Reforming Theology
Migrating Church
Transforming Society
A Compendium for Ecumenical Education
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Foreword

Fr Heikki Huttunen
General Secretary of the Conference of European Churches

GETI’17 is good news for ecumenical theological education. As an innovative model of advanced ecumenical theological education it goes beyond the traditional formats of ecumenics. The Conference of European Churches (CEC) is the main forum for ecumenical encounter and action on our continent. In its programmes, it has a history of offering platforms for academic encounter and cooperation among theological faculties in Europe. Mindful of our longstanding commitment to interaction in theological education and formation of church leadership, it is a joy and an opportunity for CEC to be involved in GETI’17.

The Global Ecumenical Theological Institute, an idea originally conceived and implemented in 2013 by the Ecumenical Theological Education Programme of the World Council of Churches, is an intensive short-term ecumenical training that addresses advanced students of theology and related fields of study.

Students constitute an indispensable part of the community of our churches. Young people are not just the future of our churches; they are the present! They are needed as active members of our congregations here and now, and the particular contribution of students should always nurture the spiritual and intellectual growth of our church life. Therefore, their education and training are vital both for the life of the church, as well as the nourishment of ecumenical openness, and interreligious encounter. In this regard, GETI’17 is a unique training that offers the younger generation of theologians skills and capacities for ecumenical and intercultural dialogue.

The historic Charta Oecumenica puts inter-confessional openness in education at the core of our ecumenical commitment. It reminds us that common development in Christian education, theological training, and continuing study and research are basic requirements for the churches’ cooperation and joint witness. On the one hand, theological education may achieve a common reappraisal of our differing points of view on church history, as well as overcoming points of self-sufficiency, hostile prejudices and conflicts. On the other hand, it can promote tolerance and fruitful coexistence by strengthening the churches’ efforts towards mutual respect and reconciliation.

The uniqueness and strength of GETI’17 lies in its contextual character, as it focuses on three urgent questions for Europe at the moment: Reforming Theology—Migrating Church—Transforming Society. Over the last few years, and thanks to the commemoration of the 500 years of the Reformation in 2017, it is commonly agreed that the principles and impulses of the Reformation are not just the heritage of historic mainline Reformation churches. We can recognise the inspiration of the Reformation in several church renewal movements and social initiatives in our different traditions. In this sense, a theological attitude that seeks to transform relationships and social structures and constantly questions our doctrinal thinking and language in light of the Gospel, may be claimed by all Christian traditions.
Migration is a current reality in a new way in our European context. People are on the move, from many directions and for many reasons. With them churches also migrate; other faiths migrate as well. This poses new challenges to Christian theologies and our perceptions of the nature and mission of the church. The religious landscape of Europe is changing rapidly. New questions—pastoral, spiritual, theological, liturgical, canonical, legal—are surfacing with regard to being church. How do we respond to this historical change in Europe? How do we value and celebrate our interrelatedness, while historical church models are challenged? How do we engage in fruitful dialogue and joint action with other religious communities, civil actors, and European Institutions with regard to the current challenges?

In order for theological education to be meaningful and transformative, it needs to respond to the challenges of European societies and the global world. Christian churches could contribute their theological resources and play an active role in shaping current changes and training church leadership to respond to them. The open letter by the CEC Governing Board to churches in Europe issued in June 2016, “Reaffirms its understanding of the EU as a community of values pursuing human dignity, peace, reconciliation, justice, the rule of law, democracy, the respect of human rights, solidarity and sustainability.”¹ It calls local churches to put Christian values into practice, to work with the wider society and within the economic and political structures constantly challenging them in light of the gospel.

Diakonia is a fundamental aspect of church life, which builds up church fellowship, promotes peaceful living, and coexistence with the rest of God’s creation. It is intrinsically linked to the work of evangelism; communicating the faith and equipping theologically the faithful and training them to respond to current challenges. Christian service and witness involve identifying and challenging injustices and addressing disparities. It means advocating for the cause of those excluded, and working for renewal and transformation in all realms of life.² In this perspective, the Christian community may become a force transforming the society.

The existence and purpose of the church can also be captured in the vision of transforming society. In this regard, theological education can play a vital role in Europe today, as Christians look for more community, togetherness and fellowship in their attempt to respond to the rising religious intolerance and extremism and the resurfacing of racism. Ecumenical theological education goes beyond a mere theoretical exchange of perspectives; it involves the ways how values are implemented in the churches and by the churches; it is about the sharp and timely message of the churches to the broader society and the political leadership today.

The present volume is a compilation of academic essays addressing the three thematic areas of GETI’17. It brings together perspectives from a wide range of Christian theological traditions and aims at facilitating conversations among student participants, guest speakers, and faculty, as they prepare to take part in GETI’17 and the Kirchentag. It is our wish that this publication will be also prove useful for higher education institutions and individual researchers grappling with questions related to reformation, migration and societal transformation, especially in the current globalized European context.

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¹ What future for Europe? Reaffirming the European project as building a community of values. An open letter of CEC to churches and partner organisations in Europe and an invitation to dialogue and consultation, 1.
Editors’ Preface

Europe is experiencing a period of tension and political challenges. Nationalism and populism are not marginal phenomena in these days. Strong voices from individuals, from political parties and associations of citizens try to establish new borders and preach exclusivism as a suitable reaction to globalization and migration. Some of them claim to be protecting western, Christian culture. But Christians can make a difference in this atmosphere of aggressive division and powerful polemics. We rely on a message of *Shalom*, of reconciliation and God’s option for the marginalized and most needy people of our days.

In this sense we took the initiative to bring together young theologians, who study in European faculties, universities and schools. We want to open the space for engaged Christians and future leaders of the churches in Europe to discuss the relevance of theology beyond denominational, national, ethnic and cultural borders. The three pillars of our ecumenical theological education project are ‘Reforming Theology—Migrating Church—Transforming Society’. We call our gathering the ‘Global Ecumenical Theological Institute’ (GETI), a continuation of a WCC-program which was held in South Korea in 2013, where 150 students of theology gathered to study together and attend the General Assembly of the World Council of Churches. This first GETI in 2013 provided an example for an inspiring and provocative exchange among students from all over the world.

The aim of GETI’17 is to facilitate concrete, ecumenical and intercultural encounter. The joint studies will contribute to a European and even global network of contacts and the mutual acknowledgement and appreciation of European and immigrant churches. Participants will study and experience the broad frontiers of an ecumenical theology and ecclesiology. This publication serves as a reader for the participants of GETI’17 and can be used for any further studies on ecumenical theology in times when spaces for a politically-engaged proclamation of the Gospel seem to be shrinking.

Fundamentals

Before entering the sections of Reforming Theology, Migrating Church and Transforming Society, four texts are provided, which were considered as exemplary ‘fundamentals’ for fruitfully grounding a visionary theology. The *Charta Oecumenica* was agreed upon in 2001 as the unifying document of European churches. One of the top statements of the *Charta Oecumenica* is the commitment, “to act together at all levels of church life wherever conditions permit and there are no reasons of faith or overriding expediency mitigating against this.” If this is taken serious, Christians can strengthen the visibility of their communion. GETI’17 is an opportunity to realise this aim. The second text is another major ecumenical agreement, which was published in 2011, namely, the so-called ‘Code of Conduct’ in mission under the title ‘Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World’ by the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, the World Evangelical Alliance and the World Council of Churches. There is no comparable document in the history of the ecumenical movement which could cover such a wide range of Christian churches and traditions. This pamphlet is calling for an attentive, respectful behaviour towards people of other religions. Christians are called to give witness of their own faith and at the same time opt for dialogue in interreligious encounters. The third fundamental text testifies to the tremendous contribution of Pope
Francis to the transformation of Christian commitment in justice, peace and preservation of the creation. Many other excerpts of his encyclicals and proclamations could have been chosen. The selected text is just one among other prominent interventions in the years of his papacy. As a last example for Christian contribution to peace and reconciliation we chose the speech of Dietrich Bonhoeffer in Fanø from 1934. Bonhoeffer’s ardent intervention for the overcoming of nationalist and divisive messages and politics can have a huge impact on theology and Christian witness in the 21st century. He points out that, “Peace means giving oneself completely to God’s commandment, wanting no security, but in faith and obedience laying down the destiny of the nations in the hand of Almighty God, not trying to direct it for selfish purposes.”

For each of the three sections of contemporary texts, there is a separate introduction. Here we provide an overview explaining why the three pillars are considered as the main topics which GETI’17 will engage.

Reforming Theology

Theology determines formulations and modes of thought for faith. Thereby it balances bible and tradition on the one hand, and dialogue with the world in which we live, on the other. These two poles between which theology oscillates have sometimes been called authenticity and faith relevance. This gives theology a task which refers in one part to a constant and in the other to a dynamic field. As such it is subjected to permanent change and urged to offer reformulations. It is a theologia semper reformanda.

It was not only Martin Luther who felt committed to this element of theology and thus reformed it. Long before him theology had undergone changes, time and again. If one studies the history of theology methodically one will find the spirit of departure and the service to a changing church in every age. The 15th century has been especially shaped by the precursors of the Reformation. At the time of the Reformation there were other impulses of departure and change apart from the Protestant camp, for example Ignatius of Loyola. And in the centuries following Luther, theologians thought of God in a new way and expressed him in different words. Last but not least, the Pentecostal movement reminded the church of the power of God’s spirit, of a changing force, which has an impact on theology. We are still struggling together to collect the fruits of this movement and to avoid the aspects, which do not conform to what we recognize as the fruits of the Gospel. The Charismatic Movement within African Initiated and Pentecostal Churches considers itself the second reformation—this time on the African continent.

Theological work which transcends confessional and ethical borders represents the opportunity for the new with authentic reference to the old. It is about hermeneutic questions: How can we refer adequately to the biblical witness and the theology of our fathers and mothers? And it is about departure, exodus and return to the sources. Freedom is a dominant keyword of the Reformation jubilee. How can one correctly take responsibility for freedom? What kind of freedom is theologically implied when Luther says: “A Christian is a free master over all things and subject to no one. A Christian is a servant to all things and subject to everyone.”

Migrating Church

Ignatius of Loyola who challenged and reformed his church in a completely different manner from the Protestant reformers narrated his path in A Pilgrim’s Journey. Ignatius presents the movement of life as not being constant and fixed, but as rather itinerant and nomadic. These characteristics define the life stories of many people of whom the Bible speaks.
Editors’ Preface

We are a wandering people of God and have no homestead here.

Christians are on a journey. People are on a journey. More than ever we witness in Europe that this is not a metaphor but a harsh reality in the lives of many refugees and persons in need of protection. The Church in Europe has become a Church on a journey. It not only faces migrants and opens its doors to them, but unites with them. Jesus himself is the foreigner who we welcome or refuse. The Church gains a new shape, a new face, when it gains new faces. People from all parts of the world bring their faith into our community of faith. Some consider themselves as missionaries who want to encourage their brothers and sisters in a faith-depleted Europe to again pray and listen to the Word of God. If such encounters shall lead to a new church it is necessary to remove misunderstandings and to find a common way. It is time for Christians of migrant communities and of European Churches to get to know each other and pursue theology together. Then the Church will be a Church of departure, a Church on a journey, guided by the modus migrandi.

But the characterisation of Christian existence as a pilgrimage and community on a journey does not call for detachment from the world but for dialogue and a dynamic relationship with the world.

Transforming Society

“A Church which ‘goes forth’ is a Church whose doors are open. Going out to others in order to reach the fringes of humanity does not mean rushing out aimlessly into the world,” writes Pope Francis I in his apostolic exhortation “Evangelii Gaudium.” The community of Christians needs a direction and attentiveness in order to participate in social change which serves humankind.

It is about a political and moral attitude which places peace, justice and care for the creation at the centre of its message. In many countries of Europe churches are important actors in the educational sector. Education shapes and forms attitudes and values. In the multitude of voices of the Christian churches a common conviction must remain recognisable so that the churches can collectively exert their influence on the change in society. Only a network of European theologians, who in the future will hold responsible positions in churches and universities, can guarantee that this one voice makes itself heard in the multitude of voices.

Society in Europe is changing radically and rapidly. Economic, demographic, political and technological change determines life, especially for the younger generation.

It is not only important to observe and understand these changes, but above all, to actively shape them. Churches have the potential to exert influence so that solidarity, diversity, responsibility and philanthropy characterise the face of Europe in the 21st century. We want to contribute to this by issuing this invitation to GETI’17 in Berlin.

We hope that this Reader will lead to deep exchanges on ecumenical theology and lead us into greater understanding of the theological challenges we are facing today on our pilgrimage of justice and peace.

Advent 2016
Uta Andrée
Benjamin Simon
Lars Röser
Fundamentals

Charta Oecumenica

Guidelines for the Growing Cooperation among the Churches in Europe

Conference of European Churches
Roman Catholic Council of European Bishops’ Conferences
(2001)

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

As the Conference of European Churches (CEC) and the Council of European Bishops’ Conferences (CCEE) we are, in the spirit of the Messages from the two European Ecumenical Assemblies of Basel (1989) and Graz (1997), firmly resolved to preserve and develop the fellowship that has grown up among us. We give thanks to the Triune God for guiding our steps towards an ever deeper fellowship through the Holy Spirit.

Various forms of ecumenical co-operation have already proved themselves. Christ’s prayer is: “... that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me” (John 17:21). If we are to be faithful to this prayer, we cannot be content with the present situation. Instead, aware of our guilt and ready to repent, we must strive to overcome the divisions still existing among us, so that together we may credibly proclaim the message of the Gospel among all people.

Listening together to God’s word in Holy Scripture, challenged to confess our common faith and to act together in accordance with the perceived truth, let us bear witness to the love and hope which are for all people.

Europe—from the Atlantic to the Urals, from the North Cape to the Mediterranean—is today more pluralist in culture than ever before. With the Gospel, we want to stand up for the dignity of the human person created in God’s image and, as churches together, contribute towards reconciling peoples and cultures.

In this spirit, we adopt this charter as a common commitment to dialogue and co-operation. It describes fundamental ecumenical responsibilities, from which follow a number of guidelines and commitments. It is designed to promote an ecumenical culture of dialogue and co-operation at all levels of church life, and to provide agreed criteria for this. However, it has no magisterial or dogmatic character, nor is it legally binding under church law. Its authority will derive from the voluntary commitments of the European churches and ecumenical organisations. Building on this basic text, they can formulate their own local addenda, designed to meet their own specific challenges and resulting commitments.

1 To the Conference of European Churches (CEC) belong almost all Orthodox, Protestant, Anglican, Old-Catholic and independent churches in Europe. In the Council of European Bishops’ Conferences (CCEE) are represented all Roman Catholic Bishops’ Conferences in Europe.
We Believe in ‘One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church’

(Make) every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

(Eph 4:3–6)

1. Called together to unity in faith

With the Gospel of Jesus Christ, according to the witness of Holy Scripture and as expressed in the ecumenical Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed of 381, we believe in the Triune God: the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Because we here confess ‘one, holy, catholic and apostolic church’ our paramount ecumenical task is to show forth this unity, which is always a gift of God.

Fundamental differences in faith are still barriers to visible unity. There are different views of the church and its oneness, of the sacraments and ministries. We must not be satisfied with this situation. Jesus Christ revealed to us on the cross his love and the mystery of reconciliation; as his followers, we intend to do our utmost to overcome the problems and obstacles that still divide the churches.

We commit ourselves

- to follow the apostolic exhortation of the Letter to the Ephesians and persevere in seeking a common understanding of Christ’s message of salvation in the Gospel;
- in the power of the Holy Spirit, to work towards the visible unity of the Church of Jesus Christ in the one faith, expressed in the mutual recognition of baptism and in eucharistic fellowship, as well as in common witness and service.

On the Way toward the Visible Fellowship of the Churches in Europe

By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

(John 13:35)

2. Proclaiming the Gospel together

The most important task of the churches in Europe is the common proclamation of the Gospel, in both word and deed, for the salvation of all. The widespread lack of corporate and individual orientation and falling away from Christian values challenge Christians to testify to their faith, particularly in response to the quest for meaning which is being pursued in so many forms. This witness will require increased dedication to Christian education (e.g. catechism classes) and pastoral care in local congregations, with a sharing of experiences in these fields. It is equally important for the whole people of God together to communicate the Gospel in the public domain, which also means responsible commitments to social and political issues.

We commit ourselves

- to discuss our plans for evangelisation with other churches, entering into agreements with them and thus avoiding harmful competition and the risk of fresh divisions;
- to recognise that every person can freely choose his or her religious and church affiliation as a matter of conscience, which means not inducing anyone to convert through moral pressure or material incentive, but also not hindering anyone from entering into conversion of his or her own free will.
3. Moving towards one another

In the spirit of the Gospel, we must reappraise together the history of the Christian churches, which has been marked by many beneficial experiences but also by schisms, hostilities and even armed conflicts. Human guilt, lack of love and the frequent abuse of faith and the church for political interests have severely damaged the credibility of the Christian witness.

Ecumenism therefore begins for Christians with the renewal of our hearts and the willingness to repent and change our ways. The ecumenical movement has already helped to spread reconciliation.

It is important to acknowledge the spiritual riches of the different Christian traditions, to learn from one another and so to receive these gifts. For the ecumenical movement to flourish it is particularly necessary to integrate the experiences and expectations of young people and actively encourage their participation.

We commit ourselves

- to overcome the feeling of self-sufficiency within each church, and to eliminate prejudices; to seek mutual encounters and to be available to help one another;
- to promote ecumenical openness and cooperation in Christian education, and in theological training, continuing education and research.

4. Acting together

Various forms of shared activity are already ecumenical. Many Christians from different churches live side by side and interact in friendships, in their neighbourhoods, at work and in their families. Couples in interdenominational marriages especially should be supported in experiencing ecumenism in their daily lives.

We recommend that bilateral and multilateral ecumenical bodies be set up and maintained for co-operation at local, regional, national and international levels. At the European level it is necessary to strengthen cooperation between the Conference of European Churches and the Council of European Bishops’ Conferences (CCEE) and to hold further European Ecumenical Assemblies.

In the event of conflicts between churches, efforts towards mediation and peace should be initiated and/or supported as needed.

We commit ourselves

- to act together at all levels of church life wherever conditions permit and there are no reasons of faith or overriding expediency mitigating against this;
- to defend the rights of minorities and to help reduce misunderstandings and prejudices between majority and minority churches in our countries.

5. Praying together

The ecumenical movement lives from our hearing God’s word and letting the Holy Spirit work in us and through us. In the power of this grace, many different initiatives now seek, through services of prayer and worship, to deepen the spiritual fellowship among the churches and to pray for the visible unity of Christ’s Church. A particularly painful sign of the divisions among many Christian churches is the lack of eucharistic fellowship.

In some churches reservations subsist regarding praying together in an ecumenical context. But we have many hymns and liturgical prayers in common, notably the Lord’s Prayer, and ecumenical services have become a widespread practice: all of these are features of our Christian spirituality.
We commit ourselves

- to pray for one another and for Christian unity;
- to learn to know and appreciate the worship and other forms of spiritual life practised by other churches;
- to move towards the goal of eucharistic fellowship.

6. Continuing in dialogue

We belong together in Christ, and this is of fundamental significance in the face of our differing theological and ethical positions. Rather than seeing our diversity as a gift which enriches us, however, we have allowed differences of opinion on doctrine, ethics and church law to lead to separations between churches, with special historical circumstances and different cultural backgrounds often playing a crucial role.

In order to deepen ecumenical fellowship, endeavours to reach a consensus in faith must be continued at all cost. Only in this way can church communion be given a theological foundation. There is no alternative to dialogue.

We commit ourselves

- to continue in conscientious, intensive dialogue at different levels between our churches, and to examine the question of how official church bodies can receive and implement the findings gained in dialogue;
- in the event of controversies, particularly when divisions threaten in questions of faith and ethics, to seek dialogue and discuss the issues together in the light of the Gospel.

Our Common Responsibility in Europe

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.
(Matt 5:9)

7. Participating in the building of Europe

Through the centuries Europe has developed a primarily Christian character in religious and cultural terms. However, Christians have failed to prevent suffering and destruction from being inflicted by Europeans, both within Europe and beyond. We confess our share of responsibility for this guilt and ask God and our fellow human beings for forgiveness.

Our faith helps us to learn from the past, and to make our Christian faith and love for our neighbours a source of hope for morality and ethics, for education and culture, and for political and economic life, in Europe and throughout the world.

The churches support an integration of the European continent. Without common values, unity cannot endure. We are convinced that the spiritual heritage of Christianity constitutes an empowering source of inspiration and enrichment for Europe. On the basis of our Christian faith, we work towards a humane, socially conscious Europe, in which human rights and the basic values of peace, justice, freedom, tolerance, participation and solidarity prevail. We likewise insist on the reverence for life, the value of marriage and the family, the preferential option for the poor, the readiness to forgive, and in all things compassion.

As churches and as international communities we have to counteract the danger of Europe developing into an integrated West and a disintegrated East, and also take account of the North-South divide within Europe. At the same time we must avoid Eurocentricity and heighten Europe’s sense of responsibility for the whole of
humanity, particularly for the poor all over the world.

We commit ourselves

- to seek agreement with one another on the substance and goals of our social responsibility, and to represent in concert, as far as possible, the concerns and visions of the churches vis-à-vis the secular European institutions;
- to defend basic values against infringements of every kind
- to resist any attempt to misuse religion and the church for ethnic or nationalist purposes.

8. Reconciling peoples and cultures

We consider the diversity of our regional, national, cultural and religious traditions to be enriching for Europe. In view of numerous conflicts, the churches are called upon to serve together the cause of reconciliation among peoples and cultures. We know that peace among the churches is an important prerequisite for this.

Our common endeavours are devoted to evaluating, and helping to resolve, political and social issues in the spirit of the Gospel. Because we value the person and dignity of every individual as made in the image of God, we defend the absolutely equal value of all human beings.

As churches we intend to join forces in promoting the process of democratisation in Europe. We commit ourselves to work for structures of peace, based on the non-violent resolution of conflicts. We condemn any form of violence against the human person, particularly against women and children.

Reconciliation involves promoting social justice within and among all peoples; above all, this means closing the gap between rich and poor and overcoming unemployment. Together we will do our part towards giving migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers a humane reception in Europe.

We commit ourselves

- to counteract any form of nationalism which leads to the oppression of other peoples and national minorities and to engage ourselves for non-violent resolutions;
- to strengthen the position and equal rights of women in all areas of life, and to foster partnership in church and society between women and men.

9. Safeguarding the creation

Believing in the love of the Creator God, we give thanks for the gift of creation and the great value and beauty of nature. However, we are appalled to see natural resources being exploited without regard for their intrinsic value or consideration of their limits, and without regard for the well-being of future generations.

Together we want to help create sustainable living conditions for the whole of creation. It is our responsibility before God to put into effect common criteria for distinguishing between what human beings are scientifically and technologically capable of doing and what, ethically speaking, they should not do.

We recommend the introduction in European churches of an Ecumenical Day of Prayer for the Preservation of Creation.

We commit ourselves

- to strive to adopt a lifestyle free of economic pressures and consumerism and a quality of life informed by accountability and sustainability;
- to support church environmental organisations and ecumenical networks in their efforts for the safeguarding of creation.
10. Strengthening community with Judaism

We are bound up in a unique community with the people Israel, the people of the Covenant which God has never terminated. Our faith teaches us that our Jewish sisters and brothers "are beloved, for the sake of their ancestors; for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable" (Rom 11:28–29). And "to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship and the promises; to them belong the patriarchs, and from them, according to the flesh, comes the Messiah" (Rom 9:4–5).

We deplore and condemn all manifestations of anti-Semitism, all outbreaks of hatred and persecutions. We ask God for forgiveness for anti-Jewish attitudes among Christians, and we ask our Jewish sisters and brothers for reconciliation.

It is urgently necessary, in the worship and teaching, doctrine and life of our churches, to raise awareness of the deep bond existing between the Christian faith and Judaism, and to support Christian-Jewish co-operation.

We commit ourselves
- to oppose all forms of anti-Semitism and anti-Judaism in the church and in society;
- to seek and intensify dialogue with our Jewish sisters and brothers at all levels.

11. Cultivating relations with Islam

Muslims have lived in Europe for centuries. In some European countries they constitute strong minorities. While there have been plenty of good contacts and neighbourly relations between Muslims and Christians, and this remains the case, there are still strong reservations and prejudices on both sides. These are rooted in painful experiences throughout history and in the recent past.

We would like to intensify encounters between Christians and Muslims and enhance Christian-Islamic dialogue at all levels. We recommend, in particular, speaking with one another about our faith in one God, and clarifying ideas on human rights.

We commit ourselves
- to conduct ourselves towards Muslims with respect;
- to work together with Muslims on matters of common concern.

12. Encountering other religions and world views

The plurality of religious and non-confessional beliefs and ways of life has become a feature of European culture. Eastern religions and new religious communities are spreading and also attracting the interest of many Christians. In addition, growing numbers of people reject the Christian faith, are indifferent to it or have other philosophies of life.

We want to take seriously the critical questions of others, and try together to conduct fair discussions with them. Yet a distinction must be made between the communities with which dialogues and encounters are to be sought, and those which should be warned against from the Christian standpoint.

We are committed
- to recognise the freedom of religion and conscience of these individuals and communities and to defend their right to practise their faith or convictions, whether singly or in groups, privately or publicly, in the context of rights applicable to all;
- to be open to dialogue with all persons of good will, to pursue with them matters of common concern, and to bring a witness of our Christian faith to them.
Jesus Christ, the Lord of the one Church, is our greatest hope of reconciliation and peace. In his name we intend to continue on our common path in Europe. We pray for God’s guidance through the power of the Holy Spirit.

May the God of hope fill us with all joy and peace in believing, so that we may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. (Rom 15:13)

As Presidents of the Conference of European Churches and the Council of European Bishops’ Conferences, we commend this Charta Oecumenica as a Basic Text to all the churches and Bishops’ Conferences in Europe, to be adopted and adapted in each of their local contexts.

Strasbourg, 22 April 2001
Metropolitan Jérémie
(President Conference of European Churches)
Cardinal Vlk
(President Council of European Bishops’ Conferences)

Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World

Recommendations for Conduct

World Council of Churches
Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue
World Evangelical Alliance
(2011)

Preamble

Mission belongs to the very being of the church. Proclaiming the word of God and witnessing to the world is essential for every Christian. At the same time, it is necessary to do so according to gospel principles, with full respect and love for all human beings.

Aware of the tensions between people and communities of different religious convictions and the varied interpretations of Christian witness, the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID), the World Council of Churches (WCC) and, at the invitation of the WCC, the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA), met during a period of 5 years to reflect and produce this document to serve as a set of recommendations for conduct on Christian witness around the world. This document does not intend to be a theological statement on mission but to address practical issues associated with Christian witness in a multi-religious world.

The purpose of this document is to encourage churches, church councils and mission agencies to reflect on their current practices and to use the recommendations in this document to prepare, where appropriate, their own guidelines for their witness and mission among those of different religions and among those who do not profess any particular religion. It is hoped that Christians across the world will study this docu-
A Basis for Christian Witness

1. For Christians it is a privilege and joy to give an accounting for the hope that is within them and to do so with gentleness and respect (cf. 1 Pet 3:15).

2. Jesus Christ is the supreme witness (cf. John 18:37). Christian witness is always a sharing in his witness, which takes the form of proclamation of the kingdom, service to neighbour and the total gift of self even if that act of giving leads to the cross. Just as the Father sent the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit, so believers are sent in mission to witness in word and action to the love of the triune God.

3. The example and teaching of Jesus Christ and of the early church must be the guides for Christian mission. For two millennia Christians have sought to follow Christ’s way by sharing the good news of God’s kingdom (cf. Luke 4:16–20).


5. In some contexts, living and proclaiming the gospel is difficult, hindered or even prohibited, yet Christians are commissioned by Christ to continue faithfully in solidarity with one another in their witness to him (cf. Matt 28:19–20; Mark 16:14–18; Luke 24:44–48; John 20:21; Acts 1:8).

6. If Christians engage in inappropriate methods of exercising mission by resorting to deception and coercive means, they betray the gospel and may cause suffering to others. Such departures call for repentance and remind us of our need for God’s continuing grace (cf. Rom 3:23).

7. Christians affirm that while it is their responsibility to witness to Christ, conversion is ultimately the work of the Holy Spirit (cf. John 16:7–9; Acts 10:44–47). They recognize that the Spirit blows where the Spirit wills in ways over which no human being has control (cf. John 3:8).

Principles

Christians are called to adhere to the following principles as they seek to fulfil Christ’s commission in an appropriate manner, particularly within interreligious contexts.

1. Acting in God’s love. Christians believe that God is the source of all love and, accordingly, in their witness they are called to live lives of love and to love their neighbour as themselves (cf. Matt 22:34–40; John 14:15).

2. Imitating Jesus Christ. In all aspects of life, and especially in their witness, Christians are called to follow the example and teachings of Jesus Christ, sharing his love, giving glory and honour to God the Father in the power of the Holy Spirit (cf. John 20:21–23).

3. Christian virtues. Christians are called to conduct themselves with integrity, charity, compassion and humility, and to overcome all arrogance, condescension and disparagement (cf. Gal 5:22).

4. Acts of service and justice. Christians are called to act justly and to love tenderly (cf. Mic 6:8). They are further called to serve others and in so doing to recognize
Christ in the least of their sisters and brothers (cf. Matt 25:45). Acts of service, such as providing education, health care, relief services and acts of justice and advocacy are an integral part of witnessing to the gospel. The exploitation of situations of poverty and need has no place in Christian outreach. Christians should denounce and refrain from offering all forms of allurements, including financial incentives and rewards, in their acts of service.

5. Discernment in ministries of healing. As an integral part of their witness to the gospel, Christians exercise ministries of healing. They are called to exercise discernment as they carry out these ministries, fully respecting human dignity and ensuring that the vulnerability of people and their need for healing are not exploited.

6. Rejection of violence. Christians are called to reject all forms of violence, even psychological or social, including the abuse of power in their witness. They also reject violence, unjust discrimination or repression by any religious or secular authority, including the violation or destruction of places of worship, sacred symbols or texts.

7. Freedom of religion and belief. Religious freedom including the right to publicly profess, practice, propagate and change one’s religion flows from the very dignity of the human person which is grounded in the creation of all human beings in the image and likeness of God (cf. Gen 1:26). Thus, all human beings have equal rights and responsibilities. Where any religion is instrumentalized for political ends, or where religious persecution occurs, Christians are called to engage in a prophetic witness denouncing such actions.

8. Mutual respect and solidarity. Christians are called to commit themselves to work with all people in mutual respect, promoting together justice, peace and the common good. Interreligious cooperation is an essential dimension of such commitment.

9. Respect for all people. Christians recognize that the gospel both challenges and enriches cultures. Even when the gospel challenges certain aspects of cultures, Christians are called to respect all people. Christians are also called to discern elements in their own cultures that are challenged by the gospel.

10. Renouncing false witness. Christians are to speak sincerely and respectfully; they are to listen in order to learn about and understand others’ beliefs and practices, and are encouraged to acknowledge and appreciate what is true and good in them. Any comment or critical approach should be made in a spirit of mutual respect, making sure not to bear false witness concerning other religions.

11. Ensuring personal discernment. Christians are to acknowledge that changing one’s religion is a decisive step that must be accompanied by sufficient time for adequate reflection and preparation, through a process ensuring full personal freedom.

12. Building interreligious relationships. Christians should continue to build relationships of respect and trust with people of different religions so as to facilitate deeper mutual understanding, reconciliation and cooperation for the common good.
Recommendations

The Third Consultation organized by the World Council of Churches and the PCID of the Holy See in collaboration with World Evangelical Alliance with participation from the largest Christian families of faith (Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, Evangelical and Pentecostal), having acted in a spirit of ecumenical cooperation to prepare this document for consideration by churches, national and regional confessional bodies and mission organizations, and especially those working in interreligious contexts, recommends that these bodies:

1. study the issues set out in this document and where appropriate formulate guidelines for conduct regarding Christian witness applicable to their particular contexts. Where possible this should be done ecumenically, and in consultation with representatives of other religions.

2. build relationships of respect and trust with people of all religions, in particular at institutional levels between churches and other religious communities, engaging in on-going interreligious dialogue as part of their Christian commitment. In certain contexts, where years of tension and conflict have created deep suspicions and breaches of trust between and among communities, interreligious dialogue can provide new opportunities for resolving conflicts, restoring justice, healing of memories, reconciliation and peace-building.

3. encourage Christians to strengthen their own religious identity and faith while deepening their knowledge and understanding of different religions, and to do so also taking into account the perspectives of the adherents of those religions. Christians should avoid misrepresenting the beliefs and practices of people of different religions.

4. cooperate with other religious communities engaging in interreligious advocacy towards justice and the common good and, wherever possible, standing together in solidarity with people who are in situations of conflict.

5. call on their governments to ensure that freedom of religion is properly and comprehensively respected, recognizing that in many countries religious institutions and persons are inhibited from exercising their mission.

6. pray for their neighbours and their well-being, recognizing that prayer is integral to who we are and what we do, as well as to Christ’s mission.
Excerpt of the Apostolic Exhortation “Evangelii Gaudium” of the Holy Father Francis

to the Bishops, Clergy, Consecrated Person and the Lay Faithful on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today’s World

Holy Father Francis

Some Challenges of Today’s World

In our time humanity is experiencing a turning-point in its history, as we can see from the advances being made in so many fields. We can only praise the steps being taken to improve people’s welfare in areas such as health care, education and communications. At the same time we have to remember that the majority of our contemporaries are barely living from day to day, with dire consequences. A number of diseases are spreading. The hearts of many people are gripped by fear and desperation, even in the so-called rich countries. The joy of living frequently fades, lack of respect for others and violence are on the rise, and inequality is increasingly evident. It is a struggle to live and, often, to live with precious little dignity. This epochal change has been set in motion by the enormous qualitative, quantitative, rapid and cumulative advances occurring in the sciences and in technology, and by their instant application in different areas of nature and of life. We are in an age of knowledge and information, which has led to new and often anonymous kinds of power.

No to an economy of exclusion

Just as the commandment ‘Thou shalt not kill’ sets a clear limit in order to safeguard the value of human life, today we also have to say ‘thou shalt not’ to an economy of exclusion and inequality. Such an economy kills. How can it be that it is not a news item when an elderly homeless person dies of exposure, but it is news when the stock market loses two points? This is a case of exclusion. Can we continue to stand by when food is thrown away while people are starving? This is a case of inequality. Today everything comes under the laws of competition and the survival of the fittest, where the powerful feed upon the powerless. As a consequence, masses of people find themselves excluded and marginalized: without work, without possibilities, without any means of escape.

Human beings are themselves considered consumer goods to be used and then discarded. We have created a ‘throw away’ culture which is now spreading. It is no longer simply about exploitation and oppression, but something new. Exclusion ultimately has to do with what it means to be a part of the society in which we live; those excluded are no longer society’s underside or its fringes or its disenfranchised—they are no longer even a part of it. The excluded are not the ‘exploited’ but the outcast, the ‘leftovers’.

In this context, some people continue to defend trickle-down theories which assume that economic growth, encouraged by a free market, will inevitably succeed in bringing about greater justice and inclusiveness in the world. This opinion, which has never been confirmed by the facts, expresses a crude and naïve trust in the goodness of those wielding economic power and in the sacredized workings of the prevailing economic system. Meanwhile, the excluded are still waiting. To sustain a lifestyle which excludes others, or to sustain enthusiasm for that selfish ideal, a
globalization of indifference has developed. Almost without being aware of it, we end up being incapable of feeling compassion at the outcry of the poor, weeping for other people’s pain, and feeling a need to help them, as though all this were someone else’s responsibility and not our own. The culture of prosperity deadens us; we are thrilled if the market offers us something new to purchase. In the meantime all those lives stunted for lack of opportunity seem a mere spectacle; they fail to move us.

No to the new idolatry of money

One cause of this situation is found in our relationship with money, since we calmly accept its dominion over ourselves and our societies. The current financial crisis can make us overlook the fact that it originated in a profound human crisis: the denial of the primacy of the human person! We have created new idols. The worship of the ancient golden calf (cf. Ex 32:1–35) has returned in a new and ruthless guise in the idolatry of money and the dictatorship of an impersonal economy lacking a truly human purpose. The worldwide crisis affecting finance and the economy lays bare their imbalances and, above all, their lack of real concern for human beings; man is reduced to one of his needs alone: consumption.

While the earnings of a minority are growing exponentially, so too is the gap separating the majority from the prosperity enjoyed by those happy few. This imbalance is the result of ideologies which defend the absolute autonomy of the marketplace and financial speculation. Consequently, they reject the right of states, charged with vigilance for the common good, to exercise any form of control. A new tyranny is thus born, invisible and often virtual, which unilaterally and relentlessly imposes its own laws and rules. Debt and the accumulation of interest also make it difficult for countries to realize the potential of their own economies and keep citizens from enjoying their real purchasing power. To all this we can add widespread corruption and self-serving tax evasion, which have taken on worldwide dimensions. The thirst for power and possessions knows no limits. In this system, which tends to devour everything which stands in the way of increased profits, whatever is fragile, like the environment, is defenseless before the interests of a deified market, which become the only rule.

No to a financial system which rules rather than serves

Behind this attitude lurks a rejection of ethics and a rejection of God. Ethics has come to be viewed with a certain scornful derision. It is seen as counterproductive, too human, because it makes money and power relative. It is felt to be a threat, since it condemns the manipulation and debasement of the person. In effect, ethics leads to a God who calls for a committed response which is outside the categories of the marketplace. When these latter are absolutized, God can only be seen as uncontrollable, unmanageable, even dangerous, since he calls human beings to their full realization and to freedom from all forms of enslavement. Ethics—a non-ideological ethics—would make it possible to bring about balance and a more humane social order. With this in mind, I encourage financial experts and political leaders to ponder the words of one of the sages of antiquity: “Not to share one’s wealth with the poor is to steal from them and to take away their livelihood. It is not our own goods which we hold, but theirs.”

A financial reform open to such ethical considerations would require a vigorous change of approach on the part of political leaders. I urge them to face this challenge with determination and an eye to the future, while not ignoring, of

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1 Saint John Chrysostom, De Lazaro Concio, II, 6: PG 48, 992D.
course, the specifics of each case. Money must serve, not rule! The Pope loves everyone, rich and poor alike, but he is obliged in the name of Christ to remind all that the rich must help, respect and promote the poor. I exhort you to generous solidarity and to the return of economics and finance to an ethical approach which favours human beings.

**No to the inequality which spawns violence**

Today in many places we hear a call for greater security. But until exclusion and inequality in society and between peoples are reversed, it will be impossible to eliminate violence. The poor and the poorer peoples are accused of violence, yet without equal opportunities the different forms of aggression and conflict will find a fertile terrain for growth and eventually explode. When a society—whether local, national or global—is willing to leave a part of itself on the fringes, no political programmes or resources spent on law enforcement or surveillance systems can indefinitely guarantee tranquility. This is not the case simply because inequality provokes a violent reaction from those excluded from the system, but because the socioeconomic system is unjust at its root. Just as goodness tends to spread, the toleration of evil, which is injustice, tends to expand its baneful influence and quietly to undermine any political and social system, no matter how solid it may appear. If every action has its consequences, an evil embedded in the structures of a society has a constant potential for disintegration and death. It is evil crystallized in unjust social structures, which cannot be the basis of hope for a better future. We are far from the so-called ‘end of history’, since the conditions for a sustainable and peaceful development have not yet been adequately articulated and realized.

Today’s economic mechanisms promote inordinate consumption, yet it is evident that unbridled consumerism combined with inequality proves doubly damaging to the social fabric. Inequality eventually engenders a violence which recourse to arms cannot and never will be able to resolve. It serves only to offer false hopes to those clamouring for heightened security, even though nowadays we know that weapons and violence, rather than providing solutions, create new and more serious conflicts. Some simply content themselves with blaming the poor and the poorer countries themselves for their troubles; indulging in unwarranted generalizations, they claim that the solution is an ‘education’ that would tranquilize them, making them tame and harmless. All this becomes even more exasperating for the marginalized in the light of the widespread and deeply rooted corruption found in many countries—in their governments, businesses and institutions—whatever the political ideology of their leaders.

**Some cultural challenges**

We also evangelize when we attempt to confront the various challenges which can arise. On occasion these may take the form of veritable attacks on religious freedom or new persecutions directed against Christians; in some countries these have reached alarming levels of hatred and violence. In many places, the problem is more that of widespread indifference and relativism, linked to disillusionment and the crisis of ideologies which has come about as a reaction to anything which might appear totalitarian. This not only harms the Church but the fabric of society as a whole. We should recognize how in a culture where each person wants to be bearer of his or her own subjective truth, it becomes difficult for citizens to devise a common plan which transcends individual gain and personal ambitions.

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In the prevailing culture, priority is given to the outward, the immediate, the visible, the quick, the superficial and the provisional. What is real gives way to appearances. In many countries globalization has meant a hastened deterioration of their own cultural roots and the invasion of ways of thinking and acting proper to other cultures which are economically advanced but ethically debilitated. This fact has been brought up by bishops from various continents in different Synods. The African bishops, for example, taking up the Encyclical Sollicitudo Rei Socialis, pointed out years ago that there have been frequent attempts to make the African countries “parts of a machine, cogs on a gigantic wheel. This is often true also in the field of social communications which, being run by centres mostly in the northern hemisphere, do not always give due consideration to the priorities and problems of such countries or respect their cultural make-up”.

By the same token, the bishops of Asia “underlined the external influences being brought to bear on Asian cultures. New patterns of behaviour are emerging as a result of over-exposure to the mass media... As a result, the negative aspects of the media and entertainment industries are threatening traditional values, and in particular the sacredness of marriage and the stability of the family.”

The Catholic faith of many peoples is nowadays being challenged by the proliferation of new religious movements, some of which tend to fundamentalism while others seem to propose a spirituality without God. This is, on the one hand, a human reaction to a materialistic, consumerist and individualistic society, but it is also a means of exploiting the weaknesses of people living in poverty and on the fringes of society, people who make ends meet amid great human suffering and are looking for immediate solutions to their needs. These religious movements, not without a certain shrewdness, come to fill, within a predominantly individualistic culture, a vacuum left by secularist rationalism. We must recognize that if part of our baptized people lack a sense of belonging to the Church, this is also due to certain structures and the occasionally unwelcoming atmosphere of some of our parishes and communities, or to a bureaucratic way of dealing with problems, be they simple or complex, in the lives of our people. In many places an administrative approach prevails over a pastoral approach, as does a concentration on administering the sacraments apart from other forms of evangelization.

The process of secularization tends to reduce the faith and the Church to the sphere of the private and personal. Furthermore, by completely rejecting the transcendent, it has produced a growing deterioration of ethics, a weakening of the sense of personal and collective sin, and a steady increase in relativism. These have led to a general sense of disorientation, especially in the periods of adolescence and young adulthood which are so vulnerable to change. As the bishops of the United States of America have rightly pointed out, while the Church insists on the existence of objective moral norms which are valid for everyone, “there are those in our culture who portray this teaching as unjust, that is, as opposed to basic human rights. Such claims usually follow from a form of moral relativism that is joined, not without inconsistency, to a belief in the absolute rights of individuals. In this view, the Church is perceived as promoting a particular prejudice and as interfering with individual freedom.”

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5 United States Conference Of Catholic Bishops, Ministry to Persons with a Homosexual Inclination: Guidelines for Pastoral Care (2006), 17.
with data—all treated as being of equal importance—and which leads to remarkable superficiality in the area of moral discernment. In response, we need to provide an education which teaches critical thinking and encourages the development of mature moral values.

Despite the tide of secularism which has swept our societies, in many countries—even those where Christians are a minority—the Catholic Church is considered a credible institution by public opinion, and trusted for her solidarity and concern for those in greatest need. Again and again, the Church has acted as a mediator in finding solutions to problems affecting peace, social harmony, the land, the defence of life, human and civil rights, and so forth. And how much good has been done by Catholic schools and universities around the world! This is a good thing. Yet, we find it difficult to make people see that when we raise other questions less palatable to public opinion, we are doing so out of fidelity to precisely the same convictions about human dignity and the common good.

The family is experiencing a profound cultural crisis, as are all communities and social bonds. In the case of the family, the weakening of these bonds is particularly serious because the family is the fundamental cell of society, where we learn to live with others despite our differences and to belong to one another; it is also the place where parents pass on the faith to their children. Marriage now tends to be viewed as a form of mere emotional satisfaction that can be constructed in any way or modified at will. But the indispensable contribution of marriage to society transcends the feelings and momentary needs of the couple. As the French bishops have taught, it is not born “of loving sentiment, ephemeral by definition, but from the depth of the obligation assumed by the spouses who accept to enter a total communion of life”.6

The individualism of our postmodern and globalized era favours a lifestyle which weakens the development and stability of personal relationships and distorts family bonds. Pastoral activity needs to bring out more clearly the fact that our relationship with the Father demands and encourages a communion which heals, promotes and reinforces interpersonal bonds. In our world, especially in some countries, different forms of war and conflict are re-emerging, yet we Christians remain steadfast in our intention to respect others, to heal wounds, to build bridges, to strengthen relationships and to “bear one another’s burdens” (Gal 6:2). Today too, various associations for the defence of rights and the pursuit of noble goals are being founded. This is a sign of the desire of many people to contribute to social and cultural progress.

**Challenges to inculcating the faith**

The Christian substratum of certain peoples—most of all in the West—is a living reality. Here we find, especially among the most needy, a moral resource which preserves the values of an authentic Christian humanism. Seeing reality with the eyes of faith, we cannot fail to acknowledge what the Holy Spirit is sowing. It would show a lack of trust in his free and unstinting activity to think that authentic Christian values are absent where great numbers of people have received baptism and express their faith and solidarity with others in a variety of ways. This means more than acknowledging occasional ‘seeds of the word’, since it has to do with an authentic Christian faith which has its own expressions and means of showing its relationship to the Church. The immense importance of a culture marked by faith cannot be overlooked; before the onslaught of contemporary secularism an evangelized culture, for all its

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limits, has many more resources than the mere sum total of believers. An evangelized popular culture contains values of faith and solidarity capable of encouraging the development of a more just and believing society, and possesses a particular wisdom which ought to be gratefully acknowledged.

It is imperative to evangelize cultures in order to inculturate the Gospel. In countries of Catholic tradition, this means encouraging, fostering and reinforcing a richness which already exists. In countries of other religious traditions, or profoundly secularized countries, it will mean sparking new processes for evangelizing culture, even though these will demand long-term planning. We must keep in mind, however, that we are constantly being called to grow. Each culture and social group needs purification and growth. In the case of the popular cultures of Catholic peoples, we can see deficiencies which need to be healed by the Gospel: machismo, alcoholism, domestic violence, low Mass attendance, fatalistic or superstitious notions which lead to sorcery, and the like. Popular piety itself can be the starting point for healing and liberation from these deficiencies.

It is also true that at times greater emphasis is placed on the outward expressions and traditions of some groups, or on alleged private revelations which would replace all else, than on the impulse of Christian piety. There is a kind of Christianity made up of devotions reflecting an individual and sentimental faith life which does not in fact correspond to authentic ‘popular piety’. Some people promote these expressions while not being in the least concerned with the advancement of society or the formation of the laity, and in certain cases they do so in order to obtain economic benefits or some power over others. Nor can we overlook the fact that in recent decades there has been a breakdown in the way Catholics pass down the Christian faith to the young. It is undeniable that many people feel disillusioned and no longer identify with the Catholic tradition. Growing numbers of parents do not bring their children for baptism or teach them how to pray. There is also a certain exodus towards other faith communities. The causes of this breakdown include: a lack of opportunity for dialogue in families, the influence of the communications media, a relativistic subjectivism, unbridled consumerism which feeds the market, lack of pastoral care among the poor, the failure of our institutions to be welcoming, and our difficulty in restoring a mystical adherence to the faith in a pluralistic religious landscape.

**Challenges from urban cultures**

The new Jerusalem, the holy city (cf. Rev 21:2–4), is the goal towards which all of humanity is moving. It is curious that God’s revelation tells us that the fullness of humanity and of history is realized in a city. We need to look at our cities with a contemplative gaze, a gaze of faith which sees God dwelling in their homes, in their streets and squares. God’s presence accompanies the sincere efforts of individuals and groups to find encouragement and meaning in their lives. He dwells among them, fostering solidarity, fraternity, and the desire for goodness, truth and justice. This presence must not be contrived but found, uncovered. God does not hide himself from those who seek him with a sincere heart, even though they do so tentatively, in a vague and haphazard manner.

In cities, as opposed to the countryside, the religious dimension of life is expressed by different lifestyles, daily rhythms linked to places and people. In their daily lives people must often struggle for survival and this struggle contains within it a profound understanding of life which often includes a deep religious sense. We must examine this more closely in order to enter into a dialogue like that of our Lord and the Samarian woman at the well where she sought to quench her thirst (cf. John 4:1–15).
New cultures are constantly being born in these vast new expanses where Christians are no longer the customary interpreters or generators of meaning. Instead, they themselves take from these cultures new languages, symbols, messages and paradigms which propose new approaches to life, approaches often in contrast with the Gospel of Jesus. A completely new culture has come to life and continues to grow in the cities. The Synod noted that today the changes taking place in these great spaces and the culture which they create are a privileged locus of the new evangelization. This challenges us to imagine innovative spaces and possibilities for prayer and communion which are more attractive and meaningful for city dwellers. Through the influence of the media, rural areas are being affected by the same cultural changes, which are significantly altering their way of life as well.

What is called for is an evangelization capable of shedding light on these new ways of relating to God, to others and to the world around us, and inspiring essential values. It must reach the places where new narratives and paradigms are being formed, bringing the word of Jesus to the inmost soul of our cities. Cities are multicultural; in the larger cities, a connective network is found in which groups of people share a common imagination and dreams about life, and new human interactions arise, new cultures, invisible cities. Various subcultures exist side by side, and often practise segregation and violence. The Church is called to be at the service of a difficult dialogue. On the one hand, there are people who have the means needed to develop their personal and family lives, but there are also many ‘non-citizens’, ‘half citizens’ and ‘urban remnants’. Cities create a sort of permanent ambivalence because, while they offer their residents countless possibilities, they also present many people with any number of obstacles to the full development of their lives. This contrast causes painful suffering. In many parts of the world, cities are the scene of mass protests where thousands of people call for freedom, a voice in public life, justice and a variety of other demands which, if not properly understood, will not be silenced by force.

We cannot ignore the fact that in cities human trafficking, the narcotics trade, the abuse and exploitation of minors, the abandonment of the elderly and infirm, and various forms of corruption and criminal activity take place. At the same time, what could be significant places of encounter and solidarity often become places of isolation and mutual distrust. Houses and neighbourhoods are more often built to isolate and protect than to connect and integrate. The proclamation of the Gospel will be a basis for restoring the dignity of human life in these contexts, for Jesus desires to pour out an abundance of life upon our cities (cf. John 10:10). The unified and complete sense of human life that the Gospel proposes is the best remedy for the ills of our cities, even though we have to realize that a uniform and rigid program of evangelization is not suited to this complex reality. But to live our human life to the fullest and to meet every challenge as a leaven of Gospel witness in every culture and in every city will make us better Christians and bear fruit in our cities.

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7 Cf. Evangelii Gaudium, Propositio 25.
I will hear what God the Lord will speak: for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints.
(Ps 85:9)

Between the twin crags of nationalism and internationalism ecumenical Christendom calls upon her Lord and asks his guidance. Nationalism and internationalism have to do with political necessities and possibilities. The ecumenical Church, however, does not concern itself with these things, but with the commandments of God, and regardless of consequences it transmits these commandments to the world.

Our task as theologians, accordingly, consists only in accepting this commandment as a binding one, not as a question open to discussion. Peace on earth is not a problem, but a commandment given at Christ’s coming. There are two ways of reacting to this command from God: the unconditional, blind obedience of action, or the hypocritical question of the Serpent: “Yea, hath God said...?” This question is the mortal enemy of obedience, and therefore the mortal enemy of all real peace. “Hath God not said...? Has God not understood human nature Well enough to know that wars must occur in this world, like laws of nature? Must God not have meant that we should talk about peace, to be sure, but that it is not to be literally translated into action? Must God not really have said that we should work for peace, of course, but also make ready tanks and poison gas for security?” And then perhaps the most serious question: “Did God say you should not protect your own people? Did God say you should leave your own a prey to the enemy?”

