial rituals, and excessive expectations of cure from the health service.

Christian faith takes a stance that is not indifferent to questions of health. Linking healing and the forgiveness of sins, Jesus devoted himself to sufferers in a holistic way. Since early Christianity, the care of the sick has been an expression of the life of the community. The professionalization of medicine has long concealed the fact that health relates to the whole person. Only in the last decade have the churches of Europe become more aware of the inner connection between body and soul. Healing and salvation have only newly come onto the agenda of the churches of Europe (LWF General Assembly Winnipeg 2003, World Missionary Conference Athens 2005).

But Protestant churches must at the same time point to the fact that “health above all” cannot be a meaningful motto for life. So evangelizing aims, among other things, to reconcile people with the broken-ness and limitation of their life. This happens when evangelizing intertwines a limited human life with God’s everlasting salvation. What counts is not giving life more and more years, but giving the years more life.

3.11. Antipathy to institutions

The churches are not exempt from the growing antipathy to institutions. The “official churches” are often regarded with mistrust. It is difficult to convey the fact that institutions are also guarantors of consistency and reliability.

But we can also regard positively the fact that all formal authority must demonstrate its personal credibility. This constitutes a new challenge for the witnesses of the Gospel in their own credibility. In view of the increasing criticism of institutions, churches are facing the task of discerning other forms of the presence of the Gospel and developing them as spaces for the experience of faith not exclusively bound to the existing parish structure.

3.12. Religious and inner-Christian pluralism

Globalization and migration bring in their train increasing religious pluralism. In several European countries today there are more Muslims than Protestants. Islam has now once again become a European religion which appears every day not only in the media but in our immediate neighbourhoods. Other religions too belong in the everyday world of people living in the great conurbations alongside various manifestations of Christianity and Islam. Religious pluralism is experienced by some as a dangerous irritant and a threat to Christian identity. This often leads to attempts to safeguard one’s own identity by exclusion and retreat. This also gives rise to fundamentalist attitudes.

Globalization and migration also reinforce a pluralism within Christianity. This inner-Christian pluralism offers on the one hand the opportunity of perceiving and sharing with one another the wealth of the Christian traditions in all their breadth, On the other hand there is a danger that different Christian traditions will again find themselves rivals in a way which damages the credibility of the common witness.

The churches are again called on to grapple with the faith of others and other traditions of faith. In this way a capacity for dialogue is exercised which sharpens one's own witness to the faith and gains new perspective on the divine reality.

3.13. International youth culture

A central aspect of globalization is the emergence of an international youth culture. This culture readily assumes cultural and also Christian features from outside itself. In this way the Gospel is reaching the young generation "from outside", i.e. in forms of Christian faith from many and diverse cultural contexts. As long as churches have the courage to provide space for youth culture, they will themselves be enriched and enabled to engage in unaccustomed forms of evangelizing. Churches, diaconal agencies and church fellowships can offer independent forms of encounter and spiritual experience (Taizé, Festivals, Kirchentag, Jesus-House) and so contribute to the development of lifestyles with a Christian character.

3.14. "Virtual community"

The new media landscape opens up unsuspected possibilities for uninhibited and anonymous exchanges at any time about personal faith and questions of life. To be permanently on-line is an illustration of the increasing individualism. The virtual community is a formative influence on the younger generation. Churches should use this virtual world for the communication of the Gospel in conjunction with offers of real community on the spot.

3.15. Demographic change

In the EU the age-group between 55 and 64 will increase by about 20 per cent in the next fifteen years, and the number of those over 80 will increase by about 50 per cent. This is a consequence above all of the decline in birth rates in the late 1960s and a markedly higher life expectation. One of the consequences of this development is that because the number of those in work is declining, the existing contract between generations can no longer be fulfilled within the current framework. Moreover the number of one-person households is constantly increasing in all age groups. Evangelizing will have to respond to this structural change by approaching older people and single people in a new way and inviting a conversation between the generations on questions of faith and life in solidarity. Here it will be important particularly to address the competences of older people and what they can offer to the service of the church.

In present-day social contexts the churches in Europe are also being confronted with their own history. Europe has been essentially moulded by Christianity. At the same time Europe is a multicultural and multireligious continent.

Great as the passion for evangelizing may be, a "re-Christianising" of Europe in

the sense of a so-called *Corpus Christianum* is neither realistic nor from a Protestant perspective desirable. On the one hand, the opportunities for stable relations offered by the national churches must be appreciated and used. On the other hand, the minority situation of many churches makes it easier for them to create a new profile without being shored up by the social “mainstream.” All churches have a duty to be humble and to abandon any “missionary imperialism.”

Protestant churches have the task of presenting and representing the Christian faith in a credible and appealing way in the market of opportunities, which includes religion. Their contribution to a Europe of nations and regions is the inviolability of human dignity, which has its roots in the Judaeo-Christian tradition. According to Protestant understanding, human dignity has its deepest ground in God’s love for humankind.

Furthermore, new opportunities for ecumenical learning are emerging in the field of evangelising through the shift of focus of global Christianity to the southern hemisphere. European churches that are weary of mission are experiencing a challenge and an enrichment coming from the southern churches and from local communities of immigrants. Whether they are capable of and ready for co-operation with communities from other continents is a question for the future of the churches in Europe.

4. Impulses

According to Michael Herbst,⁸ two ways should remain closed for those of us who follow Jesus and love our neighbour: *We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard* (Acts 4:20 KJV), and we cannot speak without love, compassion, and esteem for and of those we want to reach.⁹ Instead, he suggests measuring all our doings by Jesus Christ:

We respect that, seen from an outside perspective, we do not have a monopoly on truth. These times, beginning with the Constantine era in the fourth century, are over. This can be seen as a loss – or as a newly won freedom. Without political, strategic, or influential power, we can only serve, beg, and ask. Seen from an outside perspective, Jesus’s truth is one truth among others – but it is not a truth like all the others. Our testimony is a showing of the way – away from us and presenting Jesus. If there is opposition, we do not oppress, but keep on praying, hoping, and telling of the *power that worketh in us* (Eph 3:20 KJV).

Like Jesus, we set off, start moving, and take steps across borders and over well-known lines. We leave the safe environment of our church and we make our way “down” and “among”. Not only do we beckon others to come, but we also get out, get up, and go. We go to where people suffer and get hurt, where people moan and die, where people laugh and celebrate: in companies, schools, and hospitals, in factories,

8 The following is excerpted and translated from: Herbst M., Für die Wahrheit Christi in einer pluralistischen und globalisierten Welt überzeugend argumentieren in: Winterhoff B., Herbst M. u.a. (eds), Von Lausanne nach Kapstadt. Der dritte Kongress für Weltevangelsing, BEG Praxis, Neukirchen 2012, 53-58.

9 Herbst, Wahrheit, 56, citing an Indian aphorism: “Once you cut off a person’s nose, there is no point in giving him a rose to smell.”

shops, and parks. We serve with the things that are needed – and if God opens a door and people listen, we will talk and speak of Jesus Christ.

We try to find arguments, common ground, and a “peaceful path” we can take together, for and with non-believers, with people who are different from us. In this way we are witnesses for the truth, the way, and the light – and we hope to lead people to repentance, to Jesus as a person.

We learn to cope with small things: small budgets, small numbers of volunteers, small numbers of full-timers. We do not present our strength, we do not appear powerful. People will take notice of our tone of voice, of our “loudness”, of our warmth, of our respect and the friendliness of our request. Yes, we will preach, ask to be heard, and we will offer evangelism, faith courses, and many other things – but not out of a position of strength and wealth. People will feel our heartbeat, our passion for Christ and for others – and our passion for them to be found.

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Partnership

Partnership in Mission within the UEM: Whence and wither

Willem T.P. Simarmata

I. Introduction

At a time when various changes have taken place globally, regionally, nationally, and locally in our societies and in our churches, and those changes are bringing challenges to mission challenges, it is crucial for us as the United Evangelical Mission to take some time to pause, retreat, look back on our partnership work successes and shortcomings, observe where we are now through our analysis of the challenges of mission today, and listen to the guidance of the Holy Spirit in answering the question of where we are going. We should do so responsibly, lest we find ourselves doing what is no longer needed in our time. We want to avoid what is now called “copy-pasting”, a term used to criticize the lack of seriousness in addressing the present situation.

In the following I will undertake a short survey of the role of partnership work in mission in our life as churches together in the United Evangelical Mission. Thereafter I will present my humble observations of what we are facing as members of the UEM in the present world. I must acknowledge here the limitations of my observations, as determined by my context. I see them as a starting point in our discussion during our meeting here. Finally, I will submit some proposals on what we should do as UEM members in partnership work to enable us face these challenges.

II. Whence partnership work within the UEM?

It has up until now been known and acknowledged that without “partnership”, God’s mission would not have achieved its universalistic, inclusive, creative, innovative, progressive, and transformative outlook as it has been from the beginning in Galilee and thereafter. God the Initiator, the Energizer, the Provider, the Protector, the Sustainer, the Renewer, and the Perfecter of God’s mission of saving the universe (humanity and other created beings) has always in many ways been carried out and will always be so in cooperation with the created beings, not only human beings, but also other created beings. Oftentimes God has worked independently of their cooperation and partnership, for instance in the act of creation by God. But so far as we can see and observe, many of God’s doings have not been without the participation of human beings. In the mission of God’s love in Jesus Christ from Galilee to the ends of the world, from the first century until now, the role of those chosen, called,

commissioned, guided, and empowered by God has never flagged. Hence the existence of God's agents in the history of God's dealings with God's chosen people in the Old Testament history, and – I have no doubt – in the histories of other peoples in the history of humanity. Hence the existence of the Christian apostles and other ministers who have occurred and been named in accordance with their times and contexts. Hence the priesthood of all believers. Thus Martin Luther, the reformer named the Christians working in the secular world, beyond the domain and walls of the church, as servants of God being used by God, or, better, as partners of God to express God's will for justice, peace, security, well-being, and dignity of all humanity and our other kinds on one earth. We are partners of God in the outworking of God's good will for us. We are partners of God in God's cooperation with the good will of human beings to wish and realize the dreams of humanity for a better life and world. We should also see ourselves as partners of others to make a better world, a more humanized world, a place where heaven is felt here and now in every step and corner of human life in the world.