No, God did not say all that. What He has said is that there shall be peace among men—that we shall obey Him without further question, that is what He means. He who questions the commandment of God before obeying has already denied Him.

There shall be peace because of the Church of Christ, for the sake of which the world exists. And this Church of Christ lives at one and the same time in all peoples, yet beyond all boundaries, whether national, political, social, or racial. And the brothers who make up this Church are bound together, through the commandment of the one Lord Christ, whose Word they hear, more inseparably than men are bound by all the ties of common history, of blood, of class and of language. All these ties, which are part of our world, are valid ties, not indifferent; but in the presence of Christ they are not ultimate bonds. For the members of the ecumenical Church, in so far as they hold to Christ, His word, his commandment of peace is more holy, more inviolable than the most revered words and works of the natural world. For they know that whose is not able to hate father and mother for His sake is not worthy of Him, and lies if he calls himself after Christ’s name. These brothers in Christ obey His word; they do not doubt or question, but keep His commandment of peace. They are not ashamed, in defiance of the world, even to speak of eternal peace. They cannot take up arms against Christ himself—yet this is what they do if they take up arms against one another! Even in anguish and distress of conscience there is for them no escape from the commandment of Christ that there shall be peace.

How does peace come about? Through a system of political treaties? Through the investment of international capital in different countries? Through the big banks, through money? Or through universal Peaceful rearmament in order to guarantee peace? Through none of these, for
the single reason that in all of them peace is confused with safety. There is no way to peace along the way of safety. For peace must be dared. It is the great venture. It can never be made safe. Peace is the opposite of security. To demand guarantees is to mistrust, and this mistrust in turn brings forth war. To look for guarantees is to want to protect oneself. Peace means to give oneself altogether to the law of God, wanting no security, but in faith and obedience laying the destiny of the nations in the hand of Almighty God, not trying to direct it for selfish purposes. Battles are won, not with weapons, but with God. They are won where the way leads to the cross. Which of us can say he knows what it might mean for the world if one nation should meet the aggressor, not with weapons in hand, but praying, defenceless, and for that very reason protected by “a bulwark never failing”?1

Once again, how will peace come? Who will call us to peace so that the world will hear, will have to hear? so that all peoples may rejoice? The individual Christian cannot do it. When all around are silent, he can indeed raise his voice and bear witness, but the powers of this world stride over him without a word. The individual church, too, can witness and suffer—oh, if it only would! — but it also is suffocated by the power of hate. Only the one great Ecumenical Council of the Holy Church of Christ over all the world can speak out so that the world, thought it gnash its teeth, will have to hear, so that the peoples will rejoice because the Church of Christ in the name of Christ has taken the weapons from the hands of their sons, forbidden war, and proclaimed the peace of Christ against the raging world.

Why do we fear the fury of the world powers? Why don’t we take the power from them and give it back to Christ? We can still do it today. The Ecumenical Council is in session; it can send out to all believers this radical call to peace. The nations are waiting for it in the East and in the West. Must we be put to shame by non-Christian peoples in the East? Shall we desert the individuals who are risking their lives for this message? The hour is late. The world is choked with weapons, and dreadful is the distrust which looks out of all men’s eyes. The trumpets of war may blow tomorrow. For what are we waiting? Do we want to become involved in this guilt as never before?

What use to me are crown, land, folk and fame?
They cannot cheer my breast.
War’s in the land, alas, and on my name
I pray no guilt may rest”
(M. Claudius)2

We want to give the world a whole word, not a half word—a courageous word, a Christian word. We want to pray that this word may be given us, today. Who knows if we shall see each other again another year?

1 Allusion to Martin Luther’s hymn ‘A mighty fortress is our God...’.
2 Matthias Claudius (1740–1815) was a German theologian, journalist and poet.
Reforming Theology

Introduction

Benjamin Simon

“Whenever you find yourself on the side of the majority it is time to reform”—with that provoking quotation from Mark Twain, the American author, which was much known for his sharp-tongued critique of American society, I would like to introduce the chapter on Reforming Theology.

If we look at Jesus in the New Testament, was he member of the majority class? Did he belong to a ‘higher cast’ ruling over others? Didn't he say that he was called to the sick and not to the healthy (majority)? He was everything else but one who belonged to the majority. The Gospel and all its implications does not have its roots in mainstream and conventional settings. It is rather a message coming from the disregarded, the downtrodden and those living at the margins. In recent times this idea of having a mission (even) from the margins was properly elaborated in the WCC-Document ‘Together towards Life,’ published in 2012. In general, we can maintain that the authors of the biblical texts have been at the margins of their societies and therefore, that biblical texts and the concomitant theology should be seen as a life-changing and reforming contributions to situations of encounter and life’s circumstances.

Nevertheless, at many times in Church history, theology has become a ‘structural weapon,’ which has been misused by ruling powers and clerks, who did not take prophetic words seriously, like e.g., the fourth article of the Barmen Declaration of 1934: “The various offices in the church do not establish a dominion of some over the others; on the contrary, they are for the exercise of the ministry entrusted to and enjoined upon the whole congregation.”

Theology and theologians always need to be questioned and, in due time, to be reformed. Here I am not making allusion only on the Reformation of the year 1517. Changes and reforms took place as much in the Orthodox tradition as in the Second Vatican Council. Reformation is rather an issue which occurs in all denominations. The Ghanaian Theologian Kwabena Asamoah calls the ecclesial movement of African Initiated/Independent Churches a ‘new form of the reformation’. Reformation is not an exclusively historical term, but rather a qualitative term, which describes the contextual ability of a church. Coming back to the Gospel of Jesus it is obvious that the stories about him have been written from four different perspectives. The four Evangelists where all looking through their culturally-shaped glasses and therefore reported from their diverse perspectives.

If we talk about ‘Reforming Theology’ it can be understood in two ways: On the one hand, it’s the theology which is itself changing its surroundings, and on the other hand, it concerns a theology, which is in need of changing.

Following the first understanding, a ‘Reforming Theology’ is changing the situation and the con-
Reforming Theology

dition, which it encounters. Already in the incarnation God has sought a radical change, which resulted in a transformation of humanity. A ‘Reforming Theology’ needs to speak into the context of the people, it needs to find the appropriate language (sometimes ‘God speaks dialect...’) to share the Good News, so that it may become existential and life-changing. A changing and reforming theology is occurring more and more through people from the global south, coming to the Western world and through means of immigration, which is a phenomenon which will have to be considered much more in the future, due to more mobility, increasing conflicts and climate changes. In this changing world, the younger generation will be a crucial player, which needs to be heard already in today’s theologies and politics (it is a great mistake to talk always about ‘the next generation’!).

The second way of understanding ‘Reforming Theology’ leads us to the fact that theology needs always to be questioned and then reformed. In a globalised world, the challenges faced are constantly changing and varying. A *theologia perennis*, which rest upon the insights and perceptions of former centuries, would not fulfil the need for theological contributions today. With the large variety of theologies found in World Christianity it is important that Christians find a way of speaking to the world with one voice in order to be recognised and accepted as a significant global player—not only in religious and political but also in economical, developmental and environmental issues. To reach that aim, increasing the amount of institutions teaching ecumenical theological education or theological education in an ecumenical setting would be helpful and strongly recommended. Furthermore, curricula in theological education should more effectively include contemporary concerns, including dialogue between religions, sustainable development and topics on inclusivity.

Reforming Theology—with its dual implications—needs to be taken seriously so that we do not restrain ourselves to a Church remaining in a comfort zone but that we become a Church on the move, open for creative changes, fresh theologies and needed reforms.

In this chapter, you will first read a text from the famous Roman Catholic Theologian Cardinal Kasper on the ‘Fundamentals of Christian Faith.’ Kasper states clearly that the Trinitarian and the Christological confession of the Bible and the ancient Church remain as common basis of the Ecumenical movement. To demonstrate his thesis, he stresses four bilateral dialogues of the Roman-Catholics with the Lutherans, the Reformed, the Anglicans and the Methodists and shows the importance of the creeds.

With the subsequent article by Robert Schreiter on ‘The Future of Contextual Theology in Europe,’ it becomes clear that not only Scripture and tradition, but also the context is of eminent importance when talking about theology—and this also applies in Europe. Schreiter stresses three factors clearing the way for contextual theologies in Europe: The advent of theological methods using social sciences, the perceived distance between academic theology and a secularised society, and the changes, which the world and western societies are undergoing. Furthermore, he investigates three areas: secularization, de-Christianisation and the multicultural character of societies, to explore the significant challenges for contextualization.

With the contribution by Allan H. Anderson on the influence of ‘Pentecostalism and the Transformation of World Christianity’ we added an element, which makes clear the reasons for the emergence and growth of Pentecostalism. One of the main reasons for the growth of Pentecostalism, according to Anderson, is its ability to adapt itself to different cultures and societies and to be able to give contextualised expressions to Christianity.
Paul D. Murray introduces a new strategy in Christian ecumenism when he talks about ‘Introducing Receptive Ecumenism.’ Because of the broken witness the Christian churches express to the world, this approach invites us to move from asking how other traditions need to change, and it focusses instead on our own difficulties and tensions—taking the lived realities seriously. Therefore, Receptive Ecumenism represents an ecumenism showing ‘our wounds to each other.’

The former General-Secretary of the CEC Guy Liagre in his article on ‘Ecumenical Creeds and denominational Confessions in the Reformed tradition,’ is of the opinion that religious convictions embodied in Christian doctrines and traditions such as creeds and confessions will decline. Therefore, he stresses the need for fundamental hermeneutical reflections upon doctrines and traditions. Liagre demonstrates the difference which lies between confessions and creeds and reveals in the degree to which the reformed tradition’s confessions are always to be reformed and contextualised.

Norbert Hintersteiner, a Catholic missiologist, contributes ‘Translating God’s—From World Mission to Interreligious Witness’ on the question of intercultural challenges that Christianity is undergoing through its shift to the Global South. He focuses on mission as cross-cultural translation as well as intercultural and interfaith witness. The Indian context serves him as a platform to describe what the ‘translation of Christianity’ looks like. Hintersteiner completes his article by asking: what relationship do the described approaches to missiology have with Roman-Catholic missiology?

In ‘Theology and Interreligious Dialogue in the Postmodern Age’ the famous Roman-Catholic Theologian Peter Phan states clearly that coming from Vatican II Jewish and Muslim Religions may be ways of salvation and that religious pluralism is part of God’s providential plan. This has its genesis in the fact that the “God Christians believe in is not a solitary monad but a koinonia of three divine persons”. The author concludes that this position is especially helpful in a postmodern time where cultural, socio-political and religious diversities become increasingly true.

Stephen M. Garrett’s contribution focusses on the friendship of the two famous theologians, Karl Barth and Hans Urs von Balthasar, from which we learn that ecumenical discourse is performative, not merely cognitive. Garrett highlights there the biographies, stating that the two, who met the first time in 1940, placed Christ at the centre of their theology—nevertheless, they had a quite tumultuous friendship. The author concludes that for both protagonists, ecumenical encounters are effectual when Christ is the telos of their conversations and when the “right kinds of questions are posed rather than seeking the right kind of answer.”

In ‘Biblical Interpretation as Political Practice’ Ched Myers stresses socio-political hermeneutics and liberation theology mainly in the North American context. He analyses that there have been always two Americas—the one of inclusion and the one of exclusion—and that an enormous corpus of contemporary political hermeneutics does exist. By looking at different biblical texts from the Old and New Testament, Myers uses this methodology and comes to the conclusion that Bible study is necessary if we are to recover the church as a popular movement for humanization, compassion and justice.

Pawel A. Gajewski in his contribution on ‘Migrating Dogmatics and the Interreligious Dialogue’ analyses—using systematic theological approaches, among others—the move from a more or less normative statement in Adolf Harnack’s theology to an interreligious perspective of Hans-Martin Barth, which shows that Christian dogma and inter-religious dialogue should not be necessarily opposing positions. He comes to
the conclusion that everyone involved in dialogue should follow three rules: 1) knowing their doctrinal positions perfectly, 2) being able to talk to the present partner clearly and fully, and 3) that the parties are ready to reconsider their positions.

Jonathan Seiling, coming from the Mennonite tradition, explores the Lutheran-Mennonite dialogues by demonstrating their two major differences and their attempt at a healing of memories. Nevertheless, upon analysing the three phases of dialogues in different contexts, he presents their outcomes and ways of reconciliation, noting that until recently there was little clarity among "Mennonites globally as to the practice of accepting infant-baptised Christians as members without an adult (re-) baptism."

In her very existentially-engaged article about ‘Theology after Gulag’ Katya Tolstaya raises the question whether humans are made in God’s image, or in a wolf’s image. Her goal is to bring a new perspective to discussions on evil and the presence of God in extreme, dehumanized situations. Her challenging standpoint is the loss of everything human in humanity, therefore the loss of the *imago Dei*. In this way, she looks critically at the situation in Russia and the position of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Heleen Zorgdrager in her contribution on ‘Does Hope Need Heroes?’ focuses on a feminist political theology in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian Conflict by analysing the post-Maidan context and the role that churches play, especially towards women. In a concluding part Zorgdrager suggests six areas where a feminist public theology could contribute to the challenging situation in the Ukraine and Russia.

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### Fundamentals of Our Common Faith

#### Jesus Christ and the Holy Trinity

*Walter Kasper*

The Reformers of the sixteenth century did not intend to create a new Church, but sought rather to remain in the Tradition of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church through the ages. They officially endorsed the creedal statements of the ancient Church, and accepted the Trinitarian and the Christological confessions as expressed in these creedal statements. Thus the Trinitarian

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1 For example, the Augsburg Confession states, “The churches among us teach with complete unanimity that the decree of the Council of Nicea... is true and is to be believed without any doubt” (*The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, eds. Robert Kolb, Timothy J. Wengert (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2000), 37, Art. 1). In the Smalkald Articles Luther says the "lofty articles of the divine Majesty (viz. Trinity and Incarnation) are not matters of dispute or conflict" (*Book of Concord*, 300). In the Formula of Concord (1577), Lutherans pledge themselves to hold and defend against contrary teachings the Apostles’ Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed (*Book of Concord*, 486). In his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, John Calvin expounds on the Apostles’ Creed and extensively cites the early Church Fathers in defence of his theological treatise. Calvin’s theology connects the believer directly to God in faith, rather than through the historical Church: “a firm and certain knowledge of God’s benevolence towards us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts through the Holy Spirit.” *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 486.)
and Christological confession of the Bible and the ancient Church remained as common basis in spite of all other divisions.

But the disputes during the Reformation period gave rise on each side to serious doubts whether the Gospel of Jesus Christ was properly understood by their opponents, and given its rightful place at the centre of Christian proclamation and life. The Protestant Reformers, for example, argued that the theology and praxis of indulgences contradicted the fundamental belief that we have been justified by God’s grace, and they felt therefore that the Gospel was being distorted. Polemics proliferated especially over the questions of justification, the sacrificial character of the mass, and the papacy. Catholics saw in the rejection of these doctrines a rejection of apostolic faith handed down by the Tradition of the Church through the ages. In such an atmosphere, the apostolic heritage shared by all was frequently overshadowed, overlooked and forgotten.

In the ecumenical movement the common Trinitarian and Christological heritage became Fundamental for seeking reconciliation among divided Christian communities. It had been developing through the establishment and self-understanding of the World Council of Churches (WCC). And subsequently through the achievements of the Second Vatican Council. The 1948 Assembly of the WCC spoke of itself as “a fellowship which seeks to express that unity in Christ already given to us and to prepare the way for a much fuller and much deeper expression of that unity”. This statement was deepened by the New Delhi formulation of 1961, which spoke of “a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the scriptures, and therefore seek to fulfil together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.”

The Second Vatican Council’s Decree on Ecumenism spoke of the movement towards the restoration of unity among all Christians as being “fostered by the grace of the Holy Spirit”, and echoed affirmingly the New Delhi text in stating: “Taking part in this movement, which is called ecumenical, are those who invoke the Triune God and confess Jesus as Lord and Saviour” (UR 1). It is significant that the Apostles’ and Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creeds, which have been used in the Week of Prayer materials prepared annually by the Catholic Church and the Faith and Order Commission of the WCC over the past 40 years, are understood as commonly held expressions of Christian faith.

The Anglican position is set forth in Article VIII of the Thirty-Nine Articles: “The Three Creeds, Nicene Creed, Athanasius’s Creed, and that which is commonly called the Apostles Creed, ought thoroughly to be received and believed: For they may be proved by most certain warrants of Holy Scripture” (1571, reaffirmed 1662). The Lambeth Quadrilateral of 1888 (building on the resolution of the 1886 meeting of the House of Bishops of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America), identified the “Apostles’ Creeds as the Baptismal Symbol; and the Nicene Creed, as the sufficient statement of the Christian faith among the Articles which provide a basic reconciliation among Christians. Methodism arose as a renewal movement within Anglicanism, and John Wesley in general accepted the doctrine of the Church of England. He refers in a few places to Article VIII in the Church of England’s Thirty-Nine Articles, but never questions the dogmatic substance of the Athanasian Creed, although he is troubled by its anathemas (Ought We to Separate from the Church of England? 1754–55). The statement of Wesleyan Essentials of Christian Faith, adopted by the full World Methodist Council at Rio de Janeiro in 1996, includes the sentence "Methodists profess the ancient ecumenical creeds, the Apostles’ and the Nicene".

3 The faith and Order Commission of the WCC has continued to reflect on the basic aspects of faith. An important step towards a common expression of faith was the Study Paper Confessing the One Faith, Faith and Order Paper...
The four dialogues treated in this study have addressed the Trinitarian and Christological Foundations of Faith and the early creeds in the context of developing and setting forth a theological framework within which to address other points of difference. The dialogues demonstrate a high level of agreement on these basic issues, which is essential as we aim at restoring unity among Christians.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ

The Gospel of Jesus Christ, preached by the apostles, is the source of all saving truth and the basis of all ecumenical dialogue.

The Lutheran–Catholic dialogue affirms agreement on the gospel by stating, “What God has done for the salvation of the world in Jesus Christ is transmitted in the gospel and made present in the Holy Spirit. The gospel as proclamation of God’s saving action is therefore itself a saving event. ... Out of and in the service of the proclamation of the gospel, certain writings were composed which were later designated as the New Testament” (L–C, Malta, 16–17).

Shortly afterwards: “Lutherans and Catholics alike are convinced that the gospel is the foundation of Christian Freedom” (L–C, Malta, 30). “As affirmed in the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification, by our common faith in the gospel we hold to the heart of the New Testament witness to God’s saving action in Christ” (L–C, Apostolicity, 432; cf. JDDJ, 17).

The Reformed–Catholic dialogue begins its treatment of Christ’s relationship to the Church with a reference to the Gospel’s central content and a statement on the shared task that the gospel imposes. “The starting point of these discussions was the recognition that, in Jesus Christ, God has made joint cause with sinful humanity and aims at the renewal of the world. Therefore all those who are connected with the name of Jesus Christ have the joint task of bearing witness to this Gospel” (Ref I, 13). The same text describes the church-founding impact of the gospel: “Christ sends us into the world with the message of new life and a new common life in fellowship with him. In our speaking and acting he bears witness to himself. His Gospel gathers, protects and maintains the koinonia of his disciples as a sign and beginning of his kingdom” (Ref I, 75). This dialogue speaks of the gospel among the shared concerns basic to the Lutheran and Reformed churches, namely, “to hear and proclaim the message of the gospel as the one word of God which alone brings authentic faith into being” (Ref II, 18; cf. 68). Regarding Jesus crucified and raised: “This is the news, still surprising and overwhelming, which constitutes the gospel; of this the church is the beneficiary and herald.” (Ref II, 70).

The Anglican–Catholic dialogue describes the gospel as ‘the good news of salvation,’ while linking it to faith in Jesus to the earliest Christian preaching and to the New Testament. “Through the gift of the Spirit the apostolic community

153 (Geneva 1999). In the United States, this question was dealt with in the Lutheran–Catholic dialogue The Status of the Nicene Creed as Dogma of the Church (Lutheran and Catholics in dialogue I; Augsburg/Minneapolis 1965), and in the German dialogue in Glaubensbekenntnis und Kirchengemeinschaft. Modell des Konzils von Konstantinopel (381), ed. K. Lehmann and W. Pannenberg, Dialog der Kirchen 1 (Freiburg i. Br.: Herder, 1982).


came to recognize in the words and deeds of Jesus the saving activity of God and their mission to proclaim to all men the good news of salvation. Therefore they preached Jesus through whom God has spoken finally to men. Assisted by the Holy Spirit they transmitted what they had heard and seen of the life and words of Jesus and their interpretation of his redemptive work. Consequently the inspired documents in which this is related came to be accepted by the Church as a normative record of the authentic foundation of the faith” (ARCIC Authority I, 2).

The Methodist–Catholic dialogue states, “God has spoken definitively to us in the Son, so much so that he is called God’s Word, the Word made flesh (John 1:1–18). When the apostles preached Christ, they proclaimed Christ crucified and risen. ... The person of Christ, his teaching and work for us: it was to all this that the apostles bore witness, for all this is God’s Word. As the gospel was preached by the apostles, the church was called together” (M–C Singapore, 9–12; cf. M–C Rio, 17–18). In the ongoing life of the Church the gospel sounds forth, for “[w]hen there is faithful witness to Jesus Christ, people hear through the words of witness the word of God and know through deeds of love the God of love. To such witness in word and deed all the faithful are called...” (M–C Rio, 23).

The Creeds

Dialogue reports show the importance of the creeds for separated Christians seeking to underline a commonly shared apostolic faith, either presenting the Nicene Creed or the Apostles’ Creed in full (e.g., M–C Singapore, 38, and IARCCUM GTUM, 11, respectively), or giving common testimony that the central aspects of faith are expressed in the creeds. Lutherans and Catholics affirm together, “The starting point is the common affirmation of the faith of the early church, formulated by the early councils in obedience to holy scripture and witnessed to in the creeds of the early church (Apostles’ Creed, Nicene Creed, Athanasian Creed)” (L–C Facing Unity, 57).

ARCIC affirms that “[i]n both our traditions the appeal to Scripture, to the creeds, to the Fathers and to the definitions of the councils of the early Church is regarded as basic and normative” (ARCIC Authority I, 18).

The Methodist–Catholic dialogue states, “The Christian Church professes the Apostles’ and the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creeds, which are Christological and Trinitarian. They name the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and they place the life, death and resurrection of the Word incarnate at the centre of the articles of faith. The creeds embody the biblical teaching about God and Christ. Their confession is incor-

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8 Anglican–Roman Catholic International Commission, Authority in the Church I, 1976 (ARCIC Authority I).
In some dialogues, in illustrating common ground on liturgy, partners bear witness to the importance of the creeds as a shared aspect of worship. Reformed and Catholics testify that “[a] common profession of faith, such as the Nicene Creed, reminds us of our belonging to the church of all times and of all places, now manifest in our own community” (Ref III, 166). Anglicans and Catholics affirm that “[i]n liturgical celebrations, we regularly make the same trinitarian profession of faith in the form of the Apostles’ Creed or the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed” (IARCCUM GTUM, 13; cf. Common Declaration Paul VI–Archbishop Coggan, 1977, 2). Methodists and Catholics state that “[t]he Nicene Creed, used by both Catholics and Methodists in their liturgy and teaching, is a comprehensive and authoritative statement of Christian faith...” (M–C Singapore, 38; cf. Rio, 112).

The reports, in referring to the Creeds in the life of the Church, also single out the creedal marks of the Church, namely that it is one, holy, catholic and apostolic. The Reformed–Catholic dialogue acknowledged succinctly that “ecclesiological insights can be gathered from [the Church fathers’ writings concerning] the nature, mission and structure of the church, and might be gathered together under the four headings appearing as its marks in the Creed: one, holy, catholic and apostolic” (Ref III, 49). ARCIC states that “[t]he Church points to its source and mission when it confesses in the Creed ‘We believe in one holy, catholic and apostolic Church’” (ARCIC Church, 25).

In summary, the Nicene–Constantinopolitan Creed and the Apostles’ Creed are seen, in this ecumenical context, as essential expressions which formulate the significant degree of the one apostolic faith which Christians share, and have always shared, despite their divisions.

The Holy Trinity

The Holy Trinity as principle of communion

The dialogues generally take the Trinitarian foundations of Christian faith as given, but nonetheless offer a consistent witness to the richness of that shared Trinitarian faith.

The Lutheran–Catholic dialogue declares, “Together we confess the faith in the Triune God and the saving work of God through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit, which binds all Christendom together (Confessio Augustana [CA] Art. I and III). Through all the disputes and differences of the sixteenth century, Lutheran and Catholic Christians remained one in this central and most important truth of the Christian faith” (L–C Christ, 13).

This profession of faith in the Trinity is possible because of our encounter with the life and teaching, death and resurrection of Christ, and because of the sending of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. The Reformed–Catholic dialogue

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15 International Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, The Church as Community of Common Witness to the Kingdom of God, 2007 (Ref III).
16 Anglican–Roman Catholic International Commission, Church as Communion, 1990 (ARCIC Church).
states. “The work of Jesus, the Son, reveals to us the role of the Spirit of God who is common to him and to the Father: it reveals... that God is triune” (Ref II, 74). Similarly, the Methodist–Catholic dialogue states, “It is primarily through the missions of the Son in the Incarnation and of the Spirit after the resurrection in the Foundation and life of the Church that we come to know that the one God is Trinity and are led into some understanding of the work of the three Persons through God’s saving acts in history” (M–C Honolulu, 11; cf. Rio, 108).

The documents ponder the inner life of the Trinity. “The mystery of the divine life cannot be captured by human thought and language, but in speaking of God as Trinity in Unity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we are affirming that the Being of God is a unity of self-communication and interdependent relationships” (ARCIC Life in Christ, 7; cf. IARCCUM GTUM, 14). The Methodist–Catholic dialogue speaks of “the invisible koinonia that is the life of the Holy Trinity”, and elsewhere, of “the exchange of love that is the life of the blessed Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit” (M–C Seoul, 60 and Singapore, 53; cf. ARCIC Church, 15). The inner life of the Trinity—the life of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit—is indeed “the life God wills to share with all people” (ARCIC Church, 3). The Triune God is the author of life in all its fullness (ARCIC Gift, 7). He “is one in the communion of three Persons; perfect in holy love; comprehensive in his reconciling purpose; and utterly generous in the sending of the Son and the Holy Spirit” (M–C Seoul, 65, citing Called to Love and Praise, 2.4).

The Trinity calls the Church into being for the redemption of humankind; each of the dialogues reflects on this mystery in related ways. The Lutheran–Catholic dialogue notes. “According to the witness of the New Testament, our salvation, the Justification of sinners and the existence of the church are indissolubly linked with the triune God and are founded in him alone” (L–C Church and Justification, 6).22 The mystery of the Trinity determines and permeates Jesus whole work (cf. L–C Church and Justification, 12), and the unity he desires for his disciples is a unity “created in the image and likeness of the Triune God” (L–C Ways, 44).23 The Reformed–Catholic dialogue speaks of the movement in which the eternal Father, “for Christ’s sake and through him, accepts and recreates the lost world in the Holy Spirit” (Ref I, 81). ARCIC notes, “The will of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is to reconcile to himself all that he has created and sustains, to set Free the creation from its bondage to decay, and to draw all humanity into communion with himself” (ARCIC Salvation, 1).24 The biblical witness has led the Church to the conviction that Father and Son and Spirit were giving themselves for the redemption of us all” (M–C Rio, 25; cf. ARCTIC Church, 16; Life in Christ, 4). The Methodist–Catholic dialogue speaks at length of the mystery of the Holy Trinity being at the heart of the mystery of the Church and at the foundation of its mission. The Church springs from an initiative by the Holy Trinity” (M–C Seoul, 52); its “deepest and hidden reality, the mystery that lies at the heart of its nature and mission”, is “the invisible presence of the Triune God, the one God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the God who

22 Joint Evangelical-Lutheran–Roman Catholic Commission, Church and Justification—Understanding the Church in the Light of the Doctrine of the Justification, 1993 (L–C Church and Justification).
is Holy Love” (M–C Seoul, 49). “Communion with the Triune God is the very life of the Church; communion with the mission of God’s Son and Spirit is the very mission of the Church” (M–C Seoul, 74; cf. 51; cf. also Rio, 73; Singapore, 9; L–C Church and Justification, 5, 48).

The Holy Trinity in salvation history

a) The Father: source of salvation history

The Lutheran-Catholic dialogue states, “Like every good gift, unity also comes from the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit. The will and work of the Father is ‘in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him’ (Eph 1:10). In the Father is the origin of all the Son does for unity” (L–C Ways, 9). Testimony is given that “[t]he Father is the absolutely primary principle for he is ‘source, guide and goal of all that is’ (Rom 11:36; cf. 1 Cor 8:6)” (Ref I, 46). “God is present in the world as its Creator, Sustainer, Lord of history who rules all things as Loving Father” (Ref I, 43). “The Creator of the world... through the revelation of his will... leads mankind onto the road of salvation and in Jesus Christ offers it the gift of final redemption and participation in His divine life and thus in His freedom” (Ref I, 51). “To bring us to union with himself, the Father sent into the world Jesus Christ, his only Son, in whom all things were created” (ARCIC Salvation, 1). “The Father’s overflowing love created humanity for communion with himself and that same creative love gathers together the Followers of his Son into the visible community of the Church. ... By the unitive power of his Spirit of love, the Father draws us into a communion of life with his own beloved Son... All of this is the Fruit of the outpouring of the Father’s creative and gathering love” (M–C Seoul, 54; cf. Rio, 73, 108; Singapore, 7).

Reports testify to our jointly held belief that the Father is the source of the procession of the other persons of the Trinity.25 According to the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification, “The Father sent his Son into the world to save sinners. The foundation and presupposition of justification is the incarnation, death and resurrection of Christ. Justification thus means that Christ himself is our righteousness, in which we share through the Holy Spirit in accord with the will of the Father” (L–C JDDJ, 15). Furthermore, “Christ who is Lord of all and active in creation points to God the Father who, in the Spirit, leads and guides history” (Ref I, 45). ARCIC states that “Jesus spoke and acted with authority because of his perfect communion with the Father. His authority came from the Father (cf. Matt 11:27; John 14:10–12)” (ARCIC Gift, 9). According to the Methodist–Catholic dialogue. “The two divine missions—the sending of the Son and of the Spirit by the Father—are extensions in our world of time of the two eternal processions in the Trinity” (M–C Singapore, 7). “The Father is the source and fountainhead... Within the Godhead the Son and the Spirit proceed from the unoriginated Father” (M–C Honolulu, 10).

b) Jesus Christ: the Incarnate Word, Lord and Saviour

It is basic for the search for unity that We speak together in the dialogues about Jesus Christ proclaiming both his divine and human natures and his saving activity. “A fundamental unity in faith exists wherever church and church communities confess Jesus Christ as true God and true man and as only mediator of salvation according to the scriptures to the glory of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit” (L–C Ways, 26).

In the dialogues, the participants confess that Jesus Christ is sent by the Father on a saving mission. “The purpose of the mystery of Christ himself is to make known... the infinite wisdom of God” (Ref I, 46) Jesus was “sent among us by god the Father to make known and to bring to completion the divine’ purpose of salvation, the ‘mystery of Christ’ hitherto hidden and ‘now revealed in the Spirit’ (Col 1:26 and Eph 3:5)” (M–C Singapore, 1; cf. ARCIC Church, 1; Salvation, 1; M–C Singapore 1, Seoul 55)

Christ is the Son of the Father “in whom all things were created, he is the image of the invisible God” (ARCIC Salvation, 1). He is God’s Son “born of a woman” (ARCIC Church, 8). He took flesh “so that we in turn might share the divine nature and so reflect the glory of God” (ARCIC Salvation, 1; cf. IARRCUM GTUM, 13). He “is God Incarnate. ‘God from God. light from light, true God from true God, of one being with the Father’” (M–C Seoul, 55 citing the Nicene–Constantinopolitan creed).

Christ is the Incarnate Word; he communicates himself to us “in the whole reality of his divinity and humanity—body mind and will, and at the same time remains the Son who is in the Father as the Father is in him” (Ref I, 83). He is “the Second person of the Trinity who has taken flesh” (M–C Brighton, 8). He is the eternal Logos or Word who is God from all eternity and who became flesh and lived among us (cf. John 1:1, 14) (M–C Seoul, 55).

We proclaim together that Jesus Christ is true God and true man. “The basic work of unification occurs in the incarnation of the Son of God, in whom divinity and humanity are inseparably united in one person. Everything Jesus Christ says, does and suffers lives from this unity and has as its aim ‘that all may be one’ (John 17:21)” (L–C Ways, 10). Though “he was in the form of God... [he] emptied himself... being born in the likeness of the church of every age, we confess Jesus Christ as at once true God and true human being, at once one with God and joined in solidarity with humankind” (Ref II, 73). “He took flesh so that We in turn might share the divine nature and so reflect the glory of God” (ARCIC Salvation, 1).

**Jesus Christ is Lord and Saviour.** The dialogues repeatedly confess that in the death and resurrection of Christ, God has brought salvation. “Christ’s death on the cross and his resurrection is the climax of God’s saving act for the redemption of the whole world. By his death Christ offered himself once for all in obedience to the Father for the sins of the world (Heb 9:26–28; 10:11f)” (L–C Ministry, 6; cf. Ways, 10, 11; Christ, 15, Church and Justification, 11; M–C Nairobi, 2). The death and resurrection of Christ is the event which reveals who God is, who we are and who Christ is as mediator between God and humankind” (Ref II, 68). Thus, Through Christ’s life, death and resurrection, the mystery of God’s love is revealed. we are saved from the powers of evil, sin and death, and we receive a share in the life of God. All of this is pure unmerited gift” (ARCIC Salvation, 1; cf. Eucharist, 5). It is “the cross and resurrection of Christ that supremely reveal him to us, achieving his purpose and making him our Savior” (M–C Singapore, 10).

Jesus Christ is the One Mediator who brings reconciliation between God and humanity. ”Jesus Christ is the only mediator between God and human beings (1 Tim 2:5). Through Christ ‘the
world is reconciled to the Father in the communion of the Holy Spirit’” (L–C Ministry, 6 citing Accra, 5). “We confess together that Christ, established as mediator, achieves our reconciliation in all its dimensions: God reconciling humanity; human beings reconciled with each other; and humanity reconciled with God” (Ref II, 71; cf. 70). Hence, because Christ is the one in whom and through whom all things are created and reconciled, the proper relationship between humanity and the rest of creation is restored and renewed in him (Col 1:15–20, Gal 3:27–29; Col 3:11)” (ARCIC Church, 9; cf. 15, 22; Life in Christ, 4; Gift, 9; IARCCUM GTUM, 13; L–C Ways, 9).

The dialogues affirm the uniqueness of Christ. “Jesus Christ is God’s definitive and personal word of grace, transcending God’s manifestation of himself through Moses and the prophets” (L–C Apostolicity, 432). “As a result of Christ’s exaltation, his saving act is valid and effective for the whole of humankind. Jesus Christ is therefore the high priest not just once, but once for all, who intercedes for his flock before the Father for all time (Heb 7:25)” (L–C Ministry, 7) “We confess together that just as God is unique, the Mediator and Reconciler between God and humankind is unique and that the Fullness of reconciliation is entire and perfect in him. Nothing and nobody could replace or duplicate, complete or in any way add to the unique mediation accomplished ‘once for all’ (Heb 9:12) by Christ, ‘mediator of a new covenant’ (Heb 9:15; cf. 8:6 and 12:24)” (Ref II, 72). “In the Son, God has spoken definitively to us: the Son who is so completely the expression of his heavenly Father that he is called God’s Word (John 1:1–18)” (M–C Singapore, 9; cf. L–C Church and Justification, 10, 11, 19; Christ, 17; Malta, 48; Ministry, 6)

Confession of Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. “[Jesus the Christ’ or ‘Jesus the Lord’ is the original Form of the Christian confession of faith. The author of this confession, through which the church as community becomes heard in the world, is the Holy Spirit, in whose power Christ is known as the Lord (1 Cor 12:3), and God the Father, who by his revelation gives us Faith in the Messiah and Son (cf. Matt 16:17)” (L–C Church and Justification, 11). “Thus, in the light of Jesus’ resurrection and exaltation Christians have confessed that he has been made Christ and Lord (cf. Acts 2:36)” (Ref II, 73; cf. Ref I, 77).

“When we confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. We praise and glorify God the Father, whose purpose for creation and salvation is realized in the Son, whom he sent to redeem us and to prepare a people for himself by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit” (ARCIC Salvation, 9; cf. Authority I, 1). “It is the Cross and Resurrection of Christ that supremely reveal him to us, achieving his purpose and making him our Savior” (M–C Singapore, 10; cf. Rio, 28 and Denver, 56).

It is Jesus Christ the Incarnate Word who calls the Church into being. “It is the will of God For the whole creation that all things should be brought to ultimate unity and communion in Christ (Eph 1:10; Col 1:19–20)” (ARCIC Church, 15; cf. 22). “The Church takes its shape from the Incarnation from which it originated and the Eucharistic action by which its life is constantly being renewed” (M–C Nairobi, 10). “Given the way in which, according to the Scriptures, God has entered human history, the Church’s doctrine is centred on Christ. It flows from the identification of Jesus of Nazareth as the Savior expected by Israel, the people of God whose story is told in the Bible” (M–C Brighton, 8; cf. Seoul, 67).
c) The Holy Spirit: Lord and giver of life

The Holy Spirit is at once “the bond of unity between Father and Son” (L–C Ways, 12; italics W.K.) and the bond of communion “uniting individual Christians to Christ and to one another” (M–C Seoul, 58). “The Spirit of God is poured into the hearts of believers—the Spirit of adoption, who makes us sons and daughters of God. ... Through baptism we are united with Christ in his death and resurrection, we are by the power of the Spirit made members of one body, and together we participate in the life of God” (ARCIC Salvation, 1). The Holy Spirit “unit(es) local church communities with each other in the one Church of Christ. Within the Church, the Spirit is the bond of communion and connection across both space and time” (M–C Seoul, 58; cf. 59).

“The Holy Spirit is present and active throughout the history of Salvation” (Ref II, 75; italics W.K.). As professed in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, we jointly affirm that the Holy Spirit is “the Lord, the giver of life”. “In the beginning, God’s Spirit hovered over the waters of chaos to bring light and life, and was breathed into Adam, God’s human creation. The same Spirit inspired the prophets, promising a new beginning, a new creation, a new covenant. In that new beginning, the Holy Spirit overshadowed the Church, bringing the new life promised by Christ, the new Adam” (M–C Seoul, 58).

It is especially in the Christ event, and in the continuing life and witness of the body of Christ, that our dialogues have spoken of the presence and work of the Holy Spirit. As testified in the Gospels, most especially in the Gospel of Luke, “During his life on earth, Jesus Christ did all things in the Holy Spirit” (L–C Eucharist, 21; cf. M–C Singapore, 24). The Reformed–Catholic dialogue offers a helpful overview: “In the life of Jesus the Spirit intervenes at all the decisive moments... By the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, the Holy Spirit becomes the common gift of the Father and the Son to humanity” (Ref II, 75; cf. L–C Eucharist, 21 and M–C Singapore, 23–26).

Through the power of the Holy Spirit, the Christian community connects to and is grounded in the paschal mystery and the descent of the Holy Spirit on Jesus’ disciples at Pentecost (cf. L–C Ways, 12; M–C Singapore, 26; Ref II, 76, 84; AR-CIC Authority I Elucidation, 2).31 “It was in the power of the Spirit that he offered himself as sacrifice (Heb 9:14) and conquered sin and death and rose from the tomb, and lives in the midst of his Pentecost community. Through and in the Spirit Christians are to remain bound to Christ and continue his work” (L–C Eucharist, 21). “The Spirit is the power of living communion who makes possible our participation here and now in the saving events of the life, death and rising of Christ” (M–C Seoul, 83).

“In Christ, the Holy Spirit renews our hearts and equips and calls us to good works (JDDJ, 15)” (L–C Apostolicity, 146). “Through the Holy Spirit we become a ‘new generation’ in Christ (2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15)” (L–C Ministry, 8). “The Spirit brings newness of life in Christ to the baptized person” (Ref III, 128). While the Spirit blows where he wills. working “in such a way as to include people, both within and outside of the church, making use of whatever capacities and limitations they have”, the Holy Spirit continues to guide the Church through history (Ref III, 195: cf. 136), “build[ing] up the church by bestowing upon it different gifts (charismata) for the benefit of the whole body” (Ref III, 128). Through the “discernment of spirits”, the Holy Spirit leads the Christian community to “new insights into the Christ event and new perspectives to the wider community, inviting it to encounter God anew and to profess anew its faith” (Ref III, 125). The Spirit “conforms believers to the image of Christ. Living in the presence of the risen Lord, we know by

31 Anglican–Roman Catholic International Commission, Elucidations on Authority in the Church, 1981 (ARCIC Authority I Elucidation).
Faith the transforming power of the Holy Spirit and are enabled to live as grateful children of the Father” (M–C Rio, 26). “The Spirit is the invisible thread running through the work of the Church in the world, enabling our minds to hear and receive the Word, and giving us tongues to speak the Word (John 14:26; 16:13–14; Acts 4:31)” (M–C Singapore, 32; also cited in Seoul, 59). “The Holy Spirit is the Witness to Christ in the world (John 15:26), anointing all believers for the work of witness and the proclamation of the Good News of Jesus Christ” (M–C Seoul, 59; cf. Authority I Elucidation, 2). “Unchanging from generation to generation, the Spirit is the living continuity of the Church” (M–C Seoul, 59).

All of our dialogues speak of the Holy Spirit in relation to transformation and salvation. “[W]e confess together faith in the Holy Spirit, Lord and giver of life, who is bringing to the whole world the salvation gained by Jesus Christ” (L–C Apostolicity, 147). “The Spirit is a principal agent in establishing the kingdom and in guiding the church so that it can be a servant of God’s work in this process. ... It is the Spirit who plays the decisive role in leading believers to discern what they should do to serve the fuller realization of the kingdom in particular situations. ... Relating the kingdom instrumentality of the church to the Holy Spirit allows us to acknowledge together a more historical and dynamic vision of the church as ‘sacrament of the kingdom of God’” (Ref III, 195). “Participation in the glory of God, through the mediation of the Son, in the power of the Spirit is the Gospel hope (cf. 2 Cor 3:18; 4:4–6)” (ARCIC Mary, 52).32 “The Spirit is God’s Gift of Himself to Hs people. ... He is the love of God reaching out to humankind for its transformation and salvation” (M–C Honolulu, 11).33

Reflections

With joy and gratitude we can state that the reports of the four bilateral dialogues indicate a fundamental common understanding of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, common creedal faith, shared fundamental convictions about the Holy Trinity, and the salvific action of the persons of the Trinity. In sum, there is fundamental consensus about the Trinity—the core, the foundation, and the ultimate goal of Christian faith. There is also consensus on Jesus Christ. God’s incarnate Son, our Lord and Saviour. What we share in faith is therefore much more than what divides us. The common ground we share can be a solid basis to overcome the divisions between us.

While the dialogues have expressed a fundamental common understanding of the Gospel, longstanding differences concerning the Church require us to consider the relationship between Gospel and Church.34 This discrepancy applies also to the issue of the binding character of our common creeds. The notion of Sola Scriptura held that the Bible alone was considered the norm and rule of faith, while the creeds and dogmas were considered merely witnesses to the Faith, valid because and insofar as (quia et quatenus) they are in harmony with the Scriptures (Book of Concord, 769). They have to be tested against the Scriptures (cf. IARCCUM GTUM, 29). The Reformed tradition goes even further; unlike the Lutheran tradition, it does not have universal Confessional Writings, but adapts and renews its Confessions according to new circumstances, as in the Barmen Declaration (cf. Ref I, 37 and Ref II, 139).

Since the Enlightenment and the rise of historical methods of exegesis, not only have the Re-

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32 Anglican–Roman Catholic International Commission, Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ, 2004 (ARCIC Mary).
33 The relationship between the Holy Spirit, the Church and the kingdom of God is treated in greater detail in Walter Kasper, Harvesting the Fruits, 48–158.
34 Cf. ibid.
formers’ principles of the clarity and ‘self-inter-
pretation’ of the Scriptures been called into ques-
tion, but sometimes even the binding char-
acter of the Creeds. Even when a church affirms
the Creeds in principle and holds them as their
basis, sometimes individual elements of it (e.g.,
the Virgin Birth) are criticised. Some go even
Further and call into question the divinity or the
bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. Accordingly,
together we have to strengthen the basis of our
common Faith in the living triune God and give
witness to him. Without belief in the Godhead of
Jesus Christ, in the salvific meaning of the cross
and in the resurrection of Christ, all the rest is
without substance and foundation.

What we need first and foremost is basic ecu-
menism, i.e., renewed common comprehension
and appreciation of our common faith as ex-
pressed in our common creedal formulas. At this
point fundamental questions for future dialogue
arise. In particular, we meet here the questions
of theological hermeneutics and criteriology.35

The Future of Contextual Theology in Europe
Robert Schreiter

Contextual theologies first arose outside Europe
and North America in reaction to the universal-
izing theologies of the West. The thought forms
these universalizing theologies used, the meth-
ods employed, the questions raised, and the re-
curring preoccupations pursued were often per-
ceived as alien—even alienating—to the coun-
tries then known as the Third World. Not only
was so much of this theology foreign, it also
hinted of a continued intellectual domination,
even as political domination was being with-
drawn at the end of the colonial period. The
fledgling contextual theologies were frequently
dismissed in Western academic settings as fee-
ble and immature steps on the way to the de-
velopment of a real theology, that is, a critical,
rational theology that rose above the immediate
situation to speak universally of God and God’s
action in history.

By the beginning of the 1990s the tone in the
West was beginning to change. While it may still
be too early to chart the change accurately (for it
is by no means complete), some of the factors
are emerging with greater clarity. First of all, the
impressive developments in two forms of theol-
ogy that worked far more contextually and de-
ductively than standard academic theology—
namely, liberation and feminist theologies—in-
dicated that theological method might indeed be
taking another direction. A greater use of the so-
cial sciences, themselves largely empirically
based, pushed theology to remain more closely
grounded in the concrete and the particular.
Both liberation and feminist theologies were
also oriented to action rather than remaining
satisfied with intellectual clarification (although
the latter was an important moment in their
methods). This too set these theologies apart
from a theology more centered in justifying its
claims of knowledge vis-à-vis other cognitive
claims in modernity. All in all, an alternative to
how theology had been done in the universities
began to thematize itself, even as some academic

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circles began to incorporate these methods and insights into their own research.

A second factor was the perceived distance between academic theology and an increasingly secularized society. As Christianity continued to lose ground in both the public and the private sphere, church leaders, pastors, and missiologists started looking for ways that theology might engage the secular context more effectively. The efforts to wed theology and context outside the North Atlantic region were scrutinized closely for clues as to what might be done in Europe itself. When various schemes were proposed for addressing the dechristianization of Europe—the New Evangelization in the Roman Catholic Church, the ecumenical Missiology in Western Culture project, the Gospel and Our Culture Project of the British Council of Churches—inculturation and contextualization were invoked as constitutive parts of those efforts.

A third factor was how the world as well as Western societies were undergoing change. Globalization in all its aspects—the collapse of the bipolar world and of socialism as an economic alternative, the dominance of neoliberal capitalism, the advances in communications technologies, and the migration of peoples—all are making the world a different place. When I was asked in 1992 to write a new foreword for the German edition of Constructing Local Theologies, indicating why that book would be of interest to a German-language readership, it was precisely to those changes that I pointed.\(^1\) The interest in context in this instance had less to do with any perceived inadequacy of academic theology as it had usually been undertaken than with the speed with which changes were taking place, and the consequent destabilization of identities. Changes so momentous had to make a difference in how the world was viewed theoretically. They could not be left unexamined.

In my estimation, it was principally through these three factors that the way was cleared for thinking about contextual theologies in Europe.\(^2\) Over and above all of the other factors mentioned, at a time when the European Union raises questions for European identity, it becomes important to take stock of just what are the prospects for contextual theologies in Europe. What aspects of European contexts should be engaged? What themes suggest themselves out of the Christian tradition for possible development? And what social issues need to be addressed?\(^3\)

Europe is, of course, a vast and diverse place, as efforts at a European Union have made all too clear. A certain level of generalization is inevitable. There are some common features that might be treated, inasmuch as different parts of Europe are facing similar challenges. It is these common challenges that will serve as the focus of this chapter. Admittedly, even then this investigation will center more on Western Europe than on those countries formerly behind the Iron Curtain. Some of what will be said will, I hope, strike a responsive chord there, but in those countries history has given rise to a distinctive configuration of the problems of religion and society. And finally, this is being written by an outsider, albeit

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\(^2\) A case might be made for a fourth factor, the rise of the new practical theologies. These are a way of theologizing about practice, not merely an application of systematic theology to pastoral situations. See Don S. Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1992); Dietrich Rössler, *Grundriss der praktischen Theologie* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1994).

\(^3\) Some efforts at contextual theology have been undertaken. See, for example, John Reader, *Local Theology: Church and Community in Dialogue* (London: SPCK, 1994). The attempts to develop a liberation theology in or for Europe seem to me to miss the mark.
one who once lived in Europe and remains a frequent visitor. It is presented with the hope of stirring thinking in Europe about the future of contextual theology in that region of the world.

The investigation here is in four parts. The first three parts look at three salient factors at play in any future contextual theology in Europe. These factors are secularization, dechristianization, and the multi-cultural character of society. Each of these phenomena will be examined to uncover significant challenges for contextualization. Then, where possible, suggestions will be made regarding the contextualization process itself and what theological themes might be usefully taken up. The fourth and concluding part steps back to see what general conclusions might be drawn. It is hoped that in this way a framework for discussion of contextualization in Europe might be set up so as better to engage its possibilities.

Secularization

Secularization is a process that has been going on in Europe throughout the modern period. First understood as the appropriation of church property by non-ecclesiastical agents, usually the State, it has come to be understood as the disengagement of religious rule and influence in modern society, on both an institutional and a personal level. In the 1960s, a great deal of attention was given to religion’s place in secularization, and attempts were made to celebrate humanity’s ‘coming of age’ (to echo Dietrich Bonhoeffer⁴), with its celebration of human autonomy. All of this was framed in the work of Max Weber, who saw a continuing diminishment of religion under the forces of modernity.

Changes that have come about in understanding secularization are leading sociologists to amend their theories of secularization. These changes are necessary as changed circumstances in secularized societies pose new challenges to aspects of theory. There are four such changes that have had an impact on the construction of contextual theologies in Europe.

The first is that religion has not disappeared. In an earlier stage of modernity, predictions about the eventual disappearance of religion were quite optimistic. To be sure, there has been a decline in the presence of religion in Europe, or at least of institutional religion. Church attendance, as well as church baptisms, weddings, and funerals continue to dwindle. Yet there are two areas in which religion persists. The first may be found in the cultural logics of antiglobalism, especially fundamentalism. It may be recalled that cultural logics are responses to the encroachments of globalization, affecting the local in different ways. Fundamentalism, a slippery concept, is understood here as choosing certain (usually patently antimodern) elements of a tradition and raising them up as the ultimate criteria of orthodoxy. Not all conservative or even reactionary movements are necessarily fundamentalistic. Nearly all such movements continue to participate in modernity in certain ways. But they all share a revulsion for some, and sometimes all, elements of modernity.

The speed and pressure of globalization are such that it will likely continue to provoke new fundamentalisms. The destabilizing of identities will be met with resistance and hoped-for reversion to more stable times. A problem for contextualization is that religion as a whole now comes to be identified in the eyes of its despisers with these fundamentalisms. They represent the passion that religion can call forth, even as they

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⁵ A good guide to the fundamentalist phenomenon is Bruce Lawrence, Defenders of God: The Fundamentalist Revolt Against the Modern Age (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1989).
skew the intellectual and symbolic universe from which religion derives. Fundamentalism, as an act of resistance, can become a powerful local theology that no form of persuasion can change. Some forms of Pentecostalism function in a fundamentalistic way, and provide the poor an antimodern haven in a world that forces change on them without any of the benefits that change might bring.

A contextual theology in a European setting should not strive for a fundamentalistic goal, of course. But it must understand what drives people into fundamentalism. This is especially important for those segments of the population in Europe that have no other recourse in shaping their identities.