Partnership has likewise existed among the partners of God's mission. Jesus himself, during his public ministry in Palestine and until Judea, was in partnership with his inner-circle disciples and with many named and unnamed women in carrying out his mission. Jesus regarded them highly, despite their limitations, weaknesses, and social and political leanings. It is precisely because of his appreciation of what his partners could do to contribute to his heavenly commission here on earth that his mission neither failed nor remained in his village and province as one sect within the Judaism of his time, but spread to many parts of the world and became a universal communion where persons and peoples of all backgrounds come to one body of Jesus Christ. What is recorded by the author of John 21:15-19 is a testimony to that. There Jesus asked Simon Peter to show his love of Jesus by feeding and shepherding his sheep.

Indeed, the Christian apostles of the first century – those who received their calling during and after Jesus' earthly life – were also in partnership with their companions. The role of their partners was crucial during the period of missionizing in new areas of mission in the cities of the Roman Empire in the east and in the era of the further expansion of the newly formed Christian communities, which were committed locally to live out their new status as new creations in Jesus Christ and give witness to the love of Jesus in their own contexts through word and deed. The role of their partners in the newly formed house churches, the local leaders, and the ordinary members was also crucial in ensuring the growth of the faith of the believers through teaching and worship, and their witness to the people in their surroundings in their cities through their new life and new lifestyles.

What is more, the apostles themselves regarded the new converts to the Christian faith as their partners in continuing to proclaim the gospels in other areas. Some of them did so not only through material/financial support, but also through sending personnel to accompany the apostles in their act of missionizing. Not all congregations were ready to do so. But those who were ready became a joy to the apostles. He wrote the following to the members of the household congregations in the city of Philippi, to those who were in partnership with him by providing material needs and personnel to join him in his missionary enterprise: "I thank my God[verse

3-4] for your *κοινωνία* [read: communion, partnership] in the gospel from the first day until now” [Phil 1:5]. How the Philippian Christians were in partnership with him is emphatically made clear in Phil 3:25, 29-30: “I have thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, and your messenger and minister to my need ... So receive him in the Lord with all joy: and honour such men, for he nearly died for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete your service to me.” The Philippian Christians sent the best of the best from among them to show their communion with Paul in the missionary work. They did not just remain receivers of the gospel: through their partnership with Paul, they became proclaimers of the gospel.

The work of the Christian missionaries has been this way ever since: always the partners of God in God’s mission; always partners with their fellow Christians in their places of origin; and always partners with new converts in the mission fields, either to strengthen the work already done there in order to guarantee manifold fruits in faith and works of love, peace, and justice in their cities, or to do mission in fields that are new to them.

This is the case with the missionary work through different forms and contents, at various levels and times, and in different places of the United Evangelical Mission, first called the Rheinische Missionsgesellschaft, then the Vereinigte Evangelische Mission and United in Mission, and now the United Evangelical Mission.

I am aware of some examples in each of our own churches and lands about the truth of the mutual partnership in mission conducted by and through this fellowship of churches and institutions committed to doing mission together, the UEM. But my knowledge of them is surely quite limited. Therefore please allow me to use examples from within my own church to emphasize the great role of such a mutual partnership in mission.

I remember how crucial the partnership was that was being developed by the missionaries of the RMG in my land, the so-called Tapanuli Region in North Sumatra, Indonesia, with us the natives, my ancestors, both before they accepted the gospels and thereafter, in the proclamation of the gospel. Without this partnership, it would have been impossible for them to reach many Batak villages from their mission stations. Had they not later been in partnership with the locally educated Batak men and women, they would not have been able to build up the faith of the Batak Christians either, nor to have reached out to the many Bataks living in their remote villages. The RMG missionaries were actually ready to be in partnership with the evangelists of the Batak Mission Society, established in 1899, in order to reach the remote Batak villagers in Tapanuli and beyond. Likewise, the work carried out by the Batak Christians after the missionaries had left in 1940 (because of the change in the colonial power), work undertaken in various ministries, among themselves, and with others in mission fields like the Simalungun and Dairi districts, was always in the spirit of partnership. Indeed, the cooperation between the Batak Protestant Church and the VEM in the area of education, including theological education and health in the 1940s to 1960s and community development in 1970s to 1990s, with UiM prior to the internationalization of the UEM in 1996, and with UEM in various areas since 1996, has always been conducted in the spirit of partnership in God’s mission. We have good memories of the strength of that partnership in our history.

I do not know how the HKBP would have been able to meet the mission challenges of those times if the partnership between the HKBP and the RMG, VEM, UiM, and UEM had not been as strong as it was. The challenges faced by the HKBP under the leadership of the well-known Ephorus Dr. h.c. Justin Sihombing in 1940 to 1962 could have been met differently had the partnership with the RMG/VEM not been as healthy. Indonesia in times of independence and revolution under the leadership of Sukarno was a nerve-breaking experience. The Batak Christian Protestant Church was leading the life communion, witness, and service on its own, without the experience in leadership to face the great challenges. But the partnership with the RMG/VEM was crucial then. Likewise, under the authoritarian rule of the regime of Suharto in the 1980s and 1990s the HKBP carried out its prophetic work in the area of people's empowerment in the villages and cities, either by the head office of community development or in the district through partnership work, which would not have been so "prophetically significant" without the partnership between the HKBP and the VEM and between the HKBP districts and other districts of UEM members in Germany. By this I mean not simply the financial support provided for such prophetic work, but also the partnership in prayers. Some of us were imprisoned. But the prayers of many lifted us up, and eventually the authoritarian regime of Suharto was the one not to last. The church of Jesus Christ was neither put out nor disunited.

This was the case for the partnership between the HKBP and the VEM before the internationalization in 1996, but also thereafter: all members have mutual responsibilities to shoulder the needs of mission, depending on the members' conditionalities. The spirit of sharing with, from, and for one another has been there. This has been strengthened by the commitment to learn with and from one another. Indeed, the boldness of our previous leaders within the UEM family in meeting the challenges of mission in their times was exemplary and worthy of respect. They were, so to speak, ahead of their times. They were the children of their times, yes, but guided by God's Spirit they were able to realize the fact that the previous partners of the UEM in the global South (Asia and Africa) had grown in such a way that they could no longer simply be seen as "receivers". Rather, they should be seen and should see themselves as "givers" in the true sense of the word. Compared with the other mission organizations existing then, the United Evangelical Mission was a product of the struggle of the church leaders listening to God attentively and being motivated by the spirit of being in communion: being partners of one another to carry out the missionary task together.

Similarly, the members of the UEM in Germany could no longer see themselves as solely providers for the needs of the UEM and of UEM members through the UEM. They too could be seen as receivers of UEM work in their own missionary work in Germany. They could come to such an understanding because of their realization of the fact that mission could not be delegated to a missionary organization. The churches in Germany should also do mission within and beyond. They realized too that mission could no longer be perceived as God's work from only one direction to another, from North to South, but also the other way round. Moreover, mission before and after 1996 continues to be from everywhere to everywhere. Back then too, mission was understood not only in the sense of the verbal proclama-

tion of the word, but also in the sense of the social, political, economic and cultural transformation that had to take place not only in the Southern spheres where the negative impact of the unjust global economic and political system on the poor and powerless was very much felt by many, hence the need for mission to participate with others in the eradication of poverty and its roots in the unjust distribution of wealth. Mission must also take place in the Northern spheres, where not only was poverty felt by some, but also and more importantly, the unjust and unequal playing field of the global economy was controlled and enjoyed there. Indeed, the provision of wealth, food security, and social benefits in the Southern spheres could be one reason why the proclamation of the word as well as the service of the church to the society was no longer as welcome there as before. Mission there has to be freed from old mistakes committed in other places during the colonial period. Mission is not a much-loved word anymore. Mission must therefore come anew. Mission is directed not only towards human beings, but also to the created beings in the environment, which is being threatened by the limitless exploitation motivated by greed and luxurious life. This creates a tangible need for our mutual support of one another to carry out mission in its holistic understanding, in an era when mission can be from anywhere to everywhere.

It is true that in the process, both prior to the internationalization of the UEM and thereafter, the past paradigms of partnership (which are no longer in tune with the paradigm of the present UEM) have continued to impose their ugly face on the partnership work, not only at the national office level but also at the district level. The old paradigms of dependency, of unaccountability in finance matters due to incompetency or other reasons, of male domination, of a lack of full youth participation, and a lack of intercultural communication, coupled with varying levels of the use of modern high tech information technology (email, Facebook, WhatsApp, and others) initially refused to give way to the new paradigms of partnership based on a healthy or sound theological understanding of partnership. This understanding is, namely, “*koinonia*”, the sense of being together in one fellowship where all have equal dignity as God’s children and each individual has an equal responsibility to carry out the jointly decided missionary programme. And yet, the commitment to learn from and with one another has continued to overcome the hindrances to partnership. Much has improved thanks to the partnership work within the UEM. Our partnership work has touched various areas. The partnership programmes at district levels have been colorful, yet holistic, and have transcended borders too. We have developed inter- and intra-regions. Our partnership work has tripartite relations between three regions. Much has to be learned, though. We have to do our best to overcome those hindrances. Our partnership officers and our training programme to enable partnership leaders at the district and institutional levels should work together closely and continuously to ensure the overcoming of those hindrances.