A second area in which religion is not disappearing is in the diffuse religiosity that continues to mark secularized societies. Because of its eclectic and usually privatized character, this religiosity is often not institutionalized. It appears to be the ultimate reduction of religion to consumption. At this time it is estimated that nearly one-fourth of Northern Europeans believe in reincarnation. In the United States in recent years there has been intense interest in and discussion of angels. All of these elements together—bits of Asian religion, interest in Western esotericism or pre-Christian European religion—are commonly known as New Age religion. New Age represents a fund of religious possibilities out of which new identities may be constructed. They are the grist for the syncretic mill which creates new hybrid identities.

This diffuse religiosity is usually dismissed as being beneath the dignity of consideration by religious leaders and elites. But a careful study of practices, rather than an exclusive focus on ideas, will yield up emerging patterns of religion. They are not likely to replace historical religions, but may come to be accommodated along any of the pathways discussed in the last chapter in the section on the formation of religious identities.

The second shift affecting an understanding of secularization is the tempering of optimism about human autonomy. The sometimes heady writing about the blossoming of human autonomy, the forward-looking visions of theologies of hope, and the assessments that humanity had ‘come of age’—all hallmarks of the 1960s—began to be toned down, and at times even muted, in the 1970s by the OPEC embargo, the Report of the Club of Rome, and the growing awareness of potential ecological catastrophe. By the 1980s, rather than proclaiming a humanity come of age, postmodernists were predicting the death of the subject. The latter part of the 1990s is likely to witness an upsurge of apocalypticism and millennialism as the year 2000 approaches.

The instabilities that accompany globalization and the perils of the global economy make for a more circumspect view of human autonomy. Human autonomy is after all the goal of the secularization process, but it continues to be thwarted along the way. Since the struggle with bondage and the quest for liberation is so much at the heart of the Christian message, a contextual theology in Europe today must pick up on the changes in fortunes that have prompted this rethinking. What does the Christian doctrine of the atonement mean under these circumstances? How does one experience liberation in these days? The next chapter will look at future directions that liberation theology might take, but for now it is enough to focus upon the nexus of bondage and liberation as it has been playing itself out in recent history.

The third shift in the understanding of secularization is closely related to the second one and figured also in the earlier discussion of globalization itself, namely, the increase of risk in a globalized society. The heightened risk from the processes of short-term, swiftly moving global capitalism and ecological degradation have already been mentioned. Pharmaceutical risks can
be added to these. Even as nuclear risk has subsided, risks of smaller, intense wars and the ‘coming anarchy’\(^6\) of mass urbanization have arisen to create other threats. What happens in the wealthy centers is that even as they move to eliminate some risks (e.g., by establishing gated communities), they may be inventing new ones (such as toxic waste) or find that they have no control over others (e.g., they cannot isolate themselves from certain ecological disasters).

The management of contingency\(^7\) is already a well-known concept in the sociology of religion. Just as a meditation on recent turns of events that question human autonomy will prove useful for emergent contextual theologies in Europe, so too will a reflection on risk and contingency. The increase in numbers of security guards and the outlay for security measures (in the United States there are now more private security guards than members of the public police forces) indicate the level of anxiety. The heightened sense of risk and contingency creates more space for religion as well. Religion should not be seen as a stop-gap for plugging the holes in a porous sense of security. But it must also be remembered that risk and contingency are among the deepest themes in Christianity. Conversion, faith, and covenant all evoke risk. Our understanding of history and its fulfillment, our awareness of the asymmetries in the central Christian narrative of the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus cannot but remind us of the long reflection on contingency in our tradition.

The fourth and final consideration concerning the shifts in secularization is the release of alternate rationalities into society. Ulrich Beck refers to this as a ‘secondary scientization’ of knowledge. In the primary scientization of knowledge, the emergent physical sciences worked to convince Europe that only their—scientific—knowledge constituted the true knowledge that provided access to reality as it is. But science and scientific method, despite their phenomenal successes, still sometimes fail or contradict themselves. (Think, for example, of the contradictory results of research showing what is or is not healthy nutrition or what does or does not cause cancer.) Moreover, science has failed to solve some problems, again particularly related to health. By redoubling its efforts to convince the public that it is the only rationality, it unintentionally gives legitimation to other, competing rationalities.\(^8\)

Such legitimation in turn allows still other rationalities to flourish, even though they may not stand up under much scrutiny. Contemporary belief in reincarnation in Europe is an example of such an alternate rationality. A contextual theology in Europe today needs to trace the rationalities, in all their hybrid forms, as they criss-cross the continent. The rationalities often intermingle along the way. Take, for example, the renewed interest in the pilgrimage path to Santiago de Compostela, which attracts tens of thousands of people each year, especially young people. The medieval pilgrim road now becomes a hybridity of Christian asceticism, esotericism, history, tourism, and pre-Christian religion.\(^9\) A semiotic disentanglement of rationalities is a first step toward discerning the directions in which a new local theology might go, especially as it meets the quest for identity, the management of risk, and the encounter with contingency.

Secularization, then, is offering a number of new openings for the place of religion in society today. Contextual theology is not determined by

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\(^7\) The concept of Kontingenzbewältigung was first developed by Niklas Luhmann.


\(^9\) An example of such a weaving together is Juan G. Atienza, *En Busca de Gaia* (Barcelona: Robin Book, 1993).
what secularization may or may not offer to it; were that the case it would never be able to exhibit its prophetic edge. But a contextual theology in Europe has no choice but to take secularization into account. What is emerging in recent years is that secularization is not a uniform force, moving on a clearly chartable trajectory. It too is subject to changing forces in the environment. Contextual theology needs to be reminded of this, lest it acquiesce too readily to secularization’s claims.

Dechristianization: The Post-Christian Society

Since the ‘loss’ of the working classes to the Church in the nineteenth century, there has been talk about the dechristianization of Europe. In the latter half of the twentieth century talk of a post-Christian society emerged. Beyond acknowledging a steadily diminishing influence of the Church as an institution, it is not always clear just precisely what is meant. The various projects and schemes proposed since the 1980s to rechristianize Europe—the New Evangelization of the Roman Catholic Church, the ecumenical Missiology in Western Culture Project, or the British Council of Churches’ Gospel and Our Culture Project—all work toward a restoration of Christian faith to the populace of Europe. Before examining the implications of this for a European contextual theology, two clarifications need to be made.

First of all, dechristianization is not entirely co-extensive with secularization. To be sure, the secularization process is usually held responsible for the drift away from Christianity. But if any of the aforementioned projects is successful in bringing Christianity back to Europe, it will not be to the Europe of Christendom. The migration of peoples has forever changed that. On the continent there is now a large Muslim presence that has resulted both from invitations to come and work extended in the middle of the twentieth century and from migrations and refugee flight that took place in the latter decades. In Britain there are Muslim and Hindu populations, as well as a smaller Buddhist population, all coming from throughout the Commonwealth. A new Europe will be an interreligious Europe.10

Second, a post-Christian Europe does not mean a non-Christian Europe. As Karl-Josef Rivinius has pointed out, much of the cultural heritage of Europe is unintelligible without an understanding of Christianity. Even the most secular of Europeans has imbibed and appropriated a great deal of Christianity in the values, understandings of justice, and other principles that are of the web and woof of Europe today. Even some values once thought antithetical to Christianity (such as democracy and human rights) are now seen to be legitimate developments of the Christian tradition.11 One could argue, as Rivinius does, that any contextual theology that might be developed must lift up this Christian heritage and bring it to the attention of secular Europe. Following such a strategy, this would be the way to rebuild Christianity in Europe, by retrieving the foundation and then building upon it anew.

A strategy like this may provide a partial answer to the New Evangelization, but there are some other paths to be explored in light of the larger considerations that frame this book. The globalization process destabilizes identities and creates the need to construct new ones. It does this with a speed and a complexity that make any institutional guidance difficult. Moreover, the individualism fostered by the modernity process

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10 See the explorations of the implications of this for Christians in Henk Vroom, Religie als ziel van cultuur: Religieus pluralisme als uitdaging (Zoetermeer: Meinema, 1996).
and the cult of consumption leads to institutional distrust. If a society provides enough wealth to individuals to allow for a broad range of consumer choices, the illusion can be fostered that institutions are not necessary.\footnote{12} Emblematic of this belief in a life without mediating institutions is the Internet, which nobody owns and nobody controls, but upon which anyone with a personal computer and a modem can surf.

However, societies need mediating institutions between the individual or family and the nation. Religion, dethroned from the higher parts of the hierarchy, has tried to take that role in modern society and to some measure has succeeded when it has been a voluntary association. This is evident in the free churches, parachurch movements such as Campus Crusade for Christ, voluntary communities such as the Thomas-Community in Helsinki or the San Egidio community in Rome, and in the new religious movements.

Taking a cue from these institutions and associations that serve a mediating role, it would seem to be the task of the Christian Church today to establish credible communities, places that engage the power of ritual\footnote{13} and create group solidarity. In environments like these, practices can be cultivated and spiritualities evolved that could initiate people gradually and ever more deeply into the Christian mysteries. These communities would have to navigate between the antiglobal cultural logics that pull people toward fundamentalism on the one hand, and the primitivist cultural logics that urge people back to an imagined past on the other. These paths begin with religion as a way of life and move from there into the view of life, something which seems to fit the pattern of religious exploration: if the group is credible and inviting then the ideas may get a hearing.

In view of dechristianization, what elements would be highlighted in a contextual theology in Europe? Certainly a theological anthropology, stressing human creation in the image and likeness of God and the worth and dignity of each person would be essential. In communities struggling with oppression, the emphasis on how human rights are now included in Christian anthropology could be made. When people are struggling with human identity and with human survival, anthropological issues are at stake.

It was mentioned above that the asymmetry of the basic Christian story, of the suffering, death, and resurrection of Christ, brings a special significance to identities in a globalized society. The basic story at the center of Christianity is not about symmetries, but about mistaken identities, betrayal, reversal, and a resurrection that is not restoration but that takes the crucified Jesus to a new place. In the asymmetries eddying out of the globalization process, with its maldistributions of power and profit, with its uprootedness, double visions, and multiple belongings, with its tentative hybridities—does not the paschal mystery take on new meaning, illuminating these realities in a special way? Contextual theologies need to be able to read the Christian tradition in this way in order to connect it with the experience of many people today.

A Multicultural Reality

Secularization and dechristianization are in themselves formidable challenges to an adequate contextualization. Added to this for contemporary Europe is the fact that many cultures are jostling each other within limited space and competing for limited resources. Although Europe is less culturally diverse than Australia or

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\footnote{12}{See the examination and critique of this position in Robert N. Bellah et al., *The Good Society* (New York: Harper, 1991).}

\footnote{13}{This is explored in Karl Gabriel, "Ritualisierung in säkularer Gesellschaft. Anknüpfungspunkte für Prozesse der Inkulturation, *Stimmen der Zeit* 212 (1994): 3–13.}
North America, it has a much longer history of ethnic territoriality than either of those continents. Multiculturality has come upon Europe in a much shorter period and at a time of uncertain identity in general. The diversity is to some degree of Europe’s own making as one-time colonials settle in the imperial mother country; some people have also been invited in as cheap and additional labor, with the mistaken expectation that they will one day go back to their place of origin. In other cases, groups have been minorities within current national borders for a long time—the Basques in Spain, the Bretons in France. Sometimes people have migrated on their own, either from within Europe (Paris is now the second largest Portuguese city in the world) or from without, looking for work. One of the reflexive consequences of globalization is that now the peripheral peoples in the world economy can migrate to the center, and so the poor come to wealthy nations. Some immigrants are refugees from violence.

People from other ethnic groups do not just come and settle, they change the self-understanding of those longer settled there. Xenophobia sometimes breaks out, the relationship between ethnicity and nationality is challenged (what does it mean to be German or French?), and the host culture is changed, subtly or not so subtly, despite any resistance the host country may mount. As cultures jostle against one another and even come into conflict with one another, how does one begin to form a local theology? Whose culture forms the basis?

As was seen in chapter 3, concepts of culture as integrated wholes do not work in these settings. As cultures compete, culture itself becomes a conflictual element. Culture becomes the force-field in which new identities are enacted. In the cultural logics responding to this dimension of globalization, ethnification takes place. Those cultural groups arriving in a new place experience their cultural identity differently from what it had been at home. Here they are a minority, where they may have been a comfortable majority at home. Here they may experience racism for the first time. They are always feeling the powers in conflict over how identity is to be formed. Similarly, the host country takes on a new awareness of its own identity as a culture. These changes in cultural awareness and self-understanding are part of the process of ethnification—the process of coming to understand one’s own identity in terms of that of others, acknowledging the boundary of difference. The powerful host country can deny this and require either separation or assimilation on the host country’s terms. But such demands are never wholly successful. Often in this process ethnogenesis takes place, i.e., a group coalesces around an identity that they had not had before, as when two groups who were in conflict at home come together under the common threat of hostility from the host country.

Contextual theologies were born in the ethnification process—either in the assertion of a local culture’s distinctiveness against Western incursion, or in the affirmation of a local culture as a worthy bearer of the Good News of Jesus Christ. The multicultural reality of contemporary Europe calls forth a new challenge to contextual theology. How can a contextual theology negotiate diverse, even competing and conflicting cultural demands?

It seems to me that one must begin with a clear understanding of what a multicultural society is and what it might look like. To develop a full-scale model of a multicultural society goes beyond the scope of the discussion here; but a sketch can be given that would indicate the directions and the tasks of a contextual theology in such a society.

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A successful multicultural society must begin by assuring that all groups have access to the means for a human life (housing, employment, education, medical care) and are protected from physical violence. While this may seem an unattainable goal, to the extent that it is not achieved any attempt at a multicultural society will remain unstable.

There are three stages in the development of a multicultural society. The first is recognition of diversity. Recognition is understood here not simply as a notional acknowledgment, but as an act of acknowledging awareness and legitimacy. It is recognition in the sense that the term has been developed by Axel Honneth, Charles Taylor, and others. Without recognition there is invisibility, which demeans and dismisses those who are different. The recognition of diversity is more than acknowledgment that there are a variety of different peoples present, for that can lead merely to a generalization of otherness. Recognition of diversity requires recognition of each group, even though those recognizing may not know much about them.

From the point of view of contextual theology, the key issue is the identity of each group. Here again, a theological anthropology that stresses each being made in the image and likeness of God forms a good point of departure, particularly when posed as the question: what is it about us that makes us the image of God? The image of the addressees of the First Letter of Peter, the ‘exiles of the Dispersion’ (1:1) may provide a frame, much as the early Church brought together in cities those of marginal and dissonant social status.

The second stage toward a multicultural society is respect for difference. Respect goes beyond acknowledgment of the otherness of diversity; it explores the nature of the difference and the consequences for living together. It is aware that not all differences can be adjudicated into sameness. Respect for difference moves beyond recognition. It requires struggling with the meaning of difference.

As a theological move, respect for difference involves a struggle against those forces in society that, using the signifier of race or other means of demarcation, make difference a warrant for discrimination and oppression. Theologically, respect for difference involves a praxis of struggle against sin and evil. Here, a theological reflection on racism can serve as a helpful resource.

The third stage toward a multicultural society is a forum of cooperation and communication. Those who have been in the struggle for justice together can see better what one group may contribute to the other and to the common good. Avenues of cooperation can be laid out. The forum aims to create a communicative society rather than another cutthroat marketplace.

Theologically, the vision of reconciliation in Ephesians 2 could be used here: the creation of a space where we are “strangers and aliens no longer” (2:19). Again, this stage requires more than the good will of the participants; it needs also economic and social justice. While aware that this stage will not be fully achieved in society, the utopian vision of Pentecost, of each hearing the Good News, but in their own tongue (i.e., without having to deny their identity), keeps the hope alive.

Europe has been struggling with the issues of secularization and dechristianization for quite some time. The multicultural society is still something relatively new. In an essay on the Turkish presence in Western Europe, British cultural geographer Kevin Robbins has proposed that Europe will come to terms with a new multicultural identity only if it undergoes a profound transformation based on the awareness of

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the violence that it has done to other cultures and to the region.

One cannot be optimistic. There are no solid grounds for believing that Europe might re-commit itself to the historical process. Is it actually capable of transforming its perceptions of the ‘non-Europe’ that surrounds it? In order to do so it would need to rid itself of its myths of the others, and to allow that they are real, diverse and complex peoples. It would have to dissipate these myths in order to understand the part it has played in the disruption and destruction of their cultures and in the turmoil and violence that have afflicted the region. That would mean accepting its responsibilities in the events of past history.16

Conclusion

What then may be sought for in the future of contextual theologies in Europe? Like contextual theologies anywhere, they must be developed in accord with the local contexts, engaging the culture effectively and appropriately, yet critically. Effectiveness entails a genuine engagement and not just a superficial encounter. Appropriateness requires engagement in such a way that the culture’s codes are respected. Critical engagement means that critique is part of the process, within parameters of effectiveness and appropriateness.

Salient cultural characteristics for contextual theology in contemporary Europe were identified within the frame of the effects of globalization, especially secularization, dechristianization, and the reality of a multicultural society. Each of these requires specific theological moves. Furthermore, four formal principles need to be kept in mind.

First of all, theology must be in forms intelligible to its communities, but also in forms commensurate with how meaning is being shaped in contemporary society. Thus, the impact of communications technologies needs to be taken into consideration.17 Likewise, the meaning formation process in ethnification must be followed out.

Second, a key task of any contextual theology is the negotiation of identity in a globalized world. That entails knowing something of the globalization process and its consequences for identity formation. It is on that basis that a critique of globalization can then be mounted. A contextual theology will thus stand between tradition and modernity.18

Third, given the globalized context, a contextual theology will have to be able to utilize paradox and contradiction in an effective way, inasmuch as globalization is shot through with paradox (global-local relations) and contradiction (promising one thing, delivering another). Both of these are necessary to communicate the effects of globalization in a contextual theology.

Fourth, contextual theologies are grounded in communities and movements. Within those communities and movements there must be developed a theological base out of which local theologies can grow. That base includes (1) an anthropology that meets the challenges of contingency; (2) a spirituality, grounded in the paschal mystery, that negotiates risk; and (3) a utopian horizon for cultural inclusion and transformation.

18 See Karl Gabriel, Christentum zwischen Tradition und Postmoderne (Freiburg: Herder Verlag, 1992).
Pentecostalism and the Transformation of World Christianity

Allan H. Anderson

The Growth of Pentecostalism

The global South has seen a remarkable expansion of pentecostal forms of Christianity in the last century, an expansion that has altered global religious demographics considerably. In Latin America, Africa, and Asia, many large urban mega-churches have arisen, and much of the rapid growth in Chinese Christianity has come among those who have a pentecostal inclination. The internationalizing of the Charismatic movement in the 1960s and 1970s began to erode the isolation of indigenous independent churches in the global South, but these changes had already been brewing for decades. Rapid improvements in communications and travel brought the outside world closer to hitherto isolated communities. With new nation-states created out of former colonies came resistance to foreign cultural symbols, including Western hegemony in ecclesiastical affairs.

Nowhere was this more apparent than in China after 1949, but the entire majority world was affected. As we have seen, China developed its own forms of Christianity without recourse to the outside world. Although we may describe much of this as affected by Pentecostalism, applying this nomenclature to Chinese indigenous churches indiscriminately is as inappropriate as it is in the cases of Spirit churches in sub-Saharan Africa. India, with its closer ties to the West, has more claim on the title ‘pentecostal’ for many of its independent churches, but even this must be qualified. Latin America, with more than a century of independence, had its own momentum; and there Pentecostalism took a different turn, although not unaffected by what was happening in the North. Nevertheless, large denominations that eschewed contact with the United States emerged there from the mid-1950s onward, sometimes referred to as the second phase of Pentecostalism in Latin America, following the first denominations founded by foreigners. The Philippines, with its centuries of majority Catholicism, presented a somewhat similar situation, and indigenous leaders emerged to form new movements making a considerable impact on the religious scene. At the same time, the massive Catholic Charismatic Renewal in Brazil, the Philippines, and India helped stem the flow of Catholics into pentecostal churches. Independent pentecostal churches have proliferated worldwide. Those formed in the first half of the twentieth century and birthed in indigenous revival movements were the thin end of the wedge. They expanded rapidly and formed their own traditions, remaining isolated from mainstream Christianity for decades. For the most part, classical Pentecostalism distanced itself from them. Western pentecostal missionaries saw them as a threat or nuisance at best, or as heretics at worst—especially in the case of more heterodox movements like the True Jesus Church and the Zion Christian Church. Their hostility was passed on to the national churches that emerged from their work, and that hostility was reciprocated. Increasingly complex and multifarious networks of new independent churches have mushroomed in recent years, making them possibly the largest grouping within Pentecostalism as a whole. The recent history of Pentecostalism is littered with ‘revival’ movements causing schisms that have become its defining feature.

Facts and figures on the growth of any global religious movement are notoriously difficult to come by, yet statistics on the growth of Pentecostalism are exultingly quoted, especially by classical pentecostals. The most frequently quoted ones are those of Barrett and Johnson,
who estimated that Pentecostalism had some 614 million adherents in 2010, a quarter of the world’s Christian population, which they projected would rise to almost 800 million by 2025. This figure was placed at only 67 million in 1970, and this enormous increase has coincided with Europe’s secularization zenith. North America started earlier and made steady progress in the course of the twentieth century, but classical Pentecostalism there, while influential, is not as significant as is sometimes claimed. A survey conducted by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life in 2007 on religious affiliation in the United States found that pentecostals (including black pentecostals) were 4 percent of the total population. This constituted part of the 26 percent classified as ‘Evangelical Protestant Churches,’ compared to 18 percent called ‘Mainline Protestant Churches,’ and 24 percent Catholic. Of course, this 4 percent only refers to classical pentecostal denominations. The largest older Protestant denominations, the various Baptists and Methodists, had 17 percent and 6 percent, respectively. With 16 percent of US Americans now declaring themselves unaffiliated to any religious faith and with Catholic numbers growing, the United States is on the verge of losing its Protestant majority.¹

The other northern continent is very different. Europe retains significant remnants of state churches: Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, and Anglican. Although pentecostals have made modest increases in Europe, they remain a very small minority—less than 2 percent of the overall population in all European countries except Portugal, where Pentecostalism was influenced by the vibrant Brazilian variety. They are more significant as a proportion of the European churchgoing population. We do not know how many people transfer into pentecostal churches from older churches or have dual allegiance, as is the case in Latin America and in Europe. David Martin takes issue with the common secularization theories in explaining the ‘exceptionalism’ of Europe and suggests that Pentecostalism is less likely to succeed in the developed world because it “represents the mobilization of a minority of people at the varied margins of that world, whereas in the developing world it represents the mobilization of large masses.” He thinks that Pentecostalism flourishes in the United States because of its well-established Protestant pluralism and voluntarism, and that in Europe, Pentecostalism does not do as well where there is a strong state church—unless there is more religious plurality with a significant minority of free churches, as is the case in Romania and Ukraine, where the numbers of classical pentecostals are greater than in any other European nation.²

In fact, the dramatic growth in what are now termed ‘Renewalists’ is best explained by reference to the three majority world continents. There are indeed many reasons for the emergence and growth of Pentecostalism in the majority world, and any attempt on my part to enumerate these runs the risk of reductionism. But I will try to highlight some of the major ones. Pentecostalism is an ‘ends of the earth’ form of Christian mission with a transnational orientation based on personal enterprise, the ubiquitous voluntarism of its membership, and the constant multiplication of multicentered, variegated organizations whose primary purpose is to evangelize and spread their influence worldwide. These constant efforts to expand and proselytize are underpinned by a firm belief in the Bible as an independent source of authority, one that resonates with local customs and relates

better to a spiritual and holistic worldview—and by theological convictions based on a common experience of the Spirit who empowers believers' mission to the world. The personal conversion of individuals is the goal of these efforts. To their credit, pentecostal missionaries, themselves largely untrained and uneducated, practiced 'indigenous church' principles. They quickly found and trained thousands of local leaders, who took the 'full gospel' much further than the foreign missionaries had done. This swift transfer to local leadership was unprecedented in the history of Christianity, and pentecostal churches became indigenous and 'three-self' (self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating) before the older missions had even begun the process.

The histories recounted here demonstrate that contemporary Pentecostalism is the product of a long process of development with precedents going back to a much earlier time. Its history was in continuity with the revivalist movements out of which it emerged. Its mission was to liberate very ordinary people from colonial and ecclesiastical hegemony and (at least originally) to free women from male patriarchy. It encouraged free enterprise in a global religious market. The revival movements challenged Western hegemony and created a multitude of new indigenous churches—a type of Christianity in local idiom that was a cultural protest movement, but was also bound to include emphases on power to overcome an evil spirit world and manifestations of the miraculous. Pentecostalism addressed allegations of both the foreignness and the irrelevance of Christianity in pluralistic societies. With its emphasis on the priesthood of all true believers, it broke down barriers of race, gender, and class, and challenged the exclusive preserves of ordained male, foreign clergy. Of course, this development included multiple schisms that, while increasing division, also proliferated local leadership and encouraged religious competition.

What is often not appreciated is the extent to which Pentecostalism takes on distinctive forms in different contexts. One of the main reasons for the growth of Pentecostalism has been its ability to adapt itself to different cultures and societies and give contextualized expressions to Christianity. These are expressed in its energetic and energizing worship and liturgies, in its music and dance, in its prayer with the free use of the emotions, and in its communities of concerned and committed believers. Pentecostals are becoming more socially aware and active in efforts to relieve poverty and disease. Of all Christian expressions, Pentecostalism has an ability to transpose itself into local cultures and religions effortlessly because of its primary emphases on the experience of the Spirit and the spiritual calling of leaders who do not have to be formally educated in church dogma. This often leads to schism, but also assists multiplication. In particular, the ministry of healing and the claims of the miraculous have assisted Pentecostalism in its appeal to a world where supernatural events are taken for granted.

Some of the features of Pentecostalism that have made it attractive have been discussed here. Pentecostalism developed its own characteristics and identities in different parts of the world without losing its transnational connections. The widespread use of mass media, the setting up of new networks that often incorporate the word 'international' in their titles, frequent conferences with international speakers that reinforce transnationalism, and the growth of churches that provide total environments for members—these are all features of this multidimensional Pentecostalism, which promotes this global meta-culture constantly. The opening up of what was formerly a closed world after the fall of the Iron Curtain and the post-1980 reforms in China rapidly accelerated the expansion of this transnational movement. Although sociopolitical and historical factors undoubtedly had a role
in the spread of pentecostal Christianity, religious and ideological factors were probably more significant. The ability of Pentecostalism to adapt to and fulfill people’s religious aspirations continues to be its strength. A belief in a divine encounter and the involvement or breaking through of the sacred into the mundane, including healing from sickness, deliverance from hostile evil forces, and perhaps above all, a heady and spontaneous spirituality that refuses to separate ‘spiritual’ from ‘physical’ or ‘sacred’ from ‘secular’ are all important factors in Pentecostalism’s growth. It has been able to tap into ancient religious traditions with one eye on the changing world of modernity. This combination of the old with the new has enabled it to attract people who relate to both these worlds. With its offer of the power of the Spirit to all regardless of education, language, race, class, or gender, Pentecostalism has been a movement on a mission to subvert convention. Unlike older forms of Christian mission, its methods were not so dependent on Western specialists and trained clergy and the transmission of Western forms of Christian liturgy and leadership. In fact, Pentecostalism in its earliest forms broke down the dichotomy between clergy and laity that was the legacy of older churches. The author of “The Secular City”, Harvey Cox, in his 1995 book “Fire from Heaven”, reversed his well-known position on secularization and wrote of Pentecostalism as a manifestation of the “unanticipated reappearance of primal spirituality in our time” that would reshape religion in the twenty-first century.3

There are several important themes that I have not fully explored, such as the most recent forms of independent nonconformity, the function of mega-churches, and the mass market, including the use of media, technologies, and networking. Research must still be done on areas that have only been hinted at here: the power of free association and personal and local agency, the role and nature of the church in Pentecostalism, its leadership patterns, its structural and anti-structural permutations, church authority, governance, and the ways in which leadership patterns change over time. Pentecostals and environmental concerns, the changes affecting established institutions and structures, Pentecostalism as liberation and an option for the poor, pentecostals involved in various types of social and public engagement—all these areas deserve more attention than I have given them. Much work has already been done in the area of the migration of pentecostals from the South to the North in recent years, and I have touched only briefly on this subject. The extent to which globalization and migration in the late twentieth century have affected Pentecostalism is something that requires a much more careful analysis. The shapes of the new Pentecostalisms that have emerged as a result of the globalization process, how they differ from the older networks of denominational Pentecostalism, and what the features of this global shift of center to the South means for Pentecostalism have yet to be precisely described. There is a certain tension between the global and the local in Pentecostalism, and often the local character overshadows globalizing forces that might seek uniformity. Another area that needs further investigation is the extent to which Pentecostalism has permeated and affected the beliefs, values, and practices of other Christians. Only when these investigations have taken place will we be better able to understand those external forces that forge the religious identities of people in our contemporary societies and the increasingly important role of Pentecostalism in this pluralistic world. Many questions will remain unanswered, and indeed, some questions will not have answers.

Present Prospects

It can no longer be said without qualification that there are now over 600 million 'Pentecostals' worldwide. When considering what diverse and mutually independent movements are included in the statistics, any attempt at definition will fall short of precision, and Pentecostalism can probably never be defined adequately. Only about a quarter of this figure consists of classical pentecostals, those with direct or indirect historical links to the Azusa Street revival in Los Angeles. But some 150 million classical pentecostals worldwide after only a century is still impressive. If we add the many independent churches with pentecostal orientation, plus the Charismatic churches and renewal movements within older churches, then we have a clearer picture of its magnitude. It is no accident that the southward shift in Christianity's center of gravity over the twentieth century has coincided with the emergence and expansion of Pentecostalism. Over three-quarters of pentecostal adherents live in the majority world. Worldwide the number of Christians has doubled in forty years, from 1.1 billion in 1970 to 2.2 billion in 2010. In Africa, it was estimated that Christians exceeded Muslims for the first time in 1985, and Christians are now almost the majority—a phenomenon so epoch-making that Lamin Sanneh describes it as "a continental shift of historic proportions." There are now over four times as many Christians in Africa as there were in 1970 and almost the same is true in Asia, while the Christian population of Latin America over this period has almost doubled. Of course, some of this has to do with differentials in population growth; but it remains true that much of the global growth of Christianity has occurred through conversion in the global South, where the influence of Pentecostalism is strongest. In contrast, the Christian population of Europe during the same period has increased only by about a quarter, and that of North America by about a third. The decrease in the percentage of world Christianity in the global North is likely to continue. But even if the statistics are wildly speculative, the fact that this movement had only a handful of adherents at the beginning of the twentieth century makes its growth an astounding development. Although this growth has reversed in some more developed countries like South Korea and among Anglos in the United States, there is no sign that the rate worldwide has slowed down, and in places like sub-Saharan Africa, China, Central America, and India it may still be increasing. But even in the former countries, many pentecostals haven't left the faith altogether but have simply transferred to other Christian groups.4

A 2006 Pew Forum report (admittedly focused on urban populations) estimated that classical pentecostals formed 20 percent of the population in Guatemala, 15 percent in Brazil (the largest population of pentecostals in any country), and 9 percent in Chile. Impressive also are the figures in the African countries of Kenya (33 percent), Nigeria (18 percent), and South Africa (10 percent). With Charismatics and independent churches added in, the figures increase considerably and what they have termed 'Renewalists' approximate half the national populations in Guatemala (60 percent), Brazil (40 percent), Kenya (56 percent), and the Philippines (44 percent). In these countries Pentecostalism in all its various forms is not only a significant proportion of Christianity but also a sizable chunk of the entire population with enormous sociopolitical clout. Its adherents are often on the cutting edge

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of the encounter with people of other faiths, albeit sometimes confrontationally so. These confrontations play out in places like Nigeria and India where other religions form majorities, and this conflict, which has already claimed many lives, is in danger of escalating. Because of its tendency to proselytize, Pentecostalism also finds itself in conflict with other Christians in their traditional strongholds, such as with the Orthodox in Eastern Europe, Catholics in Latin America and the Philippines, and the (Coptic) Orthodox in Ethiopia and Eritrea.⁵

Proponents of the secularization thesis have to reckon with the fact that the Future of global Christianity is affected by this seismic change in its character. In his latest work on secularization, David Martin makes the point that secularization is a process that is neither inevitable nor undisputed and is subject to differentiation within different social spheres. This social differentiation, where religious and other cultural monopolies are broken, is determined by historical contexts and actually promotes religious competition and plurality in certain societies while favoring secularization in others. The historical factors producing social differentiation must be taken into account, because these push secularization in different directions. For these reasons, secularization varies enormously in different social groups. Martin considers that the grand meta-narrative of secularization might be “an ideological and philosophical imposition on history rather than an inference from history.” The growth of Pentecostalism in Latin America is an example of the effects of social differentiation, where the dominant Catholic Church was no longer seen as the binding glue of society, especially among the poorer classes. Its monopoly was broken and consequently, Latin American societies became more pluralistic. The same is true of Buddhism in Korea and China, Hinduism among India’s oppressed classes, and Orthodoxy in Ukraine. As one consequence, Pentecostalism has thrived.⁶

The rise of the Charismatic movement in the Western world certainly made pentecostal ideas and practices more acceptable to traditional forms of Christianity. But this might also be seen as one result of the privatization of religion beginning in the 1960s, when the established churches no longer held monopoly and authority over all things sacred, it could be argued that Charismatic Christianity provided a panacea for the spiritual deficit in organized religion and in Western society as a whole. Or, as Harvey Cox has put it, not only were people disillusioned with traditional religions in the 1960s, but also disappointed by “the bright promises of science and progress.” Cox remarks that the ‘kernel of truth’ in the ‘overblown claims’ of the ‘death of God’ theologians was that “the abstract deity of Western theologies and philosophical systems had come to the end of its run.” For Cox, the dramatic growth of Pentecostalism seemed to confirm rather than contradict what he had written about the ‘death of God’ in The Secular City three decades earlier, but it had provided an unanticipated and unwanted solution.⁷

After the 1980s, the ‘Pentecostalization’ of older churches outside the Western world, especially in Africa and Asia, accelerated as these churches adjusted to the rapid growth of new pentecostal churches in their midst. They began to adopt their methods, particularly appealing to the young and urbanized. Simultaneously, the new form of Pentecostalism exhibited a fierce independence that eschewed denominations and

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⁷ Cox, Fire from Heaven, xvi, 83, 104.
preferred associations in loose ‘fellowships.’ This gave rise to the pentecostal mega-churches that operate in cities like Lagos, Rio de Janeiro, Seoul, and Singapore, but also in unexpected European places like Kyiv (a Ukrainian church with a Nigerian leader), Budapest, and Uppsala. Each of these European cases is the largest congregation in its respective country; and in London the largest congregation is a predominantly Nigerian one. The mega-churches form networks of similar churches across the world, and these transnational associations are not only North-South, but also South-South and East-South. In most cases, these transnational churches in the North have been unable to break free from their ethnic minority character.

It is neither wise nor possible to predict the future of Pentecostalism, but a sense of where Pentecostalism has been in the past century will give an inkling of where it might go in the present one. Contemporary Pentecostalism is very much the result of the process of globalization, and ‘health and wealth’ advocates are as much at home in Lagos and Rio as they are in Tulsa or Fort Worth. In many cases, the only ones who get rich in poverty-ravaged countries are the preachers. The mass media, beginning with the use of periodicals and newsletters, followed by a ready acceptance of new technologies—first radio and then television and Internet—tourism and pilgrimages to mega-churches, ubiquitous voluntarism, and an international economy, combined to create conditions conducive to the spread of a globally Friendly religion like Pentecostalism. This manifested itself in many different ways. Some of the networks have begun to take on the appearance of new denominations. Some have passed to a second generation of leadership whose organizational ideas were quite different from those of the founders. Some of the new churches leave much to be desired—especially those with wealthy leaders whose questionable and exploitative practices continue to be debated in public forums.

The adaptability of Pentecostalism to a culture is more easily achieved in those parts of the world where a spiritual universe exists and healing and the supernatural are regarded as ‘normal’ experiences. Pentecostalism also grows where a pluralistic religious environment is the norm. This makes pentecostal forms of Christianity more amenable to the United States than to Germany or France. But, of course, the principle of social differentiation means that there will always be groups for whom Pentecostalism is an attractive religious option, even in those countries where voluntarism, pluralism, and freedom of association are limited. China watchers and Chinese scholars themselves observe that the burgeoning new Christian movements there have many pentecostal features, so that China may soon eclipse Brazil as the country with the most pentecostals, but pentecostals of a very different kind who may not use the name ‘pentecostal’ at all. The Christian world has become more interconnected than ever before; and increasingly pentecostals are having conversations with other Christians that are bringing them out of their largely self-imposed isolation. Whether this will result in more unity or more division and diversity is anyone’s guess. It is certain that the continuous change and transformation in world Christianity will continue. But Pentecostalism in the majority world, as Philip Jenkins has observed about Christianity in the global South, does not represent a global religion with roots in the North, but a new type of Christianity altogether.

Social scientific generalizations about the growth and future of religion are just that. We cannot avoid theological factors. The emphasis

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on a personal, heart-felt experience of God through the Spirit is offered to all people without preconditions, enabling them to be ‘powerful’ and assertive in societies where they have been marginalized. They are offered solutions to their felt needs in all their varieties. This will continue to draw people in the majority world to pentecostal churches. When yours is an all-encompassing, omnipotent, and personal God who enters into a personal relationship with individual believers, everything becomes a matter for potential prayer. The ‘born-again’ experience focusing on a radical break with time past attracts young people disenchanted with the ways of their parents. Pentecostalism’s incessant evangelism, offering healing and deliverance, draws large crowds and its organized system of following up contacts means that more ‘unchurched’ people are reached with this message and joined to pentecostal communities. Its cultural flexibility in its experiential and participatory liturgy, offering a place-to-feel-at-home, a measure of religious continuity with the past spirit world, and (at least to some observers) the appearance of an egalitarian community meeting the ‘felt needs’ of ordinary people—all combine to provide an overarching explanation for the appeal of Pentecostalism and the transformation of Christianity in the majority world.10

Introducing Receptive Ecumenism

Paul D. Murray

In collaboration with ecclesiologists, ecumenists, senior ecclesiastics, social scientists, and local practitioners from across the Christian traditions and from academic and ecclesial contexts stretching, thus far, from Australia, North America, and Europe, the Centre for Catholic Studies within the Department of Theology and Religion at Durham University has, for the past number of years, been hosting a series of research projects devoted to developing and modelling a fresh new strategy in Christian ecumenism, referred to as Receptive Ecumenism.1

The central aim of Receptive Ecumenism is to take seriously both the reality of the contemporary ecumenical moment—wherein the hope for structural unification in the short to medium term is, in general, now widely recognized as being unrealistic—and the abiding need for the Christian churches precisely in this situation to find an appropriate means of continuing to walk the way of conversion towards more visible structural and sacramental unity. The aim is to seek after an appropriate ecumenical ethic and strategy for living between the times; for living

10 Donald E. Miller & Tetsuano Yamamori, Global Pentecostalism: The New Face of Christian Social Engagement (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 221.

now orientated upon the promise of and calling to being made one in the Trinitarian life of God.

In service of this aim, Receptive Ecumenism represents a remarkably simple but far-reaching strategy that seeks to draw out a value that has been at work, to some degree at least, in all good ecumenical encounter and to place it centre-stage now as the appropriate organizing principle for contemporary ecumenism. This is the principle that considerable further progress is indeed possible, but only if each of the traditions, both singly and jointly, makes a clear, programmatic shift from prioritizing the question “What do our various others first need to learn from us?” to asking instead, “What is that we need to learn and can learn, or receive, with integrity from our others?”

This short essay introducing Receptive Ecumenism moves through three key steps. The first section, “Three-phase Ecumenism,” identifies Life and Works ecumenism and the traditional bilateral form of Faith and Order ecumenism as two complementary phases of the ecumenical journey that now need extending into a fresh third phase. The second section, “Receptive Ecumenism: Opening a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism,” then offers Receptive Ecumenism as this significant next phase and outlines some of the key principles that are at work in it. In turn, the third section, “Case Studies in Receptive Ecumenical Engagement,” turns to identify a number of examples of practical initiatives in receptive ecumenical learning and closes by highlighting the forthcoming Third International Conference on Receptive Ecumenism, which is to take place in June of this year in Fairfield, Connecticut. The conclusion reflects on the understanding of unity as the full flourishing of difference in communion that is at work in Receptive Ecumenism. A short bibliography of some relevant works is appended.

Three-phase Ecumenism

The modern ecumenical movement stemmed from the experience of the nineteenth-century Protestant missionary traditions, which became aware of a significant performative contradiction between the gospel of reconciliation they were each proclaiming and—acting as powerful counter-witness—the competition over the winning of souls and turf in which they were effectively engaged. As a consequence, from the outset, a fundamental ecumenical concern has been to seek for ways to move from mutual hostility and mistrust to recognition and effective collaboration in worship, work, and mission. Following the watershed 1910 Edinburgh World Missionary Conference, this concern issued in the Life and Works movement, which would later constitute one of the key streams flowing into the establishment of the World Council of Churches in 1948.

This was the crucial first phase of ecumenical engagement—first, not only chronologically but also in terms of abiding priority. This ecumenism of life, as it is sometimes called, is to ecumenical engagement as oxygen is to physical life: it is the sine qua non of all attempted ecumenical healing, without which nothing else is possible; and the churches always need more of it. Equally, no matter how much of it there might be, it alone is never going to be sufficient to solve the ecumenical problem. At its heart, the ecumenical problem consists not simply in breaches of affection, shared prayer, and witness—all of which occur within each of the Christian traditions and not simply between them—but in the institutional, ministerial, and sacramental divisions that, over centuries, have fomented and cemented such breakdowns.

At the heart, then, of the ecumenical problem is the broken witness the Christian churches give to the world by not being able to live consistently in full and visible structural, sacramental, and ministerial communion. Actions speak
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louder than words. St. Francis is recorded as telling his friars, “Preach always, and when necessary, use words.” The first way in which the churches witness to the Gospel—even before they engage in social mission—is by their own lives, their own organizational realities. And here the unpalatable truth is that for as long as the Christian churches are prevented from living in full and visible structural, sacramental, and ministerial communion with each other, then they find themselves in a state of profound lived contradiction, rent by wounds and tears in the ecclesial body of Christ.

It is this realization that in turn drove one of the other key strands of the modern ecumenical movement, also emerging from Edinburgh 1910 and also subsequently feeding into the establishment of the World Council of Churches: the Faith and Order movement. The core concern of Life and Works ecumenism was—and remains—to build shared relationship and practice across formally divided traditions. In contrast, the ecumenism of truth or the ecumenism of dialogue focuses on formal doctrinal and ecclesiological causes of division, and asks how they might be healed and overcome, or how they might, at least, come to be understood as legitimate differences rather than as fundamental divisions. Here ecumenism takes a specifically and self-consciously ecclesiological form.

There have at times inevitably been tensions at various points between proponents of Life and Works ecumenism and of Faith and Order ecumenism, but there is no necessary opposition between them. Indeed, there is a sense in which Faith and Order ecumenism—the concern for the formal resolution of points of division in order to journey towards full structural, sacramental, and ministerial communion—both follows after and requires Life and Works ecumenism. On the one hand, the development of relationship with and direct personal experience of a separated tradition and its members can itself serve to promote an urgent desire for the overcoming of all that hinders full communion and so release significant energy for the self-consciously ecclesiological work of dialogue. On the other hand, as the many participants in the classical bilateral ecumenical dialogue processes from the late 1960s onwards attest, the patient endeavours of the bilateral dialogues were sustained throughout and only able to make the progress they did on account of the quality of relationship that grew between the respective teams of participants.

Quite remarkable gains were indeed made by this second key phase of ecumenical endeavour, as exemplified by the Anglican–Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC), the most influential bilateral ecumenical dialogue in the English-speaking world since its inception in 1967 as an outflow from the Second Vatican Council. The methodology and strategies progressively developed by ARCIC in turn shaped the work of all the other bilateral dialogues. Three in particular were important: 1) demonstrating that some assumed divisions have been built upon misunderstandings and caricatures of one tradition by the other; 2) drawing upon new scholarship to show how the traditions could now more easily say jointly what they previously assumed could only be said in opposition; and 3) establishing that harmony between differing theological webs does not require uniformity of expression but, rather, ease of translation across what can legitimately remain differently articulated webs of practice and belief.

Throughout the first major phase of ARCIC’s activity (ARCIC I, 1970–81) and continuing well into the second (ARCIC II, 1983–2005), the application of these and related strategies revealed that one key area of assumed historic division after another was not actually a point of real communion-dividing difference: whether teachings about the Eucharist, or about ordained priestly ministry, or about the relationship between jus-
Surfing the considerable energy released by Catholicism’s formal entry into the ecumenical movement during Vatican II (1962–1965), the magnitude of achievement during the first phase of ARCIC’s activity fed dizzy expectations about the possible realization of full structural, sacramental, and ministerial communion within a generation. The essential tasks of the dialogue partners were to come to the ecumenical table valuing the other tradition and prepared both to explain one’s own tradition in relation to specifics with sufficient clarity and sophistication as to enable the members of the other tradition to understand it aright and affirm it, and to have their own appreciation of the other’s tradition similarly refined, all with a view to coming to reconciled understanding.

In contrast, however, to those heady days, the contemporary ecumenical scene seems considerably more sober and constrained. Indeed, on many fronts and despite the undoubted historic achievements, the structural, sacramental, and ministerial reconciliation of the traditions now seems further away than ever, causing many to speak of an ecumenical winter or of an ecumenical cul-de-sac. The great wave of reconciliation through theological clarification appears to have crashed on the beach, dissipating its energy and leaving some of the great dialogue documents as the high-water mark of a tide now turned.

This is particularly evident in relation to some of the longer-running dialogue processes, where the ‘softwood’ of relatively easy early gains has now been exhausted, giving way to the ‘hardwood’ of lasting substantive differences: differences over the ways in which the local churches and the universal Church relate, over decision making at various levels of church life, and over the nature of eligibility for ordained ministry. There have also been significantly differing formal discernments between the traditions in relation to the pastoral care of gay and lesbian people and the legitimacy of admitting women into ordained ministry. Here and in related cases, we are not dealing with mere mutual misunderstandings and differences of articulation that can be clarified and relatively easily tidied up. Rather, we are dealing with substantive, long-term differences that, at the formal level, are not going to be resolved for the foreseeable future. It is important to recognize this while also recognizing that on the ground within the traditions there can be considerable diversity of opinion, with faithful members exploring what possibilities for eventual change might actually lie open.

On account, however, of the ecumenically game-changing nature of these ‘hardwood’ issues at the formal level, a different, third-phase strategy is required: one aimed less at short-term harmonization and reconciliation (cf. the second-phase dialogues) and aimed more at long-term mutual challenge, development, and growth by bringing the traditions into encounter with each other precisely in their difference. This third-phase strategy needs to be aimed less at asking what it is that another tradition needs to understand better about one’s own tradition and to be aimed instead at asking what it is that one’s own tradition has to learn and needs to learn from the other traditions. Just such a counter-intuitive third phase ecumenical strategy has been developed in recent years under the title of Receptive Ecumenism, guided both by theological principle and by pragmatic insight.

Receptive Ecumenism: Opening a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism

The operative theological conviction is that if the call to full, visible communion is indeed a gospel imperative that shares in the reconciling work of the Triune God, then while the formal ecumenical journey might now be facing fresh challenges, this should not be mistaken either for arrival at the end of the road or for an insuperable roadblock. In Christian understanding, God does...
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not manoeuvre us into corners and blind alleys in order to prod us with a stick for sport; rather, God can be trusted to be faithful to God’s call and to provide the resources necessary to live that call fruitfully in any given context. Similarly, hope, unlike optimism, is not a form of reality denial that ignores the reality of apparent roadblocks in order to stay buoyant; on the contrary, hope takes reality seriously in all its problematic aspects and asks how the churches are resourced to live in the face of and through the roadblocks in question.

Receptive Ecumenism maintains that while the second-phase ecumenical concern to move as directly as possible to the harmonious reconciliation of apparently contradictory theological frameworks has, at least for the time being, now run as far as it can on many fronts—particularly so in the case of the more mature dialogues—this should not be taken as returning us to the first-phase ecumenism, where all that is possible is to attend to the quality of relationship, shared prayer, and witness between divided traditions. Abidingly important as such first-phase ecumenism undoubtedly remains, there must also be something more: there must be an appropriate means of continuing to walk towards and to live in anticipation of the reality of full communion.

For Receptive Ecumenism, this third way is to take seriously the gospel call to continual renewal and conversion at the heart of Christian life, and to view the churches collectively as each being on a long-term path to ecclesial renewal and growth in the face of the other: as being in a state, as Martin Luther would put it, of *semper reformandi* or, as Vatican II’s Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, puts it, of *semper purificanda*. In this perspective, the longer-term ecumenical journey on which the Christian churches are embarked, and the recalibration of ecumenical expectation that this promotes, is not a matter of failure and judgment. It is a consequence of the softwood having been passed and the hardwood now being engaged. It is a time of grace for growth towards the goal by the only route possible: that of patient, grace-filled learning of how each is called to grow to a new place where new things become possible. The fig tree is being given the additional year it requires if it is to bear fruit.

Complementing and reinforcing these theological convictions at work in Receptive Ecumenism are some equally important pragmatic insights and principles. Key here is the recognition that during the same period that the churches have come to see the fulfilment of the ecumenical goal as being on a slower track than once envisaged, they have also come to—or have had forced upon them by external circumstances—more sober appraisals of their own respective wounds, difficulties, and needs. Each tradition has specific characteristic difficulties and limitations that are open to view and that can become impossible to ignore, but which the tradition in question can be incapable of resolving from its own existing resources. Think, for instance, of the widespread public recognition across the full range of Catholic opinion by the time of the election of Pope Francis that systemic pathologies around excessive centralism and a decadent bureaucracy needed to be addressed. Seeking to resolve such pathologies using existing internal resources is like a hamster running on a wheel: there might be a sense of movement, but no real progress is being made. On the contrary, the existing pathological logic is simply being reinforced. There is, consequently, a need for refreshment and renewal from without, from the alternative logics and ecclesial experiences of other traditions. This in turn is a dynamic process that will take each tradition to new places, in the first place for their own respective health and flourishing, but by so doing also opening up currently unforeseeable fresh possibilities for their own relating.

At the heart, then, of Receptive Ecumenism is the assumption that any further formal progress to-
wards the abiding ecumenical goal of full structural and sacramental unity will only be possible if each tradition moves from asking how other traditions need to change and focuses instead on its own difficulties and tensions and consequent need to learn, or receive, from the best discernible practice and associated understanding in other traditions. This reflects a move away from ideal theorized, purely doctrinally driven ecclesiological constructs in ecumenical dialogue and a definite move towards taking the lived reality of traditions absolutely seriously, together with the difficulties and problems, tensions and contradictions to be found there.

The general tendency, of course, is to seek to hide such wounds, and most certainly to hide them from those outside the family circle. Consequently, too much ecumenical engagement is a matter of getting the best china tea service out: of showing ourselves somewhat formally in the best possible light to our distant relatives who are coming to visit rather than allowing the more warts-and-all self-understanding we keep locked behind the closed doors of the intimate family space to come into view. In contrast, rather than the ecumenism of the best china tea service, Receptive Ecumenism represents an ecumenism of the wounded hands: of being prepared to show our wounds to each other, knowing that we cannot heal or save ourselves; knowing that we need to be ministered to in our need from another’s gift and grace; and trusting that as in the Risen Lord in whose ecclesial body these wounds exist, they can become sites of our redemption, jewels of transformed ecclesial existence.

This humble yet hopeful spirit of Receptive Ecumenism resonates strongly with Pope Francis’s recent exhortation during this year’s Octave of Prayer for Christian Unity:

> It is good to acknowledge the grace with which God blesses us and, even more so, to find in other Christians something of which we are in need, something that we can receive as a gift from our brothers and our sisters. The Canadian group that prepared the prayers for this Week of Prayer has not invited the communities to think about what they can give their Christian neighbours, but has exhorted them to meet to understand what all can receive from time to time from the others. This requires something more. It requires much prayer, humility, reflection and constant conversion. Let us go forward on this path, praying for the unity of Christians, so that this scandal may cease and be no longer with us.²

### Case Studies in Receptive Ecumenical Engagement

High rhetoric indeed, but what might all this look like in practice? Various initiatives in Receptive Ecumenism have taken root and developed in different contexts around the world. The first Receptive Ecumenism project focused on an international research colloquium in January 2006 at Ushaw College, Durham, marking the confer-ral by the University of an honorary doctorate on Cardinal Walter Kasper. An international team was invited to explore, test, and develop the basic thinking at work in Receptive Ecumenism and, reflecting both the self-critical principle at the heart of the strategy and the specificity of the host tradition, to apply this thinking to exploring how Roman Catholicism might, with integrity, be fruitfully reimagined in the light of its ecumenical others. Further, reflecting the concern not just to theorize about the Church but to diagnose

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and address problems in its actual lived structures, systems, and practices, alongside the predictable mix of theologians, ecumenists, and ecclesiastics, the colloquium also drew together a critical complement of social scientists, organizational experts, and local church practitioners. The revised papers and additional commissioned essays were published in 2008 under the title *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism*.