III. The current challenges we face: Whither the UEM partnership work?

1. The challenge to live a life of sufficiency

I am aware of the likelihood that each one of us present here has his or her own sense of what we as churches and institutions, the members of the UEM in three regions, are facing. Our ideas depend on our own individual contexts, although we live in one globalized world where the interconnectedness of individuals and communities has been unprecedented, a situation in which many individuals are nevertheless facing the difficulty of finding a space in which they do not feel they have been left alone, but rather that they have been given a space to have meaningful relationships with others, a life that does not feel empty. But it may not be going too far to say that we have a common understanding of where we are now living and working as God's servants, and of what mission challenges we are facing. One thing is certain: we have realized that despite churches constantly making renewed and sustained efforts at different levels to question the validity of the destructive human desire to exploit natural resources at the expense of the poor in the name of development and limitless greed, the destruction of those natural resources continues unabated. It remains to be seen whether the world will become better and safer following the UN agreement reached on 25-27 September 2015 on Sustainable Development Goals, known as SGDs (2015-2030), and the effort in Paris at the beginning of December 2015 by representatives of 195 nations to limit global warming to 1.5 C (which will be legally signed at the United Nations on 24 April 2016, and come into force in 2020). This is the greatest challenge we face as missionaries: to call everyone into a proper relationship with God, among humanity, and between humanity and the earth. How can the partnership work within the UEM contribute to the achievement of this?

Programmes will help. But the greater challenge here is to proclaim, campaign, and live a life of sufficiency instead of a life of abundance, of extravagance at the expense of the powerless poor and defenceless nature. In partnership work this is really a challenge, because there is a great divide between the poor members of UEM in the global South and the rich members in the South and North. While the members in the South can be justified in saying that it is not fair to impose a life of simplicity on those who have long lived under development, the members in the North have also great difficulty encouraging their members in their societies to return to a life led by the ethics of "enough". We can now say that the propagation of the value of a life of "enough" or "sufficiency" is God's mission today through God's people. Without the presence of such a value, the destruction of the environment and the oppression of the poor will continue. Human solidarity will not sustainably exist when the value of greed is still there. Care for one another will not exist. UEM partnership work in this regard must be explored. I propose to begin by holding partnership seminars to address this issue, so that we know for sure how to promote an ethics of "enough" among our members to contribute to the global project of saving our world.

2. The challenge to protect the family from global interconnectedness

We all are aware of what the era of Internet communication has done to family life in the global world. While everyone is connected with one another in a way that was unimaginable before, we also know that free and rapid Internet communication has taken time away from families to meet together meaningfully and, much more importantly, to exercise a life of joint prayer, not only to seek and find God, and discern his will, but to support one another and comfort one another. The traditional regular prayer meetings within families have been replaced by the necessity of meeting with others not present in the families. Indeed, the mobile workplace has contributed to alienating family members from one another, despite the availability of a means to relate to those physically not present. As a result, we have seen the number of broken families in our societies increase. What can UEM the partnership work do to assist us in dealing with this phenomenon? Can partnership meetings provide spaces to address this issue? I propose that the UEM Department of Evangelism assist the churches in facing this challenge, through a series of seminars to find ways of helping the families of UEM member churches strengthen family life amidst this strange phenomenon of brokenness in an era of interconnectedness.

3. The challenge of protecting youth from the illegal drug trade

Our Lord died to give us life, but Indonesia, the most important hub of the illegal trade, is suffering from a drug problem that is killing our youth, our life now and in the future. The person in charge of eradicating drug abuse stated at the beginning of 2016 that there were 5.9 million active drug abusers in Indonesia as of November 2015. Every day thirty to forty people die from drug abuse. The government has programmes to address this, including rehabilitation programmes. The seriousness of the problem has caused our president to refuse clemency to those judged by the court to have engaged in the illegal drug trade. Our churches do not have much clue as to how to prevent our youths from falling into this. Acknowledging that brokenness in families may be the most important contributing factor in this is one thing, but how to prevent that brokenness has become a perennial question in our midst. Can our partnership work really address this question? Can the UEM departments of evangelism and diakonia hold consultations with our similar departments to address this issue?

4. The challenge posed by the implementation of the integrated free ASEAN Economic Community

The integrated free ASEAN Economic Community was implemented in January 2016. Uneducated and less skilful Indonesian workforce will surely be left behind. Efforts by the Indonesian government to prepare its workforce are being undertaken, but this will take time. What kind of South-South Asia Region partnership can be conceived to strengthen the Indonesian workforce, especially those in less privileged regions such as the Tapanuli, Dairi and Pakpak Areas; east Java; northern central Java; and Papua, where most members of the UEM in Asia live and give witness to this poorer community in ASEAN? What can our friends in the Philippines offer to assist the less privileged unskilled workers in Indonesia, perhaps through their skilled members already working in Indonesia in this community? The part-

nership between the UCCP and the UEM members in Indonesia can be enhanced in order to meet this challenge of enabling the less privileged Indonesian members to survive in this newly established and implemented ASEAN Economic Community. I propose that a series of seminars on the issue be held by the JPIC Department of the UEM.

5. Toba Lake to become the Monaco of Asia, a new partnership challenge

The present Indonesian government has embarked on making Toba Lake a sample of the enhancement of tourism in Indonesia, to be followed by other tourist destinations. For this new initiative, the government will construct infrastructure and help the people in the surrounding six districts (Simalungun, Samosir, Tobasamosir, Humbang Habinsaran, Humbang, and North Tapanuli) to live and work in this international tourist area. A larger international airport that can receive bigger planes is to be constructed, and construction of a highway from Kualanamo Airport near Medan and from Sibolga in Central Tapanuli to Toba Lake is being planned. It is estimated that the whole government project will be completed by the year 2030. The Indonesian government has called upon civil society groups in the area, including the churches, to participate in empowering the people to contribute to and benefit from such a plan. In the meantime, the NGOs active in the areas have called upon the government to involve the people in the implementation of the plan, so that in the end the capitalists will not be the only ones to benefit from it. The likelihood that the people living in the areas will become less privileged in the process is very high. They may end up selling their lands to rich capitalists and becoming workers in the tourism industry. The UEM member congregations living and working there and in the surrounding areas face the great challenge of making those affected aware of the prospects and helping them to become skilled players, not to mention the challenge of equipping their members to participate in the process while staying true to their faiths and Christian values. Tourism may bring in the sex trade and human trafficking, to say nothing of the likelihood of the introduction of gambling there. A more positive view of the situation suggests that the members of the UEM congregations in the area may want to consider learning organic farming; indeed, the presence of tourists from various countries in the world may open doors to sharing the gospel in locally appropriate ways. The HKBP hospital in Nainggolan in Samosir island may also serve the health needs of the people and tourists who are expected to arrive.

And yet the members of the UEM in those districts have been accustomed only to traditional life and lifestyles. Providing holistic mission to these members is a great challenge to the UEM partnership work. How can the UEM partnership work in this area function? I propose that a series of seminar workshops be conducted on how to assist the members of the UEM in these six districts with facing such new challenges in cooperation with the NGOs in the area and the government. The UEM departments for evangelism, diaconia, and partnership can work on this with the assistance of the UEM regional office in Medan.

6. The increase in intolerance on the border between North Sumatra and Aceh provinces

Religious intolerance has occurred in Indonesia in recent years. Some moderate Muslim scholars have openly described it as resulting from the import of non-Indonesian, intolerant attitudes from the Middle East. The members of UEM member congregations in Pakpak Dairi suffered discrimination in Aceh Singkil District near the end of last year. Similarly, in Papua, some Christians not belonging to the GKI Tanah Papua also showed an attitude of intolerance against the Muslims wishing to celebrate the end of Ramadan last year. It remains a great and serious challenge for Christians to face discrimination in areas where the spirit of intolerance is high, and for them not to discriminate against others in areas where the influx of job seekers is rapid and massive. The UEM has been active in working to strengthen cooperation with people of faiths other than Christianity. And yet, in the Asia region, we have seen UEM members become victims of intolerance. What kind of partnership work can be conceived to address this issue of continuing radicalization and intolerance, beyond the ways in which the UEM has already been working?

In my experience of encounters with leaders of religious organizations in Indonesia, it has become clear to me that building and maintaining close relationships and cooperation with people of other faiths should be done at different levels: nationally, provincially, and indeed locally. What kind of partnership work can we conceive to enable this to happen, to equip the leaders of our congregations at district levels to carry out this kind of expansion in closer relationships and cooperation? I propose that the JPIC Department explore this.

IV. Concluding remarks

These are some of the new and renewed challenges that we as the UEM have to cope with. We cannot do it alone. We have to cooperate among ourselves and with others to meet the challenges of mission in our respective areas. I trust that each of us can share some other challenges that the time does not allow me to explore here. I invite you to bring in your observations and experiences so that together we can be aware of them and meet them through our partnership work under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Let me close by saying that the challenges of mission are automatic; they are at our doors and in our midst. But we can meet them if we work together in partnership.

Transforming Power Relations

Xolile Simon

1. Introduction

Concepts and models of mission and partnership or mutuality and mission contain various propositions about power relations and their transformation (e.g., Barnes 2016; Nothwehr 2004; Bosch 1978; 1988). Of interest to different stakeholders in ecumenical partnerships and networks is the question of *how* and *why* a model of mission practice can enable or constrain the transformation of patterns of power relations between agents and their social systems structures: individuals (interpersonal relations), groups (inter-group/social relations), and communities (inter-community relations) as well as community structures. Collaboration between stakeholders in mission is essential for exploring contextual and theological propositions about how and why partnership, friendship, mutuality, and other missional modes of being together with and for the poor, as historical and contemporary resources of mission theology and mission practice, can trigger interactions between mission agents (A) and social structures (B) which may or may not transform power relations in ecumenical mission contexts (C). Some of the basic propositions are outlined under the three sections that follow: The poor as yardsticks and bearers of the gospel in ecumenical mission literature – power relations and mutuality; the agency of the poor in AICs and power relations – perspectives from the African notion and practice of *ubuntu*; from policy and other documents to parameters or a model of transforming power relations.