In turn, extending the concern beyond Catholicism to explore what Receptive Ecumenism might look like in relation to specific traditions, the Second Receptive Ecumenism International Conference in January 2009 (again at Ushaw College, Durham) under the title “Receptive Ecumenism and Ecclesial Learning: Learning to Be Church Together,” invited as broad a range as possible of representatives of ecclesial traditions to engage in the exercise of self-critical receptive ecclesial learning from their ‘others.’ At time of writing, the mature results of this exercise, together with other commissioned pieces, are still in preparation for formal publication.

While these first two conference-based projects delivered the fundamental thinking and basic strategy of Receptive Ecumenism and tested it out in relation to specific ecclesial traditions—and sought, moreover, to do so in a way that took account of the socio-cultural and organizational realities of these traditions, rather than simply treating them as theorized doctrinal realities—the analyses they each pursued nevertheless tended to operate at somewhat refined levels. As such, they each highlighted the complementary need for a much more practically focused project that would examine the relevance, viability, and on-the-ground implications of Receptive Ecumenism at the level of local church life.

This recognition issued in a multi-year regional comparative research project in Receptive Ecumenism and the Local Church, involving the nine major Christian denominational groupings to be found in the northeast of England, working with a multi-disciplinary team of ecclesiologists; practical theologians; sociologists and anthropologists of religion; organizational, human resource, and financial experts (Durham University Business School); church educationalists; ecumenical officers; and other local church practitioners. The purpose was to examine how respective difficulties and sticking points in the organizational cultures, structures, and processes of each of the participant church traditions, from regional to congregational levels, might fruitfully be addressed by learning from, or receiving, examples of ‘best practice’ in the other traditions. The practical and the organizational act here as portals into the theological rather than the other way around: asking first how the specific difficulties and limitations of one tradition might be tended to by learning and receiving from what is strong in the others and then subjecting these possibilities to rigorous ecclesiological testing against the terms of the relevant host tradition.

To pursue this end, three research teams have focused respectively on Governance and Finance, Ministry and Leadership, and Learning and Formation. First, each team conducted a mapping of what is happening, in principle, within each denominational grouping, drawing upon extant documentation, formal ecclesiological self-understanding, and regulations, together with some initial interviews. Second, the teams conducted more detailed empirical testing, through structured interviews, questionnaires, focus groups, and participant observation. Third, a series of congregational studies explored how these interrelated issues work in the round. Fourth, for each denominational grouping, all the findings deriving from earlier phases were then integrated into a report identifying strengths and difficulties—and areas of potential receptive learning from the gifts and strengths of one or more of the other groupings.
Fifth, these constructive proposals in turn are being subjected to further rigorous testing at the three levels of *internal, extensive* and *pragmatic coherence*: examining whether a particular tradition’s ecclesiological self-understanding can indeed be expanded and rewoven with integrity in order to accommodate the new insight and practice, while retaining all that is essential in the host tradition (albeit potentially transposed and reworked).

This formal study in the possibilities that are open at the level of the local church for receptive ecumenical learning is certainly yielding some significant findings and possibilities. That said, it needs be acknowledged that one of its limitations is the way in which its being led by a high-powered team of professional theologians and social scientists can appear to confine the process of receptive ecumenical learning to the level of the experts and to disenfranchise the ‘ordinary’ churchgoer. With this, for all the active partnership that was cultivated with each of the participant traditions, the fact that the project has operated somewhat along the lines of an external consultancy model has militated to some degree against achieving strong ownership of the project’s resulting findings by the respective traditions.

Consequently, what is really required in order to test the relevance of Receptive Ecumenism at the level of local church life is not a further series of such high-level, relatively externally conducted studies, but a series of self-initiated self-help projects wherein church members in a diverse range of contexts ask themselves where the specific difficulties in their own tradition lie and how they might fruitfully learn in these regards, with appropriate testing, from other traditions. It is pleasing to note that a considerable number of just such ‘bottom-up’ local initiatives in Receptive Ecumenism have now arisen in a wide variety of contexts around the world, each of which would repay careful study.

Shifting attention, however, for now from such local initiatives in potential receptive ecumenical learning and onto the formal, international level of bilateral dialogue, it is significant that the third major phase of work of the Anglican–Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC III) committed at its first meeting to pursuing its mandated joint focus on the church local and universal and on ethical discernment in receptive ecumenical mode. This is requiring a very challenging move away from the refined articulation of theorized, doctrinally driven accounts and towards also asking after the lived experience of decision making in each tradition and the real difficulties and tensions to be found there. In keeping also with the principle of pragmatic coherence briefly indicated earlier, these difficulties and tensions are being used as means of probing and testing the theorized accounts and identifying key areas for potentially fruitful receptive learning from the other. In proceeding in this way, ARCIC III is making no claim to being able to overcome at this point the very deep meta-differences in decision-making structures and processes that pertain between Roman Catholicism and Anglicanism. That would be utterly unrealistic. What it is seeking to do instead is to focus honestly on respective difficulties within the traditions as these arise in the experience of the concrete church and to make some kind of progress, albeit doubtless more modest than might once have been hoped for.

Finally, intentionally gathering all such practical initiatives thus far in Receptive Ecumenism at a variety of levels and from within a considerable range of contexts, the Third Receptive Ecumenism International Conference will take place at Fairfield University, Connecticut, from June 9 to 12, 2014, on the theme “Receptive Ecumenism in

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International Perspective: Contextual Ecclesial Learning.” The dual aim is: 1) to gather the total family of those who, in a wide variety of ways and contexts, have been putting Receptive Ecumenism to work in order that they might share on good practice and so contribute to the ongoing development of Receptive Ecumenism; and 2) to invite others into engaging this story and its potential in the hope that they might in turn be inspired to put it to work in their own contexts.4

Conclusion

The argument here, then, is that while second-phase ecumenism might still have important work to do in the context of relatively young ecumenical dialogue processes, where misunderstandings and prejudicial attitudes can still prevail, Receptive Ecumenism offers a constructive way ahead where such dialogues have run out of steam. Receptive Ecumenism starts with humble recognition of the wounds, tears, and difficulties in one’s own tradition and asks how the particular and different gifts, experiences, and ways of proceeding in the other traditions can speak to and help to heal these wounds that elude the capacity of one’s own tradition to heal itself.

I have argued that this way of reparative receptive ecumenical learning—this way of refreshment and ressourcement by and through the separated other—is the only way in which the currently divided traditions can walk towards full structural, ministerial, sacramental communion and their own healing together. As such, Receptive Ecumenism sets each tradition on an openended journey, both towards its own healing and greater flourishing and to coming to recognize itself in the other, the other in itself, and each as bound together in the fullness of Christ and the Spirit.

This is not a journey of return to any imagined uniformity. It is not a matter of the absorption of the many into a great undifferentiated unity. It is, rather, a journey towards the particularity of each coming to full flourishing and shining in all its particular glory. The wholeness, the full communion, of full catholicity thus understood is like the fully decked, fully illuminated Christmas tree—or like a polyphonal choir singing in harmony—in which each unique ornament, each distinct voice, is needed for the whole. It is in service of such greater ecclesial flourishing in communion and the resulting collective shining of the church in the world—called to be Lumen Gentium, light to the nations—that the reparative, critical-constructive task of ecumenical ecclesiology is properly pursued.

4 For information on the conference, see: http://www.fairfield.edu/academics/schoolscolegecenters/academiccenters/centerforcatholicstudies/otherevents/conference.
Ecumenical Creeds and Denominational Confessions in the Reformed Tradition

Guy Liagre

Many Christians miss out on God encounters because they are satisfied with good theology. Today’s Christianity is directly affected by what earlier Christians chose to do and to believe. At the same time, historical creeds and confessions tend to generate a certain uneasiness as to their status in the churches of the Reformed tradition. One of the reasons is that it is characteristic of Reformed theology to be in constant search for a Reformed identity and to define this identity time and again. But it’s not the only reason. Consensus in doctrinal matters is becoming more the exception than the rule among Christians in the western world. The ongoing erosion of ecclesial commitment and the rise of exogenic religious convictions play an important role in this process. They generate weak identities and paradoxical religious practices among Christians. Religious faith feeding on tradition becomes vulnerable when it is no longer supported by collective plausibility structures. The consequences will soon be felt. Participation in Sunday worship and the ‘rites of passage’ will peter out. Religious convictions embodied in church doctrines and traditions such as creeds and confessions will decline. In short, the legitimacy and pertinence of any form of church discourse becomes questionable. This is the case not only for the Reformed tradition but for all historic churches in the western world. Religious identities lose their specific content across any confessional boundaries.

An ever greater discrepancy tends to grow between formulated doctrine and the actual belief of the faithful. In socio-psychological terms, one could call this ‘partial differentiation’. It involves both the partial inclusion and the partial exclusion of particular elements of inherited doctrine. This process has implications for the interpretation of creeds and confessions. It points to the need for fundamental hermeneutical reflection about the role the creeds and confessions can still play in order to give any ‘accounting for the hope that is in us’ (1 Pet 3:15), as the motto of the Belgic Confession reads.

Accounting for the Hope....

It is an essential characteristic of the church of all times to commit confessional acts to paper. As soon as it is fixed, however, an historic confession always needs to be handed down and interpreted. It calls for a process of interpretation vis-

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1 Justin Holcomb, *Know the creeds and councils* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan: 2014), 9.
3 ‘Exogenic’ expressions of faith are theories and images not derived from one’s own tradition.
4 The Belgic Confession, written in 1561, owes its origin to the need for a clear and comprehensive statement of Reformed faith during the time of the Spanish inquisition in the Lowlands. Guido de Brès, its primary author, was pleading for understanding and toleration from King Philip II of Spain who was determined to root out all Protestant factions in his jurisdiction. Hence, this confession takes pains to point out the continuity of Reformed belief with that of the ancient Christian creeds, as well as to differentiate it from Catholic belief (on the one hand), and from Anabaptist teachings (on the other). Andreas J. Beck and Peter J. Tomson, eds, *The Belgic Confession at 450: Papers read at the international symposium held in Brussels 27-28 November 2011 at the occasion of the 450th anniversary of the Confessio Belgica*, Analecta Bruxellensia 15 (Maastricht: Shaker Media, 2012).
à-vis the situation in which it is embedded, thus transcending its historical limitations, as is the case with the Apostles’ Creed—which is an expansion of the Old Roman Creed. The first known occurrence of the Apostles’ Creed, in a form that is nearly equivalent to its final form, is in the Latin tract *De singulis libris canonicos scarpapsus* by the monk Priminius (sometimes spelled ‘Pirminius’) from the early eighth century. The process by which the Old Roman Creed became the Apostles’ Creed cannot be exhaustively known, though creeds that are practically identical with the Apostles’ Creed began to appear in South Gaul in the fifth century. Over the next few centuries, the Apostles’ Creed in its final form gained acceptance throughout France and Germany. It was officially recognised by Charlemagne throughout the Frankish Empire in the early ninth century, and was eventually incorporated into the liturgy of the Church of Rome. The process of its finalisation was a long one. During its reception in following generations, the phrase ‘He descended into hell’ was a late addition. This phrase, based on one interpretation of 1 Pet 3:19, is commonly understood as a reference to the ‘harrowing of hell’. The phrase is first mentioned by Rufinus in the late fourth century, and does not appear in any other versions of the creed until AD 650. Rufinus himself notes that the clause ‘is not added in the Creed of the Roman Church’. We learn from it that whoever declares to be in statu confessionis and to be looking for adequate, contemporary formulations of belief, needs to be very aware why the inherited formulae do or do not satisfy. The communication of faith which passes through religious expressions of the past testifies at least to the traces God’s Spirit leaves in history. Conversely, a mere uncritical repeating of ancient creeds and confessions can also imply a betrayal of the gospel. This insight should be made understandable in its relevance for the actual situation in church and society.

**Creed and Confession**

It is important to emphasise that, in order to understand what follows, a distinction has to be made between ‘creed’ and ‘confession’. Ecumenical ‘creeds’ are part of the community liturgy. Creeds aren’t dogmas that are imposed on Scripture but are themselves drawn from the Bible and provide the touchstone to the faith for Christians of all times and places. Creeds distinguish orthodoxy from heresy (or Christian faith from non-Christian faith). Confessions have a different function. Confessions distinguish denominational distinctives (or one type of Christian faith from another). That’s why, contrary to the Orthodox Church, the divided Western Church makes the distinction between ‘symbol’ (creeds) and ‘dogma’ (confessions). Confessions are denominational distinctives and represent a more detailed sketch than the creeds. Denominations formed confessions in order to address

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7 I leave aside in this article the role of catechisms. A catechism is a book or document giving a brief summary of the basic principles of Christianity in Q&A form. Catechisms represent the practical, ‘on-the-ground’ application of the main teaching agreed upon at church councils and expressed through creeds and confessions. The word ‘catechism’ comes from the Greek word *kat-echein*, which means ‘to teach’ or ‘to instruct.’ Catechisms are basic outlines of the teachings of the Christian faith, set forth in a way that those unfamiliar with doctrine can easily understand. Holcomb Justin, *Know the creeds and councils*, 17–20.

8 Ibid., 13.
immediate needs and concerns of the time. Such statements include the following (in chronological order): the Arminian Confession (Dutch Arminian, 1621); the Dordrecht Confession (Dutch Anabaptist, 1632); the First and Second Helvetic Confessions (Swiss Lutheran, 1536 and 1562); the Westminster Confession (English Presbyterian, 1646); The Confessions of Trent (Italian Roman Catholic, 1545-63); the La Rochelle Confession of Faith, also called the Gallican Confession (French Reformed, 1559); the Scots Confession (Church of Scotland, 1560); the Belgic Confession (Reformed, 1561); the Thirty-nine Articles (Anglican, 1563); the Accra Confession (Reformed, 2004); the Confession of Belhar (Reformed, 1986).

The three symbols of faith (the creeds)—the Apostolicum, the Niceno-Constantinopolitanum and the Athanasian—have their place in the liturgy and worship services. The other writings fulfill their own service within, and even outside, the church, in helping Christians to give an ‘account of the hope which is in us’ (1 Peter 3:15). Even though congregations may not recite confessions on a given Sunday, they still play an important role in the life of the church. Confessions help a denomination to maintain doctrinal unity. They are meant to be worshipful responses to a truly gracious God. As an example, I refer to the Confessio Belgica (the Belgic Confession).

The name of this Confession makes clear to the reformed churches that it is difficult, if not impossible, to understand who we are apart from our own unique national story. It was written by Guido de Brès, in a time when Protestants were accused by their enemies of being subversive citizens. In order to be sure that his confession would be sent to the king, a parcel which contained the Confession was thrown inside the city walls of Tournai on the morning of 2nd November 1561. The governor, Margaret of Parma, was immediately informed and decided upon an intensive investigation. The author was captured in 1567 and executed the same year. In this concrete situation, martyrdom can function as a ‘meta-narrative’ for the Belgic Confession. Explicit mention is made of the false church and its persecution of the godly. In more recent times, as an ‘outcry of faith’ and ‘call for faithfulness and repentance’, the Belhar Confession was written during the struggle against apartheid in South Africa in 1986. It was used as a status confessionis concerning apartheid, stating that the truth of the gospel was at stake. In this case, martyrdom clearly functions as a ‘meta-narrative’ for the Confession. It is now one of the ‘standards of unity’ of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA) and several other denominations, such as the United Protestant Church in Belgium. As a result of this reception, the implications of the Belhar Confession are far wider than its original context.

Confessio, Credo, Doctrina

At this stage, we have to make a distinction between the act of confession (confessio), the content of the confession (credo), and the formal expression of the confession (doctrina). Doctrine constitutes only the end of the process. What is fundamental, as is illustrated in the examples of the Belgic and the Belhar Confessions, is the confessio, the act of confessing. Confessions set out to apply the faith to the here and now. When one thinks of the importance of confessions for the life of the churches, the question should be how the church might be able to receive, reformulate and hand down an act of confession which has been fixed in an historical situation. In the background, there is also the question of the church’s relationship with the past. What value and place do we allocate to the historical experience of faith which has produced the confessions? Christians of the past were no less concerned with being faithful to God than we are. But we have to take into account the difficulty of untangling the

9 Ibid., 16.
language of the church of the past. We also have
to consider the question of how we look at the
future through the lenses of the past as it is crys-
tallised in the confessions. Back in 1967, the
Faith and Order Commission of the WCC had al-
ready stressed the need not just of a formal
study of our creeds and confessions, but also the
need to link up with their content.10 And in 1971,
the Faith and Order Commission asked: “Must
we not try to achieve a common formulation of
that hope which is the very essence of the
Church’s identity in this world? (...) Must we not
try to formulate the centre from which we begin,
the source by which we live, (...) a coherent ac-
count of the hope that is in us?”11

Challenges

The challenges of interpreting the confessions
are well known: an accelerated process of secu-
larisation; radical changes in moral standards;
economic, social and religious globalisation; a
changed relationship with nature and the envi-
ronment; and finally, the new challenges pre-
sented by ethnic, religious and cultural tensions
which cast their shadow over peace in the world.
It becomes clear, in confrontation with these
challenges, that an historical confession is an in-
terpretation of the faith with an eye to the future,
but it is not the last word. Confessions such as
the French Confession of La Rochelle, the Belgic
Confession, the Helvetic Confession or the Bel-
har Confession are carrying signs of the contin-
gencies of place and time. It needs to be taken
into account that the content of these confes-
sions (credo) and the formal expression of the
confessions (doctrina) are only the rule (regula)
for the act of confession (confessio) in a concrete
time and situation. In its tradition (i.e. in its
transmission of faith), the church can never ap-
peal to an objectively determined treasure, since
confessions are not only about matters of con-
tent of faith, but about being alone with the
Alone (solus cum Solo). In time of struggle, con-
fessions point to religion as a transformative
force. And lived religion often finds itself at an
existential distance from the fixed and transmit-
ted texts. Being religious—I am writing from a
Reformed perspective and this is the heart of the
Reformation—is a matter of individuality in
communion. The Belgic Confession declares
without hesitation: ‘We believe that (...) no one
ought to withdraw from this holy congregation,
content to be by himself, regardless of his state
or condition.’ In Reformed circles, it was empha-
sised that the community with Christ obliges be-
lievers to maintain communion with one an-
other. From this perspective, believers cannot
remain on their own. Believing is, first, an indi-
vidual matter (I am standing before my Creator),
and then a matter of the community (we stand
together before our Creator). It’s a question of
‘believing and belonging’, to use the terminology
coinined by the British sociologist Grace Davie in
the 1990s. The heart of the confessions is not a
general theory on the unutterable. It is the ex-
pression of someone’s personal relationship
with God who, at the same time, acts within and
in the name of the Reformed community. One’s
experience of faith generates a confession char-
acterised by ‘unicity in communion’. Precisely
for this reason, the old Confession can still be a
beacon and signboard for the life of the church
and serve to build, strengthen and deepen the
community of the faithful. For believers, the con-
fessions are making an appeal to personal faith
and conscience without dictating the precise
shape these should take.

Confession and *koinonia*

If Reformed tradition includes a specific ‘contextual sensitivity’, a confessional bond has to prevent her from biased contextualism as a weapon against a holistic ecumenism. Confessionality and ecumenicity are not mutually exclusive but complementary. The motto of Reformed faith is ‘unity in diversity’, including and not excluding others. Also, the *ecclesia Reformata* never intended to teach ‘special themes’. She wanted to present (as is expressed in the confessions), in her existence, the *ecclesia catholica*. Confession is not simply the declaration and adherence of doctrinal statements. It is also their implementation and the lived reality in *koinonia*. A shared profession of faith requires *koinonia*, just as *koinonia* requires a common profession of faith. In the words of Lucas Vischer: “There is a correspondence between lived community and confession. The community is not just the front of the current confession but also its condition.”

Referring to the confessions from the sixteenth century, it has to be emphasised that the Protestant Reformation sought the restoration and revitalisation of the apostolic faith of the early church. There is no doubt that, in keeping with the humanist principle of *ad fontes*, the sixteenth-century reformer John Calvin read widely in the early Church Fathers like Tertullian, Cyprian, Chrysostom and, above all, Augustine, even if they were only subsidiary authorities. In the first place, Reformed confessions refer to the Scriptures. They encourage preaching, adopting the early Christian symbols, elaborating on them and thus turning them back into personal and communal confessions. The goal of all this was to think God’s thoughts after him, as his image-bearers, as analogues.

Scripture and Confession

A very important Reformed topic is the unconditional subordination of tradition and doctrine to the Bible. Only Scripture is *norma normans* (a normalising norm). The confession is *norma normata* (a normed norm). The Reformed tradition adheres, as the Confessio Belgica indicates in Article 7, to the Protestant principle that no human writing, no matter how holy their authors may have been, can be put above the truth of God, for truth is above anything else: ‘We believe that these Holy Scriptures fully contain the will of God, and that whatsoever man ought to believe unto salvation, is sufficiently taught therein. For since the whole manner of worship which God requires of us is written in them at large, it is unlawful for any one, though an Apostle, to teach otherwise than we are now taught in the Holy Scriptures: nay, though it were an angel from heaven, as the Apostle Paul says. For since it is forbidden to add unto or take away any thing from the Word of God, it doth thereby evidently appear that the doctrine thereof is most perfect and complete in all respects. Neither may we compare any writings of men, though ever so holy, with those divine Scriptures.’ This was also made clear in the section report on reformed identity, theology and communion presented at the Constitutive Assembly of World Communion of Reformed Churches in Grand Rapids (2010): ‘As churches also informed by creedal and confessional documents that summarise our understanding of Scripture, we submit our own traditions and ambitions to constant reformation by the Spirit as we live as followers of Jesus Christ in ever-changing cultures (*Ecclesia reformata semper reformanda*—the Reformed church always has to be reforming).’

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No Confessional Agreement

Within the Reformed family, there is no agreement on the role of confessions. The Swiss Reformed Church has no creed of its own. The Reformed Church in the Czech Republic has four or five basic confessions. The United Protestant Church in Belgium has no formal confession but a declaration of faith, confessing faith in the tradition of a plurality of confessions (such as the Belgic Confession and the Confession of Belhar). In general, there is a ‘fluid relationship’ between Reformed confession and tradition. On a broader scale, a lot of Reformed churches prefer to base their theology only on the ecumenical creeds of the early church and definitely not on the confessions of the Reformation, as though only the ecumenical creeds could contain the catholic Christian truth, not the Reformed confessions. ‘It’s pride that pulls the country down,’ said Shakespeare. But is it pride to have Reformed confessions?

Confessions semper reformanda

No-one can ever step into the same river twice, because the second time both will have changed. That being said, Reformed theology is reforming theology and confessional writings are not seen as rigid formulae. Being faithful to the Reformed tradition does not mean repeating past formulae. For Reformed churches, tradition is a guide and not a jailer. Discussing confessions, discovering their power for today, and in the process, restating them in fresh and evocative terms, is crucial in order to be a proper guide to faith here and now. Critical reflection on their role in relation to societal developments is essential. I mentioned earlier the Belgic Confession. The theocratic vision of Calvin clearly influenced Article 36. The Belgic Confession says that it is the task of the state to care for and watch over the public domain—that would be the ‘normal’ task of the state. At the same time, however, the confession emphasises the task of the state to uphold the sacred ministry. The state has to do so, with a view to removing and destroying all idolatry and false worship of the Antichrist and to promoting the kingdom of Jesus Christ. The end is that God may be honoured and served by everyone, as he requires in his Word. It sounds very different from our actual situation, and the wording of this sixteenth-century confession could lead to a strange conclusion. Is it really the task of a non-IS government in 2016 to destroy all idolatry and false worship of the Antichrist? Is it really the role of the state to further the kingdom of Christ and the preaching of the gospel? The Rezeptionsgeschichte (history of the reception) of this confession was marked by a gravamen (a grievance) to the Synod, with the Dutch Calvinists protesting against this sentence that had been removed in Holland before the beginning of the twentieth century.

This kind of contextualisation, reflecting on and retranslating the confessions in their actual context, is a challenge for Reformed theology and for Reformed churches. I say this because theological reflection, as the example of the Confessio Belgica shows, can foster a broad discussion about the essentials of reformed tradition, theology and faith. In the case of the Confessio Belgica, we speak about the relationship with, and the responsibility of, the state in political questions concerning religion.

The Contextualisation of Confessions

After the sixteenth century, the adoption of a new confession became a rare event in the life of the Reformed churches. The Belhar Confession is an exception. Both within and outside South

Africa, churches reacted to this new Confession. The United Protestant Church in Belgium was the first European church to adopt it. But the fundamental question in the United Protestant Church in Belgium was—and is—how, in the twenty-first century, may an African confession speak to Europeans in a totally different context? Reinterpreting Belhar through its three middle articles—unity, reconciliation and justice—can help us, but it is still a difficult exercise. The articles relate the Confession to contemporary issues like gender rights, HIV/AIDS and economic justice. To understand the ‘no’ of the Confession, Piet Naudé—in his book *Neither Calendar nor Clock*—analyses the theological ideology against which Belhar witnessed. He offers an astute inside look at the contemporary Belhar Confession, which arose out of the struggle against apartheid. Naudé describes the Confession as a ‘protest confession’ and draws out the link between Belhar and the apostolic faith of the ancient Nicene Creed. In so doing, he tries to relate Creed and Confession. His basic question is how Reformed theology can expose itself to continual renewal, without falling into the cultural stress of innovation?

The Reformed Identity

Reformed theology affirms and embodies characteristics concerning man’s place in God’s world. Covenantal theology provides a framework by which the reformed see holistic connections in God’s unfolding plan of salvation, to which they are called to witness. The Reformed identity expresses appreciation for God’s gift of grace. From this perspective, Christian identity is a matter of being caught up in the mighty acts of God that are unfolding in the world today. Reformed Christians consider themselves as being in the world but not from the world. Zwingli and Calvin apparently considered it a worse mistake to isolate the gospel from secular thought. They contributed to the rise of humanism, translated into modern secular thought... The earliest Reformers focused on God’s transcendence as a reaction to the prevailing over-emphasis on God’s immanence. Modern thinkers have striven for more balance between the two. God still remains ‘beyond’ the world and should not be confused with it, yet ‘all space is sacred because the world crackles with the rationality of God’s providential ordering’, as Calvin stated. Reformed spirituality is about social concern, political life and a vocation that is engaged in the world. By letting God be God in his transcendence and immanence, humans can discover him in every arena of life, not simply at worship on Sundays. Reformed theology is in search of theological realism rooted in the Scriptures and Confessions, and challenged by its context, is instructed by the Bible to explore a positive notion of an open secularity that permits us to respect our religiously plural as well as secular contemporary situation, standing together in common faith, spirituality and action.

15 Piet Naudé, *Neither Calendar Nor Clock: Perspectives on the Belhar Confession* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), xix.
Translating God(s)
From World Mission to Interreligious Witness

Norbert Hintersteiner

Thanks to the work of numerous scholars of Christian missions and experts in related disciplines, we now realize that Christianity is not the exclusive possession of the white man or peoples of the Western world. In two recent books, *The Next Christendom* and the *New Faces of Christianity*, the American historian and religious scholar Philip Jenkins has vividly traced the origins, growth and diversity of Christianity in the Global South.¹ Jenkins is certainly not the first person to present and discuss Christianity’s demographic shift to the South and its consequences. Similar observations have been made for decades by scholars and historians of Christian missions working in the area of global Christianity.²

The academic literature on the shift of Christianity to the Global South, complete with demographic statistics, confirms that the landscape of ‘World Christianity’ has indeed dramatically changed. This raises a number of questions for the future development of Christianity worldwide: What theoretical context and framework best explains the changes resulting from this shift in global Christianity? What variety of ‘Christianities’ do we actually find today in the North as well as the South? What is the situation of Christian communities locally? Christianity is developing at an enormously rapid pace: how and in what direction will it develop, in the South as well as globally? All these questions are of course matters of controversy and disputed claims abound; in any case, no single approach is likely to be entirely satisfactory, since the situation and the paradigms for explaining and interpreting it, change very rapidly.³

In the following, I will concentrate on a narrower but related question: What does the shift of Christianity from the North to the South mean for missiology and the study of non-European theologies? In this new situation, which missiological approaches and paradigms are heuristically useful and offer perspective for the future?

Roughly speaking—in order to simplify the situation and limit my scope—the shift of Christianity to the Global South offers a three-fold intercultural challenge: First, it is a recognition that the Christian faith is at home in an every greater number of cultures and that it is increasingly non-Western in character. Or, as the missiologist

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Lamin Sanneh of Yale University has said, “Christianity as a truly world religion [is] increasingly defined by the values and idioms of non-Western cultures and languages.” Indeed, one may speak of the ‘browning’ of Christianity as it becomes more global and indigenous to the cultures of the southern hemisphere. Second, whereas the demographic growth of Christianity in the southern and eastern hemispheres is enormous, unlike in the West, Christians are still a minority in these areas in comparison with members of the religions of Asia and Islam. The Christians who have lived in a cultural and religious world dominated by other religions, bring a more intensive experience of inter-religious interaction to global Christianity and a different theological approach to religious pluralism than in the West. Third, as the missiologist and historian of religion Andrew Walls has noted, the study of non-European theology is essential for Christian faith and theology in the twenty-first century:

[T]he faith of the twenty-first century will require a devout, vigorous scholarship rooted in the soil of Africa, Asia and Latin America, [for] the majority of Christians are now Africans, Asians, Latin Americans, and Pacific Islanders... Christianity is now primarily a non-Western religion and on present indications will steadily become more so... The most urgent reason for the study of the religious traditions of Africa and Asia, of the Amerindian and the Pacific peoples, is their significance for Christian theology; they are the substratum of the Christian faith and life for the greater number of the Christians in the world.  

Given this three-fold intercultural challenge, I would argue that the shift of Christianity to the Global South requires a new orientation and a new paradigm of ‘interculturality’ for missiology and the study of non-European theologies. Or, expressed more modestly, intercultural and interreligious themes need to be moved to the forefront of missions.

Based on these considerations, I want to sketch a missiological perspective, in terms of the categories of ‘mission as cultural translation’ (section I) and ‘mission as an intercultural and interfaith witness’ (section II). Next, these two missiological categories will be illustrated with examples of Christian theologies in the Islamic and Indian worlds (section III). Finally, I will conclude by considering the implications of these reflections for understanding missiology as intercultural and comparative theology (section IV).

‘Found in Translation’: Mission as Cross-Cultural Translation

The theory of ‘translation’ has enjoyed a certain pride of place among the approaches adopted by missiologists since the 1980s and 1990s to conceptualise the intercultural dimension of missions, the history of missions and the expansion and reception of Christianity beyond the boarders of the European continent into numerous local languages and cultures of the Global South. By a theory of translation, I am not referring to the literal translation of texts—although this has played a central role in the history and strategy of Christian missions e.g. the many terminological disputes about the translation of the Bible into vernacular languages—but here the term is

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used in the broader sense of ‘cultural translation.’

**The theology of translation**

We can begin our reflections with a comment by Michael Sievernich:

In the case of Christianity, it is a matter of ‘translation’ into other cultures with all their linguistic, visual, artistic and other forms of expression. Christian missions do not occur through the imposition of a fixed cultural pattern, but rather involve the ‘translation’ of the gospel into different cultural patterns... At the heart of all translation is the primary translation of the written documents of the Christian proclamation i.e. the books of the original Hebrew and Greek Bible. ‘Translation’ here refers to the literary genres of the texts as well as their interpretation in various contexts, whereby it is important to take into account that the Christian message is always an amalgam of forms of cultural expression, so that any inter-religious encounter also has an intercultural character.

The theological basis for the translatability of the Christian message is the narrative of the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, which tells of the transcending of language barriers:

Then the assembled apostles “began to speak other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability” (Acts 2:4), so that, “from all nations” those gathered in Jerusalem for the Jewish Shavot could hear them in their own native languages and “Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs” said “we hear them speaking about God’s deeds of power in our own languages.” (Acts 2:11). The miracle of Pentecost attests that the Christian message is fundamentally addressed to all peoples and can be understood in all languages. In the history of Christian missions, theorists have reflected time and time again, in the light of the wealth of nations and languages, on the Pentecost miracle of language...

Recently, non-European theologians and missiologists have come to speak of the ‘translation of God into humanity’ and the resultant translatability of Christianity into a diversity of cultures. Authors who have adopted this approach include Andrew Walls, former missiologist of the

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8 Sievernich, *Die christliche Mission*, 189.

9 Ibid., 190.
University of Edinburgh and a number of his African students: including Lamin Sanneh, Professor of Missions and World Christianity at the Yale Divinity School; and the late Kwame Bediako, founder and director of the Akrofi-Christaller Memorial Centre for Mission Research and Applied Theology in Akropong-Akuapem, in Ghana.

In different ways, Lamin Sanneh and Kwame Bediako base their theological approaches on the ‘principle of translatability.’ In doing so, they describe the intercultural character of Christianity, present Christian missions as a phenomenon of cultural translation, and characterize the ‘translated’ Christianities that result. With regard to missions and the historiography of mission, they seek to draw attention to issues connected with the non-western reception of the faith: cultural assimilation, inculturation, indigenous theological developments, and religious pluralism.

Lamin Sanneh’s study *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture* is here one of the most profound theologies and histories of missions of its kind. In contrast to the Islamic concept of the ‘untranslatability’ of the Koran, based on the holiness of the Arabic language, he argues that the expansion of Christianity and its tendency toward cultural pluralism, is grounded in the principle of translatability. On this view, “missionaries became the agents of such cultural incubation of Christianity by exposing the message to new climates, believing that cultural differences, however deep and ancient, could not constitute impenetrable barriers against cross-cultural exchange...”

Andrew Walls adds more clearly theological accents to the concept of missionary translation; starting from the prologue of the Gospel of John, “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:4), he sees the divine act of translation as the beginning of salvation history, in terms of which the missionary re-creation of the faith in local languages is both founded and legitimated. According to Walls, the history of both Christian missions and Christianity as a whole is a re-creation of multiple renewed translations or new creations of the original act of divine translation, which precedes them all i.e. the Incarnation itself: “Divinity is translated into humanity, but into specific humanity, at home in specific segments of social reality. If the incarnation of the Son represents a divine act of translation, it is a prelude to repeated acts of translation as Christ fills the pleroma again—other aspects of social reality.”

The missionary encounter with other cultures and religions and the translation of the Christian message into regional idioms, has in turn, transformed Christianity. As a result of the missionary translation across languages and cultures, “[the Christian faith] is effectively expanded, put to new use, but the translated element from the source language has, also, in a sense, been expanded by translation, the receptor language...”

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has a dynamic of its own and takes the new material to realms it never touched in the source language.” 

Similarly, translation into local languages is “not about substitution, the replacement of something old by something new, but about transformation, the turning of the already existing to new account.” Since, according to Walls, the incarnation is necessarily connected with an understanding of Christian identity as a plurality, this has implications for the history of missions and church history.

In contrast to Walls, Bediako is more interested in the principle of translation for its liberating effects on non-western, indigenous, and particularly African theologies vis-à-vis western religious imperialism. The principle of translation is the basis for the development of genuinely indigenous Christian thought, “[because it is] in-built into the nature of the Christian religion and capable of subverting any cultural possessiveness of the Faith in the process of its transmission.” In view of the importance of indigenous churches, Bediako stresses that the starting point for missions is God’s own mission, the Missio Dei, which effects new appropriations, manifestations, and incarnations of the faith.

In conclusion, the theory and theology of translation introduced by Walls, Bediako and Sanneh for the history and theology of missions is an important interpretative paradigm for understanding the emergence of world Christianity and its pluriformity.

Non-Western theologies: World Christianity in cross-cultural translation

The concept of translation as developed by Sanneh, Walls and Bediko also allows us to understand recent developments in ‘non-European theologies’ as post-colonial cultural translations of Christianity. A number of developments can be subsumed under this heading.

Since the 1950s non-western theologians have become increasingly aware of major differences between their concerns and those of western academic theology. In the 1970s and 1980s this led them to formulate the differences between their questions and concerns and those of their counterparts in Europe and North America. Consequently, they also relied on a different set of theological resources. While western theology has relied primarily upon the discipline of philosophy, non-western theologies have turned to the cultural and social sciences to express their theological experience. Their preferred modes of thought are represented by cultural and social analysis, context-oriented concepts of religion and grassroots thinking.

A second formative influence upon non-western theologies has been various independence movements directed against Western colonial powers. As a result, theological developments were part of a larger movement of establishing the political identities of former Western colonies in Africa and Asia. The formative idea was that of the ‘third world’ i.e. states that were neither part of the ‘first world’ of western capitalism nor part of the ‘second world’ of socialist states. In this context, theologians had to steer a

14 Ibid.
path between independence from European colonial powers, on the one hand, and speaking with a united voice in the midst of cultural diversity of the newly formed nation states, on the other.

The concepts that soon developed to describe these theologies were ‘contextual theology’ or ‘local theology.’ These terms are meant to indicate that theology is inevitably influenced by cultural conditions. On their face, they simply refer to the fact that every theology operates within a specific historical, social and cultural context. The adjective ‘contextual’ refers to theologies that self-consciously reflect upon and embrace their cultural roots.

It is important to realize, in addition, that these theologies are actually indebted to a modern concept of culture dating back to Herder and the tradition of German Romanticism; on this view, culture is an organic unity of language, customs and national identity. Acknowledgement of their indebtedness to a romantic and organic concept of culture is not necessarily a criticism; it helped them assert their difference and particularity over against the universalistic claims of North American theologies. At the same time, this did not protect them from a certain degree of idealization, such that, in the long run, the conceptual frameworks they adopted were unable to keep pace with changing social and cultural realities.

In this regard, the encounter of these approaches with theologies of liberation and other ‘global flows’ was most certainly beneficial.

A further phase is the development of ‘post-colonial’ theologies. In this context, ‘post-colonial’ means at least two things: first, the attempt to deconstruct both the prevailing image of colonized peoples and cultures, as well as the interpretations of intellectuals living abroad who try to reconstruct their identities in ways that are often idealized and far removed from their country’s colonial past. As the turn of the century, post-colonial studies were being done in biblical studies and systematic theology.

The understanding of culture implicit in these theologies reflected an effort to develop a cultural identity and theology that reconstructs an intact pre-colonial identity which was stripped away during the period of colonial rule. On the other hand, these theologians are self-consciously aware of trying to create a ‘third cultural space’ between a lost and imagined past, and the inescapable burden of colonization.

Further reflection on non-European theologies of the twentieth-century in terms of the paradigm of translation is not only fruitful for missiological discourse—as works of Sanneh, Bediako and Walls show—but also for other developments in cultural studies, in the wake of post-colonialism and globalized concepts of culture.

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18 See: Schreiter, Constructing Local Theologies.
21 See: Homi Bhabha, The Location of Culture (London: Routledge, 1994).
22 See the overview by Bachmann-Medick, “Translational Turn.”
‘Translating God (s)’: Mission as Intercultural and Interfaith Witness

By presenting the theory and theology of translation, we have introduced a new model for missiology which should be able to give us a new perspective on the cultural diversity of global Christianity and the development of indigenous theologies. While the ‘principle of translation’ as developed by Walls, Bediako and Sanneh, is mainly a product of a critical and creative reflection on the transformation of Christianity in an African context, it can be applied more generally, in the service of broader theoretical interests, to the development of contextual and postcolonial non-European theologies.

In addition, one can raise the question whether the ‘principle of translation’ is also applicable to Christianity world-wide, particularly in contexts where the faith is not only translated into local modes of thought and culture, but where it has historically shared a common intercultural space with the languages and intellectual traditions of other world religions. The question is, how can one envision the missiological paradigm of cultural translation in contexts where Christian theology finds itself at the junction of the great world religions?

It will be useful at this point, first, to recall the context of the discovery of non-European Christianity from the perspective of the encounter with other world religions, in order, second, to test how the model of cultural translation can be applied concretely to cultural contexts where Islam or the religious traditions of India are formative, areas in which Christianity finds itself at the inter-cultural conjunction of the world’s great religions.

Religious multilingualism and interfaith witness

Among the younger generation of European Anglophone missiologists, the late David Kerr, Professor of Missiology and Ecumenics at the University of Lund and previously director of the Centre for the Study of Christianity in the Non-Western World at the University of Edinburgh, tirelessly spoke out for the special context of discovery of non-European Christianity and interreligious relations. He stated his views decisively in his essay “World Christianity and Interreligious Relations.”

Kerr begins by referring to the South African theologian David Bosch, whose important study Transforming Mission, influenced an entire generation of missiologists; Bosch argues for an ecumenical paradigm shift for missiology that emphasizes the importance of the theology of religion for missions. Referring to this, Kerr argues that there is an important cultural difference that leads North American and Asian theologians to react differently to the challenges of intercultural pluralism: while Christianity has grown dramatically in the southern and eastern hemispheres, Christians are often in the minority in these regions as compared with adherents of the religions of Asia and Islam. Kerr believes that this contextual difference is primarily responsible for the form taken by theologies of religion and the importance attributed to them.

In the West, Christian theologians think in an epistemological framework that has for centuries been deeply influenced by Christianity. In Africa and Asia this is simply not

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the case. Asian and African Christian theologians habitually undertake their work through conscious interaction with indigenous religious traditions that shape their societies. It is therefore not strange for them to identify themselves as religiously-hyphenated theologians who embrace what, in post-colonial jargon, is termed ‘cultural hybridity’: for example, the Buddhist-Christianity of the Japanese theologian, Kosuke Koyama, the Taiwanese theologian C.S. Song, or of Lynn de Silva and Aloysius Pieris in Sri Lanka; or the Confucian-Christianity that is being articulated by some Chinese and Korean Christian theologians; or the Hindu-Christianity of now three generations of Indian Christian theologians. African Christian theology has integrated many aspects of traditional African religion. Some contemporary Palestinian theologians identify themselves as Muslim by culture, Christian by faith.25

These non-European Christian theologians live religious pluralism in a manner that until recently had been inconceivable in the West. For them, religious pluralism has always been an empirical reality in their lives as well as in their theologies. As a result, the importance of the theology of religions is not simply a matter of theory, but it has a direct impact on the way these Christians, often a religious minority, relate to the dominant religious communities in Asian, Islamic and African societies. As a result, interreligious reconciliation and dialogue are often dominate theological and missiological themes, without thereby sacrificing the integrity of Christian thought or identity, e.g. by watering down the Christian message or subsuming it under a higher philosophical or mystical principle.

For example, the Pakistani theologian Charles Amjad Ali, argues for conceiving inter-religious dialogue as a process of interfaith witness, in which Muslims and Christians are invited to bring their respective understandings of truth—derived from the Word of God: whether as encountered in the Koran or in the person of Jesus in the Gospels—to bear on the common social, political and humanitarian challenges facing Pakistan.26 Here we might also mention the work of the Indian Christian theologian Felix Wilfred, in Tamil Nadu, southern India, where Christianity is involved on a daily basis in a complex and lively exchange with Hinduism.27

In such contexts, David Kerr claims missions involves more than the tension between Christian missions and interreligious dialogue: “Where pluralism is the given reality of society, as in most parts of Africa and Asia, and increasingly in the West, dialogue is no longer being understood merely as an enlightened means of mission, but as the nature of mission itself.”28

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25 Kerr, “World Christianity and Inter-Religious Relations,” 82.
28 Kerr, “World Christianity and Interreligious Relations,” 82.
'The Translated Message': Cultural Translation and Interfaith Witness

**Christian theology in the Islamic and Indian contexts**

In a religiously multi-lingual setting, mission, understood as cultural translation, becomes a process of intercultural and interfaith witness. In the following, I want to examine this process with examples of Christian theologies in the Islamic and Indian world.

**Christian theology in the shadow of the mosque**

To take one of many possible historical examples of cultural translation of the Christian faith in a religiously multi-lingual setting, I will pick the example of Christians in the Near and Middle East in the eighth and ninth centuries. At home in the Islamic world, these Christians asserted their religious identity in the idiom of the religious culture of Islam and in exchange with emerging Muslim religious and theological thought. As a ‘church in the shadow of the mosque’ as Sidney Griffith has so aptly put it, these Oriental Christians were not only at home in Islamic culture, but adopted Arabic as the idiom in which they expressed their faith and theology. Here we can speak of two Arabic-speaking communities—Christian and Muslim—which mutually influenced each other. The use of Arabic on the part of these Christians, beyond their everyday and cultural interactions, led to a particular theological translation process and to the development of a specific form of Christian theology in contrast to, and in give-and-take with, Islamic theology.

Intercultural and interfaith translation is evident in how Christian doctrine was developed by the authors of these early Arab-Christian texts in ways parallel to Islamic theology at the time: Christians attempted to express the reasonableness of their faith using a constellation of conceptions they shared with their Muslim counterparts, who themselves often rejected these same Christian doctrines as inconsistent with the Koran. In contrast to earlier Greek or Syriac Christian discourse, Arabic-Christian authors developed their arguments along lines previously used by Muslims to express the teachings of the Koran and the tradition of the Prophet Muhammad. As a result, these texts constitute a kind of Christian kalam, i.e. an Islamic religious text which, because of its formal style and systematic defence of the credibility of doctrine, is comparable to philosophical or systematic theology. The apologetic thrust of the texts of these (so interpreted) Christian *mutakallimu* (systematic theologians), was to a large extent determined by those challenges the Muslim faith faced at this early stage of its apologetics against Christian doctrine. To take an example, Arabic-Christian discussions of the Trinity and the Incarnation were carried out in a language used within the context of Islamic debates about the ontological status of the divine attributes and discussion of true prophets or true religion.

On the one hand, this Arab-Christian discourse was undoubtedly intended to strengthen the...
faith of Christians in the Islamic world. On the other hand, it was a form of ‘interfaith witness’ intended to demonstrate the credibility of the Christian faith in the idiom of their Muslim neighbours. But as Griffith concludes, the first Arab-Christian writers were more interested in attempting to translate their theological treatises and confessional writings into Arabic than in how to best articulate the Christian message in an Islamic cultural milieu and idiom. This is a failure which many contemporary historians see as a missed opportunity for the establishment of an effective missionary presence in the Arab world.

As this example shows that, despite centuries of hostility in daily life, religious beliefs and intellectual history, Christians and Muslims belong to communities which are inextricably linked together. In addition, the history of the Oriental Churches generally represents an inescapable historical foundation for intercultural and inter-religious dialogue, and interfaith witness between Christians and Muslims.

Against this background, one might expect the study of the historical experience of the Oriental churches would enjoy a higher priority in missiology and the study of non-European theologies than it currently does, especially if one aspires to take up the challenge of Islam. In fact, the experiences, achievements of cultural translation and contextual theological efforts of these ‘churches in the shadow of the mosque,’ do deserve a more prominent place in the present-day theological discussions, if an effective intercultural and interfaith dialogue with Muslims and with Islam is to be achieved.

Christianity and theology in the Indian context

As a further example of the cultural translation of Christianity in the context of religious pluralism and the encounter with world religions, I will briefly look at the example of Indian Christianity or Christian theology in an Indian context. Here I will limit myself to the project of developing an indigenous Indian church history and systematic topics such as interculturization, dual religious membership and Indian Christology.

The translated view: From Indian’s Mission History to Indian Church History. “The history of Christianity in India has hitherto often been treated as an eastward extension of western ecclesiastical history... It is now intended to write the history of Christianity in the context of Indian history.”

This is an excerpt from the programmatic statement of the authors of new comprehensive history of Indian Christianity initiated by Church History Association of India (CHAI) in 1973. The vast majority of published accounts of Indian Church history previous to this had been written from the perspective of the history of missions. These accounts told of the story of the success and failures of various missionary endeavours and missionaries in India. In these histories, Indians are primarily the object of missionary efforts, rather than independent subjects encountering Christianity for the first time; the contribution of indigenous Indians to the spread and development of Christianity is widely ignored.

As Rolf Noormann has impressively shown in his study of the CHAI Indian church history project, this missionary perspective has now been replaced by an Indian one. The aim is to present

Christianity in the context of Indian history. The approach is ecumenical, but the focus is the history of Indian Christianity and only secondarily the history of various Christian denominations. Fundamental to the project is the “change from an institutional to a socio-cultural perspective. The subject of the study is less the isolated history of the church, as it is the history of the “Christian people in the social-cultural and regional history of India.”

The main achievement of the project, as judged from the volumes that have been published to date, is the attempt to write the history of Indian Christianity ‘as it looks from India.’ This reaches from the organisation of the material, to the abandonment of the western-European missions narrative, to the focus on Indians as subjects of their own history, as well as the indigenisation of Indian Christianity.

Significantly, the CHAI project narrates the many positive encounters between Christianity and groups outside the Hindu mainstream, especially those with the ‘tribals’ and ‘Dalits’ whereby these groups too are depicted as active subjects in relation to Christianity. Most recently, one can even observe how indigenous elements and forms of expression are incorporated into mainstream Christianity, particularly among the Pentecostal churches.

By contrast, a genuine encounter between Christianity and classical Hinduism appears to have hardly taken place, probably because the Hindu religious and social elite seems not to have responded to Christianity in great numbers, despite multiple attempts since the nineteenth at a ‘Hinduisation of Christianity.’ Thus Noormann concludes:

Leading representatives of Hinduism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have carried out a successful reform of Hinduism. They often speak in a tone of contempt about real Christianity in India…. Hence, the history of Indian Christianity reflects the structure of Indian society; in other words, the overpowering social structure of Hinduism seems to have consigned Christianity to a thoroughly insignificant place [in the social order]...

The ‘Translated message’: Inculturation or Interculturation? Since the Second Vatican Council, the Catholic Church in India (with 17 million members) and its Indian theologians have sought in various ways to promote the inculturation of the Christian message and link it to the cultural and religious heritage of India. For some time now, however, the concept of theological inculturation has come under criticism and

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some Indian theologians have rejected it has inappropriate, the remnant of an outdated Western missionary strategy. Instead, they have adopted the term *inter-culturation*.

Felix Wilfred, for example, has argued that it is false to assume, as the theory of interculturation does, that Christianity is culturally neutral with respect to other cultures, although it is able to appropriate elements from them. Indeed, some theologians go so far as to claim that in the process of inculturation, the Christian message becomes stronger and more dominate, whereas the host culture, which is supposed to change and modify incoming religions and cultures, itself remains unchanged. This understanding of inculturation overlooks the fact that there is no ‘pure’ form of Christianity, which transcends cultural influences. In the encounter with other cultures, Christianity always bears the marks of its encounter with previous cultures. For this reason, Wilfred calls for abandoning the notion of inculturation and rather to speak of a ‘process of inter-cultural encounter.’

This would allow us to understand the encounter between religion and culture as a complex process of give-and-take:

When India in a process of inter-cultural encounters meets the Gospel, then certain aspects of our faith will gain in significance and importance, while others will experience less attention. Indian Christian theology will develop in such a process of inter-cultural encounters which also encompasses the area of socio-political questions. Finally, such an encounter will not be complete unless India does encounter the Gospel with all its challenges. The encounter with the prophetic elements of the Gospel implies that a deep-reaching process of change will follow. The emergence of an Indian Christian theology will be the fruit of such a prophetic encounter between India and the Gospel and at the same it will facilitate mutual enrichment.

**Translated Identities: ‘Dual Religious Belonging’**

Another important issue for Indian theology, but also for forms of Asian theology as well, is the question of ‘dual’ or ‘multiple’ religious memberships. Simply put: Indian theologians often understand themselves as both faithful Christians, loyal to the Church and its teachings, and simultaneously as a part of India’s religious and cultural traditions.

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36 Cf. Wilfred, “Inkulturation oder interkulturelle Begegnung.”


38 The theme of multiple religious belonging has been recently take up by western academics, see e.g., Catherine Cornille, ed., *Many Mansons: Multiple Religious Belonging and Christian Identity* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2002); Reinhold Bernhardt and Perry Schmidt-Leukel (eds.), *Multiple Religiöse Identität: Aus verschiedenen religiösen Traditionen schöpfen* (Zürich: TVZ, 2008).
A century has past since the Bengali Brahmin Brahmanbandhab Upadhyay (1861–1907), a convert to Catholicism, declared that he was a Christian by faith but socio-culturally a Hindu. At the time he was denounced by church authorities, but today there are a large number of Indian theologians who would argue that they are ‘Hindu-Christians’ i.e. Christians who have integrated Hindu spirituality into their lives and religious practice.

The Jesuit Michael Amaladoss, for example, presented a very personal account of his understanding of this phenomenon a number of years ago. He recounts that Hinduism was the formative religion of his childhood and the faith of his boyhood friends. In the village of Tamil Nadu, where he grew up, his family was one of only two Catholic families in a village of innumerable Hindu families. Later, he learned more about the Hindu spirituality and the seriousness with which Hindus searched for god. He also discovered that Hinduism was the ‘vessel,’ so to speak, in which his own ancestors carried their beliefs and their religious practices. The spiritual and religious values of the Hindu tradition seemed to him to be the foundation of his culture, the religion of his homeland, and the language that defined his personal identity and constituted the ground of his personality. As an Indian Christian, he felt obligated to incorporate this tradition into his Christian life. On the basis of this conviction, he calls himself a ‘Hindu-Christian’. This term has nothing to do with eclecticism or syncretism, but with the experience of a fundamental reciprocity between how Hinduism and Christianity point to the absolute reality of God, expressed in the diversity of their religious symbols and practices.

Translated Testimony: Indian Christology.

Against this more general background, we shall take a brief look at concrete examples of Hindu-Christian encounters in Indian theology. We shall do so with a few remarks about the attempts to develop an ‘Indian Christology’ or to give Jesus of Nazareth an ‘Indian face.’

Certainly over the past one hundred years, Indian Christian theologians have tried to build on certain positive responses to the figure of Jesus of Nazareth found among Hindus in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and in doing so have tried to develop new forms of Indian Christology.

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For example, Brahmabandhab Upadhyay (1861–1907) understood Jesus Christ as the incarnate Logos, who had attained the highest form of human consciousness (in Sanskrit: cit), the perfect unity of human and divine being. Krishna Mohan Banjerjee (1813–1855) described Jesus Christ as Lord of the universe (prajapati), while Sadhu Sundar Singh (1869–1929) and Vengal Chakkarai (1880–1958) described him as the supreme and final incarnation (avatara).

In the twentieth century, a number of Protestant and Catholic Indian theologians have tried to promote a genuinely Indian Christology by borrowing from Hindu teachings and ideas: for example, various theologians have tried to exploit the Hindu concept avatar for Christology. The discussion here focuses on whether Jesus Christ is the only possible incarnation or, in accord with the logic of avatar teaching, whether he is one of many incarnations, even if the ‘first’ or the ‘most important’ one.\(^\text{42}\) It is striking that these approaches tend to neglect the historical Jesus and focus instead on the eschatological or cosmic Christ. In the religiously pluralistic Indian context, it seems important to present Jesus as the final consummator, who unites the whole of creation and offers it to the one God, rather than as the sole Redeemer or Saviour. In recent decades, a ‘Christology of the ashram’ has developed, in which Jesus Christ is understood neither as the supreme guru (sat guru) nor, as in Ananda Christology, as the one who in his life, death and resurrection experienced perfect happiness (ananda).\(^\text{43}\)

Finally, Felix Wilfred has demanded that any Indian Christology should take into account two things: the dialogue with Indian religious pluralism and the situation of the poor and oppressed.

Indian Christology is something which arises out of a concrete encounter with the world of our neighbors of other faiths, out of the daily living together in close contact and narrow interaction, in short, in a coming together in which a new reflection on Jesus Christ and his mystery happens. Furthermore is an Indian Christology something which starts from a reflection on Jesus Christ out of a situation in which millions of poor and marginalized—crossing all religious boundaries—fight for mere survival.\(^\text{44}\)

Dalit theologians have taken up this challenge and have begun to reflect on Christology from the Dalit point of view. They see Jesus as the Son of Man, who did not cling to his divinity, but in the Incarnation, became one with the Dalits. In Jesus Christ, who does not shrink from being counted among the untouchables, the Dalits find a God who identifies with them and liberates them from their suffering.\(^\text{45}\)


\(^{44}\) Wilfred, On the Banks of Ganges, 65, fn. 37.

‘Translation in Reverse’: Missiology as Intercultural and Comparative Theology?

The conscious perception of the emergence and articulation of non-European cultural and theological translations of Christianity are associated with different forms of intercultural theology in Europe and North America. On the other hand, growing religious pluralism and intensified inter-religious debates in the United States has encouraged the development of the discipline of ‘comparative theology.’ In both contexts, the approach to missions through cultural translation and interfaith witness is readily adaptable and constitutes the leading approach in the theological discussions of intercultural issues within Christianity and other religions.

Intercultural theology

The origins of intercultural theology are in fact to be found in the perception, communication, promotion and critical solidarity with non-European theologies. Intercultural theology was inaugurated in 1975 with the publication by Richard Friedli, Hans Jochen Margull and Walter J. Hollenweger of “Studien zur interkulturellen Geschichte des Christentums,” as well as Hollenweger’s three-volume work Interkulturelle Theologie. At this time, they had already recognized the demographic trends showing that Christianity was on its way to becoming a non-Western religion. This point is provocatively made by German translation of the title of Robert Schreiter’s Constructing Local Theologies, translated as Der Abschied vom Gott der Europäer (“Farewell to the God of the Europeans”); this provocative view had already begun to emerge in Roman Catholic theological circles at the end of twentieth century with the idea of a ‘culturally polycentric world Church’ (J.B. Metz), whose form of unity was understood as the recognition of the multiplicity of ethno-cultural Christianities.

The 1978 proposal of the Munster pastoral theologian Adolf Exeler to engage in ‘comparative theology’ rather than missiology, belongs to this tradition. According to his view, every church and theology should be required to “submit their concerns in a genuine dialogue in which each of the parties could learn from each other.” European theology should carefully listen and try to learn and understand the modes of thinking and action of others, rather than imposing their own modes of thinking and action or without “ appointing themselves as judges over others.” The goal of a comparative theology, according to Exeler is “to make the theological riches and charisms of the individual churches and cultural groups fruitful for the greater unity of Catholic thought.” More concretely, Exeler sought a comparative pastoral theology “for the sake of a more effective evangelisation.” Subsequent missiologists have tried either to clarify Exeler’s proposal or have viewed it with caution.

46 See: Schreijäck, Außereuropäische Theologie.
48 Exeler’s proposal for a ‘vergleichenden Theologie’ is to be distinguished from recent Anglo-American calls for a ‘comparative theology.’ See below.
50 Ibid., 207.
52 Exeler’s proposal is explicated in: Thomas Kramm, “Was ist von einer ‘vergleichenden Missionswissenschaft’
Giancarlo Collet gives two reasons for this reluctance:

Aside from the fact that this concept is in danger of allowing Eurocentrism to force itself through the back door, its weakness lies first in its regionalisation of problems and second in its latent ecclesiocentrism.

The other weakness of comparative theology seems to me to lie in the fact that a central theme of traditional missiology and something that still belongs to faith, is communication beyond one’s own narrow community of faith, which here either no longer comes to expression or is hardly discernable. Thus comparative theology is in a comfortable position, but at the price of omitting the provocation and impertinence which is a universal feature of the Gospel, always encountered in a limited, inculturated form viz. to be an offence to the Jews and a scandal to the Gentiles, a post-Christian society ‘in stagnant water.’ (cf. 1 Cor 1:24).

Exeler’s proposal for a ‘comparative theology’ has found no explicit development in subsequent German missiology.

Meanwhile, however, within missiology, there is a lively debate about which governing principle could mediate between contextual and universalizing approaches to an intercultural hermeneutic and theology. On this point, the project of intercultural theology faces significant systematic challenges, especially in light of the diversity and the claims of contextual theologians: first, the western project of ‘intercultural theology’ provides third-world theologians a forum in the West for the recognition of cultural particularity in theology. On the other hand, intercultural theology requires that contextual theology to be open to other cultures by virtue of its reflection on its own contextuality.

Robert Schreiter has sought to ground his own contextual theology in a theory of communication and semiotics; in Constructing Local Theologies (1985) he traces the cultural basis of local theologies and their relation to other Christian traditions and translation processes and then, a decade later in New Catholicity (1995), he proposes a ‘new Catholicity’ in the light of a globalized understanding of culture. The demand that local theologies consciously affirm their own contextuality while, at the same time, taking a global perspective, is central to intercultural theology: the tension between cultural particularity, the capacity for change on the basis of changing contexts and claims of universal validity certainly lend a fascination to every
irreducibly situated theology. How can the Christian faith manifest itself in the particularity of a given culture without sacrificing its universal and hence transcultural truth claims through the process of cultural translation? And how can cultural differences of lived Christian faith coexist with the Church’s ‘catholicity’ i.e. its universal unity?

These questions do not exhaust the theological issues that must be addressed, but they are the types of issues and discussions especially characteristic for what recent Western European and North American missiologists understand by this new programme of ‘intercultural theology.’

Comparative theology

As for the question of mission as translation and interfaith witness, I want to defend the claim that Anglo-American ‘comparative theology’ represents an extremely promising approach to missiological discourse and praxis. It builds on the awareness of the early pioneers of interfaith theological dialogue and along with the development of a theology of religions, should be the leading paradigm in the field, first in the Western theology and then in the theological and interreligious encounter with world religions. 57

Anglo-American comparative theology is quite distinct from Exeler’s attempt to replace missiology with ‘vergleichende Theologie’ in German-speaking countries in the 1970s. While both approaches focus on the particularity of the missionary encounter with cultures and theology in a non-European context, 58 comparative theology is not limited to an inter-Christian missionary discussion of cross cultural and comparative issues within global Christianity. Rather, its scope is the field of inter-religious theological debate, interfaith witness and the encounter with world religions. The comparative element refers to diverse theologies of religion as seen from the perspective of an academic theology.


58 Francis Clooney is explicit on this point. For his more systematic reflections about comparative theology see Francis X. Clooney, “Comparative Theology,” in: John Webster, Kathrin Tanner and Ian Torrance, eds., The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology (Oxford University Press, 2007), 653–69, 656ff. Clooney’s numerous individual theological studies, often comparisons of particular theological issues between Christianity and Hinduism, are of interest here as well. Clooney’s work stands in a long tradition, dating to the missionary tradition of the previous century, of theological conversation between these two great religious traditions. Cf. Norbert Hintersteiner, “Interkulturelle Übersetzung in religiöser Mehrsprachigkeit: Reflexionen zu Ort und Ansatz der Komparativen Theologie,” in Komparative Theologie, eds. Bernhardt and von Stosch, 99–120.
Although the perspectives of comparative theology will develop over time, as more theologians contribute their specific projects, if we take the example of Francis Clooney, we can already sketch some systematic points that give us an initial impression of contemporary comparative theology.59

Comparative theology requires the acceptance of the inter-religious character of theology. Theology, in a sense at least analogous to fides quaerens intellectum, is a practice shared by people of different traditions. Even if Christianity has a specific history in the West, theology need not remain limited to a western or Christian context. From this perspective, one can speak of Hindu theology, Islamic theology, Jewish theology, and perhaps even Buddhist or Taoist theology.60

Insofar as theology is an intellectual religious activity in different cultures, theologians can enter into dialogue with one another and explore the similarities and differences in theological content and method across religious boundaries. Such a theology is comparative, inter-religious and dialogic. Theologians are thus accountable to the other religious tradition as well as their own.

Certainly, comparative theology will also have to make allowances for cases in which attention to the particularity of another theological tradition leads to scepticism about the translatability of its terms and concepts across religious and theological boundaries.

In the Christian case, questions of religious pluralism are often related to questions about the uniqueness of Christianity among the religions, the importance of religious conversion and the wider or narrower views on the acceptance of other religions. In recent theology of religion, the latter question has been discussed under the rubric of inclusivism, exclusivism and pluralism. But this form of theology of religion generally requires no special knowledge of other religious traditions and its justification remains internal to Christian discourse. While such a theology of religion has a certain role to play, proponents of comparative theology would insist that it best be developed only after a lengthy comparative theological praxis.61

Does comparative theology imply or require a new theological community with an ‘inter-religious faith’ in which theology is not longer bound to a particular faith community and theological discourse? If the comparative study is to be honest and productive, the comparative theologian must in fact increasingly live within a broader theological horizon and within a theological community that extends across religious boundaries.

Despite this broader theological horizon and its dialogic nature, comparative theology can still be confessional and apologetic. If dialogue is essential for inter-religious theology, it should be lively enough to discover and debate differences. In addition, after the give-and-take theological

59 Compare the following presentation of Francis X. Clooney, “Comparative Theology,” 653–69. This systematic presentation of comparative theology is taken from Hintersteiner, “Wie den Religionen der Welt begegnen?” 170f.
comparison, and after perhaps temporary alienation from their own tradition, it should be possible for participants to affirm the truth of their own religious beliefs within the context of interfaith witness.

Finally, it must be conceded that like intercultural theology, comparative theology is still far from being a free-standing academic discipline and the conversation about how its academic standing vis-à-vis intercultural theology on the one hand, and contemporary missiology, on the other hand, has only just begun.

World Mission Today and Interfaith Witness

What is the relationship between the approach to missiology we have been presenting here, with its diverse ecumenical and theoretical concerns, and post-conciliar Roman Catholic missiology?

Of central importance here are developments in the second half of the twentieth-century, after the initial impetus of the Second Vatican Council; the many documents of the universal Church and the local churches as well as new missiological approaches, give witness to the need to re-think the task of missiology as well as to recognize its increasing importance. As for the universal church, in the encyclical on missions Redemptoris Missio: On the Permanent Validity of the Church’s Missionary Mandate, promulgated by John Paul II in 1990, it is striking that, in continuity with the missionary decree of the Vatican II, Ad Gentes, the encyclical claims that the church’s missionary activity has not come to an end, but rather, in the face of new religious, cultural and social conditions, the church stands at the beginning of a new missionary age.

Similarly, in the context of the world church, the German Bishop’s Conference, which recently published the programmatic statement Allen Völkern Sein Heil (2004), seeks to awaken a new sense of the fundamental mission of Church to proclaim the Kingdom of God (cf. Luke 4:43). The Bishop’s write that ‘world mission’ means: “to transcend boundaries separating us from others while respecting their otherness, to witness so credibly to the Gospel, that others know they are invited to follow Jesus and accept his Gospel.”

This view of missions accepts that the spread of Christianity is not linked to any particular ethnic, linguistic, political or cultural constellation, but in view of its universal salvific mission and cultural translatability, is in principle open to the world’s plurality. As a result, the Christian faith has been able to take root among almost all countries, cultures and peoples of the world. As different as the processes of world mission are, depending on local circumstances or epochal circumstances, whether past or present, they all agree on the importance of inter-cultural dimensions of translation, exchange and encounter.

In the above considerations, I’ve emphasized the ‘cultural translation’ of Christianity in order to conceptualize both the rootedness of Christianity in various parts of the world as well as to present non-European theologies as the results of translation. Secondly, I’ve tried to present aspects of a theological approach to missions that

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64 “Allen Völkern Sein Heil. Die Mission der Weltkirche” (German Bishop’s Conference, 76), Bonn 2004, 37.
65 Cf. Sievernich, Die christliche Mission, part III.
envisions a shift away from the traditional concept of mission toward a view of missions as 'interreligious witness' in light of religious pluralism and the new demands posed by the encounter with other religions.

In Roman Catholic missiology, an exclusivist understanding of salvation has long been dominant, even when missionary practice has seemed to demand a more mediating, inclusivist position. On this model, the value of other religions is perceived as expressions the human search for God. Accordingly, even if their gods are demoted, they remain ‘translatable’ so, as Cardinal Ratzinger has said, they are “as anticipations, as a step in the search for the true God and its reflection in the creation, they can become messengers of the one God.” However, as Michael Sievernich notes, in continuity with *Redemptoris Missio*, Catholic missiology has a further theological task of giving greater attention to the role of the Holy Spirit. “When the role of the Holy Spirit in all cultures and religions is recognized, even prior to the arrival of the missionaries, it leads to a dialogue which is open to surprises (Rev 10:45), and there is a conflict neither between missionary proclamation and interreligious dialogue, nor can they be see as alternatives.”

It should be clear from the preceding discussion: interreligious dialogue and interfaith witness do not replace the Church’s missionary mandate, but complement it through a dynamic of mutuality and the search for truth.

In the light of the shift of Christianity of the Global South, Catholic theologians agree with their counterparts in other confessions that the task of a present-day, world-oriented missiology is to foster a global inter-cultural conversation among different contextual theologies and ‘translated’ Christianities, as well as to promote qualified theological debate among the religions.

As for the intercultural conversation with non-European theologians, it seems to me that, with a few exceptions, the new Christianities of the South and their theologians have yet to make a their influence felt in the Christian theology of the North. Or, to speak to the Catholic mission scientists to Nijmegen, Frans Wijsen, too: “Often European theologians eagerly take up contextual Theologies from Africa, Asia and Latin America, but they do not change their Western outlook and view of theology. They treat third world Theologies as if they are exotic fruit to supplement their traditional European dishes.”

As long as this situation prevails, there will be no full participation of these ‘exotic’ non-European theological translations and new creations; the creation of the theological premises for the study of global Christianity as well as an *intercultural* and possibly *inter-religious theology* remains a challenge and an increasingly important task for theological faculties in the twenty-first century, both in the West and elsewhere.

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67 Sievernich, *Die christliche Mission*, 239.
68 Wijsen, “New Wine in Old Wineskins,” 45.
Reforming Theology

Theology and Interreligious Dialogue in the Postmodern Age

Peter Phan

Contemporary cultural critics have long noted that the mood of our time is sharply different from that of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. While modernity is characterized by a belief in limitless progress achievable by universal rationality, technology, and individual freedoms, we are witnessing today a widespread critique of these ideals, at least in the forms espoused by the Enlightenment, as the result of an increasing awareness of their nefarious effects on society and the environment. In contrast to modernity, our age has been called, for lack of a better term, postmodern. Though the label is slippery and the contours of our age still remain hazy, there is little doubt that since the beginning of the twentieth century there has been, at least in the West, to use David Tracy’s expression, a ‘disenchantment with disenchantment,’ that is, a radical critique of the Enlightenment’s critique of premodern modes of thought and action.¹

Postmodernism and its Challenges to Church and Theology

This contemporary disillusionment with modernity’s championship of rationality, technology, and individual autonomy, however, is no call for a return to the paradise of premodern innocence. Rather, with the very weapons forged by the Enlightenment itself, postmodern thinkers direct their withering attacks against modernity’s celebration of objective and universal reason, the benefits of technological achievements, and the liberation of the individual from institutional control. While recognizing the undeniable contributions of modernity in these three areas, postmodern critics have argued that philosophic reason is laden with vested interests, technology leads to the brink of annihilation for humanity and the ecology, and individual freedoms collude with the subjugation of the powerless and the voiceless. The horror and terror of history, rather than being tamed by modernity, have grown exponentially.

True to its underlying philosophical assumptions, postmodernism is a multi-valent and even ambiguous phenomenon. Initiated in architecture and the arts, postmodernism rejects modernity’s preference for stylistic integrity and purity and espouses instead heterogeneity and polyvalence, bricolage and pastiche, and an eclectic mixture of disjointed and contradictory elements. In theater, postmodernism celebrates transience instead of temporal permanence and experiments with improvisation, group authorship, and viewer participation rather than continuing the tradition of performing a ready-made script. In literature, the postmodern favorite genres are the spy novel and science fiction, the former juxtaposing a seemingly disjointed series of events and unconnected clues, the latter laying side by side two radically different worlds, the one real in appearance but turning out to be illusionary, and the other sinister in appearance but turning out to be more benign and real at the end. This phantasmagoria of the fictional and the real is further enhanced by the filmmaking technology that allows the viewer to perceive what transpires in the movies and on television, disjointed in time and space, as a unity in space and time. The unreality of the real and the reality of the unreal are made even more indistinguishable by means of advanced techniques of computer—generated images and special effects. Added to all this is the Internet world

of ‘virtual reality,’ in which the screen of the personal computer both connects the surfer with the whole wide world of other surfers and chatters and at the same time shields him or her from the world of interpersonal, face-to-face relationships. In the virtual world there is neither objective reality ‘out there’ nor subjective reality ‘in here’; rather, the events happen somewhere in between, blurring the distinction between subject and object, the very thing postmodernism says ‘reality’ is.

Undergirding and perhaps also resulting from such a cultural outlook is the philosophical stance that despairs of achieving objective truth and absolute knowledge of reality. Instead of yielding universal, supra-cultural, and timeless truths about ‘reality,’ knowledge is viewed as an ever-shifting social construction made by a particular community in view of its own interests. The best that can be obtained in our knowledge of reality, according to postmodern epistemology, is a ‘useful fiction,’ not generalizing principles or overarching systems (metanarratives) that can be reasonably legitimated. In this view knowledge is inherently uncertain, incomplete, fragmented, interest-laden, relative, particular, and pluralistic.

Basic to the postmodernist epistemology is respect for and celebration of particularity and ‘otherness’ in all dimensions of human life, from race and ethnicity to gender to religion to culture. Diversity and plurality, which otherness implies, are seen not as curses to human flourishing to be exorcised or as threats to human unity to be suppressed. Rather, they are to be vigorously promoted and joyously celebrated as natural endowments necessary for genuine peace and justice. Plurality and diversity are perceived to be the essential safeguards preventing life-affirming unity from degenerating into deadening uniformity or, worse, into an instrument for the powerful to homogenize those who are different and to deny them their basic right to be who and what they are.

Ironically, however, concomitant with this centrifugal celebration of plurality and otherness, there is also in postmodernity a centripetal movement toward universal unity, toward the construction of the ‘global village,’ under the pressure of the process of ever-widening globalization. Aided by the worldwide adaption of a single neo-capitalistic system of free enterprise, globalization has extended beyond the West not only the technological achievements but also the ideals of modernity to other parts of the world (globalization as extension). Thanks to communication technologies and ease of travel, geographical boundaries have now collapsed, and a person’s identity is no longer defined by his or her place of birth. Even our sense of time is largely compressed, with the present dominating our temporal awareness and relentlessly pressing onto the future with ever ‘new and improved’ versions of what is now technologically available (globalization as compression). As a result, there has emerged everywhere outside of the West, especially among youth, a homogenized ‘hyperculture’ characterized by modern values (and vices) and consumption of Western goods.

But the movement is not unidirectional. On the contrary, the non-Western parts of the world, though technologically less developed (except Japan, South Korea, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Taiwan) have also transformed the cultural and religious landscape of the West, especially through immigration. As Diana Eck has convincingly demonstrated, thanks to the 1965 Hart-Celler Act, which abolished restrictive quotas on immigration from countries other than Europe, a record number of Asians, Africans, and Latin Americans have come to the United States, bringing with them their diverse cultural and religious traditions, so that the ‘Christian country’ has become ‘the world’s religiously most diverse nation,’ with Buddhist, Confucian, Taoist, Hindu, Jain, Sikh, Zoroastrian, Islamic, African, and Afro-
Caribbean traditions well represented. Cultural and religious diversity is increasingly true also of countries such as Britain, France, Germany, and Italy.

Needless to say, this new cultural, socio-political, and religious context—cultural diversity, economic globalization, and religious pluralism—presents difficult challenges to the church and theology. Culturally, how can the Catholic church purge its two-millenia-long tradition of Euro-centric elements so that its face is truly catholic, that is, universal? How can the Catholic church become a truly local church? Socio-politically, how can the church credibly preach Jesus’ teaching on God’s preferential love for the poor and the marginalized and act in solidarity with those crushed by the forces of globalization? Religiously, how can the church not only respect but also incorporate into its own life and worship the teachings and practices of other religions in order to be enriched and transformed by them?

Answers to these three questions based on any appeal to universal reason or sacred authority are unlikely to find a receptive ear, especially in the postmodern age. Any attempt to construct a metanarrative on the basis of either natural law or divine revelation that could claim universal validity and absolute normativeness, apart from particular social locations, is illusory; there is no acultural and atemporal ground upon which to stand to render a verdict on the alleged universal validity and absolute normativeness of such a metanarrative. We are ineluctably socially located and historically conditioned animals. There is no Archimedean point from which to survey the whole of history, which is still ongoing, or to intuit the unchangeable essence of things, which always exist in time and space and therefore are in the process of continuous becoming. Both the knower and the known are caught in a mutually conditioning nexus from which neither can be extracted to be either the unbiased observer or the neutral object of investigation. Apart from the object known there is no knower, and without the knower there is no object known. This is all the more true in matters religious, which are ultimately matters of life and death, where life-transforming decisions are not amenable to explanations by means of a rational apologetics and logical syllogisms.

All these considerations need not lead to skepticism, agnosticism, or relativism, as some postmodernist thinkers have argued. Rather, what these reflections imply and require is an epistemological modesty that accepts the finite (and in the Christian view, fallen and benighted) intellects that we are. In addition, we have at our disposal modes of knowing that are not purely rational, that appeal to the imagination and the heart, that do not make grandiose claims to absolute validity and universal normativeness, that do not produce an infallible certainty but anchor the mind and the soul in an unshakable certitude, the kind of knowledge that is proper to interpersonal relationships, different from that of mathematical equations and physical laws, the sort of knowing that leads to decision and action.

Furthermore, human knowledge, at least of things that matter deeply, is not obtained by means of meditation in a solitary cell or in boisterous, hard-ball talk shows in which the sole purpose is to score rhetorical victories over one’s opponents. Rather, it is gained in a serious and thoughtful give-and-take of mutual learning and teaching, in a respectful and humble conversation with the tradition and the community of fellow seekers, in a word, in a genuine dialogue with the other, in which one’s own insights are humbly offered, the other’s wisdom gratefully appropriated, and the quest for truth is undertaken together in mutual respect and love.

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Christian Faith and Religious Pluralism

It is in this spirit of dialogue that the church must engage with the other religions. The church, which shares “the joy and hope, the grief and anguish of people of our time, especially of those who are poor and afflicted in any way,” is inevitably enmeshed in the turmoil of our age. Ironically, the church, which finally caught up with the modern world, as the title of Gaudium et Spes implies, after centuries of ‘kicking and screaming,’ is now being left behind as the world moves into postmodernity. The question now is whether, faced with the signs of the time, the church will repeat its mistakes, either indulging in a futile nostalgia for a vanishing golden age of order and uniformity by promoting a restorationist agenda, or succumbing to the songs of the postmodern sirens by swallowing postmodernism hook, line, and sinker.

Christian faith would, it seems, wholeheartedly welcome religious pluriformity and diversity as the fruits of God’s creative act, reflecting God’s own being. Indeed, the God Christians believe in is not a solitary monad but a koinonia of three divine persons, that is, of the eternal subsistent relations resulting from the Father ‘generating’ the Son and ‘breathing forth’ the Spirit through the Son; of the Son being ‘generated’ by the Father and ‘breathing forth’ the Spirit by the power of the Father; and of the Spirit ‘proceeding’ from the Father through the Son and uniting them both in love. Because of—not in spite of—divine unity, plurality and diversity are inherent in God’s Trinitarian life and being; conversely, because of—not in spite of—divine diversity and plurality, God is one. On the one hand, were it not for the plurality of the divine persons, there would not be the one God, since divine unity is constituted by the harmony of diverse eternal relations. On the other hand, were there many gods, there would not, paradoxically, be divine plurality, since they would be uniformly divine. In the divine Being, the more God is one, the more plural God is, and vice versa. God’s oneness and plurality are in direct, not inverse proportion with each other. It is only because the Father and the Son and the Spirit are related in mutual perichoresis or circuminsessio (or circuminsessio) that God is one, and God’s oneness necessarily entails plurality. Divine unity does not consist in the one nature or substance but in the unity of the eternal threelfold relations.

Furthermore, creation itself can be regarded as God’s free and loving gift of God’s otherness and plurality. Creation is not a mere prolongation of the same divine substance into time and space, as emanationists suggest. Rather, it consists in bringing into existence a genuine other, ontologically different from the divine, which reflects and embodies divine plurality in the variety and multiplicity of creation.

This same otherness is preserved in the incarnation. In the enfleshed Logos the divine nature and the human nature are, to use the expression of the Council of Chalcedon, “without confusion and change, without division and separation.” Indeed, as the council teaches, “the distinction between the natures was never abolished by their union but rather the character proper to each of the two natures was preserved as they came together in one person (prosōpon) and one hypostasis.”

Finally, grace or union with the divine is not an ontological dissolution of the human self into the divine being, like a drop of water falling into the ocean. Rather, it is a deification of the human
person in which a real distinction remains be-
tween the divinized human being and the divi-
izing Holy Spirit.

This inherent bias of the Christian faith toward plurality and diversity, based on theological, christological, and pneumatological grounds, does not mean that Christianity itself in its past two millennia has always and everywhere ac-
cepted and fostered these two features of reality as divine blessings. It is true that the church has taken to heart the Pauline model of ecclesiology in which a variety of charisms is encouraged for the building up of the body of Christ (cf. 1 Cor 14) and has attempted at various times to be, like Paul, everything to everybody. Nevertheless, there is a well-nigh irresistible tendency in any organization with large-scale structures and well-defined canons, such as the Catholic church, to promote centralization and uniformity and to nip in the bud any centrifugal movement toward plurality and diversity as a threat to its institutional order and well-being.

The Catholic church’s attitude toward followers of other religions and the religions themselves has followed an arduous and twisted path. Happily, it is now long past considering the followers of other religions as ‘infidels’ or ‘pagans’ and no longer teaches, as the Decree for the Jacobites of the Council of Florence did in 1442, on the basis of Matt 25:41, that those who remain outside the Catholic church, including pagans, Jews, heretics, or schismatics, will go to the “eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels,” unless before their death they join the Catholic church. The Catholic church no longer holds Pius IX’s teaching in his allocution Singulari quadam (1854) that “no one can be saved outside the apostolic Roman Church, that the Church is the only ark of salvation, and that whoever does not enter it will perish in the flood” and that they are exculpated only in virtue of their ‘invincible ignorance.’

On the contrary, in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (Lumen gentium) Vatican II affirms the possibility of salvation for Jews, Muslims, those “who without fault on their part do not know the Gospel of Christ and his Church, but seek God with a sincere heart, and under the influence of grace endeavor to do his will as recognized through the promptings of their conscience,” and even for those “who, without fault on their part, have not yet reached an explicit knowledge of God, and yet endeavor, not without grace, to live a good life” (LG, no. 16). Furthermore, Vatican II in the Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity (Ad gentes) recognizes the presence of ‘elements of truth and of grace’ (AG, no. 9) in non-Christian religions and acknowledges them as ‘seeds of the Word’ implanted by God before the preaching of the Gospel that “may sometimes be taken as leading the way (paedagogia) to the true God and as a preparation for the Gospel” (AG, no. 3).

In the post-conciliar period Pope John Paul II, more than any of his predecessors, has made enormous contributions to interreligious dialogue, not only in his extensive and ground-breaking writings on the subject, but also, and perhaps more significantly, through his numerous symbolic actions, such as his visits to places of worship of other religions and his several gatherings of leaders of various religions in Assisi for prayer.

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5 For the English text, see Neuner and Dupuis, The Christian Faith, 423–4.
6 Two recent statements of the Magisterium deserve special notice. In his 1990 encyclical on mission Pope John Paul II declares that the Holy Spirit is present “not only in individuals but also in society and history, peoples, cultures, and religions” (Redemptoris missio, no. 28). The 1991 document Dialogue and Proclamation of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples and the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue says that because of “the active presence of God through his Word” and “the universal presence of the Spirit” not only in persons outside the church but also in their religions, it is “in the sincere practice of what is good in their own
In spite of its positive evaluation of non-Christian religions in general and of Judaism in particular, Vatican II self-consciously refrains from affirming that these religions as such function as ways of salvation in a manner analogous, let alone parallel, to Christianity. In the last three decades, however, extensive reflections have been done on the relationship between Christianity, and by implication, Jesus Christ, on the one hand, and non-Christian religions, especially Judaism, on the other. A new theology of religions has reassessed the role of Christ as the unique and universal savior and the function of non-Christian religions themselves within God’s plan of salvation. Several theologians—myself included—have argued that these religions may be said to be ways of salvation and that religious pluralism is part of God’s providential plan.

Such a theologoumenon brings with it far-reaching and radical consequences for the practice of Christian mission and raises thorny questions regarding conversion and baptism as the primary goals of evangelization. Indeed, if religious pluralism belongs to divine providence and is not just the fruit of human sinfulness, then it may not and must not be abolished by converting all the followers of non-Christian religions, at least during our common journey in history. At any rate, from the purely pragmatic point of view, the disappearance of these religions is extremely unlikely, given the fact that after almost five hundred years of mission in Asia, only 3 percent of Asians (who constitute three-fourths of humanity) are Christian, not to mention the fact that new religions and religious movements are founded all the time.

One immediate requirement of this situation is for theology to rethink the relationship between Christianity and other religions. In a recent work Catholic theologian Paul F. Knitter, who has written extensively on religious pluralism, has helpfully categorized contemporary theologies of religions into four basic types, which he terms ‘replacement,’ ‘fulfillment,’ ‘mutuality,’ and ‘acceptance’ models. The first affirms that Christianity is the one true religion and that it will replace, totally or partially, all other religions, which are considered basically humanity’s sinful attempts at self-salvation. The second, while affirming Christianity as the one true religion, acknowledges the presence of elements of truth and grace in other religions and advocates a mutual, though not equal, complementarity between Christianity and other religions through dialogue. The third holds that there are many true religions, none necessarily superior to the others, which are all called to dialogue and collaborate with one another, especially in projects of liberation, in order to realize their true nature. The fourth stresses the diversity of religions and refuses to seek a common ground among them; rather, it urges each religion to foster its own aims and practices.

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The Hope of Friendship

Learning from the Ecumenical Conversations between Barth and Balthasar

Stephen M. Garrett

Karl Barth was renowned, especially in Catholic circles, for his acerbic remarks regarding Catholic dogma. One of his more well-known comments stemmed from his 1920s and 1930s interaction with Erich Przywara, a Jesuit priest who sought to build bridges between German postwar culture and religion via the *analogia entis*. Barth saw liberal Protestantism’s efforts to ground theology in Friedrich Schleiermacher’s existentialism as akin to Roman Catholicism’s ‘exploitation of the *analogia entis* to pursue ‘natural knowledge of God’. Barth flatly rejected both, declaring ‘... the *analogia entis* as the invention of the Antichrist, and... because of it it is impossible ever to become a Roman Catholic, all other reasons for not doing so being to my mind short-sighted and trivial’. Barth would go on to pursue theology as dogmatics based on the Word of God spoken in Jesus Christ and bounded by ‘the sphere of the Church, where alone it is possible and meaningful’.

Barth’s early antagonism, though, made it difficult to earn a hearing among Catholics in the 1940s and 1950s as the likes of Hans Urs von Balthasar and Henri Bouillard tried to appropriate aspects of Barth’s thought, particularly his christocentrism, to redress some of the deficiencies they perceived in Catholic theology related to neoscholasticism. Balthasar, like Bouillard, had engrossed himself in Barth’s work, beginning with his doctoral studies in the late 1920s that led to the publication of his dissertation, *History of the Eschatological Problem in Modern German Literature*, in 1930. He would later befriend Barth in 1940 after having arrived in Basel for his first Jesuit assignment as student chaplain at the University of Basel. Although Barth was nearly twenty years his senior, these early encounters matured into a mutual friendship that spanned almost three-decades. Their genuine friendship offered ecumenical hope, despite the caustic environment surrounding Protestants and Catholics at the time, especially in Switzerland.

The Barth-Balthasar friendship, consequently, serves as an important case study for ecumenical conversations today as evidenced by their March 1954 correspondence concerning some of Barth’s misreported remarks on Catholic-Protestant distinctives. The effectualness of this particular exchange, in light of their friendship, came not because Barth and Balthasar strove for some ‘essence’ of Christianity but rather because they pursued Christ as *telos* in the context of a true friendship where honest disagreements were discussed. They were never content to let their disagreements stand and were often baffled by them. As such, their ecumenical exchanges bore fruit in asking the right kinds of questions rather than striving for the right kinds of answers. Hence, Barth and Balthasar bore witness to Christ through their distinctive traditions being challenged by the questions posed and the witness given. This led to an ethos of *semper reformanda*, an always reforming theology. From the Barth-Balthasar friendship, we learn, therefore, that ecumenical discourse is *performative*, not merely cognitive. It should proceed with a disposition of hope—an eschatological hope that bears witness to the unity we

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1 Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* 1.1, xiii. The secondary literature details a complicated and lengthy debate surrounding Barth’s opposition to the *analogia entis*. For a recent appraisal, see Thomas Joseph White, ed. *The Analogy of Being: Invention of the Antichrist or Wisdom of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011).
have in Christ by the Spirit so that the world may believe, while acknowledging that same unity will not be fully realized until the eschaton (John 17:20–23). It’s important, then, to examine more closely how the Barth-Balthasar friendship emerged.

The Barth-Balthasar Friendship

Barth delivered his final sermon of a decade long ministry to his rural parish in Safenwil, Switzerland on 9 October 1921. It was a decade tramelled by the devastation of the Great War yet a time when Barth had ‘come of age’, having published two editions of his Romans commentary and found his theological voice in opposition to modern, liberal Protestantism. Barth left Safenwil later that month for the University of Göttingen where he began his academic vocation by accepting the chair of Reformed Theology. At Göttingen, he wrote his first dogmatics, which was not well received by the theology faculty. The tension this caused compelled him to search for a way out of Göttingen. In the summer of 1925, the Protestant Faculty of Theology at Münster offered Barth the position of Professor of Dogmatics and New Testament Exegesis. He eagerly agreed to the proposal. While in Münster, Barth’s lecturers were prolific, ranging from the history of dogmatics to exegetical interpretations of several New Testament books. Believing the time was ripe for a new dogmatics to be written, he embarked on his second attempt that began with the doctrine of the Word of God, what he envisioned as the first volume of a Christian Dogmatics in Outline. Working in Münster also provided ample opportunity to pursue his intrigue with the ‘problem’ of Catholicism. Barth regularly invited prominent guests to his seminars and did so by asking Przywara to visit his 1928–1929 winter seminar on several occasions. After one of Barth’s lectures on the church, Przywara and Barth lingered in a lengthy conversation, the centre of which focused on the analogia entis. This would be the beginning of a long-standing debate between Przywara and Barth that would mark both their prodigious writings.

Barth left his academic post in Münster for the chair of systematic theology at the University of Bonn in March 1930. When he left for Bonn, he began to have grave concerns over the rise of National Socialism, not to mention the inane theology arising within the German Evangelical Church. As his new christocentric approach to theology crystallized in the early days at the University of Bonn, Barth determined to write a church dogmatics rather than a Christian dogmatics as he had begun in Münster. This was a monumental shift in that theology is not beholden to philosophical categories to be arranged in a ‘systematic’ way but rather is circumscribed within the realm of the church and responsible to the living Word of God. As dogmatics, theology takes its normative cue from the witness of the Scriptures, Old and New, to manifest the truth of its message that has been proclaimed by the Christian church both past and present. With these matters in mind, Barth significantly revised the first volume of his Christian Dogmatics into part one of the first volume of his Church Dogmatics, which was published in 1932. In this volume, Barth adamantly opposed ‘natural theology’, both the Roman Catholic and the 19th century Protestant variety, which

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3 Busch, Karl Barth, 164–88.
4 For a fuller development of this shift, see Graham Ward, Barth, Derrida, and the Language of Theology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).
served as the impetus for his political protest against National Socialism.\(^5\)

In late June 1933, Barth penned a sharply critical pamphlet of the Nazi regime entitled, *Theological Existence Today*, declaring that the God revealed in the person of Jesus Christ is the one Lord and Saviour of humanity. The pamphlet served as the clarion call for the Confessing Church to stand against the Third Reich and the German Christian Movement. Barth even sent a copy to Adolph Hitler. Nearly one month after its publication, the pamphlet was banned but not before 37,000 copies had been distributed. Officials at the University of Bonn would suspend Barth, forcing him to leave in 1935, as he would not unconditionally swear allegiance to the Führer. Upon hearing the news, the University of Basel extended an invitation to Barth to assume a professoriate in the Faculty of Theology, which Barth graciously accepted. Five years later, in 1940, Barth would encounter an exceptional individual who stimulated his thinking and became an unexpected friend and interlocutor—Hans Urs von Balthasar.\(^6\)

Balthasar’s journey to Basel was just as circuitous as Barth’s return to his birthplace. As a young boy in Lucerne, Switzerland, Balthasar was immersed in various forms of ‘high culture’ that nurtured his love of music, particularly Bach and Mozart. He was a person of humble faith, growing up in a devoted, active Catholic family. He would attend a Benedictine run secondary school in Engelberg, Switzerland where he spent an inordinate amount of time on music and reading classic literature like Dante’s *Divine Comedy* and *Faust*. While the reasons are unclear, he would leave Engelberg before finishing his studies to attend a Jesuit secondary school in Feldkirch, a city devastated by war in neighbouring Austria-Hungary. Balthasar was discontent with the classroom, so he and two friends left Feldkirch a year early and secretly enrolled at the University of Zurich in the late 1920s. Balthasar followed a course of study leading to a doctorate in *Germanistik*, a combination of German philosophy, literature, and language that included studying in Vienna, Berlin, and Zurich. His university studies challenged his faith, especially in Vienna where he encountered the antagonistic thought of Nietzsche, Freud, Mahler, and the like. One who likely encouraged Balthasar, though, was the renowned psychoanalyst Rudolf Allers who once followed Freud but upon his conversion turned to the study of philosophy and theology, imparting the significance of the *I-Thou* relationship for human existence. In the end, Balthasar ascribed to an integrative methodology evidenced in his dissertation, bringing theology and his vast literary reading together in a way that informed both.\(^7\)

Shortly before the completion of his university studies in the summer of 1927, Balthasar embarked upon an Ignatian spiritual retreat to nurture his faith under the guidance of Fr. Friedrich Kronseder. Without any inclination to enter the priesthood, Balthasar experienced an undeniable calling to give up his personal educational pursuits, including music, to follow Christ into the Society of Jesus, though he would some thirty years later lament not having responded to this call by submitting to the Secular Institutes. Balthasar joined the Bavarian Jesuit Order after completing his doctoral studies in 1929, following the Society’s novitiate formation. He would study philosophy in Pullach, near Munich, and

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\(^5\) Busch, *Karl Barth*, 200–22. Cf. Barth’s comments about Gottlieb Sohngen’s view of the *analogia entis* in *Church Dogmatics* 2.1 as his view is akin to Balthasar’s.


theology at Fourvière, near Lyons, France. Absent the kind of aesthetic and literary culture Balthasar had come to know, he considered his Jesuit education to be arid, dry, and incredibly dreary, so much so that he plugged his ears, as the story goes, during his lectures so that he could read Augustine.\(^8\) Fortunately, for Balthasar, he encountered Przywara in Munich and Henri de Lubac in Lyons. Przywara, through his study of Augustine and Aquinas as well as his dialogue with Barth, gave Balthasar the tools to not only assess modern philosophy by using the analogia entis but also to discern the God-world relation where whatever similarity exists it always exists amidst an ever-greater dissimilarity. De Lubac introduced Balthasar to the church fathers as a way beyond the neoscholastic vision of humanity as pursuant of two ends, one natural and the other supernatural, by conceiving of human ends in terms of the unified beatific vision of God. Nature, then, is not ‘pure’ or mechanistic as the medieval nominalist supposed but rather intrinsically connected to the divine.\(^9\) Both Przywara and de Lubac would become his lifelong friends who inspired his imagination and helped him navigate what Balthasar considered to be the desert of neoscholasticism.

Balthasar finished his Jesuit preparation in 1937, after being ordained to the priesthood on 26 July 1936. He moved to Munich to finish his dense, three volume expansion of his dissertation entitled *Apocalypse of the German Soul* (1937–1939) that put modern German thought in relief of New Testament eschatology, revealed the veiled religious dimensions of modern German literature, and located human ends in transcendence. Balthasar also worked with Przywara in Munich for two years as the associate editor of the Jesuit journal, *Stimmen der Zeit*, and would witness the ascension and assertion of Nazi power in its preparations for war. Shortly before the Second World War began, his Jesuit superiors offered him either a position as professor of ecumenical theology in Rome at the Gregorian University or a position as student chaplain at the University of Basel. Unsurprisingly, Balthasar followed his pastoral inclinations and chose the latter as he sought to infuse his theoretical knowledge with the vicissitudes of life.\(^10\)

Upon his arrival in Basel, Balthasar wrote Barth a letter seeking a personal meeting with him. Inspired by his mentors, particularly Przywara, to engage with Barth’s work, Balthasar had already had several imagined ‘conversations’ with Barth not only in his reading of but also in his writing about Barth. Now he wanted to meet the man face-to-face. In his letter, Balthasar indicated that he had read Barth’s earlier works and his most recent volume of *Church Dogmatics* (CD 2.1). He took issue with Barth’s position on the analogia entis and claimed that Barth had not really addressed the true matter at hand—neoscholasticism’s erroneous doctrine of pure nature. Balthasar and Barth would meet for the first time on 29 April 1940. This was the beginning of a lifelong friendship filled with honest, ardent disagreement but also a mutual admiration and respect for one another. They were united in their resistance against the Third Reich and shared a common love for Mozart. They possessed an abiding love for Christ and risked ecumenical engagement as Barth took the Catholic Church more seriously than communism and Balthasar took Barth more seriously than neoscholasticism. Both placed Christ at the centre of their theology and located theology within the sphere of the church, though they would differ on the relationship between Christ and his

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church. Nevertheless, it was difficult for Balthasar to find a hearing for Barth as he tried to offer a sympathetic reading to his fellow Catholics because of Barth’s strident positions against Catholicism during the 1940s and 1950s, which he would later moderate due to Balthasar’s influence.11

Christ, Creation, and His Church

In the summer of 1941, Barth invited Balthasar to attend his lecture on the Council of Trent, slyly commenting to his students about Balthasar’s presence that ‘the enemy is listening in’. Balthasar’s participation was vigorous and stunned Barth such that he had ‘no really impressive counter-attack’. Barth surmised that Balthasar ‘had been reading my Dogmatics too much (he dragged around II, 1 especially, in his briefcase, like a cat carrying a kitten)’. Balthasar would later return the invitation to Barth during the winter of 1948–1949, inviting him to sit in on a ten-part lecture series entitled ‘Karl Barth and Catholicism’. Barth attended the controversial lecture series as often as he could in expectation ‘to learn more about myself’ and would later laud Balthasar’s interpretation of his work as insightful.12 Prior to Balthasar’s winter lecture series, though, Barth delivered an address to the first meeting of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in which he chastised ‘Rome and Moscow’ for not participating, insinuating that Catholicism is akin to communism. Barth would clarify his remarks in a follow up interview: “Indeed, I did,’ Barth said frankly. ‘For I see a link there. I always felt Catholicism to be in agreement with communism.”13 Comments like these didn’t help Balthasar’s cause and would only heighten the tension between him and his Jesuit superiors. Yet, the Barth-Balthasar friendship through the years would bear ecumenical fruit as evidenced by one example from their personal correspondence.

In March 1954, Barth participated in a question and answer forum in Stuttgart, Germany where he initially offered some prepared remarks but then went on to answer questions from the audience concerning Protestant conversions to Catholicism as there were several recent prominent conversions at the time by poets and other aesthetically inclined persons. Although Barth was unaware, his answers to questions were reported in the journal ‘Deutschen Volksblatt’ as harsh and rough in tone, noting Barth to have said that no ‘decent person’ would convert to Catholicism. Prof. Alfens Auer, who was the founding director of the Catholic Academy of Germany in Stuttgart-Hohenheim and leading moral theologian at the University of Würzburg and later at Tübingen, passed the article to Balthasar. After reading the article, surely Barth’s previously acerbic comments echoed in Balthasar’s mind as he quickly queried Barth with a passionate, candid reply. In his reply, Balthasar made it personal by asking sarcastically whether Adrienne von Speyr, whom Barth knew well, was a ‘decent person’ for converting to Catholicism under his tutelage in 1940. Balthasar went on to express his concern over Barth’s ‘poisonous’ statements because of the influence he had throughout Germany, questioning whether Barth was able to show a modicum of mutuality.14

12 Busch, Karl Barth, 302, 362.
14 Manfred Lochbrunner, Hans Urs von Balthasar und seine Theologenkollegen (Würzburg: Echter Verlag), 330. Lochbrunner’s three volumes in German are a treasure trove filled with archival material and personal correspondence between Balthasar and his theological, philosophical, and literary friends. I’m grateful for Long’s Saving Karl Barth that pointed me to this source. Summaries and translations from Lochbrunner are my own.
Barth warmly and apologetically replied to Balthasar on 29 March 1954, stating that his remarks were misreported and didn’t quite capture the sense of his theology concerning Christ and his Church nor the spirit of the conversation. After all, Barth retorted, ‘How can a reporter capture a four-hour question and answer forum in such a short article?’ Barth proceeded as best he could to explain himself based on his prepared, handwritten notes and his recollection of the event. He was asked to address what were the decisive differences that separated Roman Catholicism and Reformed Confessions. Barth answered the question with four questions: “1. Where is the sovereignty of Jesus Christ with respect to the Church? 2. Where is the freedom of grace with respect to human achievement? 3. Where is the right and duty of the whole community with respect to the official representatives? 4. Where is the individuality of the Spirit with respect to the works of the sacramental institutions?” These questions formed the basis of his remarks, concluding that Roman Catholicism is ‘monistic’ as it has hegemonic control over the Church, its works, offices, and the sacraments. Barth keenly noted, though, that the reporter omitted a poignant question he put to his Protestant audience: ‘But does our Protestantism have the right to reproach the Roman Church about these matters?’ This question, Barth contended, changed the tenor of his reported remarks, emphasizing to Balthasar that ‘you know me well enough to guess how I briefly developed this point.”

Barth continued by explaining that his answers to questions concerning ‘impressive’ conversions by poets and other aesthetically inclined persons were not as eloquent as he would have liked. He clarified further by distinguishing between those who were long formed by Catholicism like Balthasar and these recent converts as representative of the ‘impossible possibility’ by which he likely meant that while conversions are possible it is impossible for them to reconcile the rift between Catholics and Protestants. Barth was surprised, though, Prof. Auer did not convey to Balthasar his more pointed remarks, which the ‘Deutschen Volksblatt’ journalist also omitted, that conversions must not be understood morally but rather as ‘abominations’, as a ‘betrayal of the Gospel’. Barth tried to justify his strong remarks out of pastoral concerns in order to sway wavering Protestants, knowing that he couldn’t tell them what to do or not to do, because such decisions were serious and should not be taken lightly. Citing James 3:2–12, Barth acknowledged, though, that he needed to be more careful with his words and implored Balthasar at the end of his letter ‘not to be angry forever at me’ and to send him a letter indicating such once he returned from Munich. Balthasar did send a confirmation letter to Barth on 12 April 1954, grateful that his letter had awakened in Barth a ‘Christian and friendly love of enemy’.

During this period, the tension between Catholics and Protestants was particularly palpable, making the Barth-Balthasar friendship all the more remarkable. Jesuits living in Switzerland at the time while tolerated were not officially recognized in that the Swiss constitution prohibited them from teaching in schools or preaching in churches (This section of the Swiss constitution was only rescinded in 1974). Many Protestants thought Balthasar’s lectures on Barth violated the Swiss constitution, which was one of the reasons why Balthasar’s lectures were so controversial. For Barth to engage with Balthasar was viewed by his Protestant contemporaries as suspicious as many Swiss Protestants considered Catholics and particularly Jesuits as a threat to Swiss liberty. Balthasar’s engagement with

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Barth was also viewed by his Catholic contemporaries as problematic in that Barth was considered to be a ‘modernist’ and a contentious figure even among his Protestant colleagues. As such, any rapprochement would only compromise the Catholic faith, which is why Balthasar’s book on Barth was initially suppressed by Jesuit censors in 1941. Nevertheless, Barth and Balthasar risked friendship. Considering their friendship, what can we learn, then, from this particular exchange?