2. The poor as yardsticks and bearers of the gospel – Power relations and mutuality

The general background to power relations and transformation in ecumenical mission theology and mission practices is comprised of the modern missionary movement, Christendom in the West, and Christianities in their different contexts, for example Africa and Asia. The classical missionary movement contributed to the “coming of age” and pluralization of World Christianity. As one of the first ecclesiological experiments in serious intercultural and interreligious communication, it became an essential factor in relativizing the territorial identification and power of Christendom and the Western world. Ultimately, it turned out to be one of the most important presuppositions of the twentieth-century ecumenical movement (Hoedemarker 1993; 1999; cf. Sanneh 1993; Daugherty 1993; Walls 1996). Comparing the Christendom model of Western Christianity and models of inculturation in world Christianity, Sanneh highlights the dynamic power of the

gospel and the contributions of human experiences and interactions in models of inculturation, namely:

People want to interpret Christianity by standards of exegesis and doctrine familiar to them, something that the Christendom model of the church warranted. World Christianity, by contrast, must be interpreted by a plurality of models of inculturation in line with the variety of local idioms and practices. The mental habits of Christendom predispose us to look for one essence of the faith, with a corresponding global political structure as safeguard, whereas world Christianity challenges us to pay attention to the dynamic power of the gospel and to the open-ended character of communities of faith. Doctrine and exegesis are important, it should be stressed, but not without the dimension of personal experience and the network of human interaction. (Sanneh 2003:35)

According to Wisjen (2003:53), power relations, group interests, inclusion and exclusion constitute boundary-crossing theologies, practices, and processes, for example “mission as contextualization”. Beginning with Bosch’s *Transforming of Mission*, paradigms and approaches to models of “mission as contextualization” in world Christianity¹ have dealt with power relations in transformation to various degrees: theological and methodological trends in African Christian Theologies;²

1 World Christianity and the responses and interactions of faith-based individuals and groups in local and global contexts are approached from intercultural theology and missiology: Intercultural theology recognizes that “there is a need for a theory (theology) of intercultural encounter and understanding, just as there is a theory (theology) of interreligious dialogue. This is what intercultural theology is all about, carefully balancing between the unity and diversity of cultures” (Wisjen 2003:42). On the other hand, missiology is a “theory (*logos*) of intercultural communication of religious meanings (*missio*)” across temporal, geographic, religious and ideological boundaries” (Wisjen 2003:47; 49; 50, italics in original). Both intercultural theology and missiology need to deal with the new transcultural faith-based communities in World Christianity. The new interest is in “becoming transcultural, responding to the realities of globalization by actively and intentionally engaging in activities that span borders. Transcultural congregations give priority to programs that honor their commitments at home but also seek to be engaged in the lives of others around the world. A transcultural orientation connects local commitments with churches, communities, and individuals in other countries” (Wuthnow 2009:6).

2 Aguilar, Mario 2002. “Postcolonial African Theology in Kabasele Lumbala”. *Theological Studies* 63:302-323. Ford, David (ed.) 1997. *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology in the Twentieth Century*. Chapters 22(1) African Theology (Kwame Bediako); Chapter 22 (2) “African Theology: South Africa” (John de Gruchy); Asamoah-Gyadu, J. Kwabena “Bediako of Africa: A Late 20th Century Outstanding Theologian and Teacher”. *Mission Studies* 26(9):5-16; Bediako, Kwame 2002. *Theology and Identity: The Impact of Culture upon Christian Thought*; Gifford, Paul 2008. “Trajectories in African Christianity” *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 8(4):275-289; Maluleke, Tinyiko Sam 1997. “Half a Century of African Christian Theologies”. *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 99:4-23. Maluleke, T.S. 1996. “Black and African Theologians in the New World Order: A Time to Drink From Our Own Wells. *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*. 96:3-19; Knighton, Ben 2004. “Issues of African Theology at the Turn of the Millennium”. *Transformation* 21(3):147-161; Munga, Stephen 2000. “Encountering Changes in African Theology”. *Swedish*

identity and agency in African Christian theologies;³ and reconstruction and reconciliation in African Christian theologies.⁴ This presentation uses the concept of *interculturality* to acknowledge that these theologies and African Christianities have at least referred to or integrated perspectives of power relations and transformation to make sense of and pursue the following practices and processes in and between three models: *inter*-culturation for the unity and diversity of cultures; -religionization for the unity and diversity of religions; and *inter*-contextualization for the particularity, diversity, and “preferential option for the poor” in world Christianity in a revolutionary perspective of contextualization (Bosch 1991:420-457). The agency of the poor and the “preferential option for the poor” in world Christianity connects power relations and transformation to intercultural, interreligious, and intercontextual models of ecumenical mission. Thereby, it makes transforming power relations an integral aspect of partnership or mutuality in mission and challenges the Christendom model of church and mission and its expressions in World Christianity.

Addressing the dynamic and complex contexts of mutuality and power relations is the “unfinished task” of transforming mission in and through local and global contextualization within the following concepts and frameworks: “mission as contextualization” (Bosch 1991), “mission *with*...transformative encounters (mutuality, complexity)” and “mission *through*... pastoral circle, praxis matrix (contextual dynamics)” (Kritzinger 2013:36, italics in original).⁵ The frameworks promote and guide mission that is “transformative” in that it transforms power relations in and through local and global encounters and conversations in mission. Such “transforming mission” emphasises a faith commitment and a commitment to changing social and faith-based realities, for example the reality of problematic power relations in church and society. Mission of this kind:

Missiological Themes 88(2):225-250.

3 Maluleke, Tinyiko Sam 2001. “Identity and Integrity in African Theology: A Critical Analysis”. *Religion and Theology* 8(1):26-41; Maluleke, Tinyiko Sam 2000. “The Rediscovery of the Agency of Africans: An Emerging Paradigm of Post-Cold War and Post-Apartheid Black and African Theology”. *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 108(21):19-37.

4 Gathogo, Julius Mutugi 2007. A Survey on an African Theology of Reconstruction (ATOR) *Swedish Missiological Themes* 95(2): 123-148; Dedji, Valentin 2001. “The Ethical Redemption of African Imaginaire: Kà Mana’s Theology of Reconstruction”. *Journal of Religion in Africa* 2001 31(3):254-274; Schreiter, Robert 2003. “Liberation and Reconciliation as Paradigms of Mission”. *Swedish Mission Council* 3(5):1-25; Schreiter, Robert 2005. “Reconciliation and Healing as a Paradigm for Mission”. *International Review of Mission* 94(372):74-83; Mwaura, Philomena Njeri 2009. “Human Identity and the Gospel of Reconciliation: Agenda for Mission Studies and Praxis in the 21st Century”. *Mission Studies* 26:17-30; Carney, J.J. 2010. “Roads to Reconciliation: An Emerging Paradigm of African Theology”. *Modern Theology* 26(4):449-469; Gunda, Masiwa Ragies 2009. “African Theology of Reconstruction: The Painful Realities and Practical Options!” *Exchange* 38:84-102; Mugambi, Jesse N.K. 2003. *Christian Theology & Social Reconstruction*; Mugambi, Jesse N.K. 1995. *From Liberation to Reconstruction: Christian Theology in Africa after the Cold War*.

5 The other three are “Mission is ... *missio Dei* (motivation, direction)”, “Mission as ... dimensions of mission (breadth, inclusivity)”, and “Mission in ... prophetic dialogue, bold humility (ethos, spirituality)”.

... suggests that mission remains an indispensable dimension of the Christian faith, and that, at its most profound levels, its purpose is to transform reality around it. Mission, in this perspective, is that dimension of our faith that refuses to accept reality as it is and aims at changing it. “Transforming is, therefore, an adjective that depicts an essential feature of what Christian mission is all about” (Bosch 1991: xv).

Transformative mission requires commitment and openness from individuals, groups, and institutions; they must be *reflexive* agents in a dual sense, transforming social reality as they themselves become objects of transformation. Thus, the rationale for transforming power relations is “mission as contextualization”, which outlines some of the theological, contextual, and methodological turns in how we understand ourselves and others (self-identities in a “new hermeneutical approach”) and how we produce knowledge about partnership, mutuality and power relations in mission (“epistemological break”) by participating and reflecting critically on the encounters. Transforming contextual and cultural social realities⁶ is the rationale for and the ultimate aim of mission, starting with orthopraxis as the first transformational theological act and linking orthopraxis to orthodoxy as the second theological act, all the while dealing creatively with the tension between contextual relevancy and Christian identity in both the orthopraxis and orthodoxy, accounting for the interdependency and mutual influence of orthopraxis and orthodoxy, and accounting theologically for the proposed *relevance and effectiveness* of a theology, programme, and practice of human *participation in missio dei*.

Hence, the basic question of this section is how far the social and faith-based realities of the poor, the prime bearers and yardsticks of the gospel, can influence our theologies and practices today. In ecumenical mission theology and practice, according to Matthey (1999:294), the irruption of the poor and “a discovery of the specificity of the gospel within the global mission of God” occurred during a crisis and rethinking of mission, context, and identity at ecumenical mission conferences, particularly those in the 1970s. The reorientation was not just about “holistic definitions of mission” (church and mission); this irruption turned the assumptions and priorities of mission upside-down. As victims, the indigenous poor were seen as “the yardstick for judging all social, political, economic, religious and missionary developments and programmes.” The poor were recognised as the prime bearers of witness to the gospel in the world. (Matthey 1999:294; 302)

6 For interactions between the social realities of context and culture in CER approaches, see “mission as liberation” and “mission as inculturation” (Bosch 1991), typologies of constants in mission, and “Mission as Liberating Service in the Kingdom of God” (Bevans and Schroeder 2004), paradigms of inculturation, liberation and reconstruction in postcolonial Africa or post-apartheid South Africa; paradigms of liberation, healing, and reconciliation in post-Berlin world (Schreiter).

Another important development was when the ecumenical mission conferences widened the definition of culture in the late 1980s and 1990s, but not just to include and expand on themes of peace and justice. The definition included and highlighted the role of religions and interreligious dialogue, especially popular religious experiences and religiosity as expressed in African Independent, Pentecostal, and other churches. This was not just about giving “attention to the demands from the representatives of indigenous peoples, to their demand for respect for their cultural identity, to their offer of and request for true partnership with the churches with a missionary tradition” (Matthey 1999:301). More importantly, “today they are reappearing on the scene as the proud bearers of cultural and religious traditions which had not been contemplated in 1980” (Matthey 1999:302).

This has implications for immersion and encounters with the poor in local and global contexts of poverty for the sake of partnership, mutuality, and the transformation of power relations. An immersion or an encounter is “not simply *cognitive*, an intellectual exercise leading to understanding. It is also *affective* and *effective*: *Affective* in the sense of touching the deepest of our values and strongly motivating our responses. *Effective* in the sense of organizing our responses with planning, execution and evaluation” (Henriot 2005:16, italics in original). Such encounters imply the participants being propelled and affected by them; immersion should be meaningful and effective according to the yardsticks of embodiments of the gospel by the poor – the bearers of witness to the gospel in the social realities of cultures and religions (Matthey 1999:228). Since the 1970s, this has been one of the main “unfinished tasks” of ecumenical mission theology and practice.

3. The agency of the poor in AICs and power relations – Perspectives from *ubuntu*

In most African countries, encounters with members of the African Independent Churches (AICs), the churches of and for the poor, provide opportunities and challenges to partnership and mutuality in mission theologies and practices in African Christianity. “Ubuntu” is more than just an idea about partnerships, mutual respect, or caring for the social and religious “other”; it is more than an ideology. A constructionist approach of intercultural theology builds on and expands three levels of interpreting *ubuntu* (Coertze 2001; Louw 2005)⁷, applying

7 Although Coertze (2001), an anthropologist, omits the religious dimension and emphasizes the critical dimension of ideology, the elements of *ubuntu* he mentioned correspond to broad semantic shifts in South Africa. First, the “original” moral connotation of *ubuntu* in the early rural African indigenous communities (Coertze 2001) relates to “humanity, humanness, or even humaneness” (Louw 2005). Second, *ubuntu* structured hospitality, shaped social interaction, and impacted ritual practices in rural contexts. It informed and encouraged individuals and communities to negotiate exclusion and inclusion when they encountered missionary Christianity and, later, interacted with “others” in urban contexts. A relational ethos or an ethos of belonging, as an essential aspect of *ubuntu*, was inferred upon individuals

to members of AICs the notion of the poor as the yardsticks of, and bearers of witness to, the gospel.

Ubuntu has been used since the 1990s to approach the AIC as a social and religious movement. This was especially the case when “the expansion of the AIC movement ... [was] recognised as a major social phenomenon worthy of investigation by scholars of social movements in South Africa” (Oosthuizen 1997:2; 2002:4).⁸ The perspective explains mutuality in relation to the complexity of religious agency, social relations, and social transformation, including faith-based transformation. It means that the complexity of power relations in an AIC “must be studied within its own frame of reference and by the logic internal and particular to it” (Oosthuizen 1993:67). Oosthuizen takes *ubuntu* as a frame of reference to argue that

The AIC movement’s success lies in the principle of *ubuntu*, mutual support with social responsibility. *Ubuntu* is the foundation of the traditional African society...based on the support networks within the extended family. *Ubuntu* lives on in the AIC movement, where it finds its complement in the essential teachings of Christianity. Every Christian church should be mutualist, communal and supportive. The AICs are thus able to become a substitute society that looks back to traditional society and renews it. (Oosthuizen 2002:9)

or groups by Christian communities and constructed in communities as the interpreters of cultural and religious “others” and “otherness”. Louw defines *ubuntu* as a human and religious relational ethic to address the problems of cultural, religious, and theological absolutism (extreme forms of exclusivism) and relativism (extreme forms of pluralism). These forms exclude and dehumanize the religious “other” and “otherness” in the contexts of diversity today (Louw 2002:5). Third, the contents and practices of *ubuntu* are sustained, challenged, and transformed by ritual and ideological (interests and commitments) of the poor in their communities and the broader public discourse. Consequently, as the *ubuntu* concept has become institutionalized, it has also “been imbued with ideological content” by politicians, theologians, educators, and others in post-apartheid South Africa (Coertze 2001:115-116).

8 Oosthuizen and his co-researchers have contributed to the critical theoretical and action-based empirical studies of interculturality as a model of theologizing and (practising for) producing socio-economic justice (development) through the embodiment of the poor in post-apartheid South Africa. Oosthuizen aptly summarises the significance of the contributions when he states: “The new generation of AIC studies have profoundly challenged the conventional...earlier portrait painted by theorising theologians, religionists of the AICs as apolitical, rather other-worldly groupings, offering spiritual solace to a non-modernised populace. Instead, the AIC movement is coming to be seen as a significant force which shapes contemporary black South African society: a provocative social movement with a strong potential for involvement in developmental issues (see Cross, Oosthuizen, Clark 1993). Increasingly, AICs are seen as a significant category of development actors, comprising as they do mobilizations of the poor which addresses the issues of poverty through a combination of mutual social support and direct, tangible developmental interventions. Though this ethos of the AIC movement remains stoic, within this ethos AICs play a significant role in promoting economic and social empowerment among their members (Oosthuizen 1997:112).

The South African Governmental White Paper on social development and welfare combines elements from three levels of *ubuntu* to emphasize the importance of relationality and mutuality for human flourishing and social responsibility at the interpersonal/inter-group, community, and structural levels of society: that is, *ubuntu* is

the principle of caring for each other's well-being...and a spirit of mutual support.... Each individual's humanity is ideally expressed through his or her relationship with others and theirs in turn through a recognition of the individual's humanity. Ubuntu means that the people are people through other people. Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu. It also acknowledged both the rights and responsibilities of every citizen in promoting individual and social well-being. (Republic of South Africa Government Gazette (1996, February 2). Government Welfare Paper on Welfare no. 16943. Pretoria, South Africa, 18).

David Chidester (a religious scholar) and Desmond Tutu (a theologian and religious leader) have explained how the AICs have used *ubuntu* as a strategy to deal with the cultural, religious, and contextual challenges of Christendom and world Christianity among the identity formations and mission expressions of AICs in post-colonial colonial contexts.

Since the 1980s, the postcolonial worldview analyses by Chidester have explained *ubuntu* in the AICs as a quest for a sense of identity, belonging, and social justice. This analysis of religion and ideology underscores the agency and resistance of members of AICs to colonial mission encounters and domination. Referring to the inaugural address of the Archbishop of Cape Town, Chidester states that Tutu did not translate *ubuntu* as just “an Africanised version of the Christian ‘golden rule’” informing mutual respect and caring. The archbishop employed it as a critical perspective and rejection of the “violent strategies” of imperial and postcolonial power encounters and negotiations (Chidester 1989:18). In the 1980s, Tutu’s “Worldview Analysis of African Indigenous Churches” critiqued the colonial and imperial worldview analyses of religion as “distinctively dehumanizing enterprise[s]” (Chidester 1989:15). Referring to his own contributions, Chidester concludes, “I was particularly critical of two things: unreflective generalizations about western and African worldviews and (2) unexamined power relations in the (mostly theological) assessments of African religions” (Chidester 1989:15). Placing mutuality on a continuum between indigeneity and hybridity, as two distinct but related strategies of connecting agency, power relations, and transformation, the question is: With whom, for whose interest, and how have members of AICs and the AICs as institutions used *ubuntu* to negotiate their identities, power relations, and socio-economic justice? This question remains relevant.

Answering such a question requires that we move beyond immersion and encounters, which are “only points of departure” in a mission practice, to the incorporation of agency and social power in a postcolonial theoretical framework (Chidester 1988:20). Chidester pleads for deep encounters with the poor through informative, reflective, and empowering engagements [participatory-action research (PAR)]. PAR is proposed as the primary mode of ecumenical engagement to recognize and affirm the self-identifications and “negotiation of multiple iden-

ties” and to restore the dignity of AIC members from the perspective of a particular cultural and religious worldview. The assumption is that the dominant and shared worldview of AICs “is not simply a way of seeing, or a way of thinking, but it is a multidimensional network of strategies for negotiating person and place in a world of discourse, practice, and association” (Chidester 1988). Moreover, the AICs’ “strategic negotiations of power involve claims made on the symbolic discourses, practices, and forms of associations that compromise a worldview” (Chidester 1980:21).

A postcolonial approach to religion, in Chidester’s view, incorporates “indigeneity and hybridity” as two extreme strategies to describe identity, belonging, and mutuality as dimensions of *ubuntu* in the AICs. Indigeneity connotes the “subjectivity and agency” of members of AICs who negotiate “meaning and power” in the encounters with the “others” and “otherness.” On the other hand, “hybridity” explains the diversity and *liminality* (“being-in-between”) of AICs in complex historical and contemporary processes of cultural, religious, and political exclusion and displacement. Chidester specifically links hybridity to space and displacement, that is, the “cultural space in-between, the intercultural space of contacts, the relations and exchanges” (Chidester 2000:434). By extension, the AICs have found themselves, firstly, “in-between” various forms of identity and social justice discourses which mostly exclude and, sometimes, include them. Moreover, “in-between” also explains the locations and spaces within which the selection, negotiation, and integration of dimensions of *ubuntu* occurs.