Ecumenical Hope: Learning from the Barth-Balthasar Friendship

Both Barth and Balthasar saw little value in official ecumenical conferences and exchanges, much less in supposed consensus documents and joint declarations that attempted to agree upon some essentialist Christianity. Both stood firmly within their respective traditions and argued ardently for their viewpoints, which is why Barth was considered the Catholic antagonist and Balthasar the integrationist as convert-maker. What brought them together was their kindred spirits in that both possessed a deep love of music and especially Mozart. Both had little regard for ‘professional theology’ and considered theology as reflective action on God’s revelatory Word as attested to in Holy Scripture such that theology and life become a false dichotomy. Theology, then, ‘can only be theocentric and Christocentric, because it is entirely absorbed in looking at the form (Gestalt) of revelation and because it seeks everything that theology has to say in Christ’. This kindred spirit, this theological orientation, was not only the basis of their friendship but was also on display in this particular exchange. The most obvious example stems from Balthasar’s initial query when he turned Barth’s impersonal critique into a personal one by asking whether Speyr was a ‘decent person’. This in effect challenged Barth’s criticism by bringing theology and life together, which in turn led to Barth’s own explanation regarding his pastoral concerns for his Protestant audience. Furthermore, Balthasar took Barth at his word, replying with what appears to be some playful banter as Balthasar revels in arousing in Barth a measure of ‘love of enemy’. Ecumenical encounters, then, are worthwhile when conducted within the context of genuine friendship where theology and life are seen together rather than as a bifurcation.

As Barth proceeded to elaborate his account of the event, it became evident that the central issue underlying his prepared remarks was his understanding of Christ, Creation, and Church, which was one of the sharpest differences between Barth and Balthasar. The first question Barth raises, ‘Where is the sovereignty of Jesus Christ with respect to the Church?’, makes the point. While both envisioned Christ as the telos of the Church, Barth insisted that the Church was not an extension of the Incarnation while Balthasar criticized Barth for conceiving of a Church that eliminated any real, dynamic God-human interaction. As such, Barth construed Protestant conversions to Catholicism as a ‘betrayal of the Gospel’ while Balthasar envisioned his efforts to convert others as participation in the God-human drama. In the end, Barth and Balthasar would never resolve the tension surrounding this issue, leaving both baffled by this disagreement. Despite this disagreement, Barth and Balthasar did not abandon their particular traditions that witness to Christ in order to achieve some compromise but instead were tested by ‘the other’. Ecumenical encounters, then, are ef-

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17 Long, Saving Karl Barth, 20–5.
fectual when Christ is the telos of our conversations rather than striving for some essentialist notion of Christianity.

As Barth explained to Balthasar, he was asked first to offer some prepared remarks about the differences between Catholicism and Reformed confessions before taking questions from the audience. In those prepared remarks, Barth set out the four questions that formed the basis of his response. To be sure, Barth offered to his Protestant audience answers to these questions as he understood them. Upon closer examination, though, the content of these questions reveals where Barth believed the differences were between Catholics and Reformed confessions. For example, in question three, Barth challenged the hegemonic power of the Catholic hierarchy by probing the relationship between the community and its official representatives, implying that the rights and duties of the community were undermined by such power. Is it any wonder why Barth would associate such hegemony with communism? What’s important is the question being asked and not Barth’s conclusion as his conclusion only engendered disdain. The question, though, opens to a conversation, whether internal or external to one’s tradition. The rightly posed question can be more effective than the right answer as evidenced by Barth’s question to his Protestant audience that likely undermined any sort of self-righteous piety: ‘But does our Protestantism have the right to reproach the Roman Church about these matters?’ Ecumenical encounters, then, are fruitful when the right kinds of questions are posed rather than seeking the right answers to the wrong kinds of questions. This in turn leads to a disposition of

Taking the Barth-Balthasar friendship as a whole in light of this particular correspondence, ecumenical encounters are performative, not merely cognitive. Barth and Balthasar understood this well as evidenced by their theological orientation, their opposition to the bifurcation of theology and life, and frankly their own lives. In this particular correspondence, Barth could have easily ignored Balthasar’s letter because Balthasar was misinformed. Rather, Barth not only clarified the situation he also acknowledged his own faults, seeking reconciliation with Balthasar. As such, ecumenical encounters should proceed with a disposition of hope—an eschatological hope that bears witness to the unity we have now in Christ by the Spirit so that the world may believe, while acknowledging that same unity will not be fully realized until the eschaton (John 17:20–23). Given the tensions between Catholics and Protestants, particularly in Switzerland, it would have been easier for Barth and Balthasar to pursue separate ends, to pursue their own work internal to their confessions. Yet, because of their hope in Christ, they risked friendship; and, Catholicism and Protestantism are now better for their efforts. More importantly, their ecumenical efforts bore witness to Christ from their respective traditions so that the world may know of him. Ecumenical encounters, then, are fitting when they are more concerned about theological performance, a hopeful disposition, and theological virtue rather than merely cognitive assent. We have Barth and Balthasar to thank for these lessons.19

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19 I’m grateful for comments by Chris Hatton and Jared Schumacher on an earlier draft that sharpened my thinking. Any errors in judgment, however, remain my own.
Biblical Interpretation as Political Practice

Ched Myers

There have been few North American theologians in the past three decades who have seriously attempted to bridge the longstanding gulf that exists between the seminaries, the sanctuaries, and the streets. Of those few, Lee Cormie stands out as one of the most passionate and exemplary. As our paths have crossed at conferences, demonstrations, and ecumenical services, I have always appreciated conversations with Cormie, whose grounded theological perspectives and active commitments to social analysis and strategic action are encouraging and clarifying. It is in this integrative spirit, and in deep appreciation for Cormie’s work and witness, that I offer the following reflections on the uses of Scripture for engaging social change.

Socio-Political Hermeneutics and Liberation Theology

During the 1970s Christian liberation theologies percolated throughout Latin America, Africa, and Asia, as well as among Third World communities within First World countries. These diverse theologies generally shared three characteristics: (a) a grounding in practices of popular education and pastoral work among the poor; (b) reflection generated from contexts of violence, poverty, and oppression; and (c) alignment with social movements of service to the marginalized, advocacy, and sometimes revolutionary engagement. During this same period a variety of ‘political theologies’ and Christian-Marxist dialogues emerged in North Atlantic countries. Lee Cormie has been one of North America’s most diligent and faithful translators and promoters of this theological tradition. His writing and his activism around struggles for social change at home and abroad have inspired a generation of both students and colleagues to connect faith and justice.

Liberation theologies animated ‘political readings’ of both Testaments that focused upon God’s attentiveness to the poor, the prophetic insistence upon social justice, and the vocation of the church to stand in solidarity with the marginalized. Most of the initial exegetical work was, however, topical, and offered mostly by theologians. Catholic and Protestant biblical scholars were slower to respond to liberation themes. Notable exceptions were Hebrew Bible scholar Norman Gottwald, whose socio-political interpretation of Israel’s origins was groundbreaking in its use of sociological method and political hermeneutics, and Richard Horsley, who pioneered similar approaches to the New Testament. Though initially controversial, their work eventually transformed the field.

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3 One of the earlier attempts was George Pixley, God’s Kingdom (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1981).
In 1983 Gottwald and Horsley, in a collection of essays on political and social hermeneutics, identified four key ‘chasms’ in biblical studies, between: (a) religion and the rest of life; (b) the past as ‘dead history’ and the present as ‘real life’; (c) thought and practice; and (d) biblical academics and popular Bible study. “The Bible is about political-economic life inseparable from religious perspective and inspiration,” they wrote, “and is full of political-economic-religious conflict and struggle.” They called for biblical scholars to “recognize that their own enterprise and points of view are historically determined and parochial... and further recognize that certain popular readings display an affinity or analogy with certain views or struggles represented in biblical literature.”

This represents an enduring statement of the issues addressed by socio-political readings of the Bible.

The conservative drift of culture and politics through the Reagan/Thatcher and Bush/Blair eras saw liberation theologies increasingly relegated to the activist margins of First and Third World seminaries and churches. A recent anthology of Latin American ‘economic readings’ of Scripture shows, however, that liberation theologies continue to fertilize engaged biblical study throughout the Third World, despite less interest among First World publishers. Meanwhile, a modest but steady stream of political and socio-logical readings of the Bible has emerged among a new generation of exegetes during this same period. This field is broad enough to divide into four interrelated trajectories (the following is a selective but hopefully representative list of work in English):

1. Thematic studies. Driven by contemporary social concerns, these works survey biblical perspectives on specific issues such as economics, violence and nonviolence, and politics.

2. Liberation/social hermeneutics. Inclusive of feminist/womanist and racial-ethnic

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7 For a sampling, see David Jobling et al, eds., The Bible and the Politics of Exegesis: Essays in Honor of Norman K. Gottwald on His Sixty-fifth birthday (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 1991).


hermeneutics, this broad rubric entails methodological approaches,11 social-theoretical readings,12 and studies of specific texts.13

3. Socio-historical and sociological-anthropological studies. Though they differ in their attitude toward historical ‘quests,’ many North Atlantic scholars have used social and anthropological theory and/or politico-historical structural analysis, in three broad trajectories:

- Social history, focusing on the sitz im leben of the Hebrew Bible,14 the Jesus movement,15 and Paul;16
- sociological context of the NT17
- readings of specific texts.18

4. **Socio-literary and ideological approaches.** Influenced by the Formalist challenge to historical-criticism, some are examining biblical narrative as historically specific ideological productions rather than trying to get ‘behind’ the text. This trajectory includes:

- **literary sociology/sociology of literature;**
- **ideological criticism, a related development that endeavors to read ‘against the grain,’ exercising suspicion about how power functions within and around the text;**
- **post-colonial readings, a trend in literary theory recently picked up in biblical studies, that examines the legacy of imperialism, cultural hybridity and political ambiguity.**

It is fair to say that liberation hermeneutics disrupted whatever academic consensus may have existed in academic biblical studies prior to 1975. Kah-Jin Kuan sums up the new mood: “Biblical interpretation has begun to see shifts in paradigms since the introduction of liberation theology. As a biblical scholar, I no longer subscribe to the idea that biblical interpretation was or can ever be objective and universal.”

This brief survey suggests that there now exists an enormous corpus of contemporary political hermeneutics. I have two concerns about this body of literature. One is that too often these works are obtuse and/or pedantic, and thus difficult to access by non-academics who are involved in concrete struggles against oppression and for social change, and who could benefit by such critical reflection. Another is the tendency of many scholars to handle biblical material with a presumption of moral superiority. Scripture has, of course, been employed in the service of conquest and colonization through the history of Christendom since Constantine, which is why the history of interpretation must be aggressively engaged. This should not, however, obscure the ‘contrapuntal’ fact that most of these old texts were produced by and for peoples on the margins of empire. Indeed, the biblical writers were far more countercultural than most
modern postcolonial scholars, who often seem far more adept at identifying ‘accommodation’ in Scripture than in their own social practices. Should not the hermeneutic of suspicion go both ways?

While the field is vastly diverse and even fragmented, I believe the most significant watershed is not between competing theoretical schools. Rather it is between those who engage texts from within and on behalf of ongoing social movements for change, and those who are content with purely academic deconstructionism. A good case in point is the way in which ‘empire’ has recently been used by many scholars as a hermeneutic key for reading the NT. This is a welcome trend, since two decades ago my own study of Mark was deemed too ‘politicized’ for taking this approach. But for some academics the analysis of imperialism stops at antiquity, while for others it informs past and present. In either case, unless historical analysis is connected to concrete engagement with, for example, the all too real rehabilitation of U.S. imperial rhetoric and policies under the second Bush regime, ‘empire studies’ will amount to little more than another fad in biblical studies.

From a liberation perspective, the litmus test of any method will always be the degree to which it is able to animate praxis, and to which it is accountable to and involved with churches and social movements of humanization on the ground. Too many theological scholars still fall prey to the ‘ideology of professionalism,’ which generates insularity and intellectual detachment.

Colleagues like Lee Cormie, who are not reluctant to anchor their work in social movements, are rare. The old adage, ‘location, location, location,’ will continue to define whether our readings of the Bible are merely political in theme, or constitute a political practice.

It is both my conviction and experience that the Bible comes alive precisely at the point that interpreters venture analogical comparisons to real situations of engagement with marginalized people, and with actual struggles for personal and political transformation. I proceed, then, to a reading of two biblical texts in socio-historical context, placed alongside my context of organizing and advocacy for social justice. I offer this as a suggestive example of interpretation as political practice.

Tearing Down the Walls of God’s House: Third Isaiah and Ecclesial Struggles for Inclusion

You hammer against the walls of your house. ... Unfortunately, it is often a bearing wall that has to go... Knock it out. Duck. Annie Dillard, The Writing Life

We live in a world in which the social architecture of functional segregation and inequality persists. Divisions of race, class and gender have become so deep that they threaten the structural

23 See fn 19 above.
integrity of the ‘House,’ whether this is understood in terms of a church, the nation as a whole, or our entire globalized civilization. The question is whether we have the courage to take down walls that divide—even if they are bearing walls—in order to save the house.

The specter of the American House collapsing under the weight of its own contradictions has long haunted U.S. leaders. “A house divided cannot stand,” warned Abraham Lincoln, appropriating the ancient verdict of Jesus (Mark 3:25) to describe the economic, social and political crisis that led to the War Between the States in the 1860s. This historical ultimatum keeps recurring in the American political unconscious:

- invoked by Martin Luther King in his famous August 1963 speech about racial justice, delivered standing in front of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, DC;
- implied in the slogan of the 1992 Los Angeles urban uprising, the largest episode of civil unrest in the U.S. since the Civil War: “No justice, no peace!”;
- confronted again as a global truth with the dramatic collapse of the World Trade Center Towers on Sept. 11, 2001.

A house constructed upon social, economic and/or ideological division will, sooner or later, either cave in because of internal structural flaws or be destroyed by those whose disenfranchisement gives them no reason to feel a stake in its maintenance.

The fact is, there have always been two Americas: not just of rich and poor, but also of inclusion and exclusion. The America of inclusion has found expression in the ideal of ‘liberty and justice for all,’ and has been embodied whenever Indian treaties were honored, Civil Rights realized, women’s suffrage secured, child labor laws passed, immigrants embraced, or same-gender marriage legalized. The America of exclusion, on the other hand, was articulated in a Constitution that originally enfranchised only white landed males, and has been embodied in indigenous genocide, Jim Crow segregation, Guilded Age economic stratification, immigrant exclusion acts, restrictive housing covenants, and the Religious Right’s current campaign for a Constitutional Amendment to prohibit same-gender marriage.

These two visions of America continually compete for the hearts and minds of our churches. Today Christians are once again lining up on both sides. On one side are those who understand Civil Rights logic as inevitably expansive into equal rights for all minorities, not just some—the America of Emma Lazarus’ “Golden Door,” Martin Luther King’s “I Have a Dream,” and Audre Lorde’s “Sister Outsider.” On the other are those who believe that justice is a limited good, and that we need to suppress pluralism and restore ‘purity’—the America of George Bush’s imperial politics, CIA rendition flights, and James Dobson’s ‘Focus on the Family.’ Where our churches locate themselves on this political and theological terrain of struggle between those who would tear down dividing walls and those who would shore them up will determine the future of faith—as it did in Nazi Germany.

A curious and troubling conversation between Jesus and his disciples in Mark’s gospel toward the end of his ministry is germane. In his dramatic public action in the Temple precinct, Jesus symbolically “loots” those who have looted the poor (Mark 11:15–17). Shortly thereafter his disciples stand, intimidated and fascinated, before the imposing edifice of the Jerusalem Temple exclaiming: “Look, what magnificent structures!” (Mark 13:1). It was indeed an awesome structure, bigger than life, the architectural symbol of their nation. “Do you see these great buildings?” replies Jesus, unimpressed. “There will not be one stone left upon another” (13:2). Talk about deconstruction! Jesus’ dictum about the ‘divided House’ turns out to be a trope for the
Temple-State! Is it any wonder that the authorities wanted him dead?

“Christ has made us one, having broken down the dividing wall of hostility,” wrote the author of Ephesians (Eph 2:14). The conviction that structures of social segregation had been abolished by Jesus lay at the heart of the earliest church’s message. Indeed, the apostle Paul committed his entire ministry to carrying on the related work of building a new foundation of race, class, and gender equality: “There is no longer Jew or Greek, slave or free, male and female; all of you are one in Christ” (Gal 3:28). This New Testament ethos was, of course, eventually abandoned by the church, which chose to accept Constantine’s Faustian bargain. But the vision has resurfaced with every renewal movement throughout our history: among Benedictine monks and Franciscan friars, Anabaptist radicals and Methodist reformers, and in our own time through movements for Civil Rights, women’s ordination, lesbian and gay inclusion, and immigrant dignity. Its roots, however, are found a half-millennium before Christ, in the proclamation of a disciple of the great Israelite prophet Isaiah.

Isaiah 56:1–8 is the opening stanza of the prophetic oracle sometimes referred to as ‘Third Isaiah’ (Isa 56–66). It sets a tone of radical inclusion, envisioning a time when people from all over the world, including ethnic outsiders and sexual minorities, will be welcomed as full members into God’s House. This thesis is reiterated at the close of Third Isaiah: “The time has come to gather all the nations and tongues” (Isa 66:18). This is the ‘new heaven and new earth’ that YHWH intends to bring about (Isa 66:22).

Scholars date Third Isaiah sometime in the first two generations of the Israelite exiles’ return from Babylon, between the reconstruction of the Temple (515 BCE) and the time of Nehemiah (ca. 444 BCE). This was a watershed time, and two key issues faced those trying to rebuild their society. One was who was going to lead this project, the other was who was going to participate in it. Such questions always shape the political landscape, then and now.

Those who had been exiled to Babylon were the elites of Israelite society: priests, managers, the landed aristocracy, scribes, etc. The majority of peasants had remained in Palestine, working the land and scraping out a living, as the poor have always done under any regime. As the elites began to trickle back, they faced a dilemma: how would they reestablish their title and their privileges to land, to social status, and to political position? The returnees were a mixed bag, indeed, including land speculators and carpetbaggers trying to take economic advantage of the new settlements; priests determined to reestablish the cultic center as their power base; ultra-nationalists who saw a chance to rebuild old dreams of sovereignty; and political front men for Israel’s new Persian imperial rulers who were trying to exert colonial control of the new entity in Palestine. All the elites agreed on one thing, however: they would define the reconstruction project.28

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27 Second (Isaiah 40–55) and Third Isaiah represent the work of prophetic successors to the eighth century Isaiah: the former during the exile to Babylon, the latter during the ‘reconstruction’ period following the return. These writings arose most likely from prophetic ‘schools,’ evidence of which we find in the Elijah/Elisha cycles (e.g., the ‘company of prophets’ in 2 Kings 4:38). Here disciples carried on the work of their teachers, recontextualizing their word into another historical moment—which is, of course, what all preachers try to do every time they proclaim the Word into a given context.

Such aspirations generated conflicts with the existing population over property, politics, and religion. The most dramatic example was a proposal to rebuild the Temple. When the Persians defeated the Babylonians, King Cyrus had decreed that the returning Israelite leadership could reconstruct a Temple in their homeland, but this project was opposed by the *am-haaretz* (‘people of the land’). Cyrus’ royal successor, Darius, then halted construction for political reasons, and it took concerted efforts by Israelite elites to get Cyrus’ original promise honored (a drama narrated in Ezra 1–9). One need only reference the situation of Palestine since 1948 to imagine the struggles between the longtime residents on the land and ideologically motivated and politically powerful ‘returnees.’

The strategy of the elite was to purge the peasantry by establishing new ethnic purity standards. Efforts to shore up the boundaries of nation and family stressed genealogical integrity (which advantaged the scribal class, who kept records of their lineage) and Levitical fidelity (which advantaged the priestly class). The Persian overlords were supportive of such measures: an ethnically uniform colony was easier to manage politically. This explains why the books of Ezra and Nehemiah are concerned with defining insiders and outsiders, and why the people of the land resisted their attempts to assert control.²⁹

Their ‘reconstructionist’ position was legitimated on the basis of Deut 23:1–8, which specifically excludes ‘from the assembly’ males who were not sexually functional, the ‘illegitimately’ born, and foreigners. (Similar laws are found in Lev 21:17–21 and 22:22–24, where sexual blemishes are seen as an indication of impurity.) We might call this the social strategy of ‘anthropological exclusion’: ruling out persons not because of anything they have done, but because of who they are in their bodies.

Third Isaiah argues vehemently against this position, taking specific issue with the view that the nation would best be protected through ‘ethnic cleansing’ and endogamy. Instead, Isa 56:1–8 calls for the boundaries of the community to be preserved through ethical behavior. Whoever keeps the Sabbath, the text asserts, is entitled to full inclusion, a point underlined by the most ‘extreme’ examples: eunuchs (heterosexually non-conforming males) and foreigners.

A dramatic opening line that crystallizes the entire argument to follow: “This is what God says: ‘Maintain justice! Do what is right! Then I will vindicate you!’” This makes it clear from the outset that the issue is justice, not purity. Justice is immediately defined as obeying Torah, keeping Sabbath and turning away from evil (Isa 56:2). In appealing to Sabbath practice, the prophet is invoking the heart of the ethical tradition of Scripture. To keep Sabbath is to make sure everyone has enough and no one has too much, celebrating the gifts of the Creator by keeping both power and goods circulating rather than concentrating (Ex 16:16–19). It calls for vigilance against poverty and social marginalization and for limits to work and accumulation (Deut 15; Ex 23:10–12).³⁰

²⁹ The chronological question of which leader came first is a notoriously thorny one, but what is clear is that Nehemiah allowed existing exogamous marriages to stand but forbade future ones, while Ezra took a more conservative position, instructing Judeans who had ‘married out’ to divorce their foreign wives. But if we are tempted to feel morally superior toward such ancient statutes, we should remember that it was not until 1967 that the U.S. Supreme Court overturned a Virginia statute barring whites from marrying nonwhites. This decision overturned similar bans in fifteen other states—but Alabama did not remove it from its constitution until 2001!

But Third Isaiah goes further, addressing a part of the community that is being legally and socially excluded:

Let not the foreigner say...
Let not the eunuch say...
For this is what God says...
(Isa 56:3–4)

This verse un-silences the voices of those who have introjected their rejection by the dominant culture because of how they are perceived and publicly caricatured: “The LORD will surely separate me from his people,” and “I am just a dry tree.” Second-class citizens in our own history know all too well this self-hatred—black children trying to scrub their skin white, immigrants changing their names, women keeping silent, and gays and lesbians staying deep in a destructive closet—all to avoid the contempt of a society that barely tolerates them. Internalized self-negation and external oppression are like a constant ‘acid rain,’ one black psychologist once put it. And it is time, says Third Isaiah, for it to stop—because YHWH says differently (commentators believe the prophets rhetoric here implies a new ruling on case law).

The eunuch who holds to the Covenant will receive, “in My house and within My walls, a monument and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off” (56:5). The prophet knew very well that eunuchs were, according to Levitical stricutures, excluded from cultic and family life. After all, since they could not procreate they could not reap the benefits of patrimony, including land ownership. This also meant that their names would be lost to posterity, an ancient way of rendering someone socially and historically invisible. Instead, God promises an honored place in the ‘House,’ something better than patrimony, symbolized by a special ‘monument’ and an ‘everlasting name.’ Playfully, the Hebrew word rendered as ‘monument’ in the NRSV is yd, usually translated as ‘hand’ (cf. Isa 57:8), but also as ‘power,’ ‘place’—or as a euphemism for ‘penis’!

The only social group lower in the Levitical hierarchy than eunuchs were foreigners, exactly those whom the prophet next addresses. He repeats himself: if foreigners follow, serve and love God, and observe the Sabbath and the Covenant, “I will bring them to my holy mountain, and their sacrifices will be acceptable” (56:6–7). The House has been ‘remodeled’ and ‘repurposed,’ in order to be “known as a place where all nations pray.” This is Third Isaiah’s answer to Ezra and Nehemiah’s culture war on those who didn’t fit the ethnic-national ideal: Don’t force sexual minorities out, and let foreigners in. YHWH welcomes whosoever desires to follow the Way, regardless of who they are in their somatic identity. Third Isaiah’s advocacy for faithful Sabbath-keeping over self-righteous gate-keeping is good

31 “Will not be cut off” (charath in Hebrew) is a play on the Hebrew word for eunuch (cariyc), which comes from an unused root meaning to castrate. The verb firmly links this oracle to the ‘new thing’ YHWH is doing at the end of Second Isaiah: “Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress... it shall be a memorial to the Lord, an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off” (Isa 55:1 3). Eunuch occurs 42 times in OT, and is translated in the Septuagint as eunouchos, meaning ‘keeper of the bedroom,’ designating the role of royal eunuchs as ‘chamberlains.’ There is continuing scholarly debate about whether this term narrowly refers to those who were emasculated to serve as court retainers, or whether it is a broader term including all men who were socially emasculated because of their sexual physiology or orientation. Matt 19:12 suggests that there are eunouchoi made by men, and eunuchs ‘from birth.’ Paris Malik has argued at length from hundreds of ancient sources that this latter designation clearly included homosexuals (www.well.com/user/aquarius/index.htm#Home%202). Frederick J. Gaiser reads the text this way in, “A New Word on Homosexuality? Isa 56:1–8 as Case Study,” Word & World 14 (1994) 280–93. See also Nancy Wilson, Our Tribe: Queer Folks, God, Jesus, and the Bible (New York: HarperCollins, 1995); and Tom Horner, Jonathan Loved David: Homosexuality in Biblical Times (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978).
news today, when gay and lesbian citizens are watching their civil rights erode, while gay and lesbian Christians are having their discipleship dismissed. The prophet shatters the silence that kills, and authorizes attempts to tear down the bearing walls that still divide God's House.

In Third Isaiah's view, the Jerusalem Temple was meant to be a world House, not a national shrine (as every other temple in antiquity was). But his vision did not prevail; the ethnocentric strategy of Ezra and Nehemiah carried the day. Indeed, some of those kicked out of the newly proscribed Judean body politic ended up as the despised Samaritans of Jesus' day. Chauvinism is indeed very powerful. Yet God's Word did not prove fruitless.

"Nothing From Outside Can Make You Unclean": Jesus and Ecclesial Struggles for Inclusion

Dichosa la casa que abriga este dia. Dichosa esta casa que nos posada.
("Blessed is the house that today offers protection. Blessed is this house that gives us shelter")
—from the traditional Mexican litany of 'Posadas'

More than four centuries after Third Isaiah, Jesus of Nazareth one day dusted off that Isaiah scroll, looked hard at his synagogue audience, and read: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because God has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor... (Luke 4:18–19). When he was done citing Isa 61:1–2a—the heart of Third Isaiah—he added: "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:21). Jesus was announcing a renewed campaign for inclusion rooted in this prophetic tradition.

Later, in the midst of his cleansing/exorcism of the Jerusalem Temple—the dramatic culmination of his struggle with the Judean authorities—Jesus quotes directly from our text: "My House shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples" (Isa. 56:8 = Luke 19:46). It is not overstating the case to say that Jesus staked his entire ministry on the vision of Third Isaiah. Its ethos of radical inclusion animated his constant transgressions of social boundaries: eating with lepers, hanging out with women, touching the impure, teaching the excluded. If Third Isaiah was so formative for Jesus, then, perhaps it ought to guide us also through the well-mined battlefields of our current culture wars.

To strengthen our resolve, we should note that in the often overlooked parabolic teaching of Mark 7:14–23, Jesus spins an argument that is remarkably similar to Third Isaiah's. The literary context finds Jesus having to defend his disciples' practice of sharing table fellowship with 'unclean' outsiders (Mark 7:1–5). The set up of the scene contrasts Jesus' proximity to the marginalized poor with that of the Pharisees by comparing their relationship to the town square:

And wherever he went into villages or cities or the countryside, they laid the sick in the marketplaces (Gk: *en tais aerogais*) and begged Jesus that they might touch even the fringe of his cloak; and all who touched it were healed. (6:56)

For the Pharisees... do not eat unless they wash their hands diligently... and when they return from the marketplace (Gk *ap' aerogas*) do not eat anything unless they ritually purify themselves [Or it] (7:3–4)

The emphasis on public space, table fellowship and the 'politics of touch' makes it clear that this represents yet another prophetic skirmish with the Purity Code. This is a three-part episode:

7:1–5: Pharisees' challenge to Jesus' disciples; explanation of the Purity issues involved;
7:6–13: Jesus' counter-attacks on Pharisaic authority;
7:14–23: Jesus returns to the original issue of meal-sharing, offering a 'parable.'

The question here is whether the table will be a place where in-group boundaries are maintained or where the social ‘outsider’ may be embraced.

Jesus’ disciples are apparently following his example of ignoring certain purification rites at table (7:2). Washing hands, produce, and utensils had nothing to do with hygiene, but with the symbolic removal of impurity (7:3–4). These conventions, together with kosher dietary rules, functioned politically (defining ethnic identity) and socially (who one ate with and what one ate reflected one’s status in the class hierarchy). The fact that Mark sets this debate in relation to the ‘marketplace’ also suggests an economic dimension in the background. Pharisaic regulators were concerned that marketplace food had been rendered unclean at some stage (i.e., seed sown on the Sabbath or fruits harvested without properly separating out tithes), and sought to control such ‘contamination.’ Many Galilean peasants resented these Pharisaic ‘middlemen’ in the processes of production, distribution, and consumption of produce.32

The Pharisees are accusing the disciples of group disloyalty and defending their own social and economic status as economic and cultural brokers. Moreover, they charge that Jesus’ community is ignoring the ‘tradition of the elders’ (7:5). This was a body of legal interpretation that the Pharisees claimed had been handed down orally alongside the written Torah. Jesus refuses to recognize the authority of this ‘human tradition,’ contrasting it with the ‘commandment of God’ (7:8–13). Not surprisingly, he then appeals to Isaiah to underline his point (Mark 7:6–7 = Isa 29:13). The allusion is germane: Isaiah’s oracle denounces false prophets ( Isa 29:10) and people who ‘cannot read’ (29:12), and promises that “the wisdom of their wise shall perish” (29:14)!

In a deft bit of casuistry, Jesus moves from defendant to prosecutor by invoking a bit of ‘case law’ (Mark 7:9). He argues in 7:10 that Torah enjoins a responsibility to provide economic support for one’s aging parents (see Ex 20:12) and conversely condemns those who would try to escape this obligation by pronouncing a curse (see Ex 21:17). He accuses the Pharisees of circumventing this obligation by allowing (presumably wealthy) people to will their estates to the Temple, declaring them korban (Mark 7:11). Such vows of dedication froze a family’s assets until at death they were released to the Temple treasury, for which they represented an important source of revenue. But because this practice leaves the dependent elderly financially ostracized, the putatively pious ‘vow’ to the Temple becomes in fact an economic ‘curse’ upon the elderly (7:12), and thus “nullifies the command of God” (7:13).

The principle here is the same we see in earlier Markan conflict stories: putting those who are vulnerable before the demands of institutions or the sophistry of the privileged (see especially the sequences in 1:40–3:6 and 5:1–43). Mark is again trying to show that when religion legitimates socio-cultural inequities, it subverts justice. Economic critique lies at the core of these interventions: Mark, who began our episode by linking the Pharisees with the Jerusalem scribes (7:1), later indicts the scribal class and the Temple treasury in systemic exploitation of the poor (12:38–44).33

Mark concludes with a signal to the reader to pay careful attention: “Listen to me all of you, and understand” (7:14). Jesus’ teaching, characterized in the next verse as a parable, is concise and to the point: “There is nothing which goes into a person that can defile; only that which comes out

of a person defiles” (7:15). This mysterious trope is immediately decoded for the Twelve in the following household scene (7:17). Using the physical body as a metaphor for the body politic (employed also by Paul in 1 Cor 12:12–30), Jesus contends that social boundaries constructed by the Purity Code are powerless to protect the integrity of the community: ‘contamination’ can only arise from within.

Mark interprets this to mean that Jesus “declared all foods clean” (7:19). Not only does this re-enfranchise marginalized Jews; a kosher diet must no longer function to proscribe table fellowship with non-Jews either! Mark agrees with both Luke (see Acts 10:9–16) and Paul (see Rom 14) that obstacles to building community with ethnic outsiders must be removed—no matter how fundamental to the culture! This extraordinary call is underlined by the ensuing episodes in Mark. First, Jesus sacrifices his own Jewish male honor in order to welcome a female foreigner ‘to the table’ (Mark 7:24–37). Then the circle of enfranchisement is expanded by the feeding of Gentile multitudes (8:1–9). Mark concludes this narrative sequence with Jesus’ warning to his disciples to “Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Herodians” (8:15). Social and political exclusivity jeopardizes the ‘one loaf’ around which the church is called to gather (8:16–21).

Taking a page from Third Isaiah’s book, Jesus’ teaching concludes that the true ‘site of purity’ is not the body but the heart, the moral center of a person in Hebrew anthropology (7:18–20). A vice-list follows, alluding in part to the prophet Hosea’s denunciation of public crime in Israel: theft, adultery, and murder (7:21 = Hos 4:2). Jesus thus re-draws the lines of group identity: the ethnocentricity of the Purity code is replaced by the rigor of collective, ethical self-scrutiny.

All groups establish boundaries to determine who is in and who is out. These can be moral, such as when they help protect weaker people from domination by stronger people. But while this ‘defensive’ function is usually cited as justification for borders and walls, more often the actual relations of power are the opposite: they function to protect the strong from the weak, defending privilege and maintaining inequality. In what may be at once his most radical and most widely ignored teaching, Jesus rejects all culturally proprietary boundaries that alleges to protect one’s own community from perceived external threats. Scapegoating or excluding outsiders cannot protect us—only our own ethical behavior can do that. We should not underestimate how radical Jesus’ proposition was for a first century Jew. An analogy for modern North Americans might be re-defining U.S. citizenship not by one’s papers, but by one’s genuine commitment to the Bill of Rights: an ideology of ‘open borders’!

Each Advent since 1994, a small group of Christians make a pre-Christmas pilgrimage to the barren landscape of the U.S.–Mexico border at San Ysidro/Tijuana. It is a celebration of posadas, the traditional liturgy celebrated by Mexican Catholics throughout the American Southwest during the last nine days of Advent. Marchers accompany statues of the Holy Family from house to house around the barrio, waiting to be recognized and allowed in so that the Christ-child may be born. But this ‘posada sin fronteras’ (shelter without borders) is public, political theater at a door that is closed and heavily guarded: we converge on the menacing border fence, a ten-foot high metal wall donated to the U.S. Border Patrol by the Pentagon after Desert Storm—one war’s surplus bolstering another war’s front lines. It is organized by immigrants’ rights groups on both sides of the border to protest...
anti-immigrant legislation and popular prejudice.

The traditional litany is recited back and forth across the fence, the role of the Holy Family seeking refuge sung by the Mexican group, while we Californians recite the lines of the hard-hearted innkeeper: Yo no puedo abrir; no sea algun tunante (“I cannot open, for you may be bad people”). The no-man’s-land of the border is bathed by floodlights and thick with Border Patrol vehicles and helicopters, ‘innkeepers’ who spend millions of taxpayer dollars in an effort to reduce illegal entries across this, the world’s most heavily used border crossing. Their mission is to keep out the very ones Who a century earlier were expressly invited to the U.S. by the extraordinary verse of the immigrant poet Emma Lazarus that is inscribed on the Statue of Liberty: “Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free. … Send those, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me: I lift my lamp beside the golden door.” No seas inhumano; tenos caridad (“Don’t be inhuman; have mercy on us”), sings the Mexican ‘Joseph.’ We hear but cannot see one another. “Ya se pueden ir, y no molestar,” threatens the Innkeeper. Porque si me enojo les voy a pegar (“Better go on, don’t bother us. For if I become angry, I shall beat you up.”) We use the occasion to talk about the human rights abuses at this border, and to commemorate the hundreds of undocumented immigrants who have died from Border Patrol violence or the harshness of the crossing. When the litany finishes, doves are released on both sides of the fence and fly off unrestrained by the metal fence, the new global economic order’s Berlin Wall. It is an amazing public liturgy in the only place where First and Third World stand adjacent, a free-fire zone in the war against the poor. Here we celebrate hope along a wall that runs right through the heart of this little congregation—and through our church and nation.

For U.S. citizens, these are issues of national identity, to choose which America to embrace. Israel’s ethic of compassion toward outsiders was shaped by its own history of pain: “You shall not wrong or oppress a resident alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt” (Ex 22:21). The U.S., too, is a nation of immigrants. And for Christians it is a matter of “hearing” Jesus’ teaching afresh (Mark 7:14), and that of Third Isaiah before him. If We refuse to take sides with today’s outsiders, we too are “without understanding” (Mark 7:18a).³⁵

Conclusion: Interpreting the Bible as Political Practice

Third Isaiah’s vision focuses on ethics, not anthropology, and so does Jesus in Mark 7:1–23. As Martin Luther King Jr., famously put it, the issue is “the content of one’s character, not the color of one’s skin.” It’s not about sexual orientation but social practice, not about what’s between your legs but what’s in your heart. The current conversation in our churches concerning whether or not sexual minorities are welcome as full participants in discipleship, and whether Christians should offer sanctuary of undocumented immigrants,³⁶ must surely stand under this Word of God.

Unfortunately our denominations prefer to approach these issues through studied ambivalence, interminable commissions, “don’t ask/don’t tell” avoidance, and repressive politeness. And some so-called Christians engage in mean-spirited gay and immigrant bashing. The Christian Right has turned the war on terror

³⁵ For more on this see Ched Myers and Matthew Colwell, Our God Is Undocumented: Biblical Faith and Immigrant Rights (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2012).
³⁶ See www.newsanctuarymovement.org.
abroad into a war of terror at home against those who don’t fit the national ideal, as it lobbies hard to preserve the heterosexual monopoly on marriage and to militarize our national borders.

There are many sound ethical and political reasons why democratic citizens should support gays and lesbians in their struggle for full inclusion into both church and society. And issues related to the involuntary migration of peoples, and to the geopolitical definition of human communities, are complex in the modern world, and deserve our careful reflection and deliberation. But these are finally theological and pastoral issues for Christians. Our responsibility is to encounter immigrants and refugees not as statistics, but as human beings who endure extraordinary hardship and trauma in their struggle to survive; to come to know persons of different sexual orientation as folks who struggle with intimacy, love, and commitment—just as heterosexual people do.

The power of Bible study as political practice can help. This is perhaps best illustrated in the well-known and surprisingly successful case of the Jubilee 2000 campaign. We took the Levitical exhortation that Israel should periodically redistribute wealth and land and applied it to ecumenical organizing on behalf of the world’s most highly indebted nations. Other examples of biblical interpretation in conversation with social movements I have recently worked with (both in publication and popular education) include:

1. Considering the prophetic critique of ancient imperial clear-cutting of the Cedars of Lebanon in light of specific struggles to save old growth forests in Canada and Brazil;  
2. Reading Eph 2–3 as “Paul’s Letter from a Birmingham Jail,” correlating the apostles’ strategy of resistance to social codes of race to those of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., as part of anti-racism work in churches;  
3. Applying Isaiah 3’s indictment of the ‘spoil of the poor’ in the houses of the wealthy to a capacity-building effort to promote ‘social investing’ in poor neighborhoods in the U.S. among middle class Christians and Jews;  
4. Reading Mark 13’s warning to disciples not to be deceived by the propaganda of wartime, during the first months of the second Gulf War in 2003, and correlating it to Dr. King’s prescient “Beyond Vietnam” speech of 1967;  
6. Reading Luke’s Emmaus Road story through the lens of M. L. King’s assassination in Memphis in 1968;  
7. Reappropriating the obscure exhortation to self-amputation in Mark 9 with the help of the modern addiction recovery movement as a struggle for individual and community liberation;  

42 Beyond the ‘Addict’s Excuse’: Public Addiction and Ecclesial Recovery,” in The Other Side of Sin, eds. Susan
8. Examining Paul’s invitation to become ‘ambassadors of reconciliation’ (2 Cor 5–6) in conversation with the Greensboro, North Carolina Truth and Community Reconciliation Project, 2002–2006;43

9. Looking at the story of Huldah (2 Kings 22) in light of the work of a Catholic feminist to critique and reclaim her tradition;44

10. Reading Jesus’ ministry around Capernaum in Mark 1–3 synoptically with M. L. King’s nonviolent Civil Rights campaigns.45

This kind of Bible study is not just possible but necessary if we are to recover the church as a popular movement for humanization, compassion and justice. It can and should be practiced in the spaces between the seminary, the sanctuary, and the streets, where colleagues like Lee Cormie have done their best work.46

Third Isaiah and Jesus both call us to become a House of radical hospitality that reserves a special place for the otherwise excluded. As John’s gospel puts it: “In my Father’s house there is lots of room” (John 14:2). Our communities of faith must be about discipleship, not disenfranchisement; communion, not exclusion. Regardless of what we do, however, the God of justice will continue to welcome the outsider who wishes to follow, and to warn erstwhile insiders that using God’s name will never protect a ‘den of thieves’ from judgment. There is no divided house that can stand, which is why Jesus invites us to dismantle every dividing Wall—even if they seem to be bearing walls. May the churches follow Jesus, who followed Isaiah, who followed Yahweh, into a House for all peoples.

Migrating Dogmatics and the Interreligious Dialogue

Pawel A. Gajewski

In its popular concept the dogma—conceived as a number of formulations concerning the Trinity and Christ—seems something very distant from the topics that are considered vital for the life and witness of today Christian churches.

It is also possible to feel some embarrassment in facing any dogmatic statement in front of an audience of representatives of other living faiths. By quoting Schalom Ben-Chorin, we could affirm that the faith unites while the dogma divides.1

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43 See ibid, chap. 1; and ibid, Vol II, chapter seven.
44 Foreword to Joanna Manning, Is the Pope Catholic? A Woman Confronts Her Church (New York: Crossroad, 1999).
Recent migration processes have become increasingly intense. Such processes have confronted Christian theology with the challenging living faiths which are no longer limited to their historical and geographical territories.

In this perspective, this paper aims to reflect on the Christian dogma in the context of an interreligious dialogue. We do say that for those who are Christians and are ready to face an interreligious dialogue, the dogma represents one of the essential turning points. Otherwise such dialogue risks being distorted.

The dogma, however, is not a static normative statement. If we consider dogmatic formulations not as a series of assertions but as a reflection on the relationship between the Divine and the Human, our perspective can change. If the narrative value that aims to create a relationship with the other adds to the assertive value of the Christian dogma, then we can realise that the dogma can and must be considered as a language to narrate the search for answers that refer to the fundamental questions posed by human beings. If we rediscover the value of history in the theological reflection, even the sense of the most difficult terms may become perfectly understandable. The narrative takes place in the history and the narrative of the dogma, in turn, finds a place in the history to show the history of dogma movements, of its migrations to use this somewhat current metaphor.

Inter-Religious Dialogue Today

The inter-religious dialogue, analysed from a theological point of view, can be defined in three main types: missionary-apologetic, ethical, spiritual-mystical. It goes without saying that this schematic is not the only possible, but it seems useful to set some definitions moving from the conclusions discussed so far. Certainly, against these dialogue models which are applied with different degrees of success, occurs some situations (unfortunately more and more frequent) in which the dialogue is overwhelmed by abuse and violence. It is clear that any form of interreligious dialogue, even the most theologically problematic, is always better than the lack of dialogue and prevarication.

The missionary-apologetic model

Concerning this model, the dialogue is purely a mean. By comparing it with the other, the main objective is, first of all, to show that the Christian message contains the totality of the truth. Then, to convince the others to embrace the Christian truth unconditionally. In this model we find the absolutism of the Christian dogma, primarily intended as a set of propositions derived directly from Scripture. Such absolutism, however, today is not driven by Roman Catholicism (as conceived by Harnack and his followers). This model mostly characterises conservative evangelical churches as well as the evangelical current, whose presence is transversal to all the Christian denominations.

Under the perspective of religious and cultural pluralism, this model is sometimes considered limited and theologically limiting for an Inter-Religious Dialogue. However, we should admit, that it is a model that strengthens the missionary impulse of many people who believe in the need to announce the Gospel ‘to all peoples.’ The evangelical theologians believe that the apologetic-missionary model is not exceeded. However, concerning the inter-religious dialogue it is recommended to inform the partner/s about the missionary aim. If this premise is not made clear, it risks creating quite ambiguous situations.

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**The ethical model**

Undoubtedly, the most influential theorist of this model is Hans Küng. This model dogmatic is subject to a process of dialogue which aims at achieving a number of social objectives that are in turn subordinate to an ethics universally acceptable and (hopefully) shared. Seen in this perspective, the dogmatic assume a purely descriptive role, sometimes limited to the pure narration of the history of doctrine. The teleological judgement is suspended, and the binding nature of the word is oriented in ethical criteria and not theological.

However, beyond criticisms it must be said that this is a model that has now reached a remarkable level of consensus, officially certified by the World Parliament of Religions. It is also a model that is often used not only in the context of inter-religious dialogue but also in the dialogue that several world governments lead with the religious confessions that are present in their territories. Undoubtedly and specifically it is only possible to take into consideration ethical and legal objectives, to fully safeguard the neutrality of modern states towards religious confessions.

**Mystic-spiritual model**

In this model the dogma actually becomes irrelevant. The privileged category is that of experience, both individual and collective, and spirituality replaces theology. The dialogic dimension lies not in the contingency but mainly in transcendence. The only possible theology is apophatic; all other forms of theological thinking are subject to a quite strong criticism, even though more implicitly than explicitly. In turn, this approach to religions is divided into two currents. The first, rather elitist, is esoteric or initiatory. Given its special nature, this current can contribute to inter-religious dialogue only indirectly because its reference categories are not understandable to not initiated. The second current, easily accessible to most people, move the centre of the dialogue from the doctrine to spirituality. The sacred texts are then read mainly symbolically and the multiplicity of interpretations is not only accepted, but theorised. A particular manifestation of this orientation are the prayer meetings, among which certainly stands out Assisi 1986 and its following editions. It is not the case of the Assisi events, but in some other special events this dialogue model is likely to turn easily in a form of syncretism, most of the times unconscious.

Out of every reasonable doubt, all three models described above are destined to have a long life and their use will bring results far from negligible. To date, the role and contribution of the evangelical dogmatic in inter-religious dialogue constitute a particularly fertile field work.

**The History of the Dogma and its Conclusions: Adolf von Harnack**

When combining 'history' and 'dogma,' it is natural to talk about the history of the dogma. Undoubtedly, the most important author is Adolf von Harnack. In 1886, the year in which Adolf

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5 For further investigations at: www.parlamentoofreligions.org.
6 Cf. René Guénon, *Considerazioni sulla via iniziativa* (Rome: Gherardo Casini Editore, 2010). This study is an attempt to recover a genuinely initiatory dimension that is present, according to the author, in all great religious traditions. At the same time, it is a hard criticism in any form of undue manipulation of such initiatory dimension.
7 The meeting promoted by Pope John Paul II has been relaunched by his successor Benedict XVI. However, one cannot avoid the fact that to these events the Roman Catholic Church combines theological positions close enough to the apologetic-missionary model.
8 In 1914, Adolf (von) Harnack (1851–1930) was awarded the title of nobility. In this paper, however, we will
von Harnack took office at the University of Marburg, the first volume of *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte* (the history of dogma Manual) was issued. In 1889 and 1890 the following volumes were published. Harnack’s methodological approach and his thesis are revolutionary and rise different reactions in the academic world—from unquestioning enthusiasm to open hostility. In 1889 was issued *Grundriss der Dogmengeschichte* (Compendium of the history of dogma) and in 1891, it takes the final version. Thanks to its consistency, this opera achieves an immediate and significant success. And, right in 1893, the French edition curated by Eugene Choisy, with the preface by Harnack, will be issued.

Now we should investigate what is the meaning of dogma for Harnack. A very concise definition might be the following: a statement of faith that refers to the knowledge of the world and the history and it is stated as absolute truth. Harnack, however, prefers a plural definition for the concept of dogma:

[The dogma is] a complex of interrelated claims which are conceptually formulated, suitable for a scientific apologetics discussion and represent the knowledge of God, the world and the saving acts of God. And, the dogma aims to human beatitude.

The need to deal with Gnosticism has created one of the greatest dangers intrinsically present in Christianity itself, namely its ‘deep Hellenisation,’ to use the expression created, in fact, by the same Harnack. This danger, in fact, is fully manifest in what Harnack calls the ‘dogmatic Christianity.’ However, the object of Harnack’s criticism are not the dogmas but the binding and normative character that they assume as unique expressions of Christian doctrine.

### The three conclusions of the history of dogma

Harnack shows the conclusions of his methodological approach in the third volume of *Handbuch der Dogmengeschichte*. In terms of disclosure, more than the above mentioned volume, contributed to the diffusion of his thought the subsequent editions of the *Compendio*, from the fourth in 1905 until the sixth one issued in 1922.

The three conclusions about the history of dogma theorised by Harnack—Reformation, Catholicism and Socinianism—are, in fact, considerations about the historical outcomes achieved in the early twentieth century by the dogmatic phenomenon. In very short terms, such conclusions may be defined as the Reformation overcoming the dogma, the Post-tridentine Catholi-
cism absolutizing the dogma and the Socinianism destructing it. Needless to say that Harnack prefers to focus on the first one of the above conclusions, almost totally identified with Luther’s works. And, such orientation is the first real limit of Hartack’s approach. To almost totally identify the Reformation with Luther is a conscious and reasoned choice and it will have discussed hereafter. This choice, however, limits the utility of the Harnack’s methodological approach from the outset. The study approaches which identify with Catholicism and with Socinianism seem to be definitely more versatile. However, also these two—like the Reformation indeed, are limited by the following development of Christian thinking. The most significant limit consists of Karl Barth’s the *Kirchliche Dogmatik*. He addresses the questions raised by Harnack in a completely different way, without falling, however, into the dogmatic absolutism which is typical of the Catholicism. The second limit, less consistent but theoretically evident in practice, is the development of the so-called social Christianity. Harnack interprets the social dimension of Christianity in a predominantly ethical key tending to underestimate its historical significance and the number of theological elaborations that have been already accomplished by Harnack’s contemporaries, especially by Troeltsch. The third and methodological limit is the transversal character of the three conclusions developed by Harnack. Harnack presents a model built on a compartmentalised system, while the application on the history of dogma in Christianity of Harnack’s method demonstrates the transversal characteristic of overcoming absolutizing and destructing the dogma.

*Luther and the Reformation: overcoming the dogma*

According to Harnack and concerning the Reformation, the history of dogma is only able to illustrate Luther’s Christianity in order to make comprehensible the following developments; and Luther’s Christianity belongs in its entirety (up to now) to the history of dogma or it is entirely excluded. However, it is more correct to exclude Luther’s Christianity, because the ancient dogma put itself as infallible and the Reformation rejected this claim for its own formulations. If then, we wanted to recognise any dogmas in the sixteenth century Protestantism’s formulations and we wanted to link the history of the above mentioned dogmas until the Formula of Concord and the Dordrecht Canons, we would perpetuate the confusion of the followers who for the Protestant doctrine are still searching a concept which would be an intermediate position between the reformable and infallible. The churches of the Reformation have some doctrine statements (*Lehrordnungen*), but not infallible dogmas.

But what are the specific reasons of Luther’s special role in the history of dogma? Reading the *Compendium*’s pages dedicated to the Reformer of Wittenberg, it is possible to notice a particularly intense emotional charge: Harnack definitely put Luther at the same height of Augustine for the originality of his theological elaboration and for his role in the history of Christianity.

Under an historical perspective, Harnack gives Luther a double merit. First of all, Luther freed the gospel of Jesus Christ from Middle Age ecclesiasticism and moralism. At the same time, he has given effect to the origins of Christianity, restoring the ancient dogma based on the Gospel and taking back the centrality of Soteriology which was side-lined by speculative dogmatism.

According to Harnack, another important aspect of Luther’s doctrine is his ecclesiology which is based on four key statements: 1) the Holy Spirit founded the Church through the Word of God; 2) This Word is the preaching of the revelation of God in Christ, as it creates the faith; 3) the church has no other scope than that of faith; it is also the mother in whose womb come to faith; 4) religion is nothing but faith, the sphere in which the church and the individual keep their faith cannot
consist of special practices, and even in a particular area, but rather the believer must prove his/her faith in the natural order of life and supportive love of neighbour.

Harnack puts particular emphasis on the fourth statement. According to him, Luther returned the independent right to the natural laws in marriage, in the family, in the profession and in the state, emancipating them from the protection of the church and subordinating them to the spirit of faith and love. Thus this emancipation that was made by Luther in the doctrine and then in the society, allows Harnack to give Luther’s work the character of a quantum shift that naturally puts an end to the history of dogma.