Writing from a global theological perspective on black experiences and denial of human dignity, Lewis states that “at the heart of *ubuntu* lies an understanding of identity as it emerges through relationship; that is, the principle of interconnect-edness” (Lewis 2010:69). Lewis recounts the influences of past injustices, but also imagines an alternative of just practices and identity formations. He asserts that “I in no way wish to deny the huge injustices done to Black people, or indeed the legacy of this past and its continued influences on the present. However, *ubuntu* in my view allows for an acknowledgment of the past but seeks to find a new way forward” (Lewis 2010:70, italics in original). It is one way of looking for convergences and divergences in the agency of the poor and the transformation of power relations in the context of migrations in Africa, Asia, Europe, and North America. *Ubuntu* brings new opportunities and challenges for being with religious others and for understanding their suffering, and thus for the mutual transformation of power relations today.

4. From policy and other documents to parameters or a model of transforming power relations?

“Mission as the church-with-others” (in Bosch 1991) discusses an ideal and desired interdependence and mutual responsibility between partners in mission, replacing older models of interaction and cooperation between the so-called older and younger churches, mostly between churches in the global North and global South. Bosch’s experience, spirituality, and theological reflection informed his development of the

idea and practice of interdependent and mutually responsible mission for about thirty years, from the 1960s until early 1992. For twenty-five years, since the publication of *Transforming Mission* in 1991, Christian cross-cultural workers, clergy, missiologists and other theologians have used, applied, critiqued, and expanded his ideas. The challenge of existing and future programmes for transforming power relations in mission is to link and incorporate ideas, practices, and processes that have evolved at the grass-roots and academy levels over the last twenty to fifty years of different postcolonial contexts. These years overlap with the three decades preceding and the two decades following the “internationalization” of the United Evangelical Mission (UEM) in 1996. The UEM is an emerging ecumenical story and a case for exploring the *what, for whom, and why* of transforming power relations through mission in partnership or mutuality in mission’s local and global contexts: what has worked in one context and has not worked in another context over the last two to five decades.

Policy and other documents from faith-based organizations like denominations and congregations and from the academic literature refer to or describe desired and undesired power relations as a dimension of mission practices influencing friendship, partnership, and mutuality. The texts *allude to* or explicitly state how and why mission agency and structure can negatively or positively interact with and influence the transformation of power relations between individuals and groups of agents. Propositions based on documents, practices (conversations, stories, different ministries), and processes of faith-based organizations are initial programme theories (stating what is happening and what should happen) that should inform the organizational structure as well as the construction of an overarching mission instrument to develop, implement, and evaluate transformative power relations in mission. Past and current cases show that short-term, mid-term, and long-term praxis cycles of mutuality in mission “from below” – of immersion in local and global contexts, engagements, reflections, planning and evaluations – should undergird, direct, and sustain the transforming of power relations. Participating in *missio Dei* and guided by the agency of the Trinity, the UEM can make a significant contribution in setting trends over the next twenty to fifty years. Moving from documents to parameters or a model within a missiological framework of transforming power relations in mission can facilitate the process.

Middlemiss (2011:1163) builds on concepts of the causal power of agency and structure to propose a model of a sustainable lifestyle – the power of a community to affect relations between human beings, and between human beings and nature and structures. The model aims to “explain the interaction between structure and agency” on the one hand, and social change on the other. It includes “sets of beliefs about the power of community” and about how communities stimulate or initiate practices and processes to influence and impact social relations, power relations, social systems, and structures (Middlemiss 2011:1157-1158). Middlemiss proposes the following broad parameters of conversations and critical reflection:

1. Situating power relations and mission in historical and current practices and processes of social organizations and faith-based organizations (FBOs);
2. Linking social and religious actors (agency) and the structures of culture and society (structure);

3. Explaining how agency and structures interact to influence power relations;
4. Identifying underlying power dynamics of the agency (personal characteristics and resources) and structures (rules and resources) of organizations;
5. Explaining the (im)possibility of the causal power of agency and of current and new structures to transform power relations in and through organizations;
6. Developing, implementing, and evaluating programmes for transforming power relations at the interpersonal and structural levels of organizations.

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Partnership and Encounter among People in Mission: Sharing my Work and Experience as a Mission Co-worker in the Philippines

Josephat Rweyemamu

Introduction

The words of the refrain of “Onward Christian Workers”, a hymn sung during our UEM conference opening devotion on the evening of 26 June 2016 and led by Silliman Divinity School, captures well the essence of partnership and exchange in mission, in my view. The words read: *Here’s my hand, co-workers / Give me your hand, too / Let us work together, there is much to do.*

Partnership suggests the ability to see the need for working together with others in fulfilling certain tasks or responsibilities. It is the action of giving our hands to each other – *here’s my hand, co-worker / give me your hand, too.* In the context of mission, partnership may be understood as an affirmation and acknowledging of the place of others in complementing one another as we all seek to participate meaningfully in *Missio-Dei*. It is a result of acknowledging the strength of unity and solidarity and rejecting the weakness of disunity and individualism. In other words, partnership in mission suggests an expression of a joy of working with others, affirming each other’s talents, strength, knowledge, and experiences as an important ingredient in building God’s kingdom on the planet Earth.

I think that partnership and encounter should be one of the important themes in the area of mission in our postmodern pluralistic world of the twenty-first century, for the sake of a peaceful, respectful, meaningful, and relevant missional engagement. In this presentation, I intend to share some ideas around the above topic based on my own experience as a mission co-worker in the Philippines through the UEM South-South exchange.

Sharing my experiences of teaching mission studies in a cultural context different from mine

I came to Silliman University in the Philippines in 2014, as a mission co-worker from Tanzania under the UEM programme. My responsibility was to work as lecturer in mission studies, part of Silliman University’s endeavours to develop an “International Center for Mission Studies in Asia”. The Philippines is well known as a country of hospitality. Dumaguete City, where Silliman University is situated, is a multicultural

society where many foreigners are easily accommodated and embraced with love. Dumaguete City is also known as a home of gentle people. On that note, my family and I feel humbled to serve as mission co-workers among these wonderful people. We love the people and we love to serve God with them as brothers and sisters in Christ. We love the place, too.

Upon my arrival, I was assigned to teach mission studies to senior students (BTh., MDiv., MTh., and sometimes ThD students who register for mission studies as their elective courses). The courses that were allocated to me were *Mission and Ecumenism*, *Foundation of Mission – Biblical and Theological*, and a *Seminar on Evangelism and Church Development*, and very recently I was assigned to teach a *Seminar on Mission History* as well. My approach to teaching is mainly based on what may be called a student-centered and contextual approach. In this case, therefore, the approach is not so much one of lecturing in monologues but of creating more space for students' discussions and reflections of the topics provided to them.

Our students mainly come from the Philippines, but sometimes from other countries like Indonesia, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and Africa. These students also come from different church denominations, so the theology of their denominations and contexts needs to be taken into account when developing a teaching methodology and creating a learning atmosphere that will benefit all students. I try as much as possible to be culturally, doctrinally and contextually sensitive and to make use of their various backgrounds and experiences to enrich the whole class through discussions, debates, and sharing of experiences on various missiological issues around the topics of study.

How do I do this?

I spend at least one month or more introducing the subject matter, in order to allow students to have a glimpse of the course and the themes to be discussed. In short, I cultivate a ground or lay a foundation for the students to know the subject. Afterwards, I distribute several topics to students and suggest literature related to their topics. I challenge them to do research and write academic papers that they will afterwards present in the classroom for discussions. Students are challenged to submit their papers at least three days before, so that other students may read the papers and prepare questions, criticism, and contributions. During class presentations, students will raise critical and pertinent questions and contribute significantly to the topic and the debate around that topic. When they do, I normally guide and moderate the discussions and challenge the students to make sense of the theoretical ideas that are being presented along with the practical dimensions of the ideas and concepts in relation to their churches, cultures, and country-specific contexts. Through listening to their stories and their application of the knowledge, I learn quite a lot about their ways of thinking, worldviews, experiences, cultures, and contexts. The classroom is among my best spaces for encounter.

Partnership, exchange, and encounter in mission: A bridge towards mutual understanding

Exchange, partnership, and encounter create a space for both explicit and implicit dialogue between people of different cultures, which is a more appropriate way of doing mission in our contemporary times than taking a confrontational approach.¹ Moreover, exchange and encounter requires openness and humility, with a readiness to learn from another's faiths and cultures and see what can be emulated and/or perhaps be integrated within our own faiths and cultures. The activity entails both boldness and humility in a missional approach, a model which is affirmed by eminent missiologists like David Bosch and Bevans and Schroeder.²

Mission today is much more than the extension of God's love towards the world. We are no longer living in those times of forced conversion and persuasive Christianization. Exchange and encounter, in sum, suggests a broader possibility for a model of mission that leads to the discovery of one's strength and weakness and furthers the maturity of all people involved in it. At the WCC ecumenical conference in Whitby, Canada (1947), "Partnership and Obedience" was a central theme that had been suggested as a means to improve the relationship between churches in mission. The so-called younger churches in the global South were to be seen as equal partners in mission with their brothers and sisters from the West (the older churches). I am not sure if this goal has been adequately attained among many church members of the global North with their counterparts in the global South, but it is very impressive indeed to see how the UEM has been working hard towards this development. The celebration of two decades since its internationalization attests a greater achievement of this ecumenical call for partnership and obedience, something probably worth emulating by all other mission organizations as they take part in mission, since our understanding of mission today has shifted from mission being a movement of "West to the rest" into a movement of "from anywhere to everywhere". I personally have seen that my participation in the UEM South-South exchange programme is an opportunity to strengthen the mutual relationship between churches in the global South. It contributes to seeing partnership as an opportunity to recognize each other as important, as people whose experiences, knowledge, talents, and spirituality can benefit all in the kingdom of God, as we all live in one world under the lordship of one Christ.