Socinianism and Catholicism: the destruction and institutionalization of the dogma

These two conclusions relevant to the history of dogma are perfectly antithetical. The Reformation, identified by Harnack with Luther cannot be considered as a synthesis or a middle ground between these two extremes. The radical difference is already found in the attempt to describe the two phenomena: The Socinianism is presented as a system of multiple doctrines, free from any institutional limits while Catholicism combines a precise and compact doctrinal system to an institution perfectly organised and rigid. The Socinianism realises the destruction of the dogma by absolutizing the intellect whilst Catholicism by absolutizing the ecclesiastical institution that identifies with the dogma. In the end, both phenomena therefore manifest themselves as totally self-referential paradigms.

The term ‘Socinianism’ refers to Lelio and Fausto Sozzini that, on the heels of the Reformation, founded in Poland an ecclesiastic community of anti-Trinitarian matrix.

According to Harnack, the speculative rationalism and anthropocentric dimension of Socinianism has undermined the dogma until completely destroying it. At the same time, however, even the ancient theology that is considered one of the foundations of the church by Luther, is taken in its heterodox version that is different from the constitutive dogma. The tension between Christology and Soteriology is resolved through removing the first and reducing to morality of the second, that means a particular way of life built on the basis of the free will. The research relevant to the doctrine, then, shifts to self-mysticism and theological subjectivism.

On the other side, there is the Tridentine Catholicism. In his analysis of dogmatic Catholicism, Harnack grounds his approach on a specific assumption and formulates an evaluation. Harnack’s states that the development of dogma is unlimited, in abstracto but limited in concreto since the Greek church has completed its dogmatic system at the end of the Iconoclastic Controversy, while the same Catholic Church, which admits the possibility of formulating new dogmas, recognises however, these can only make clear depositum fidei given once and for. In his analysis of the dogmatic formulations of Catholicism, from the Council of Trent (1545–1563) up to the First Vatican Council (1869–1870),14 Harnack affirms that such formulations are primarily grounded ‘on political and ecclesiastical reasons’ thus the dogma has been developed as a legal system that needs obedient believers more than aware ones.15

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14 The Second Vatican Council was convened by Pope Pius IX by the papal bull Aeterni Patris dated on June 29th 1868. The first session was held in St. Peter’s Basilica on December 8th 1869. The outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War interrupted the Council in July 1870. Then, in 1960 the Council was declared closed after a century by Pope John XXIII, as a formal act before the opening of Vatican Council II. For further investigation August Bernhard Hasler, Come il papa divenne infallibile. Retrosenscena del Concilio Vaticano I, (Turin: Claudiana, 1982).
Hence, the transformation of the dogma in a law system neutralises the ancient dogma and emphasises the normative value of the tradition by absolutizing the notion of dogma and any other dogmatic formulations of the Roman Catholicism.

The other issue refers to the concept of infallibility. The Council of Trent affirms the infallibility of the dogma. Given that, the Post-tridentine Catholicism is on the opposite side compared to the Reformation, which grounds its doctrinal statements without giving them absolute infallibility.

A further step toward the absolutizing of dogma appears during the First Vatican Council, with the dogmatic definition of papal infallibility concerning faith and morals. Harnack recognises in this decision several political and ecclesiastical reasons, his criticism, however, emphasises the creation of a fully self-referential paradigm, in which the ecclesiastical institution identifies with the notion of dogma.

By summarising Harnack's conclusions, it is possible to affirm that only the notion of dogma, in the reworking started by Luther, can be considered like a boost towards an interfaith perspective. None of the radical positions (destruction and institutionalization) would prompt a perspective of dialogue.

The Dogma and The Nature of Doctrine: George Arthur Lindbeck

In contemporary theology, one of the most important authors promoting the debate about the relationship between the dogma and an inter-religious dialogue is undoubtedly George Arthur Lindbeck. Among Lindbeck's works it is worth mentioning: *The Future of Roman Catholic Theology* (1970), *Infallibility* (1972) and *The Church in a Postliberal Age* (2003).

But, the work that directly concerns the present investigation is *The Nature of Doctrine. Religion and Theology in a Post-Liberal Age*. The volume, published in 1984 and translated into all major languages of the world, has greatly influenced the development not only of the North American theology. *The Nature of Doctrine* is a challenging reading; the hermeneutic theory of religious doctrines proposed by Lindbeck, however, is original and useful for a theological analysis of non-Christian religions.

*A linguistic and cultural approach*

Which is the core of *The Nature of Doctrine*? It is an approach to religious doctrines defined as 'linguistic and cultural.' This method considers the religious statements as rules providing for an authoritative language that is shared within

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16 George Arthur Lindbeck was born in Luang, in China, in 1923 in a family of Lutheran missionaries of Swedish origin and Pietist orientation. Because of an illness he begins to attend school only at twelve. Once back in the US, he studied at the Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter (Minnesota), at Yale and later at the Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies of Toronto and the École Pratique des hautes études in Paris. Interested in medieval theology, he obtained a doctorate from Yale with a dissertation on Duns Scotus. A Yale deals with medieval authors as part of the Faculty of Philosophy and that of theology before devoting himself entirely to theological studies, in particular the ecumenical theology and history of dogma. Constantly and strongly expressed himself against a certain anti-Catholicism of the American Protestantism, for example during the protests that followed the opening of a US embassy to the Vatican. The Lutheran World Federation appointed him as an observer at the Second Vatican Council, from 1968 to 1987 he is co-president of the Catholic-Lutheran Theological Commission. It is not a pastor but a layman.

17 Italian Edition. *La natura della dottrina. Religione e teologia in un’epoca postliberale* (Turin: Claudiana, 2004). To date, the excellent Italian edition edited by Fulvio Ferrario has not raised the debate it deserves. It is desirable that in Italy, since the increasing multiplicity of religions, Lindbeck's thinking finds adequate appreciation.
the community that adopts them. Lindbeck contrasts this approach with other two, respectively defined as propositional and existential-expressivist. The first of these models, found in various forms of orthodoxy, particularly in the Roman Catholic after the Council of Trent, grounds on the assumption that the doctrinal statements are the statements that say something about reality. The second model, typical of the entire liberal theology, claims that the doctrinal affirmations are different symbolic expressions of a common human experiential core in relation to the Absolute. In addition, such statements are considered culturally and historically conditioning. In his work, Lindbeck applies his method to three doctrinal points: The Nicene-Chalcedonian Christology; papal infallibility; Marian dogmas.

However, on a practical and pastoral level it turns clear how these three models work when approaching the Bible. The Bible is a collection of texts written in Hebrew and Greek, following the grammatical rules of these languages. Thus far, all the methods follow the same line. The problem arises when dealing with the ‘content’ of these texts. In this case a ‘propositional’ will say that the Bible expresses a number of indisputable assertions about reality. Instead, a liberal will say that it is an attempt to express the universal experience of the Absolute within a Judaic context during the first millennium before Christ and reinterpreted in the First Century A.C. based on the experiences of the Apostles of Jesus. Lindbeck, instead, based on his approach, defines the Bible as a ‘grammar’ to interpret the reality. In other words, according to Lindbeck, within a community of faith it is not necessary to translate the Bible in the language of the world (attempts by liberal theology), or simply the sharp distinction between the language of the Bible and the language of the world. By asserting the superiority of the first (attempts made by various forms of propositionalist literalism) what counts is the ability to transcribe the world in the language of the Bible.

Thus, an inter-religious dialogue or inter-confessional inside the Christian community, should focus first and foremost on the effort to create a kind of ‘comparative grammar’ of various religious languages and only then it should deal with doctrinal questions.

A (too) weak influence

What was the influence of the Lindbeck’s approach on inter-religious dialogue? So far quite small, despite the translations of his work in major modern languages as well as some lively academic debate raised from the English edition in 1984. We can only agree with the statement of Lindbeck, quoted by Fulvio Ferrario in his introduction to the volume, that “in the mid-eighties of the twentieth century the ecumenical debate was more concentrated on ethical issues [...] than doctrinal ones”. However, the new multi-religious framework that since the beginning of the third millennium has been gaining a strong role opens up new margins for Lindbeck’s positions. In the last chapter of his volume Lindbeck outlines a theology programme that he defines ‘post-liberal.’ This approach aims at overcoming the existential-expressivist model that is dominant in today’s debate. This program is also fully usable in Italy to seriously talk to Catholicism about welcoming migrant sisters and brothers who knock at the doors of our churches, not to forget the wide spread of Islam and the progressive diffusion of Buddhism in our country.

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Evangelical Dogmatic in an Inter-religious Perspective: Hans-Martin Barth

The theology of Hans-Martin Barth\textsuperscript{20} shows that the Christian dogma and inter-religious dialogue should not be necessarily on opposite positions. His method is closely related to the reformulation of the approach to the dogma outlined by Luther.

The basis of this volume can be expressed in the following statement: to those who now want to be testimony of faith, our society asks to face the multi-religious situation which has become a global phenomenon. The confession of the Christian faith, therefore, corresponds to a necessary tolerance and dialogue, in other words the need to put our testimony on an inter-religious level. In the preface to his volume \textit{Dogmatic: Protestant Faith in the Context of World Religions}, Barth explains his project with the following words:

Theologians of earlier generations have presented their investigations (i.e. their theology) always with the conviction to present Christian truth. [...] but, the fact that the Christian faith has been always put in doubt, have not often found enough space in this approach. To date and in recent future, the Christian faith must and can show its best in the competition of non-Christian religion.\textsuperscript{21}

And again:

A Multicultural and multi-religious condition requires to constantly reflect upon its context to investigate (i.e. to define) the relationship with the others. Opening towards ecumenism—and it occurs only within Christianity, is no longer enough. One of the future competences of the pastors will be the knowledge of the principal doctrines of non-Christian religions and the ability to take a position and express their point of view (the Christian-evangelical one) about these doctrines.\textsuperscript{22}

And, this is the focus point of Barth’s dogmatic that is conceived as an impetus for inter-religious dialogue. Thus, Barth presents a doctrine of the Christian faith in the evangelical perspective and in the horizon of the other religions. Barth tries to keep intact the essentials of Christian doctrine, by finding a place in a truly evangelical theological heritage, and to examine the ability of this doctrine to deal with non-Christian religions. His attempt could be described as the search for a Christian dogmatics which is oriented to religious pluralism and open to dialogue.

\textit{Hans-Martin Barth’s approach to dogmatics}

Gerd Wiesner has highlighted four main issues that characterise Barth’s approach to dogmatics.\textsuperscript{23}

The first refers to Christianity as a whole. Christianity should begin to see themselves as a religion among many others. Christians should le-

\textsuperscript{20} Hans-Martin Barth was born in 1939 in Erlangen. He was the son of Pastor Paul Barth. In 1958–1963 he studied theology in Erlangen, Heidelberg and Rome (Waldensian Faculty of Theology and the Pontifical Gregorian University). He obtained his doctorate in theology in 1965 and in 1966 he became pastor. From 1981 until his emerituation in 2005 he was professor of systematic theology at the University of Marburg. Luther’s theology is undoubtedly the core of his investigation, although in recent years Barth’s interests are clearly on inter-religious dialogue and secularization.


\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 8.

Pawel A. Gajewski: Migrating Dogmatics and the Interreligious Dialogue

gitimise themselves without applying those argumentative structures used so far to deal with the secularised modernity. In this new framework, we must recognise and take advantage of certain situations that occur when dealing with different religions, considering them as a chance in order to make wide and to deep our beliefs and the understandings of the Christian faith.

The second aspect is to take seriously the other religions, in all their shades, recognising them as true partners. That means overcoming the opinion that the other religions represent beliefs outdated by Christianity. The consequences of such position in Barth’s positions are quite challenging. In this perspective, our direct involvement and our commitment to the dogmatics, consists of reflecting on the issue of the Triune God that wants to communicate something to Christianity also by means of other religions.24

The third characteristic of Barth’s approach is the conviction that the content of Christian doctrine should be understandably explained to those who are not Christian. The Trinitarian faith is a thought pattern set in a confession of faith that is no longer accessible or understandable even to most Christians.25 However, Barth believes that the faith in the Trinitarian God can be helpful in the dialogue with other religions, because it can reveal dimensions that are so far unknown. Moreover, this faith can correct some errors within Christianity itself. After all—and this is the fourth characteristic of Barth’s approach—this dialogue aims to make and maintain the Christian faith able to communicate not only with non-Christian religions, but also with an a-religious context.

Christian theology in the inter- and a-religious context

For the Christian theology the exposure to the views and experiences of other religions without prejudices and fears entails risks and resources. From this debate Barth expects invigorating boots to Christianity. It is important to become aware of the errors and the pushing factors since the comparison above may not mean a distortion of the Christian faith. As the faith of the people of Israel found its final form in a constructive dialogue with the different religious environment, so today the comparison with other religions can bring Christianity to the same type of experience.

Barth talks about a responsible dogmatics under an ecumenical and inter-religious perspective. A dogmatics that aims to a plural development of Christian doctrine and to become an indicator of vitality and the ability of an ecumenical and inter-religious approach. For the Christian dogmatics the main challenge is to create a model of collaboration between different positions that are often contradictory; a model addressing a fertile interaction in a pluralist society that is, indeed, splitting and fragmenting on the religious level.

In this perspective it is essential for Barth not to indicate a narrow confessional baseline. The demarcations are necessary but not necessarily lead to closures or separations. The identity, even on the level of faith, is not something static, but rather is a process. The truth cannot be fixed once and for all in theoretical formulas, but it becomes accessible in a new way in each different context. Again, the purpose of the dogmatic cannot be to represent today the old theological issues which are sometimes purely abstract, but to

25 This thesis has been recently presented by Hans-Martin Barth, Konfessionslos glücklich. Auf dem Weg zu einem religionstranszendenten Christsein (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2013), 156–91.
encourage the dialogue with other communities of believers.

Conclusion: Towards a Migrating Theology of Dialogue

Each dialogue (ecumenical and inter-religious) that is truly such requires compliance with three very brief rules. The first is that the people involved know perfectly their doctrinal positions. The second is that they are able to talk to the present partner clearly and fully. The third is that the parties are ready to review and to revise their positions based on the positions which are shared in the course of the dialogue.

These three rules are at the same time the three tasks of the Christian dogmatic: to define the content of the doctrine, to develop linguistic and conceptual tools that are useful to communicate it to others, to critically review their content in the light of talking to non-Christian religions. In performing this role, it is absolutely necessary an interdisciplinary approach to the New Testament so that the confession of the Christian faith can be pronounced with more conviction, but also with greater openness to other living faiths.

Healing of Memories and ‘Right Remembering’ as Means toward Reconciliation

The Case of Lutherans and Mennonites

Jonathan Seiling

When you begin to make someone’s acquaintance, do you focus on those issues you have in common, or those which are unique? And what if your distinct features—characteristics that make you really who you are—appear to be in opposition or conflict with those of your acquaintance? Do you ignore those differences and build on less characteristic features which are similar, i.e. convergent, or explore why you are so different, i.e. divergent? Perhaps you could explore background issues that would explain your differences, which might actually allow an appreciation of the other’s uniqueness; through that process, you may begin to value each other’s characteristics, understanding them as expressions of a long, complex process of identity formation which continues to the present.

Throughout most of my life, when asked “what does it mean to be Mennonite” I would reply that believer’s baptism (not infant baptism) and a refusal to serve in the military were essentials, even ‘non-negotiables.’ Both of these features of the Mennonite confession and practice have been repeatedly underscored throughout the centuries, notwithstanding some exceptions. Some Mennonites would even insist our distinctive features are constitutive of true Christianity, as important as the confession that Christ is Lord. When such distinctions create walls of division among Christians, it becomes nearly impossible to speak of a process of finding commonality between denominations, as we all identify certain distinct features which, when pressed, would probably be expressed as ‘non-negotiables’ even while recognizing that the nature and essence of the Church escapes our ability to narrowly or precisely define its parameters.
Lutheran-Mennonite Dialogue

When Mennonites and Lutherans become more deeply acquainted and study the official statements from each other’s confessional tradition, one may choose to focus on convergences and/or divergences. On the other hand, it is also possible to develop a richer understanding of their background, how these distinct traditions developed over time. The deeper one grasps and appreciates the complex historical development of a tradition, the better one can appreciate its unique characteristics. A further level of investigation comes when one begins to both compare respective synchronic and diachronic developments, and takes note of places in which the traditions intersected over time. This creates a much more complex—if not endless—process of becoming acquainted. This also lays the groundwork for an understanding of the ecumenical Church as one not seeking to narrowly circumscribe the Church, but to jointly seek what the Church will become as the fact of its diversity is recognized and its members seek reconciliation in Christ through the Church.

The key challenge of the two features of Mennonite identity—believer’s baptism and rejection of military service—for a dialogue with Lutherans has been mutually exclusivity: Mennonites have generally rejected the validity of the Lutheran practice of baptizing infants, while Lutherans rejected the Mennonite practice of rebaptizing adults who had already been baptized as infants; Mennonites rejected the possibility of military roles that involve lethal force, while Lutherans reject Mennonites’ refusals to obey the State’s requirements of service. When seen in this way, it becomes difficult to bypass these divergences and build a solid, genuine, ecclesial relationship, let alone grow toward reconciliation.

Over the last three decades Lutheran and Mennonite denominational commissions have been undertaking such a complex process of mutual acquaintance as described above. While a focus on convergences and divergences was initially a viable approach, it became necessary to explore perceptions of our respective histories—both self-perception and of the other. It was also important to note how the historical relationship between the denominations contained transgressions, which, partly through ignorance, have bred mutual grievance and resentment. Although the two traditions base their faith and practice upon their reading of Holy Scripture, they refer to confessional documents stemming from the early Reformation and following, which may be read as either authoritative for the contemporary denomination or as historically relativized, and therefore only indirectly authoritative.

Authority and Relativity of Confessional Documents

The founding document of the Lutheran tradition is the Augsburg Confession (1530), hereafter ‘AC.’ On the occasion of its 450th anniversary in 1980 the Lutheran Church invited other Reformation-era denominations to join them in the celebration. Mennonites expressed that they could not celebrate a document in which their Anabaptist forebears were repeatedly and explicitly condemned, in some cases for the same doctrines and practices as Mennonites still hold today. Surprised that Mennonites identified themselves so closely with the Anabaptists condemned in the Augsburg Confession, Lutheran leaders began to engage Mennonites in a series of national dialogues: France (1981–1984), Germany (1989–1992), and the United States (2001–2004). These regional processes led to an international dialogue and ‘healing of memories’ service of reconciliation in 2010. The reconciliation was followed by a series of national, regional and local events in which Mennonites and Lutherans were encouraged to engage the outcomes of the dialogue processes. For example, in the region of Canada where I live, Lutheran and
Mennonite pastors, scholars, congregants and church leaders participated in events that concretely marked the significance of the reconciliation.² All reports from these national dialogues are available in German and English.² The decades-long bilateral dialogue demonstrates the attempt to discern the role of historical reflection alongside the study of confessional documents and contemporary theological reflection.


The dialogue commissions began by identifying matters of convergence and divergence. After noting the church’s relationship to government, service in the military and the doctrine of baptism they recognized their shared historical heritage, in which their commonality as Reformation-era traditions was emphasized, highlighting their central focus on Scripture and proclamation of the Gospel as their (convergent) purpose. They then recognized the historic divergences in baptismal practice and their views of the Church’s relationship to secular government. Then the condemnations in the Augsburg Confession were addressed: “it must be recognized that the condemnations expressed in the Augsburg Confession contributed to the persecution of the Anabaptists... by explicitly naming a group whose adherents had been sentenced to death at the Diet of Speyer (1529), and also for reasons of political opportunism.” [131]³ The Lutheran commission expressed regret, seeing “the persecution of the Anabaptists in the sixteenth century and later as an error that separates us from our brethren and we ask their forgiveness for that.”[131] By stating that the persecution of the Anabaptists was an error, this seemed to relativize the authority of the AC, and also signaled that the contemporary churches were convergent in their renunciation of historical persecution. The dialogue therefore, set a tone of fraternal encounter and the desire to confront the painful memories, which had an enduring influence on ecclesial relations to the present.

Germany (1989–1992)

The dialogue in Germany took a different approach. Here the Lutheran dialogue commission initially distanced the contemporary Lutheran Church from any act of persecuting or condemning others, but took a further step of attempting to explain condemnationary statements in the AC as being contextually conditioned, and not even pertinent or applicable to contemporary Mennonites. In effect this historically relativized the AC, delimiting its contemporary relevance and therefore its authority, thus minimizing the need for contemporary Lutherans to retract any of its statements, stating that the AC’s condemnations were mostly due to inaccuracies and bias due to insufficient knowledge of its authors:

If the AC rejects the ‘Anabaptists’ as only contemporary adversaries [i.e. those of the 1520s], then it is adapting a heretical designation from the early church and thus is giving it a new meaning that brings together very different groups and teachings, which are not always sufficiently perceived in their specific theological concerns and in their statements. [156–57]

Yet if Mennonites today were in fact to identify themselves with the positions of the Anabaptists, specifically those which the AC condemned, it would make it more difficult to relativize its implications for Lutheran-Mennonite relations

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¹ https://mcec.ca/content/lutheran-and-mennonite-reconciliation.
³ Hereafter page numbers in square brackets refer to the English edition of Mennonites in Dialogue (see ibid.).
Concerning contemporary theological differences the commissions suggested, “many doctrinal differences can be understood as a warning against the dangers of one’s own teaching or as mutual enrichment,” [157] thereby implying that there was no need to see one position as absolutely exclusive of the other. The challenge of addressing AC article XVI (on government) was more significant yet the commission concluded, the “rejection of AC XVI no longer pertains to Mennonites today to the same extent as the Anabaptists of the Reformation period,”[159] given that not all Mennonites hold a dualistic view of the church and world; yet, admittedly “it remains problematic for Mennonites to wield weapons of violence in the service and mandate of a political entity for the sake of legal duties.”[160] Ultimately the German Lutheran commission defended its historical position concerning the use of state-sponsored violence, stating “according to the Lutheran understanding it is in principle possible that Christians do military service with the possible consequence of an armed deployment to defend the rule of law: but they can be led to refuse military service also and certainly based on a Christian conscientious position.” [160] Nevertheless, much fruitful exchange has resulted in recent years from a deeper engagement on issues of human security, leading some Mennonites to take more seriously some of the challenges posed to a sectarian pacifist position, leading some Lutherans to take very strident steps toward denouncing any recourse to violence, even taking on the designation as a ‘peace church.’

The Lutheran commission recognized “that what was pronounced by the Augsburg Confession contributed to the persecution (e.g., execution, expulsion and legal discrimination) of the Anabaptists... we can certainly understand this behaviour historically, we want to express our sincere regret in this matter... [it was] a blameworthy occurrence that strained our relations with the Mennonite brothers and sisters and for that we ask forgiveness... we want to place our relationship onto a new spiritual foundation. Dialogues and regular meetings should help us be able to take further steps together in the sense of a reconciled diversity. We unanimously declare that, according to our understanding of the life and teachings of the Mennonite congregations of the AMG, the rejections of the AC do not pertain to our present-day dialogue partner. We attribute no church-dividing importance to the ongoing differences between our churches and congregations.”[162]

This led to a mutual invitation to communion. The Mennonite dialogue commission responded saying, “many Anabaptists and later the Mennonites looked upon the Protestant churches with arrogance and did not want to have fellowship with them. We have put our relationship on a new foundation.”[167] The process of historical reflection seemed to relativize the AC’s authority. Yet if historical documents such as the AC are overly relativized, having very little bearing upon the present, in what way can they be true or relevant?


The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) declares: “This church accepts the Unaltered Augsburg Confession as a true witness to

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4 See documents concerning the peace ethics process of the Protestant Church in Baden: http://ekiba.de/html/content/der_friedensethische_prozess_in_baden_ab_2011.html
5 English: Association of Mennonite Congregations in Germany
Although one of the stated goals at the outset of the dialogue between the ELCA and Mennonite Church U.S.A. was to work toward ‘healing of memories’ the commission shifted toward a focus on ‘right remembering,’ lest they imply that healing require an element of forgetting. The dialogue in the United States made historical reflection a central feature of the dialogue process, which both drew upon the successes of the French and German dialogues, and pointed toward the international process of reconciliation that would soon follow.

They distinguished between the goals of healing and remembrance as follows: “The limitation inherent in the concept of ‘healing memories’ was that, as an end in itself, both churches ultimately could find satisfaction for the sins of the past without seeking to live as reconciled sisters and brothers in the future. Right remembering, however, provides an ongoing approach for examining potentially church dividing issues within a framework of mutual respect and trust. It encourages more accurate understanding of each church’s history and teaching. In this sense, right remembering not only leads to the healing of painful memories but also contributes in a continuing way to a deepening relationship between our two church bodies.” [174]

Many years prior to the start of an official dialogue process there had been several informal meetings between Mennonites and Lutherans and two ELCA synods passed resolutions, “urging this church publicly to reject the invectives of Martin Luther and other Lutheran Reformers” [172] and consequently an official dialogue process began in 1999. The report on the dialogue process lists one of the central topics as ‘right remembering of the martyrs’ tradition,’ which is the first reference in any of the national bilateral dialogue reports to the term ‘martyr.’ [173] “One item raised at every forum was the strong desire for deepening levels of trust, respect, and cooperation among members of our two church bodies.” [173] They asked the pointed question, “What does it mean for today’s Mennonites and Lutherans that there once was Anabaptist blood on Lutheran hands?” [174] They reviewed the actual historical record in order to more closely identify how facts and perceptions differed. To what degree had Mennonites held an exaggerated view of the persecution? Did the AC have a direct impact on persecution, as has been assumed? Looking to the present, the questions move toward how right remembering instead of half-forgetting (leading to unchecked assumptions) might offer mutual benefit in this century.

The dialogue in the U.S.A. sought to guard against Mennonites’ tendency toward separatism, and wrestle with the authoritative nature of confessional statements such as the AC: “If the effect of martyr memories is to enforce a continuing separation of Mennonites from fellow Christians, is an adequate lesson learned from their sacrifice? If the effect of condemnations in the Augsburg Confession is that mistaken images of Anabaptists are perpetuated or violence against them justified, how can Lutherans understand that document to be a true witness to the Gospel?” [176, emphasis added]

The liaison committees worked further to articulate areas of divergence and convergence concerning baptism and views of the State. They concluded with eleven recommendations for further collaboration and education, starting with a combined delegation from the French, German and American dialogues to study the Book of Concord concerning its condemnations of the Anabaptists. They also recommended further study to focus on the divergent theologies of baptism. The report concluded with the “Declaration of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in

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America to the Churches of the Anabaptist Tradition." [183-85]


The report from the international dialogue notes the centrality of historical reflection for the preceding decades of official bilateral dialogue: “From the very beginning of the dialogue, participants in the Lutheran-Mennonite International Study Commission realized that reviewing the early history of relations between Lutherans and Mennonites was key in helping churches interpret the condemnations of the Anabaptists in the Augsburg Confession... that might hinder further conversations. Knowing this history will also help to clarify the connection between confession and persecution.” [204] The centrality of historical analysis became a means to seek reconciliation today.

While the conclusion that Lutherans were responsible for 100 of the Anabaptist martyrs of the 1500s, they recognized that there were Lutheran voices who also spoke out against such persecution at that time too, most notably, Johannes Brenz. 7

Subsequent to the international bilateral dialogue, the issue of military service has continued to occupy Mennonites and Lutherans, especially in Europe and in international ecumenical circles. Mennonites have begun to recognize the influence of Lutheran pacifists, especially Dietrich Bonhoeffer, upon some recent developments in Mennonite political ethics, and Lutherans have engaged the pacifist thought of contemporary Mennonites such as John H. Yoder.

Yet the issue of baptism had remained a key issue of mutual exclusion until recently. As the result of the German dialogue, the Mennonites of the AMG have clarified that individual congregations may decide to accept as members believing Christians who were baptized as infants, no longer requiring them to be rebaptized as adults. The Dutch and Swiss dialogues with the Reformed Church have similarly stated their acceptance of new members who were baptized as infants. Until recently there was little clarity among Mennonites globally as to the practice of accepting infant-baptized Christians as members without an adult (re-)baptism.

Trilateral Dialogue on Baptism

In 2012 a dialogue commission was established between the international commissions of the Catholic, Lutheran and Mennonite churches. Throughout the five years of the dialogue process, repeated attempts were made to approach the historical practical and theological aspects of each tradition’s understanding of baptism. By attempting to understand the uniqueness of the Catholic, Lutheran and Mennonite doctrines, they have achieved a clarification of which matters are mutually divisive and in which sense all confessions may share a degree of commonality in this aspect of faith and practice. A reflection upon history has remained integral to the process. Elsewhere, the approach of seeking common understanding through a joint telling of history has also served the Lutheran World Federation in its relations with the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, which jointly produced a document in preparation for the commemoration of the Reformation. Thus a focus on ‘right remembering’ and healing of memories do not represent steps on the way to dialogue, but a feature of a deeper level of encounter and understanding of others’ uniqueness.

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7 James Estes, Godly Magistrates and Church Order: Johannes Brenz and the Establishment of the Lutheran Territorial Church in Germany, 1524–1559 (Toronto: CRRS, 2001), and idem, Christian Magistrate and State Church: The Reforming Career of Johannes Brenz (Toronto: CRRS, 1982).
“Reforming Theology, Migrating Church, Transforming Society”

From a Mennonite perspective the themes of “Reforming Theology, Migrating Church, Transforming Society” speak directly to the mode and identity of the church today in its search for reconciled diversity. Is it even possible today to conceive of a theology that is not self-critical, never in the process of becoming reformed, or a church that sees itself as geographically intractable and immovable, one that has no engagement with the injustices and utter failures of human society and government beyond its borders? These three themes are becoming part of our common purpose as a global communion.

No matter what current aspirations are, we might well consider the how the church’s ideal for today and its history continually shape us. Shall we ever assume that the church—one whose theology is open to change, whose members circle the globe, finding new and creative ways to follow God’s plan to reveal the Gospel in ever-changing contexts—can simply move forward with today as a starting point? Can we piously forget the tumultuous historical current that brought us to the present? Merely by becoming aware of the most general distinctions between denominations, each member of every denomination bears some conception, however small, of one’s historically-shaped denominational identity, including those who self-declare as ‘non-denominational.’ But do we believe these historical identities must influence our ability to be the Church of Christ today?

Since the Enlightenment era the link between religion and violence, particularly between Christianity and the State in Europe, has reduced if not destroyed the credibility of religion in general. It was bad enough that western Christian Crusaders would slaughter Muslims in the Middle Ages, but they also turned their sword against eastern Christians and this rampant lethal violence was supported by the State Church. Then during the Reformation-Confessionalization eras, opposing denominations, which had gained the support of political rulers, turned their inquisitorial, military and policing efforts against those who refused to conform to their confessional order. Many voices from various territories and denominations protested this abuse of Christianity, although the legacies of religious violence would continue for centuries, tragically persisting to the present.

In recent decades considerable scholarly efforts have offered a more precise understanding of the ways in which various theologians and denominations since the Reformation have either defended or rejected the use of force or violence in the name of God, and further studies continue to explore this complex topic. There is broad recognition that memories of violent persecution, particularly those enacted upon one’s own denominational heroes or martyrs, play a potential role in deterring ecumenical efforts today, especially if there is no effort to acknowledge and renounce such acts. It bears repeating that the credibility of Christianity in general is compromised in modern society by the fact that violence is still condoned in the name of God.
Theology after Gulag: Introducing the Field

Katya Tolstaya

My age, the wolfdog, goes straight for my throat.
But no wolfdog flows in my veins.¹

These lines of the Russian poet Osip Mandelshtam, who died in 1938 from hunger and exhaustion in a Stalin camp, can be seen as an apt description of human existential perplexity over against the atrocities of the past century. The Nazi camps and the Gulag, but also the Holodomor, the Cambodian genocide, and mass rapes of women in Congo have shaken the foundations of anthropology, theological and humanist alike. The massacre in Rwanda, the children’s death of starvation in Nigeria and the humanitarian disasters that led to the refugee crises are just a few indicators that our century is a successor of the previous one. Human suffering and our existential perplexity about it remain. Is man God’s image or is man wolf to man?² Equally at stake is the soundness of Christian theological concepts, for example, the concept of God. Is God the loving and caring Father, who has things under control and in order? Is there any God at all?

Theologians from all continents are coping with these challenges. Questions of evil, complicity and guilt have been confronted by Theology after Auschwitz, post-Apartheid theology, and liberation theologies. Yet contemporary (inter)confessional theology has no answer to Auschwitz, the Gulag, or any other instance of radical evil. According to some Christian theologians, God is present in:

1. the ‘why’-question itself, or
2. in the aporia, or inability to solve the theological questions we are facing, or
3. in our complaint and indictment of the violence, or
4. in reason fighting the violence of technique and reflection through dialogue and reconciliation, through compassion and retry.³

These answers are not conclusive, exactly because theology in its primary meaning as the human capability of speaking about God, reaches its limits here. Soteriology, Christology, and eschatology are possible directions to reconsider these aporias. However, a thorough effort is required each time, as practice reveals over and again the contextual sensitivity in applying concrete theological notions and concepts. For example, Christian soteriology proved to be counterproductive in Jewish-Christian dialogue.

Still, what matters is not the absence of a conclusive answer, but the presence of systematically validated theological groundwork that can be fruitful for future theological reflections. Interdisciplinary and interreligious post-traumatic 'theologies-after' that have developed since WWII have helped change mentalities, for example in post-Nazi Germany, post-apartheid South Africa, and Latin America. This groundwork inspires us to think further, to elaborate the existing efforts, and to pose new questions—or keep posing the same ‘ultimate’, i.e. most difficult questions.

² This is a reference to the famous Latin expression ‘homo homini lupus est’ from Plautus’ play Asinaria. It became famous through the philosopher Thomas Hobbes, who used it in his work De cive (1651).
³ The list is taken from an unpublished manuscript on Christian dogmatics by Dr Akke van der Kooi, whom I thank for her kind permission to use it here.
The goal of this Chapter is to bring a new context and a new perspective to discussions on evil and the presence of God in circumstances of extreme dehumanization. These discussions are at the core of post-traumatic theologies and of theories of transitional justice. The new perspective I bring in is a fundamental challenge of the loss of 'everything human in man' (Varlam Shalamov), which would theologically mean the loss of imago dei. We are confronted with this anthropological given in testimonies of extreme dehumanization, regardless of time and context. The existing post-traumatic and post-genocide 'theologies-after' have not yet really faced this challenge. And even though most testimonies of, for example, the Gulag and Nazi camps indicate this extreme dehumanization, they too do not really deal with what dehumanization actually implies, the 'loss of all human emotions except for rage, hatred and envy' (Shalamov).

One of the dangers of not facing this challenge for theology would be arriving at reconciliation too quickly, without profoundly considering the consequences of the extreme suffering for theological anthropology, the concept of God, soteriology and other relevant loci (i.e. dogmatic theme subthemes such as the concept of God, ontology, anthropology, Christology, epistemology, and so on). My thesis is that a theological account, individual and ecclesiastic, for dehumanization is a condition for speaking about God in the 21st century and for coming to terms with the traumatic past and present. This requires a rethinking and reforming of theology which takes dehumanization as its reference and focal point. And this raises a number of theoretical and methodological questions which have to be considered carefully.

In this contribution I will first briefly describe the phenomenon of extreme dehumanization, to then outline the challenge testimonies of dehumanization bring to theological anthropology. Subsequently, discussing the issue of complicity in guilt, I will briefly sketch one case that calls for reforming theology, the societal setting in present-day Russia. Finally I point out a potential within Eastern Orthodox theology that can help to reform and reorient theology to engage with the questions of radical evil.

Extreme Dehumanization and Theological Anthropology

In his works the Russian writer Varlam Shalamov, who from 1937 to 1953 spent seventeen years in the Gulag, uniquely explores the loss of 'everything human in man'. This makes his testimony a point of departure for this Chapter. As a reference, there is an essential difference between Varlam Shalamov's stories about the Gulag, Kolyma Tales (1954–1962), and reports from two other great Russian writers who themselves were in labour camps, Fyodor Dostoevsky's House of the Dead (1860–1862) and Alexandr Solzhenitsyn's Gulag Archipelago (1958–1968). For Dostoevsky and Solzhenitsyn, the camp can in principle have a purifying function, leading to a catharsis. With some hundred years lying between them, their testimonies share this anthropology.

Shalamov derives from his camp years a totally opposite experience. Briefly summarized in theological terms, Dostoevsky and Solzhenitsyn depict the ineradicability of God’s image in a human being despite the utmost hardships. Shalamov’s challenge to theological anthropology is that he describes, or better, as a writer is guided by his confrontation with a human condition in which everything human has left a human being, where extreme exhaustion, caused by “Cold, hunger and sleeplessness,” has led to the “last border beyond which nothing human is left to man—only mistrust, rage and lies.”

4 Varlam Shalamov, “An Individual Assignment:” Kolyma Tales, transl. John Glad (Harmondsworth: Penguin,
Similar testimonies can be found from survivors of extreme dehumanization across history\(^5\): there is a limit of exhaustion beyond which nothing human is left in a human being. Such dehumanized ‘living corpses’ were called *dokhodyagi* in the Gulag and *Muselmänner* in the Nazi camps. But as I noticed earlier, to the best of my knowledge Shalamov is the only author who is writing to testify to this dehumanization and who perceives reality through this anthropological phenomenon.

I already mentioned two main factors that lead to the dehumanization in Shalamov’s experience. The first is severe hunger:

> All human emotions—love, friendship, envy, concern for one’s fellow man, compassion, longing for fame, honesty—had left us with the flesh that had melted from our bodies during their long fasts. [In the slight muscular layer which still remained in our bones (...) differed only anger—the most enduring human feeling.]

The second factor leading to total dehumanization is severe frost:

> The same frost that transformed a man’s spit into ice in midair also penetrated the soul. (...) And the soul shuddered and froze—perhaps to remain frozen for ever.

Shalamov writes that by severe frost and hunger, working sixteen hours a day, seven days a week, and being constantly beaten up by convoy and criminals, healthy young men became *dokhodyagi* within twenty to thirty days. What makes Shalamov’s testimony so terrifying is that anyone is subject to the dehumanization, regardless of social, educational, or religious background, or any other condition. The dehumanization is unconditional. “These terms are repeatedly tested,” Shalamov’s narrator adds laconically.\(^8\)

What should a theology which takes this extreme dehumanization as a focal point look like? We can start to clarify this question by a brief excursion to philosophy, to show what it should not look like.

### Being Reliable

Particular attention to the Gulag and Auschwitz has been given within the discipline of political philosophy. However, Western political philosophers who discuss the Gulag or Auschwitz, such as Alain Badiou, Jean-Francois Lyotard, and Giorgio Agamben, offer no solution to this anthropological challenge, as they neglect the personal level of suffering and approach this challenge within the wrong discipline. For example, in his brilliant comparative analysis of Shalamov’s and Solzenitsyn’s writings, the French philosopher Alain Badiou gives preference to Shalamov. According to Badiou, Solzenitsyn is too much of a Russian to be able to teach Western readers something they could not discover for themselves already, that is, ‘that Stalin was totalitarian’.\(^9\) Certainly, Badiou is correct: any

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1994), 20. Not all of the *Kolyma Tales* have been translated in English.


6 Shalamov, “Dry Rations,” *Kolyma Tales*, 56. Translation between square brackets are mine; this passage has not been included in the translation by John Glad.


9 Alain Badiou, *Can Politics Be Thought?* followed by *Of an Obscure Disaster: On the End of the Truth of the State,*
reader can draw this message equally from history textbooks as from Solzhenitsyn’s prose.

There is, however, a problem with Badiou’s methodology and the discipline he chooses to analyse the two writers. He opts for Shalamov because ‘his art directs the possibility of political thought.’ According to Badiou, Shalamov’s purpose was to create an artistic world where ‘exception becomes the metaphor for normality, and the literary immersion in this nightmare may awaken us to the universality of a will’.

Shalamov was, indeed, an artist. But the issue is not at all his interest in metaphors. His purpose was not a ‘literary immersion’ of his reader into a ‘world of metaphors.’ The concept of a metaphor does not apply here. The author Shalamov is trying to exceed a common ontological condition of the Gulag victims. For example, of the narrator of his story “Dry Rations”: “A human being survives by his ability to forget. Memory is always ready to blot out the bad and retain only the good.” And the narrator of the story “Sententious” tells about the eviction of language and, inevitably, of memory and emotions in the labour camp. Contrary to his characters, Shalamov says: “I don’t want to forget anything and exactly in that (…) I see my fate!” His purpose was not to forget, and to testify what he had encountered.

The abstract level of political philosophy is therefore inappropriate for understanding the difference between Shalamov and Solzhenitsyn. Such a conceptual approach cannot do justice to Auschwitz or the Gulag. To face the essential questions, our analysis has to start on the level of the concrete testimonies.

Departing from this concrete anthropological level, opposite to the political philosophers, will immediately clarify the real ‘ultimate question’— the concrete human fate under a totalitarian regime. To prevent abstraction and conceptualisation we should take a human fate as the reference point of our analysis. But having typed the words ‘human fate,’ did not I myself make an abstraction from an individual? Should not a theologian call each individual by name to be reliable? The same risk of abstraction exists in my very thesis of taking the dokhodyaga as a reference. We risk not only making the dokhodyaga into an abstraction or concept. The risk of making real people and real suffering abstract lies, for example, also in making Auschwitz or the Gulag a metaphor for ‘other instances of political violence’.

Another problem is identifying ourselves with the victims as ‘victims’.

What, then, is a reliable way of speaking?

This notion of reliability is not just a figure of speech. It has been brought in by Shalamov. He explicitly sets ‘reliability’ as a standard for reflection. Shalamov is writing what he calls ‘the prose of the future,’ the only criterion of which is ‘reliability’: “prose of the future demands something different. Not the writers will talk, but men of profession who possess the writer’s gift. And they will tell only about what they know, what

trans. Bruno Bosteels (Durham, Duke University Press, forthcoming), 21. I thank Dr Bosteels for sending me his translation prior to publication.
10 Badiou, Politics, 22.
11 Badiou, Politics, 23.
they saw. Reliability—this is the power of literature of the future."  

If reliability is a criterion for literature, even more so it is for theology. For a theology to be reliable, the awareness of the tension between concrete existence and generalization is crucial. Striving for reliability can be found in what the Catholic political theologian Jürgen Manemann calls the creation of an “anamnestic culture, which remembers about the forgotten victims.” But how to realize this in practice in view of the tension between the concrete and the general?

As I already mentioned, our analysis has to start on the level of the concrete testimonies. We have to keep in mind that on the one hand it is impossible to name or remember every victim (by name), on the other hand that those who did not experience extreme suffering are unable to imagine what it really is. An unimaginable ethical norm, applicable on the level of testimonies of a dokhodyaga is (to quote Shalamov): “there are, perhaps, worse deeds than to eat from a human corpse.” Acknowledging these two precautions, we have to be guided by the singularity of any suffering.

Thus in crucial respects, the complexity of a post-traumatic theology depends on the perception of God and the ‘other’, i.e. of theology and anthropology, and of personal and collective responsibility, i.e. of ethics. We learn to avoid false identification with the victims from works of theologians of the third and fourth generations in post-Nazi Germany who do not shun to face and to engage with their difficult past, also in their family history (I will mention some of their thoughts below on complicity in guilt). In cases where the political situation has not yet allowed for such reflection, this engagement will not necessarily be more difficult, but certainly more complex.

Taking ‘Theologies-after’ as a mirror, we should develop what I call a hermeneutics of stakes. With this I mean that to approach the level of personal suffering, but also to raise the question of personal and institutional accountability in coming to terms with the traumatic past, we should deal with the ‘ultimate’, that is, the most difficult questions and challenges, starting with the loss of everything human in the situations of extreme suffering. Such a hermeneutics involves a constant refocusing of oneself as a scholar toward the concrete other, whom I call the ‘living person’.

In discussing the ‘ultimate’ questions such as radical evil, approaching the living person in her/his ultimate existential incomprehensibility enables on the one hand to be sensitive to the risk of conceptualization and abstraction. On the other hand, this notion serves as an ethical imperative for a scholar to do as much as possible to understand the ‘other’. This definition of incomprehensibility is intended as a methodological instrument to assure that we do not conceptualise the other nor radical evil and extreme dehumanization.

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17 Katya Tolstaya, Kaleidoscope: F.M. Dostoevsky and Early Dialectical Theology, trans. A. Runia (Leiden, Boston: Brill 2013), e.g. 19–23.
Reflection and Reconciliation: Socio-political Conditions

An ideal situation for the process of reconciliation would seem to be that of South Africa, where reflection, introspection and remission—whether successful or not—lie at the basis of post-apartheid historiography, theology and the legal system. More frequently, however, the political situation does not allow for adequate reflection on the direct past. And generally, time distance should facilitate more adequate reflection on the traumatic past. Theology after Auschwitz, for example, emerged some twenty to twenty-five years after the Holocaust.

About the same amount of time has now passed since the fall of communism. Within the Reformed tradition in post-communist Eastern Europe a profound reflection on the communist past has arisen, though it never has developed into a structural movement or theology. A parallel post-Soviet theology or a ‘Theology after Gulag’ is lacking exactly because of the socio-political context. In most post-Soviet countries, there is still no broad societal and theological reflection on the Soviet legacy. The situation is particularly striking in Russia, where since the USSR’s collapse the Russian Orthodox Church has gained institutional strength and societal prominence, claiming the allegiance of 80% of Russian citizens and influencing the public rhetoric of historic remembrance. Academic theology has done little research on this religious revival, and has as yet given no unbiased response to the Soviet past. Formulating a post-Gulag mentality and theology seems increasingly important given the new political and ideological divisions between East and West: just as Russia never shook off the Soviet legacy, the West never really overcame Cold War thinking.

Existing models to address a violent legacy, which have been successfully applied in other societies, draw on notions from theology (e.g. guilt, forgiveness, reconciliation). But these models will be ineffective in the post-Soviet context, since they presuppose conscious reflection on the past by political and religious leaders.

within a legal system. In Germany and South Africa, they were employed after the ending of a repressive regime. The post-Soviet context lends itself more for comparison with the German than with the South African context: in both the Nazi and the Soviet systems state ideology had a ‘dehumanizing’ impact not only in the camps, but also on all strata of everyday social life. The crucial difference to South Africa and Germany is that Russia has never distanced itself from its past (the USSR), and the institutional heirs of the ‘perpetrators’—the security forces—are still in power. In Russia in the 1990s there have been attempts to stimulate public debate about Soviet crimes and commemoration of the victims. Some attempts came from ‘liberal’ Orthodox representatives who appealed to theological notions such as guilt, repentance, and reconciliation. Since the 2000s, however, the past is increasingly being ideologized and, indeed, ‘rewritten’ for political purposes rather than processed. Sophisticated Soviet ideological mechanisms—patriotism, propaganda, myth-creation, substitution—still permeate society, conditioning popular responses to past and present and ascribing ‘sacral’ status to human constructs like nation, State, and Church. This setting increasingly works against all initiatives for reflection.

As a prominent and influential institution, the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) seems well-placed to stimulate and support reflection on the past, but thus far it has sidestepped vital questions of collaboration and guilt. At best it reflects upon the past in the context of the persecuted Church, for example by canonising Soviet-era martyrs. Although the ROC recognises the need to ‘preserve memory’, it mostly constructs a one-sided, positive vision of the past. It has not generated the reflection required to face the challenge of Soviet dehumanization.

Moreover, the ROC is contributing to the state’s patriotic ideology: the current conflicts in Ukraine and Syria are framed—like WWII—as a ‘Holy War’, and Ukrainian ‘fascists’ are equated with German fascists. WWII is being sacralized as a heroic feat, while the legacy of terror is ‘rewritten’ in State propaganda and school textbooks. In the process, Russian Orthodoxy is instrumentalised and the ROC’s socio-political capital is exploited. Thus, religion is further ideologised, and this generates a vicious circle.

State and Church increasingly promote Orthodoxy as a core component of Russian national identity and cultural heritage. Yet while some 80% of the Russians identify themselves as ‘Orthodox’, only 5% attend church weekly. In this process religion and ideology tend to conflate, which is an additional aspect that hinders reflection.

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22 For overall comparison, see e.g. Michael Geyer, Sheila Fitzpatrick, eds., Beyond Totalitarianism: Stalinism and Nazism Compared (New York: Cambridge University Press 2009).


tion on the past. As Nanci Adler wrote, this rewriting of history 'is part cause and part effect' of the fact that coming to terms with the past has failed.\textsuperscript{25}

To connect to the previous paragraph, the lack of reflection on the Soviet past and the risk of abstraction can also be found in recent doctrinal documents issued by the ROC, \textit{The Bases of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church} issued in 2000 and \textit{The Russian Orthodox Church's Basic Teaching on Human Dignity, Freedom and Rights}, issued in 2008. This works out in the ROC's use of the traditional theological notions such as \textit{man as God's image and deification}. For example, Ch. I, section 1 of \textit{Basic} derives human dignity from the biblical notion of the endowment of man with God's image and likeness (Gen 1:26) to state in Ch. II, section 1: "The image of God can be either darkened or illumined depending on the self-determination of a free individual, while the natural dignity becomes either more apparent in his life or obliterated by sin." I constrain myself to only one observation: this Chapter (II) of \textit{The Basic Teaching} is entitled "Freedom of choice and freedom from evil." The \textit{Muselmänner} and \textit{dokhodyagi} of Auschwitz and the Gulag disclose a total loss of any dignity and of the image of God. Free will was out of order in these circumstances. This anthropological given from recent history calls for a reconsideration of the ecclesiastical and doctrinal speech on man as God's image. Since the ROC-documents do not confront concrete history, theological notions become abstracted from the lived experience to which these documents lay claim.

Reliable Theology in View of Complicity in Guilt

The current Russian church-state relations bring into play a complicating socio-psychological and theological aspect of personal and collective complicity in guilt. Generally speaking, Christian 'Theology after Auschwitz' is twofold: one side is given by the sense of bearing political, historical and theological responsibility as Christians for the genocide of the Jews as the chosen people. The other side, already indicated at the beginning of this Chapter, is the problem of speaking about God after this evil and suffering. These two aspects are, of course, reciprocal.

Perplexity and the simultaneous necessity to speak, together with the theological and societal problem of complicity in guilt, has led to a shift in 'after Auschwitz'-theology. David Patterson states: 'Ethical reflection about the Holocaust needs many supplementary or even conflicting paradigmatic approaches. This process can bring to light different, sometimes paradoxical, elements of the Nazi genocide, and thereby after Auschwitz it can reveal the importance of an ethical openness for constructive plurality itself.'\textsuperscript{26} Contemporary German theologians are trying to find their own position by investigating the Holocaust from the perspectives of victim, perpetrator and spectator.

In the ongoing multifocal and variegated debate Norbert Reck stresses an aspect of collective human responsibility and guilt: "Thinking about the Nazi-time and about what was made of it after the Second World War, makes sense only if its foundation is the affirmation of general responsibility of all people for each other."\textsuperscript{27} Meantime,

\textsuperscript{25} Nanci Adler, “Reconciliation With—or Rehabilitation of—the Soviet Past?” \textit{Memory Studies} 5/3 (2012), 327–38, 328.


\textsuperscript{27} “Das Nachdenken über die Nazizeit und über das, was nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg daraus gemacht wurde, hat nur dann Sinn, wenn die Bejahung der generellen Verantwortlichkeit aller Menschen für einander dabei die
Katya Tolstaya emphasizes the individual aspect of guilt and forgiveness: ‘As long as guilt is understood collectively, it cannot be prosecuted and punished in a legal sense. The ‘solidarity of guilt’ then reverses into a ‘solidarity with the perpetrators,’ whose integration is being promoted under the guise of reconciliation without much remorse and repentance.’

For post-Soviet contexts this important issue of complicity in guilt and responsibility for evil is different. In the Soviet case distinctions like victim–perpetrator, and therefore responsibility for evil and violence, are blurred: anyone could become an ‘enemy of the people’ just as anyone could become a KGB-informant. ‘The majority of today’s Russians have inherited a victim complex’ This, too, hinders reflection on the past.

A survey from March 2016, conducted by the Russian analytical ‘Levada Center’ on Joseph Stalin showed that 45% of Russians believe that the suffering endured by the Soviet people during the Stalin era can be justified by the achieved technical, military and other results. 57% of the respondents believe that Stalin cannot be considered a state criminal. Putin propagates the message that Russia “has no need to be ashamed of her past,” and “no one must be allowed to impose a feeling of guilt on us.”