Exchange and cultural encounter in mission: A space of mutual growth through learning from each other

Exchange and encounter in mission necessitates the act of learning from each other. By learning from each other, we both discover that we need to have a common approach to today's global challenges. Cultural encounter helps us to see more of

1 See Josephat Rweyemamu, *Conversion Discourse in African Perspective*, (2014: 275).

2 See David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, (1991: 489), Bevans and Schroeder (2011) in *Prophetic Dialogue: Reflections on Christian Mission Today*.

our commonalities as humans than our differences. Again we see our differences as an opportunity for mutual growth, as we understand ourselves better by reflecting ourselves in the mirror of others. We clearly see our weaknesses and strengths, and in so doing we see our differences as something worthy of celebration.

On that note, therefore, cultural encounter to me as an African in Asia, particularly in the Philippines, has clearly revealed that Asians and Africans have many more commonalities than differences. By this, however, I don't mean to say that there are no differences. Just like Africans, people in the Philippines and many other Asian countries are the recipients of a Western Christianity that was accompanied by a colonial and imperialistic approach. Before the inroads by western Christianity, indigenous Filipinos had their own religion, wherein they worshiped God (Bathala) in a way that was informed by their religio-cultural worldview. As some Asian theologians and scholars have observed, the cosmic ontology of Asian beliefs was not adequately taken into account by most Western missionaries during the introduction of Western Christianity, especially Protestant Western Christianity. It is clear that in both Africa and Asia (using the example of the Philippines), Western missionary Christianity was conveyed under a colonialism and imperialism that aimed to pervert indigenous peoples' religion (which they called animistic religion) and culture by replacing them not only with Western Christianity, but also with Western ways of life that at that time were also informed by the development of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment. Hence, both African and Asian theologians share a need to develop a contextual theology and indigenization of Christianity so that the Christianity on both our continents will continue to make sense to our ordinary Christians, if it is to last.

During the launch of my book in August of last year (2015), entitled *Conversion Discourse in African Perspective*, my faculty colleague in the Divinity School, assistant professor Lily F. Apura (who is currently pursuing her doctoral studies in the area of the Old Testament) wrote a review of the book. She concludes with the following words:

The title [of this book] can easily be changed into "Conversion Discourse in the Philippine Perspective", the similarities in the culture and missionary experience the resulting problems in the Philippines [P]rotestant churches are [that] uncanny. I challenge mission practitioners, as all UCCP pastors and workers are, to sort out our understanding of conversion and the way of doing mission through reading this book. For in many ways, as we fail to learn from the missionaries' mistakes and our own, we perpetuate [W]estern Christianity and contribute to the disfigurement of Filipino identity and culture. More importantly, we fail in the bar of the life-affirming message of the gospel to the Filipino.³

From this assertion, it goes without saying that both Asia and Africa have some common blessings and challenges that necessitate the need for us to learn from one

3 In Silliman University Divinity School, 54th Church Workers Convocation, August 28-30, 2015, Proceedings "Rediscovering the Biblical, Historical and Theological Roots of Worship", p. 30.

another as Christians, and above all, as sisters and brothers under one UEM family. Both Africa and Asia (the Philippines) share a context in which the rise of Pentecostal and Charismatic forms of Christianity, popularly known here as “new religious movements”, pose a challenge to our mainline churches. It is hard to ignore their existence and the challenges they pose, as they seem to attract most of our Christians in our times. The question for all of us would be how we are to make sense of these phenomena taking place in our field of study and service. The reason for the rise of Charismatic and Pentecostalism in many parts of the world and their gains in prominence, especially in the so-called global South, should not only be looked at based on external influences but should also be traced from the people’s cultural dynamics, worldview, and spirituality. As such, one of the renowned Filipino social anthropologists, Melba P. Maggay, in her article “Towards Sensitive Engagement with Filipino Indigenous Consciousness”, writes:

If evangelism is to be authentic, it must take account of the distinct manner in which Filipinos see reality. Foremost to the Filipino cognitive approach is holism as opposed to the Western tendency to compartmentalize reality. [The] Filipino makes no sharp distinction between the natural and the supernatural, the sacred and secular, and the public and private realms.⁴

Maggay, in this case, calls us to an understanding that has a more sensitive approach to Filipino indigenous consciousness and stimulates an evangelistic practice that is genuinely incarnated in the cultural reality of the population. I personally find that Maggay’s observation would doubtless be quite relevant not only in the Philippines but also in the African context as well.

Furthermore, the place of faith healing, traditional music, women’s roles, the role of sacrifice in traditional indigenous beliefs, and the indigenous perception of the physical and spiritual world⁵ form a fundamental ontological arena among the traditional Filipino religions,⁶ just as in Africa, and this can and will continue to enrich Asian Christian spirituality even in our modern times. These realities inform the context of what the Philippines’ Christian faith will mean to the majority of ordinary Filipino Christians today. I believe that, just as in Africa, traditional beliefs in the Philippines did not completely die with the introduction of Western Christianity but have been transformed and continue to reproduce in more modern ways.⁷

4 Melba P. Maggay, “Towards Sensitive Engagement with Filipino Indigenous Consciousness”, in *International Review of Mission* vol. 98, 1998, p. 367.

5 Interview with chieftains among the Ata-Manobo and Bagobo tribes in Mindanao, August, 2015.

6 Indigenous beliefs in the Philippines have been generally referred to as “animistic beliefs”. Personally, I have some theological reservations about this. I am more comfortable referring to Filipino indigenous traditional beliefs as traditional Filipino religious beliefs than as animistic beliefs.

7 Cf. Rweyemamu, 2014, *Conversion Discourse in African Perspective*. Throughout the book, Rweyemamu argues that Christianity among the Haya (Africans) draws rules and resources from African traditional religion in order to make sense of their Christianity. African traditional religion didn’t die during the introduction of Western Christianity among them, but

Partnership and encounter in mission: Learning from each other and learning to work together

As pointed out earlier, through culture, partnership, and encounter we further discover that our cultural differences are not more than what we share as people created by God in his own image. We discover that we can work together and enrich each other in many ways, even in the area of theological reflection, as our missional engagement. As a mission co-worker in the Philippines I have learned and continue to learn about several issues, some of which I intend to briefly share here below:

The traditional Filipino worldview, just like the African worldview, suggests that life is connected – the visible and the invisible are not separated, and this concept of holism is clearly manifested in people’s daily rhetoric. The dead live in the spiritual world – in another dimension, but not far from us. Stories from students and many others about the concept of third eyes are very common. One with a third eye can see the invisible spirits. The presence of spirits of dead people can sometimes can be felt or seen. A girl whose father died several years ago and who wanted to sell me the car she had inherited from him told me: “I am happy my dad’s car is going to be bought by a pastor. I am sure my dad will also be happy, because he was a good Christian. Please take good care of my dad’s car.” She told me that she believed her father was now all-seeing and knew why she was forced to sell the car: she wanted money to buy a flight ticket in order to go to Germany. The implication was that even if her father had died some years before, he still knew and saw what was going on this physical world. Elaborating on how Filipinos see reality in holistic form, Maggay writes:

Foremost to the Filipino cognitive approach is holism as opposed to the Western tendency to compartmentalize reality. Filipino makes no sharp distinction between the natural and the supernatural, the sacred and secular, and the public and private realms.⁸

This worldview is completely shared by Africans. Neither Africans nor Filipinos separate these realities. In Africa, the dead are referred to as the *living dead*. They are still alive and can influence the physical world. The spiritual world and the metaphysical world among the Africans are not fundamentally dichotomized, just as is the case among the Filipinos and in some other Asian countries.

Based on these facts, I find that we “South to South” partners can share our theological experiences and expertise. How can, for example, our understanding of

their religio-cultural worldview forms a context in which Christianity continues to flourish in modern African today. Cf. Alisa Pierson, “Religion and Spiritual Beliefs in the Philippines”, in which Pierson argues from the context of Roman Catholic Christianity that, interestingly, “Catholicism and spirituality in the Philippines extends beyond just being Catholic. In fact the way Christian religion is practiced in the Philippines is very unique in comparison to the form Christianity takes in the west or other areas of the globe. Filipino Catholicism is practiced alongside and influenced by precolonial indigenous religions and indigenous Filipino concepts that are found in other areas of Southeast Asia.”

8 Melba Maggay, “Towards Sensitive Engagement”, 369.

the theology of ancestology⁹ be shared among the Asian theologians? Is it right, for example, to continue referring to Filipino and other Asian indigenous traditional beliefs as animism or animistic religions, as was understood by some early Western Missionaries¹⁰? Is there any adequate attempt to revive our understanding of this indigenous religious spirituality in a way that can enrich our Christian spirituality in the Asian (Philippines) and African theological discourse and engagement? These are some of the areas that both parties (African and Asian) can continue to explore in depth together. Most of the time, when I discuss these contextual issues with my students and cite some examples from African experiences and perspectives, I find how excited they are about the contextual theology of mission and indigenization.

Another possible area where we can probably share experiences and ultimately enrich each other is the theology of reconstruction and theology of struggle. In the Philippines context, the theology of liberation in the form of theology of struggle is popular. Social activism and climate justice, peace and reconciliation, and dialogue among peoples of other faiths preoccupy much of the mission discourse in the Philippines, especially in the UCCP. There is not so much discussion of the theology of reconstruction.¹¹ In this case, as much as we Africans have to learn from our brothers and sisters in the Philippines (UCCP) and Asia in general, we also have opportunities to share our experiences of how we engage ourselves in the theology of reconstruction in this era when all African countries have gained at least political freedom. The question that most African younger people have today as an important item on their agendas is the quest for economic freedom, as they find that political freedom without economic freedom is an illusion. They fight for equal opportunity for education and employment, an equal playing field for global business opportunities, and all of the other basic needs that have been deprived them by unjust socio-economic systems. The challenge is how we are to engage the theology of reconstruction and the theology of struggle in this fight for economic freedom that is so important to many young people and perhaps one of the most pressing issues

9 See for example the work of Laurent Magesa, 1997. *African Religion: The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life*. Much work on the role of ancestors in African traditional society has also been extensively done by another Tanzanian Catholic theologian, Charles Nyamiti. See for example, *Christ as our Ancestor* (1984); "Some Moral Implications of African Ancestral Christology" (1992), *Journal of African Christian Studies* 8(3): 36-51; "African Ancestral Veneration and its Relevance to the African Churches" (1993), *The Journal of African Christian Studies* 9(3):14-37; "African Christologies Today" in Schreiter, R.J. (ed). *Faces of Jesus in Africa* (1995); "The Trinity from an African Ancestral Perspective" (1996), *Journal of African Christian Studies* 12(4): 38-72.

10 I am aware that this understanding has shifted in many of the scholarly and academic discourses among the majority of Western thinkers. I therefore do not intend to generalize in this case, but it is clear from my theological interactions with students that the legacy left on the ground has not died yet.

11 See for example the work of Jesse Mugambi, *From Liberation to Reconstruction: An African Theology after the Cold War*, 1995, East Africa Educational Publishers Ltd. See also Sam Tinyiko Maluleke, "Half A Century of African Christianity Theologies: Elements of the Emerging Agenda for the Twenty-First Century", in Ogbu Kalu (ed.), *African Christianity: An African Story*, p. 423.

of our time, especially in our developing countries.¹² Since Africa, the Philippines, and perhaps some other Asian countries share some of their challenges, such as unemployment, social economic inequalities, climate injustice, and the like, we can continue to grow together by sharing our experiences in dealing with these alarming issues, not only through conferences like these but also through partnerships and exchanges of co-workers.

Eventually, we are all one in Christ

As I mentioned earlier, exchange and encounter in mission leads us to discover that we are essentially one people. For myself, a Lutheran pastor from Tanzania, working with the UCCP clearly reveals this discovery to me. The more we get to know each other, the more we know that we don't know enough. We have a common faith, though we express it differently. Our cultures embody our faith in different ways, but our faith is fundamentally one. How we worship and how we express our faith (in form) may be at odds, but the essence of what we believe is one. An encounter in mission opens our eyes more to help us realize that our differences shouldn't be a source of division, but an opportunity to celebrate and enjoy these differences, for they color and express the beauty of our common humanity. These differences help us to see ourselves much better and they lead us to acknowledge that there are more ways of doing things, indeed, even better ways than those we used to know.

Encounter and exchange strengthens a call to work together and make our differences something worthy of celebration. It is an opportunity for us to witness to the world that difference is no longer a reason for division, but an opportunity for a mutual embrace in our otherness. We can stand together in the call of Edinburgh 2010, which reads:

*We are challenged to welcome one another in our diversity, affirm our membership through baptism in the One Body of Christ, and recognize our need for mutuality, partnership, collaboration and networking in mission, so that the world might believe.*¹³

In Africa, we have a life philosophy that we call “ubuntu”. *Ubuntu* literally means “humanness”. One is a human not because of what he/she physically looks like, but because of the inner nature of being that connects him/her with other human beings. Thus, a human being's life is realized in connection with others. This can be

12 Cf. the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), an opposition party in South Africa led by perhaps the most prominent and controversial younger politician in South Africa in recent times, Julius Malema. His new party has gained massive support from many younger generations because, among other things, his message resonates well with the majority of younger people, who have for decades been deprived of their basic needs, including quality education. Their political fight aims to dismantle the economic system that has placed them at the margins, the system that seems to perpetuate the apartheid legacy.

13 As quoted in Jonathan Y. Tan, *Christian Mission among the Peoples of Asia*, 2014. Maryknoll, NY, p. 55.

captured simply in a phrase that was coined by John Mbiti, an African theologian popularly known as the father of traditional African religion. As he put it, *I am because we are; since we are, therefore I am*. In traditional African society, life is realized in connection with the lives of others. It is a recognition that a person is a person through recognition of an “other” in his or her uniqueness and difference: my humanity is co-substantively bestowed upon the other and me. Humanity is a quality we owe to each other; we create each other and need to sustain this otherness creation. And if we belong to each other, we participate in our own creation.

This understanding has kept us together for so many years. It has enhanced the spirit of valuing humanity in diversity and encourages the bond of unity among many communities. We as Christians, as a new community of faith in Christ and now in the UEM family, should encourage each other to continue learning from our cherished traditions that have made our lives worth living. I feel that the reality of valuing each other and the sense of community and oneness is inherently part of humanity, even if modern development embedded in technological advancement tends to take us away from this very basic human natural identity that in fact defines our humanity. Our humanity is not complete without other humans, and indeed in communion with other creations of God.

This *Ubuntu* African traditional philosophy can be one of our models to help us to see each other as brothers and sisters in Christ under the umbrella of the UEM, even if we come from various parts of the world. United in our oneness, we indeed continue to meaningfully and authentically convey a message of unity and hope to the divided world. Let us all strive to always continue being a living example and a testimony to all we encounter as we participate in the mission of God in this broken and seemingly hopeless world characterized today by divisions of all sorts.

Conclusion

Finally, let me mention to you that I find it an impressive and worthwhile opportunity to be part of this UEM South-South faculty exchange. It is indeed an enriching experience, one which contributes to the broadening of my scope and perspective as I am not only sharing my knowledge with my students in Silliman University Divinity School, but also learning a lot from them, as well as from my colleagues and even through my interactions with people in the communities. This encounter experience in mission exchange, I believe, will not only stay with me but will also be shared with my people in Africa upon my return at the end of my working contract. As the UEM already sees it, exchange and partnership should continue to be seen as another dimension of mission in our times, in a modern world characterized by the era of globalization.

A Comment

Rethinking Mission after an Encounter with a Statue

Volker Dally

Thinking about mission has always been part of my life. Having been born and raised in a region in Germany where almost any member of a church would talk about mission, I understood it as a substantial part of Christian life. The pastor of my local Reformed congregation was a missionary himself, the Baptist congregation in the village financed a missionary family and their work, missionaries were invited by the YMCA to talk to us young people, and the Wycliffe Global Alliance had its German headquarters in the town where I was born.

So why should I have had any doubts about mission at all? Mission was not only possible, but a matter of course to me. Consequently, I supported mission with my prayers and some money.

When I was growing up, however, my school religion teacher raised some critical questions about mission and studying theology in the eighties in Germany. Mission was not an issue in the faculty where I studied, but it was treated with suspicion, especially the “colonial interest of mission” that some scholars and students imputed to it. Somehow I lost sight of mission and my interest in mission until the year 2003, although I have been in many mission fields without recognizing those situations as mission settings.

In the year 2003, I was in India for the first time to join a pastoral training on interfaith dialogue. It was abundantly clear that we would discuss the impact of mission during the seminar. And since we were a group of German theologians, the contributions about mission were critical. I did not even realize that the Karnataka Theological College in Mangalore in South India, where we had met with Indian theologians, would never have existed if not for the German missionaries who had been there in the nineteenth century. Following the seminar I had the chance to visit Bengaluru (Bangalore), the so-called Silicon Valley of India. Walking down Mahatma Gandhi Road, a busy shopping district, I found myself in front of a statue showing a person in a Prussian church robe. People had given him a special honour by decorating him with flower chains. The person honoured there turned out to be a German missionary who had worked in Karnataka in the nineteenth century. What's more, the statue was not an old one. The Hindu government of Karnataka had installed it only two years before, as a symbol of its gratefulness for the work that the missionary had contributed to the society of his time and the culture of Karnataka.

This encounter with Ferdinand Kittel brought me back to mission, and his work became somehow a kind of paradigm for how I see mission today. Kittel,

who was sent on behalf of the Basel Mission in 1853 to Karnataka, underwent a significant change of attitude over the years. His extensive correspondence gives us good insight into how, over the course of time, he changed his approach to the people to whom he was sent; indeed, his attitude changed so profoundly that he identified a considerable lack of understanding on the part of his sending organization, a phenomenon that continues to happen to missionaries to this day when they have reached a certain point of inculturation. When Kittel suggested linking Kanaresian melodies with Christian lyrics, as he had recently observed, instead of using German melodies, his sending organization strictly rejected his idea. This verdict put an end to all attempts at the inculturation and indigenization of Christian faith and life in South India for almost one hundred years. It could have made mission there impossible, but God's mission was successful in spite of the paradigm of the sending organization in Kittel's time. No matter the era, the culture, or the approach mission has always been possible because people are called to the work even if the agencies and especially the churches have other ideas of how to do it.

Careful study of mission history and mission theology reveals that Kittel was not the only one who changed from a person sent out with an instruction to a real missionary, with a vision and a deep concern for the people he was sent to. Missionaries past and present have come close to the people they served, adapting to local traditions and customs much better than other European settlers. With their command of local languages, the missionaries often became advocates of indigenous people in their fight for justice – a situation that not infrequently conflicted with the interests of local colonial governments, and was not the reason they had been sent out from Germany. But this advocacy turned out to be a must in mission efforts. It might be a common ground in all mission endeavours. Thus we should not look for the lowest common denominator, but for the major common denominator: the example Jesus Christ has given to us by himself. Just as Jesus approached the people according to their individual life situations, mission will do the same for as long as people are following HIM. The approaches have represented and will continue to represent a multitude of options and concepts, and they will evolve in the same way they always have.

If we are courageous enough, we even may speak with the apostle Paul: “What does it matter? Just this, that Christ is proclaimed in every way, whether out of false motives or true; and in that I rejoice” (Philippians 1:18).

One of the many benefits of the United Evangelical Mission is that within our communion in Asia, Africa, and Germany we continue to discuss the various concepts of mission, even meeting with people of other faiths to discuss mission approaches – theirs and ours. In these encounters and discussions, we realize whether false motives are there and how we can change. We see that diversity is a beautiful opportunity, albeit sometimes an irritating one, as long as the major common denominator comes first.

And we definitely do realize that mission is possible: anywhere and anytime.

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