Outlook: Deification as Direction for Theological Reflection on Radical Evil

In view of this twofold dilemma: the risk of abstraction and conceptualization—and thereby of arriving at reconciliation too quickly, or harmonizing the past—and the need for reliable talk of God and the human individual, what direction could a theology take to be reliable? What would a hermeneutics of stakes look like in theological practice?

One direction for the Orthodox context could exactly lie in the Eastern Orthodox notions of man as God's image and deification—partaking in divine nature—provide us a direction to reforming theology of evil and complicity in guilt. Let us briefly consider this Orthodox surplus value.

The mention of deification in the ROC’s official documents is not accidental. Deification, or theosis is the interconfessional trend of contemporary Christian theology. Originating from Eastern Orthodoxy, deification is a spiritual practice of humility, asceticism, and prayer to achieve likeness to or union with God. This practice involves man’s ‘co-working’ with God. Essential to this practice—as articulated by the Church fathers—is the unity of creation. This holistic
worldview that all of creation, including humanity, is permeated, and thus connected by the divine, is summarized in the liturgical words: ‘God is everywhere present and fillest all things.’

The roots of the polarity of the doctrine of theosis lie in (re)discovery of hesychasm in the late 19th century Russian Orthodox spirituality. Since then, various elaborations of theosis have emerged from all Christian confessions. It remains a key element in modern Orthodox lived religious practices of co-working with God, however, pilgrimage being a prime example.

Surprisingly, modern theological discussions on theosis neglect the unity of creation and reduce deification to an individual process. Strikingly, most discussions, regardless of denomination, follow two parallel lines, which do not cross each other. Either the discussion touches on theosis as a personal practice and thus regards theological anthropology, or attention is given to the distinction of God’s wholly transcendent and unknowable essence and the divine immanent energies that permeate the creation, making the participation in God possible and thus regards theological epistemology.

This missing link is, perhaps, not totally surprising, while these discussions reflect the cultural-and theological-historical context of the ‘turn to the subject’ in which the doctrine of deification has been rediscovered in Russian Orthodox spirituality in the 18th, and foremost reinvented theologically from the late 19th century onwards. In this context theosis is explained as a personal participation in God and personal deification through a life of prayer and asceticism. However, as already indicated above, from the desert and Cappadocian Fathers, through St Maximus the Confessor to St Gregory Palamas with their respective teachings on the divine logoi and on energeia that permeate the creation, and above all, through the Eastern Orthodox spirituality, or the attitude in contemplating God and his creation, this personal or individual practice of deification is embedded in the world-view of the unity of creation. In patristic thought, this cosmic dimension, which is thematically encompassed by the notion of the union of creation, secures deification, and not the other way around. In the Fathers, for example in Maximus and Palamas, this cosmic dimension is first of all experienced and belongs in the first place to existentiality, and only from there to theology. In modern theological discourses and discussions it becomes another theological notion. Conceptualization of what essentially has been experienced would be one of the main reasons why the link has been missed.

Another reason would be the difference in the hermeneutics of stakes: a world-view, that is, a sociologically, historically and culturally determined attitude, from which a theologian develops her argument. In contrast to the theocentric rationale of the Church Fathers such as Maximus and Palamas, the expositions of the modern theologians are anthropocentric in their outset. The Church Fathers’ acknowledgment that the divine Otherness (‘activity’, energies or logoi) holds creation together, makes for their intrinsically theocentric world-view. For example, in discussing Dionysius the Areopagite Vladimir Lossky notes: “divine rays penetrate the whole created universe, and are the cause of its existence.”

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33 Louth correctly prefers this translation of energeia (Louth, Introducing Eastern Orthodox Theology, 40).
This intrinsic theocentricity informs the patristic perception of man as God's image as the crown of creation. This theocentric starting point brings human responsibility for the other human beings and for the rest of creation into a totally different axiology that that we find in contemporary theology. Without this link to the union of creation the theology and practice of deification become anthropocentric or even egocentric, detached from creation and from fellow humans.

Simultaneously, to prevent abstraction, this axiology has to be combined with a stress on the individual responsibility of each 'living person' in and for creation. This individual responsibility for evil is explicitly perceived as an intrinsic ontological given from the unity with the cosmos, while in modern theology, even in the modern Theologie nach Auschwitz, complicity in guilt is underarticulated ontologically and is therefore endangered to stay confined to mere ethics. This world-view of the unity of creation also lays an ontological basis for the complicity in suffering without downplaying singularity of any suffering. It therefore bares potential for confronting the challenge of extreme dehumanization as testified in the Gulag and Auschwitz. But this should be a thorough discussion of a theological locus, such as the concept of God, ontology, anthropology, Christology, soteriology, epistemology and so on, that has to be articulated and to justified in relation to other loci. While this holistic worldview can help to overcome the impasse of modern individualism and contribute to rethinking man's place in creation, its potential is currently undeveloped.

Does Hope Need Heroes?
Towards a Feminist Political Theology in the Context of the Russian-Ukrainian Conflict
Heleen Zorgdrager

The following is a quotation from my 22-year-old student Nina from Lviv, describing her Maidan experience: "There were people from all regions in Ukraine. The cooperation was great. It didn’t matter which language you spoke. People did not think about themselves but about the other. They were prepared to sacrifice their lives, so strong was the feeling of community." Her friend Ulyana adds, "Maidan was like a big church in the open air. We could breathe in that open air. That was the Holy Spirit."

Half a year later, after the annexation of Crimea and the Russian-backed separatist war in Eastern Ukraine, the students are tired and disappointed, and express their feelings of helplessness.² They now wonder what they can do and believe that only prayer can unite them. They simply hope for something better. They try to reduce their feelings of powerlessness by volunteering: collecting goods and money for the army, visiting wounded soldiers in the hospitals, helping refugees, and attending prayer services.

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¹ Unpublished interviews conducted with students of the Ukrainian Catholic University and Ivano Franko State University, Lviv, 26 and 28 March 2014 (the interviews were conducted in English or Ukrainian; the quotations here and henceforth are taken from the interviews in English language).
² Unpublished interviews conducted with students of the Ukrainian Catholic University and Ivano Franko State University, Lviv, 7 November 2014.
Reforming Theology

at church for peace and the wellbeing of the nation.

The non-declared but very real war in the east of the country has changed the lives of all Ukrainians. Many families are anxious about husbands, fathers, and sons serving in the Anti-Terrorist Operation [ATO] zone. Many families are mourning the death of loved ones, be it civilians killed by shelling or soldiers on the battlefield. Relatives have become separated from one another by new physical borders and by mental borders of diverging pro-Ukrainian or pro-Russian loyalties. Friends have decided to reduce their conversations to an indispensable minimum or to freeze relationships completely till better times come. Ukrainians face a situation that is usually ignored in descriptions of wars: the shelling and shooting is destroying friendships and relationships more often than lives. Russian friends tell me that this collateral damage (or is it the core damage?) of war is also splitting their circle of friends, relatives, and colleagues.

In this article I want to reflect on the following questions:

1. What is the post-Maidan situation and what roles do Ukrainian women play in it, and how do they respond creatively and critically to that reality?
2. Regarding the political theology of the churches, which road maps to the future, which narratives of salvation do the churches offer to the faithful?
3. Why is it that right in the midst of wartime the churches continue their ‘war on gender’?
4. How can women build a peace-promoting, de-escalating theology in the context of this war today? How might our narrative of salvation look?

In the end, I suggest building blocks for a feminist political theology in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. My position is that of a committed outsider. I am only partially entitled to give voice to Ukrainian women’s concerns and hopes. But I can give voice to my own hopes. The method can only be that of dialogue, or polylogue. Therefore, I am grateful for the responses and comments of my colleagues and friends both from Ukraine and Russia which have enriched the contents of this article.

Ukrainian Women in the Post-Maidan Situation

Women’s agency in wartime

Participation in the EuroMaidan protest increased civic and political awareness and agency among women. Men and women participated in the Maidan movement in near equal numbers: 41 to 47 percent of the participants were women. Their roles were manifold. They were engaged in traditional, supportive tasks such as

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3 As for the part of a theology of reconciliation in the context of this conflict, I am inspired by reflections of Fr Cyril Hovorun, Alfons Brüning, Cinta Depondt, Lydia Lozova, and Frans Hoppenbrouwer, shared at the conference “The Churches and the War in Ukraine,” 4 April 2015, Tilburg (Netherlands), organised by Foundation Communicantes and the “Endowed Chair of Orthodoxy and Peacebuilding” of Protestant the Theological University and VU University.

4 This article is based on a keynote lecture presented at the ESWTR conference, Orthodox Academy of Crete, 17–21 August 2015. Halyna Teslyuk of the Ukrainian Catholic University in Lviv was the first invited to respond to the paper, followed by Marina Shishova of the Orthodox Christian Academy in St Petersburg, and Elena Volkova, former professor at the Moscow State University and currently active at the Sacharov Centre. Their responses were followed by a panel discussion.

5 Olga Onuch, “EuroMaidan Protest Participant Survey. Ukrainian Protest Project” (http://ukrainianprotestproject.com, 6 November 2015) [The Ukrainian Protest Participant Survey was conducted from November 26,
kitchen work and distributing food for protesters; sorting donated clothes, food, and medication; cleaning up the protest spaces; coordinating logistics; administering services; and writing press reports. Women were also active in roles that placed them in riskier situations, as on-site doctors and nurses, on-the-scene journalists and photographers, and lawyers for arrested protesters. When the protests turned more violent, women were excluded from the barricades. The narrative on Maidan became man-centred. Men were celebrated as the new Cossacks. Heightened patriotic discourse and expansion of violent protest strategies strengthened patriarchal attitudes towards women. (Neo)traditionalist gender-scripts assigned them the roles of ‘mothers of the nation’ and ‘inspiration for male protesters.’ It sparked heated discussions among women about the relation between the feminist and nationalist-patriotic agenda. Loyalty to the nation’s struggle for independence is deeply entrenched in the history of the Ukrainian women’s movement and needs our particular attention below.

Despite the rule excluding them from the barricades, some female protesters still joined the clashes and prepared Molotov cocktails or threw them themselves. There were also three all-female self-defence brigades formed, called the Zhinocha Sotnias (Women’s Squads or Women’s Hundreds).

After Maidan, many young women continued their activist roles in the volunteer movement, which is a rather new phenomenon in Ukrainian society. They have become involved in NGOs, in grassroots initiatives for social and political reform, in critical art projects, in university initiatives promoting exchanges between East and West Ukraine, and in numerous initiatives to support the army with food, clothes, bulletproof vests, and medical supplies. While men continue to dominate the traditional political sphere (the new government of Ukraine has only one woman, the Minister of Finance, Natalie Jarjesko), women are expressing their political engagement in new civil and local networks, as leaders of NGOs and as undertakers of volunteer initiatives.

An interesting shift in public opinion has occurred. According to a poll on public trust conducted in May 2016 by the Razumkov Centre, Ukrainians mostly trust volunteer organisations (trusted by 63.7% of respondents) and the Armed Forces of Ukraine (61.8%). They have taken over the lead from churches, which were until March 2015 still the most trusted institution (66.2%), and now follow as third with a trust of 60.5%.

The traditional political sphere, dominated by men and notorious for its corruption, is highly mistrusted. The voluntary organisations, with their high degree of female participation, and the churches, traditional citadels of male power, are competing for the first position.

Gendering the front

A process of militarisation, which had already begun during Maidan, sped up after the annexation of Crimea and the war in Donbas. Militarism sharpens gender dichotomies. The social reality gets divided into the categories of fighting front and home front, a gendered division of reality. Politics of masculinity and femininity are produced to support the war effort. The ideology of ‘man-making’ serves the, in theory, absolute separation of military and civilian worlds of the battlefield and the home front. The symbol for the home front is the mother. There is a firewall between the battle zone and the home front, namely the security policy of maintaining strict control over communication and information, suggestively ‘for the good of the mothers’. In Russia, this information ban is complete: mothers know nothing and are deceived about the fate of their sons, at times carrying empty coffins because the bodies of their sons killed in the ‘war that does not exist’ are not given back to them.

Expert Cynthia Enloe shows that the military system, in reality, is not separate from, but profoundly parasitic on family and kinship. The maternal sacrifice is the fertile soil from which the military draws its lifeblood. While men are fighting, women are mourning—or praying, as they are every Saturday morning in Lviv at the special Mothers of Soldiers prayer service. The tight intertwining between patriarchy and militarism is also evident in a policy that promotes births and motherhood, a ‘pro-natalist policy’. Militarised regimes tend to see mothers as breeders of the nation and of future soldiers. The ideological intertwining is best phrased by Benito Mussolini: “War is to man

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12 Enloe, *Maneuvers*.
13 Ibid., 248.
what motherhood is to woman." Military war and demographic war tend to ally. This can be observed in the Ukrainian situation as well.

The empirical reality of the demarcation between the fronts, however, has always been more complicated. In Ukraine there are women present at the front, as soldiers, as liaison officers, as doctors and nurses, as engineers, and as prostitutes.

A special case is Nadiya Savchenko, a 34-year-old first lieutenant in the Ukrainian Ground Forces and Air Force pilot. Nadiya, whose name means ‘hope,’ joined as a volunteer the Aidar battalion in the ATO in Donbass. She was captured by pro-Russian rebels and handed over to Russia. While in captivity, Savchenko was elected as deputy to the Verkhovna Rada (Parliament) in November 2014. Savchenko has become a symbol of the struggle for Ukraine. President Poroshenko awarded her with the title ‘Hero of Ukraine,’ the highest national honor.

He said, “Nadiya is a symbol of unbroken Ukrainian spirit and heroism, a symbol of the way one should defend and love Ukraine, a symbol of our victory.” Patriarch Filaret awarded her with the Holy Order of St George for her brave fight against the evil dragon of Putin’s Russia.

Savchenko is Christ-like, Mary-like, and Pussy Riot-like. Like Pussy Riot, she writes letters from prison, is supported by a famous French philosopher (Bernard-Henry Lévi in her case), and the pictures of her behind bars and on hunger strike for 83 days have become iconic.

Ukraine has in Savchenko its ‘Berehynia of the war.’ The Berehynia was a female spirit in Slavic mythology that transformed in 19th-century discourse into the mother and protector of the nation. As a young, slender woman with big eyes, she symbolises the human face of the Ukrainian armed forces and gains the world’s sympathy for Ukraine’s unequal struggle.

As the following examples will show, women are breaking down the barrier between home front and battlefield in other ways as well. In the powerful movement of volunteers supporting the Ukrainian army with food, goods, technical equipment, and medical supplies, women often carry out the transport themselves and deliver the goods right behind the frontlines. Mothers of

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15 According to statistics from 2009, in peacetimes, women made up almost 13% of the Armed Forces of Ukraine; 7% of these women were officers. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women_in_the_military_by_country#Ukraine, 6 November 2015)
18 Ibid.
21 See for example “ Бог нам послав НАДІЮ!” July 11, 2014, by Yuriy Havrylyuk (http://www.halynaklymuk.com/nadiya-means-hope-in-ukrainian/) This Facebook post honours her in ecstatic wordings: “For Ukrainian woman, she is the sun and the air around us. She is mother—one that gives birth; and wife—one that makes a man a human being. Nadiya Savchenko—she is even Berehinya the Protectress who is not afraid to stand up against those who are tearing Ukraine apart and spill its blood! She is like the Mother of God. And the picture of Nadiya with the helmet—it is like an icon. ... God has given us Nadiya—HOPE.”
soldiers sometimes take to the streets and demand that Russia stop the war. Female journalists and photographers cross the front lines, and subvert the information ban by reporting about the ambiguous, ugly, and not so heroic realities of the war (such as violence against women in the war-zone and the increase of domestic violence committed by servicemen on leave). And finally, there have been explicit dialogue initiatives by women who seek communication with those on the other side of the frontline.\(^22\)

**Dialogue Initiatives by Women**

We should be cautious to call these ‘dialogue initiatives’ rather than ‘anti-war’ or ‘peace-building’ initiatives, since Russian internet trolls have seized the name of a so-called Ukrainian Peace Movement.\(^23\)

In late August 2014, the popular singer Ruslana (Stepanivna Lyzjytsjko), who acted as a courageous moderator on the Maidan stage, made a trip to Donbas. After the trip, she gave a press conference in Kiev. Her main message was “Stop firing at countrymen.” Ruslana is convinced that Ukrainians from both sides should stop shooting countrymen and unite against the real enemy, the foreign aggressor.\(^24\)

In December 2014, the journalist, lawyer, and politician Tetiana Montian went to the rebel-controlled territories of Luhansk and Donetsk. The trip resulted from agreements reached during a teleconference on Channel 17 between Tetiana Montian and Oleksii Mozgovyi, field commander in the so-called LPR (Luhansk People’s Republic). During Montian’s visit to Donbas, Mozgovyi released a soldier who had been held captive since August 2014. Moreover, Montian held public meetings in Luhansk and Donetsk and answered journalists’ questions. After coming back to Kiev, Tetiana Montian together with Channel 17 journalist Dmytro Filatov gave a press conference titled ‘Humanitarian disaster in Donbas.’\(^25\)

The initiatives of these women are characterised by the readiness to have a face-to-face encounter with the enemy, and a deliberate kind of *naïveté*. The expectation is that perhaps the other side can teach one something that one does not yet know. Perhaps reality is different from the propaganda both sides want people to believe. By challenging the dichotomy of home front and battlefield, and listening and talking to real people, civilians, and combatants, these women at least trouble the mythologies of war.\(^26\)

The women’s movement as a collective is not really visible in the initiatives for dialogue. In June-July 2014, there was an initiative of the ‘Union of Ukrainian Women’ to appoint the organisation’s leader Valentyna Semeniuk-Samsonenko and her deputy Hanna Osova as heads of Donetsk and Luhansk Regional State Administrations. The initiative was meant to promote de-escalation of violence and conflict resolution. After the death of Semeniuk-Samsonenko under unclarified circumstances on 27 August 2014, there were no further reports on dialogue initiatives by the Union of Ukrainian Women.\(^27\)

\(^22\) International Centre for Policy Studies [ICPS], *Mapping of Dialogue Initiatives to Resolve the Conflict in Ukraine*, January 2015.

\(^23\) See for instance “Victoria Shilova—Leader of the Ukrainian Anti-War Movement Has Been Abducted and Imprisoned by the Kiev Regime” (http://www.liveleak.com/view?i=a46_1428573966#MQCPUCAi81D3RoeA. 99, accessed 6 November 2015)


\(^25\) Ibid.


\(^27\) ICPS Report, *Mapping of Dialogue Initiatives*, 25. Valentyna Semeniuk-Samsonenko was the former Head of the
Feminism and patriotism

Why are women’s initiatives for dialogue so exceptional? To answer this question, we have to discuss the relation between feminism and patriotism. Can patriotic goals serve the interests of women? For Westerners, feminism and patriotism appear to be incompatible. As far as I can see, Western feminists have become deeply suspicious of any kind of nationalism. Their moral compass has been shaped by the historic experiences of national-socialism and fascism. They associate nationalism with war-making, imperialistic aspirations, and compulsory motherhood policies that assign to women the function of biological and symbolical reproduction of the nation. Mainstream Western feminists feel comfortable with the trajectory of cosmopolitanism and anti-militarism. They fail to understand the specific Central- and Eastern-European situation. In these regions, women’s emancipation in the nineteenth and twentieth century went hand in hand with the formation of nation states and the fight against imperialistic powers. Though not without problems and ambiguities, the interests of women and nation, both victims of totalitarian statehood, could converge in numerous ways.

Feminism is not imported from the West. Historian Oksana Kis dryly comments:

In analyzing the process of feminism’s flourishing in independent Ukraine, both in the sphere of public activism and in the academic milieu, it should be remembered above all that feminism can hardly be seen as alien. It had taken root and borne fruit in Ukrainian scholarship and public life a century ago. Feminism in its essence and consequences (though perhaps not in its declared goals and form) was the powerful women’s movement in Galicia and in eastern Ukraine in the early twentieth century.

Ukrainian women significantly expanded their range of social and political roles by joining the nationalist organisations that from the 1920s till the 1950s fought for the ideal of an independent Ukrainian state. Significant numbers of women participated in the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists [OUN] and its military wing, the Ukrainian Resistance Army [UPA].

Departments of gender studies in Ukraine (in Lviv, Kiev, Odessa) embrace the concept of ‘national or patriotic feminism.’ It is a concept of pragmatic feminism. The scholars in these departments have set out to participate critically as feminists in the process of nation building, and in the process of constructing collective memory and national identity.

For example, feminist historian Oksana Kis works on the ethnological discourse that has been developed since the 1990s in the field of ‘Ukrainian Studies.’ She deconstructs the essentialist concept of Ukrainian culture that domi-
nates the scene, focuses on family, kinship, customs, tradition, and promotes maternalistic discourses.

Not all gender scholars share the “national (or patriotic) feminism” approach. The defining narrative in western Ukraine is the nation-centred narrative, whereas in parts of eastern Ukraine, the transnational narrative of the Soviet past still shapes minds and hearts. The Charkiv feminist scholar Irina Zherebkina, who elaborates on the gender theories of Judith Butler, criticises her Ukrainian colleagues for their narrow ethnocentrism, whereas the latter defame the Russocentric, anti-Ukrainian, imperialistic attitude of the Charkiv school.

It is important to note that Ukrainian ‘national feminism’ is not as provincialist as it may seem. Women scholars from the Ukrainian diaspora in the U.S. and Canada actively take part in research and discussions, and there is a steady exchange of scholars, students, programs, methods, and ideas between the continents.

The Role of Churches and their Narratives of Salvation

Salvation and the nation

Which road maps to the future, which visions of hope do the churches offer to the faithful? What kind of political theology do they present? It is important to note, that there is no clearly dominant (majority) church in Ukraine, and the confessional landscape is very pluralistic (see figure 1). In order to trace the political theology of the churches, I shall look at both the Russian Orthodox Church and two important Ukrainian churches and analyse the latest Easter messages issued by their leaders (April 2015). These messages have a major public impact. They are read aloud after the Easter liturgy and widely spread through the media.

Patriarch Kirill (Gundyayev) of the Russian Orthodox Church calls the Resurrection of Christ a gift of hope. He calls Christ ‘the First Warrior in

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The image of hope is the glorious resurrection of the Russian people and nation, surely affirmed by the Resurrection of Christ, but even so, “evidently attested by the Victory in the Great Patriotic War.” It is difficult to determine which event is most decisive. The suffering nation will stand up in eternal glory. Patriarch Kirill speaks here of the resurrection of Holy Russia, in modern terms: Russkiy Mir, the Russian World.

The Russian World is a sketchy yet undoubtedly divisive ideology of what Russia is (or at least pretend to be). As a political concept, it is vague and imprecise. It is a sacralised view of Russian national identity. It asserts that Russia has the mission to expand its influence and authority until it dominates the Eurasian lands by means of a strong, centralised Russian state aligned with the Russian Orthodox Church. Based on the idea of a ‘clash of civilisations,’ Russian Christian civilisation is opposed to Western liberalism, which is equated with barbarism.35

Patriarch Kirill’s Easter message also addresses his flock in Ukraine, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate, and aims to include them and preferably all Orthodox believers in Ukraine in the imagined community of the Russian World. Ukraine should not exist as an own nation. The Patriarch’s political theology around Christ the Warrior is built on the logic of victory and defeat.36

What kind of messages are the Ukrainian church leaders sending? Patriarch Filaret (Denisenko) of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kiev Patriarchate (one of the independent Orthodox churches in Ukraine) matches his Moscow colleague’s militant tone and nationalist worldview. He says: “we firmly believe that soon the Lord will send us victory over the aggressor, for where the truth is, there are God and victory.”37 The image of hope is the speedy victory over the enemy. There is no doubt that God is on the side of Ukraine. In an interview, Patriarch Filaret declared that “God is on the side of truth, and since Putin and the Kremlin committed an act of falsehood, they will be defeated by God.”38
His patriotic theology is clearly black-and-white, building on the oppositions of good and evil, truth and lie, victory and defeat. Is there any room for a future relationship with the enemy?

Patriarch Sviatoslav (Shevchuk) of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church proclaims that "[C]elebrating Easter during war is being able to see the Risen Christ in our victory today." Here again we hear a story of sacrifice, heroism, and victory, though first of all of a spiritual kind. When it comes to attitudes toward the enemy, "those who let themselves be deceived by insatiable imperial ideology of lie and violence"—the foreign aggressor Russia but also the pro-Russian rebels in the Donbas—Patriarch Sviatoslav makes efforts to speak in a nuanced way. The Truth of Christ does not simply refer to the ‘truth’ of the Ukrainian position. He states that the Truth of Christ comes to the fore where people speak and show the truth about what is happening in Ukraine. This nuance is significant. It keeps open the possibility that the truth might be inconvenient. Such people, according to the Patriarch, can become the true apostles of the gospel of peace and love. He insists that we debunk the propaganda that deceives the minds of many Europeans. We should not perceive the conflict as a civil war, or as a war between two nationalisms; it is a conflict between an authoritarian state system and a statehood built on free and responsible citizenship.

Cult of the ‘Heavenly Hundred’

The Cult of the ‘Heavenly Hundred’ (Nebesna Sotnia) is a symbol for the political theology of Ukrainian churches. This is the glorious title for the more than one hundred people (among them three women) who were killed by snipers during the bloody attack of 19–20 February 2014. It was the gruesome end of the Revolution of Dignity.

On the first anniversary of the massacre, Patriarch Sviatoslav said: “Someone will think of victims of Maidan, another will talk about a fusillade at Maidan. But we Christians realise something much deeper here. We talk about an Easter sacrifice of the Heavenly Hundred.” Their free-willed sacrifice is a beginning of new life for the nation. With their ‘holy blood’ they sanctified the freedom of Ukraine.

Searching for a shared, inspiring national narrative, Patriarch Sviatoslav does not back a narrow nationalism. The national unity of Ukraine should be inclusive, like the community of the Heavenly Hundred, some of whom were ‘sons of Belarus and Armenia.’ Nevertheless, the outcome is a sacralisation of events and victims. The Heavenly Hundred are viewed as the celestial patrons who invisibly guard Ukraine. Chapels are built in memory of the Nebesna Sotnia. They are the subject of an entire iconostasis (by Roman Bonchuk, Ivano Frankivsk). And the Ukrainian state has installed An Order of the Heaven’s Hundred Heroes.

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39 Officially the ecclesial title is: Major Archbishop of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church. For the Greek-Catholic faithful, in everyday speech, he is their patriarch. In its ecclesiology, the UGCC claims the title of patriarchate, according to the tradition of the Eastern churches, but so far the Holy Father refused to give the blessing. Antoine Arjakovsky, Conversations with Lubomyr Cardinal Husar. Towards a Post-Confessional Christianity (Ukrainian Catholic University Press: Lviv 2007), 139–52.

40 “Church Leaders’ Easter Messages to Ukrainians.”


I wish to question this growing cult of the Heavenly Hundred. Elevating them to the status of an Easter sacrifice makes their individual stories, motives, and dreams invisible and impalpable, and reduces them to a single story. Does honouring the risk they took automatically mean that I agree with each of them? The sacralisation makes it impossible to criticise the narrative behind the cult. Does the Gospel compel one to love one’s own country above everything else? Is a violent death in a people’s protest life-giving or perhaps sometimes or many times just tragic, without sense, a reason to cry to God in despair?

Patriotic Religion and War on Gender

Military War and War on Gender

In the midst of the military war with Russia, a war on gender, led by churches and right-wing organisations, has restarted in Ukraine with fresh energy. How can this simultaneity be explained?

The anti-gender movement has some history in Ukraine. I would like to mention two events to illustrate this. In April 2012, the Dognal Group, a breakaway sect that calls itself the ‘Ukrainian Orthodox Greek-Catholic Church,’ held a public manifestation. A group of about 30 people had gathered in front of the city hall in Lviv, carrying billboards with pictures and slogans against homosexuality, abortion, and juvenile justice reform. In the centre of the stage there was an act of performance art: a hangman entirely clothed in black and with a black hood, held a scythe in his hand while sitting on a coffin. On his chest was a sandwich board with only one big word painted in red: GENDER. It was a perfect visual illustration of the idea that gender ideology is the ‘culture of death.’ Though the Dognal group has very few supporters in Ukrainian society, with this anti-gender campaign they play on sentiments and fears that are widespread among Ukrainian people.

Later, on 27 November 2012, a conference seminar on ‘Gender Theory’ took place at the Ukrainian Catholic University, organised by the ‘Institute of Marriage and Family.’ The invited keynote speaker was Italian Professor Maria Luisa Di Pietro (endocrinologist and specialist in bioethics), who warned against the dangers of gender ideology. The head of the Theology Department of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church [UGCC], Bishop Yaroslav Pryriz, commented on that occasion:

Until recently, the term ‘gender’ was completely unknown by the general public, not only in Ukraine but throughout the whole world. But suddenly it became one of the leading principles of certain ideologies. The aim of gender ideology is to create a new type of man who is endowed with the freedom to choose and implement his sexual identity, regardless of biological sex. It is clear that such a position is unaccepta-


44 Named after their leader, the Czech Republic citizen Antonin Dognal, the group consists of fundamentalist Catholic clerics and nuns, and its activities are characterised by aggressive actions and an anti-European Union agenda. The group is suspected of having allegiances to Moscow. Andrew Higgins, “Ukrainian Church Faces Obscure Pro-Russia Revolt in Its Own Ranks,” in: New York Times, 21 June 2014. (http://risu.org.ua/en/index/monitoring/society_digest/56840/, accessed 6 November 2015)
ble from the point of view of Christian morality. But even more disturbing is that gender ideology is protected by national and multinational institutions, and traditional moral values are discriminated against and persecuted. If its further movement is not stopped, then soon Christians and all those who follow the eternal moral precepts risk becoming delinquents.45

Battle for traditional values

Oksana Kis calls gender a litmus test for Ukrainian democracy. Already in 2013 she wrote, “the sharpness of the conservative reaction was [is] conditioned precisely by the maturity and increasing influence of the women’s movement and gender studies, along with the shift in the appropriate legal basis [concerning gender equality].”46 She comments on the conservative forces, that include the churches:

Turning to glaring disinformation and manipulation of the Ukrainians’ consciousness, exploiting their national and religious sentiment, and homophobic prejudice, they present gender policy as a phenomenon aimed exclusively at propagating homosexuality and subverting traditional family values in Ukraine.47

The reason for the current re-emergence of the anti-gender campaign is the intended reform of the Constitution of Ukraine, to bring it in accord with European legislation. In March 2015, the President of Ukraine set up the Constitutional Commission for this purpose. Its Working Group on Human Rights has already made proposals ensuring gender equality and the rights of sexual minorities.

The churches have fiercely opposed these reforms. In general, as Alfons Brüning observes, religiosity in Ukraine, as in other areas of the former Soviet Union, bears characteristics of a post-soviet morality that gives stability preference over freedom.48 In the current situation, however, this devotion to conservative values takes more militant forms.

The All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organisations [AUCCRO], which played a wonderful, connective, and courageous role during the Maidan revolution and in the following months, is now in the forefront of defending the “principles of human relation that are traditional for Ukrainians.”49 They campaign to enshrine in the Constitution the right to life ‘from conception to natural death’ and keep marriage defined as a ‘family union between a man and a woman.’ According to the AUCCRO, “justifying such dubious proposals [of the Constitutional Commission] by reference to European experience is irrelevant, because the European Union

47 Kis, “Feminism in Contemporary Ukraine,” 10.
has opposing views on the issue of anti-discrimination legislation, marriage and family, and legal opportunities for sexual minorities.”

Local churches support the campaign of the Council of Churches and Religious Organisations. The rectorate of the Ukrainian Catholic University in Lviv backed the amendments of AUCCRO with an “Appeal to Government Leaders,” delivered on 29 July 2015.51

In the short introduction the public appeal reads,

In our opinion the health of the family and the promotion of family values is a real challenge in ensuring the basic rights of Ukrainian citizens. Only in this way is it possible to overcome the practice of abortion and reduce the number of divorces, the level of family violence, the number of children abandoned by their parents, social orphans, the fall in the birth rate [demographic anxiety!], and other severe social problems.

Protection of the traditional patriarchal family is believed to be the panacea for a huge range of social evils. It is shocking that a letter from a public university lacks a modicum of academic reasoning. It is even more painful that the letter reflects an unawareness of the often harmful reality of patriarchal family relations to the lives and rights of women and children.

This position does not necessarily reflect the opinion of all members of the university. There are more nuanced voices in the ranks of the Ukrainian Catholic University. Since 2012, the UNWLA Lectorium on Women’s Studies has organised lectures that discuss in a more academic and informed way social, historical, political, and religious issues concerning women, men, sexuality, and the family in the Ukrainian context.

On 20 October 2015, the AUCCRO declared once again that the draft proposal of the Constitution (and consecutive legislative initiatives) was unacceptable to them because they believed it would undermine the legal basis of the traditional family and impermissibly violate the rights and freedom of the citizens. AUCCRO stated that the Constitution should be based on the traditional moral values of the Ukrainian people.52 According to them, these corrections lead to positive discrimination of sexual minorities, propaganda, and discrimination of other parts of society. On 19 November, the target was the bill on amendments to the Labour Code.53 AUCCRO condemned the bill and asked the President to refrain from signing it. The Council sees the main threat in the introduction of new terms into the legal environment of Ukraine. In particular these terms include the definition of ‘gender identity’ and ‘sexual orientation’ which would, according to the Council, open further way for the implementation of other provisions that are common in Europe: a ban on criticism, introducing quotas in employment, and legalising gay marriage.

The pro-life and traditional values agenda has become the major unifying factor among the churches in Ukraine and shapes their involvement in the public discourse. It is a well-structured and coordinated campaign to misrepresent the concept of gender, to create an enemy image of ‘gender-ideology,’ and to introduce a

new kind of religious and moral fundamentalism. At the moment of writing, it is still unclear how this battle over the Constitution will end.

To gain a better understanding of the popular concept of the ‘traditional Ukrainian family,’ we can consult a schoolbook series of Christian Ethics, in this case one that considers itself modern and even ecumenical: Osnovy Chrystianskoyi Etiky [Foundations of Christian Ethics], published in 2010. The title of volume two is “Live and learn in the family.” It reads, in Chapter 4:

The father is the head of the family. He protects the family. He rules and is respected always as head of the family. The word of the father is always and for everyone important. The saying is: ‘Father knows how to educate, and mother how to caress.’ [...] We call God Father. We honour our fathers because they represent God on earth.

Then, some chapters later, we find the saying “as the family, so the nation.” Family and nation are both declared patriarchal and sacrosanct institutions, according to this Christian textbook intended for primary school pupils.

Homophobia

It is difficult to assess whether homophobia has increased since Maidan. Favourable factors for the strengthening of domestic homophobia include the further radicalisation and militarisation of the society as well as the economic and social dislocations caused by the political crisis. Nazariy Boyarsky, of the “Coalition against discrimination in Ukraine,” states that Ukrainian society idealises the supporters of the radical right-wing organisations, who carried out attacks on the members of the LGBT community in the past, as ‘Defenders’ and ‘Warriors of Light’ as a result of their involvement in the revolutionary events and ATO. At the same time, “the law enforcement agencies do not pay enough attention to the activities of such [homophobic] organizations... and compared to other countries Ukrainian society treats it [homophobic activities] more passively.”

The gay pride rally in Kiev was allowed to take place on 6 June 2015. Although for the first time in history it was guarded by the police, several dozen assailants attacked the police and the participants.

On 12 August 2015, the leaders of churches in Odessa appealed to the city authorities not to allow a gay pride festival “for the sake of peace among residents and visitors.” The churches that foment the hatred and intolerance against LGBT people, now hypocritically refer to possible violence as an argument to prohibit the gay pride event. The district court in Odessa has banned the rally and one of its arguments for doing so is ‘for the sake of national security.’

The ‘heroic narrative’ that emerged from Maidan might also influence the perception of homosexuality in society. In a highly militarised society, homosexuality is considered and condemned as
‘emasculated masculinity.’ Homosexual males do not fit the image of a hero-warrior. Another example of how the heroic narrative can merge with the traditional values discourse is illustrated by a poster presented in the centre of Lviv shortly after Maidan. It pictured a sweet baby and the text read: “In order to become a hero, one first has to be born. Do not commit abortion.” The city council of Lviv is mentioned as one of the sponsors of the pro-life campaign.62

Towards a Feminist Political Theology in the Ukrainian Context

I wish to contribute to Aristotle Papanikolaou’s attempt at designing an Orthodox (and profoundly ecumenical) political theology that goes beyond nationalist, anti-Western, and imperial schemes.63 In his book The Mystical as Political: Democracy and Non-Radical Orthodoxy (2012), Papanikolaou lays the groundwork for an Orthodox political theology that endorses democratic principles. The guiding theological concept in his proposal is divine-human communion, or theosis. In Papanikolaou’s understanding, theosis is far from the individualised goal of moral self-perfection. Deification as a mystical principle refers to creation’s and human beings’ eternal capacity for transformation. They are meant to grow into the all-encompassing divine-human communion. Politics, for Papanikolaou, is the practice of learning, despite all difficulties and conflicts of interest, to love the neighbour/the stranger.

According to Papanikolaou, the Orthodox attitude toward modern democracy is half-hearted. Orthodox churches in post-Communist countries never unequivocally support democratic forms of government and democratic values, but are always pushing to ensure their own cultural hegemony. For Papanikolaou and also for Pantelis Kalaitzidis,64 democracy and human rights are not a threat to the Orthodox spiritual ideal, but rather conditions necessary for achieving theosis.

From a feminist perspective, we can contribute to the concept and praxis of a different political theology. There is a rich source of feminist liberation theology, developed from Latin America to South Africa and Indonesia, to connect with and to draw on. We can also connect with the design of a feminist public theology that emphasises the deeply hybrid and ambiguous representations of female religious agency in the post-secular world (Anne-Marie Korte).65

I propose the following elements as important building blocks for a feminist public theology in the Ukrainian (and Russian) context:

1. Truth-telling about the patriarchal ideology and power relations in state, society, and church as well as truth-telling about what is happening on the ground

Women must claim the right of freedom

62 Picture of the poster in photo-archive of Heleen Zorgdrager.
of speech in the churches, and extend the space and rights of civil society into the walls of the church itself. Today, in Ukraine, there is no public discussion in the churches or theological institutions about women’s rights, reproductive rights, or the rights of sexual minorities. The teaching of the church is unidirectional: from the church that ‘possesses the truth’ to the people in society. Women and men do not feel free to express their doubts and various opinions.

2. **Deconstruction of heroic narratives and of salvation framed in the logic of victory and defeat, and the creation of alternative salvific images like ‘human rights Mariology’** (Elena Volkova)\(^{66}\) and **divinisation as the path of the cross and the sword** (Maria Skobtsova)

We must continue to collect post-heroic narratives of grassroots heroes that reveal the truth in a more human, tentative, provisional form. Interestingly, a research in the U.S. has shown that real heroes adhere to a broad definition of the ‘in group.’ Most people only include relatives, friends, and colleagues, but the potential hero considers all humanity to be his/her neighbour.\(^{67}\) That would be a great starting point for alternative concepts of heroism. It could begin by showing how the Gospel is misrepresented when church leaders limit the meaning of John 15:13 to the sacrifice of the soldier for his Fatherland. The imagery of the ‘cross and sword’ of Maria Skobtsova can be inspiring here.\(^{68}\)

For Skobtsova, two images symbolise—on an equal basis—the love of the neighbour: the path of the Mother and the path of the Son. The Son symbolises the active sacrificial service to the world, while the Mother/Mary symbolises the path of compassion, co-suffering, co-bearing the other’s pain. Skobtsova calls it ‘the way of the cross’ and ‘the way of the sword.’

She explains that the soul of every religious person walks both the path of the Mother and the path of the Son. This opens up an alternative kind of spiritual heroism. The sword that pierced the soul of the Mother (we are all mothers of all of humanity) becomes the cross, leading to acts involving suffering and sacrifice.

3. **Rethinking the relation between feminism and patriotism**

How can women contribute to ‘good forms’ of patriotism and to ‘inclusive expressions’ of national identity? What can we learn here from the experiences of Central and Eastern European women and their studies of the past and present? How does a philosopher like Hannah Arendt reflect on the relation of the individual to the nation and state, from the perspective of statelessness?

4. **Clearly opting for a model of the Church in partnership with (and not as the moral voice of) civil society**

The attitude of Orthodox churches towards modern democracy is ambivalent, as Papanikolaou shows.\(^{69}\) There is never

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\(^{66}\) Volkova, “Every Son’s Mother,”.

\(^{67}\) Tonie Mudde, “Heldenbrein” [Brains of Heroes], column in Volkskrant, 25 April 2015.

\(^{68}\) “De l’imitation de la Mère de Dieu” (1939), in *Mère Marie Skobtsov (1891–1945), Le sacrement du frère*, ed. Hélène Arjakovsky-Klepinine (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 2001), 175–90. It is important to note that the symbols—the cross and the sword—are found in the poem “Snow Maiden” of Aleksandr Blok, dated 17 October 1907.

\(^{69}\) Papanikolaou, *The Mystical as Political*, 50–2.
unequivocal support for democratic forms of government over other options, while the churches express a clear concern for maintaining or re-establishing a cultural hegemony. This cultural hegemony is manifested in the claim of a privileged status of traditional churches in public education and legislation. All-male church leadership presents itself as the moral voice of society in its aggressive policy to shape public morality on issues such as family, abortion, and homosexuality from supposed and non-disputable moral Christian principles. As long as the Church is not open to dialogue with liberal parts of society and to partner with other social organisations on the basis of equality, it will not be able to fulfil a truly constructive, peacebuilding role in society.

5. **Building postcolonial alliances**

Alliances between Ukrainian and Russian women, and relationships with other European women, are needed to unravel geopolitical conflicts and the impact they have on women, motherhood, human relations, reproductive rights, and so on. It is also necessary to influence the social teachings of churches by coordinated action and to work through transnational networks and ecumenical organisations to pursue women’s goals and objectives. Women who are in leadership positions in the World Council of Churches should raise their voices and urge the WCC to openly condemn the misuse of religion in this war for imperialistic goals, and the severe violation of the rights of religious communities in Crimea and Donbas. The WCC should end its Moscow-friendly policy.

6. **Acknowledging that reconciliation begins here and now, and consists of the not-so-glorious work of practicing hope according to a recovery model of long-term care.**

Reconciliation is supported by the face-to-face encounters of common women and men and of symbolic figures of the contesting groups. Reconciliation is practiced by everyone who does not give up in a situation of despair and tries to remain human. I put my hope in my Ukrainian students, who do not only act for the wellbeing of fellow Ukrainians, but also let the question of forgiveness of the enemy torment their hearts and souls.

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70 Compare Viktor Yelenski, Церква повинна вступати у дискусію з ліберальною частиною суспільства [Church must enter into a dialogue with liberal part of society], 31 December 2015. (http://risu.org.ua/ua/index/all_news/community/religion_and_society/62097, accessed 14 March 2016).

Introduction

Uta Andrée

The title of the second part of our project is ‘Migrating Church’. With this thematic track the Global Ecumenical Theological Institute will turn its attention to an urgent societal and political issue of the current debates within Europe. In this chapter we have gathered seven articles dealing with migration as a theological issue. The heading ‘Migrating Church’ contains the idea that the reality of church and the self-understanding of Christian life are intrinsically intertwined with the phenomenon of migration. Migration is a core ecclesiological issue. Designating the church as a ‘migrating church’ is somehow a bold ascription and a challenge for many, who do not yet draw this connection. Especially churches which are big in number and possess strong institutions are challenged to reflect upon whether they as churches could preserve the character of a pilgrim community. How can established churches or churches of the establishment prevent themselves from becoming self-sufficient and inflexible institutions? Our title ‘Migrating Church’ attempts to stimulate the transformation of churches into communities of faith and solidarity.

That is the reason for, and approach we wish to take in reflecting upon migration, a phenomenon has shaped human community and society at all stages of history. In times of huge migratory fluctuation, migration turns into an issue of ethics and Christians try to find appropriate answers for it by using biblical and theological reasoning. It is the task of Christians to introduce into the general debate Christian values and convictions like justice, charity, dignity, solidarity, moderation, surrender and just distribution, so that the Christian voice can be heard as a contribution toward the resolution of conflictual developments in politics and in society. From the perspective of a theology of creation, for instance, we must ask: To whom does the earth belong? Who is allowed to open borders and who is allowed to insist on the maintenance of these man-made boundaries? From an eschatological perspective one can ask: How do the contact and the behaviour in church and society towards migrants reflect the fact that God’s kingdom is in our midst? Which kind of divine judgement do we expect and link with the ethical question of a fruitful and peaceful encounter with migrants? Moreover, at the centre of any reflection on migration we see the migrants themselves as subjects of their stories, their decisions and their faith.

Apart from the ethical dimension that Christians gain from theological reflection and that they introduce into society, it is also necessary to turn the question to congregations themselves: How do Christians and church parishes treat migrants? How do they view people of other denominations or other religions? Which kind of mission—if this is still the appropriate term—are we called to in the encounter with foreigners, refugees and displaced peoples? How much does the acquaintance with others shape and transform our own Christian identity? Who are we for...
the foreigners? Who are they for us? Abraham received three foreigners in Mamre and he proved to be worthy to receive the great announcement and promise, because he generously opened the door and received the strangers, offering generous hospitality.

Churches in Europe today need a theology of migration, a theology which understands breakup, transition and new beginnings as fundamental facts of human existence, in which faith and relationship with God are essential dimensions. This pertains in circumstances in which nationalistic and racist groups argue that they represent the 'Christian occident'. The indigenous population of Europe must consider their own history as one of migration and fluctuation. In addition to being a product of migration, at any given time Europe's nations have benefitted from incoming migration and still benefit from it—economically, politically and culturally. European Identity relies on the affirmation of the community of different people and peoples; this is something like the credo of Europe: to integrate what is different and transform it into a new unity. Especially in these days of worldwide migratory movements and nascent conflicts related to migration, Europe has the chance to provide a positive example of hospitality, sharing, overcoming boundaries and transcultural transformation. The positive resonance of this challenge can be fostered through theological reflection and the introduction of biblical narratives. God's option for those who are homeless and in transition, for those in need of protection and for the poorest, is at the core of the Gospel. God is with them in a very special way and whoever receives these receives God himself.

In this sense the chapters in 'Migrating Church' are the heartbeat of this reader, testing the appropriate vision of the reformation of the church and the transformation of the society. If we succeed in pointing to the most relevant aspects of a migrating church, we fulfil the goal of reforming theology and transforming society.

With an overview on Theology of Migration we open this second section of the GETI'17 reader. The author is Gemma Cruz, she is a catholic theologian originally from the Philippines today teaching in Melbourne / Australia. She doesn't only see Migration as a phenomenon of crisis, but points to the gifts in the encounter of strangers. The border becomes the adequate place for authentic and true theology. The border as a locus theologicus brings her to the conclusion that at the border we meet each other and we meet God. And furthermore she underlines that “Migration is a microcosm of Christian belief.” Gemma Cruz is a theologian with the bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other, she reflects theology in the light of suffering and injustice. It is a well informed and relevant approach that leads us through this contribution.

Werner Kahl, pastor of the United Church in Germany, presents us in his article the strong impact of migration within Early Christianity. Werner Kahl is teaching New Testament in Frankfurt, in many of his writings and publications he stresses the transcultural dimension of the development of congregations and church in the apostolic time and refers it to our present challenge of opening up for an intercultural self-understanding of Christianity also on the local level. In his article he is high-lightening the coming together of different ethnic and cultural groups in the narratives in the book of acts. He gives examples of misunderstanding and examples of successful cross-cultural communication. Werner Kahl does not only give us a fresh look into Acts, but also introduces Paul as a 'sensible cross-cultural evangelist in migration.'

Steve Bevans is a priest in the missionary congregation of the Society of the Divine Word (SVD), he was teaching at the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago. He is one of the protagonists of intercultural theology. In his article he is bringing together the topic of migration and the question of mission. Mission according to his understanding is “in the first place primarily the
work of God in the world.” And his question is: “How might the church carry out mission among migrants?” For him this mission must embrace the issues of justice, peace and integrity of creation, it has to open up for inculturation of the gospel and for interreligious dialogue. It is a matter of reconciliation and transformation of the church. The culmination of his reflection is the insight, that the central point is the mission of migrants among those who receive them.

The final judgement of Matt 25 is the centre of Tim Noble’s article. Matt 25 describes the attitude of those who will be called “blessed by the father” and who will enter the kingdom of God. Tim Noble analyses the current positions and behaviour of politicians and in the civil society and he comes to the conclusion, that we face the judgement of God in the encounter with the migrant and the stranger. A Christian Europe cannot opt for exclusion and hatred, but finds its identity in a culture of welcome and peace.

Doris Peschke, General Secretary of the Churches’ Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) is calling for a strong engagement of churches towards a culture of welcome and solidarity within the situation of increasing migration to Europe. The theme of Migration and religion should be liberated from the one-sided concentration of fundamentalist developments and threatening scenarios, but regarded as a chance for a renewed understanding of Christian community and responsibility. Doris Peschke gives interesting insides about the data of migration and the religious and social realities among the migrants’ populations. Her claim is that we must overcome the perspective of a homogeneous society.

Benjamin Simon, professor for missiology at the Ecumenical Institute of Bossey / Switzerland, focuses on language as a key identity marker in the development of immigrant churches. He recalls the biblical passages in which language plays a major role especially the confusion of languages in the story of the tower of Babel (Gen11) and the restoration of mutual understanding and common language in Acts 2. After Pentecost diversity is not anymore expression of punishment, but can be seen as enriching challenge for the upcoming movement of Christianity (cf. Gal 2). He is then explaining a model of how immigrant churches evolve nowadays and deal with language issues within their worship traditions. He comes to the conclusion that the future form of congregations are multilanguage parishes in which diversity reflects the reality of globalisation and merging societies.

Uta Andrée tries to highlight the interference of security and faith respectively of faith and insecurity. She analyses three biblical texts related to migrant situations and comes to the conclusion, that a positive perspective on the interference of migration as an experience of insecurity and faith may not be highlighted by those who observe migratory phenomena, but can only be stated by those who experience it. She than mentions different phenomena which cause turbulences in the relationship between migrants and original population in Germany during the recent months. Her call is to listen to the affected people first, before drawing any conclusion. That’s why this article ends with three very impressive interviews with women who for different reasons migrated to Germany.

Bianca Dümling reflects on the motivation of migrants of Christina background to serve as missionaries in the receiving country. Some called this dynamic—which she describes with some interesting examples—a ‘reverse mission’. Bianca Dümling asks how reformation traditions and impulses from a historic protestant theology could inform this process. She agrees that the spirit of reformation returns through the new development of migrant churches and their missionary zeal, but we together have to transform the reverse mission into a process of learning together.
Migration as Locus Theologicus

Gemma Tulud Cruz

Theology has evolved over the ages in many ways. Methodologically, philological analysis and logical analysis, which are primarily associated with the scholastic method, now sits alongside historical and social analysis, which forms part of the methodology of contemporary theologies such as liberation theology. Source-wise, theology has also evolved to use not only the Bible and Tradition but also human experience, culture, as well as historical and sociological data. Consequently, theology’s definition has expanded from Saint Anselm’s classic definition of ‘faith seeking understanding’ into, among others, theology as a ‘critical reflection on praxis.’

Indeed, to do theology today means, in part, to face reality and raise it to a theological concept. Theology from this perspective needs to be honest with the real. Anselm Min speaks of this in the context of migration by drawing attention to the fact that theology is a reflection on the transcendent significance of all aspects of human experience, but especially of those aspects in which human dignity and solidarity are at stake.

It is within this understanding of doing theology that this essay engages the issue of human mobility today insofar as this issue is redefining and transforming the human condition such that theologians like Carmem Lussi argues for its ‘theological consideration.’

The Challenges of Migration

The movement of peoples is as old as the human species. Contemporary human mobility, however, presents serious challenges in a number of ways. First, there is the matter of density. At no other point in the history of humanity has the number of people on the move been at such a large scale that the current period is being referred to as the age of migration. A 2015 United Nations (UN) report, for example, states that there are currently 244 million international migrants, a 41% increase since 2000. Today, 1 in 33 persons is a migrant. This immense movement of peoples is not only rearranging human geography but also transforming the economic, religious, and cultural landscapes of many countries in positive but, oftentimes, politically-divisive ways.

Second, and more importantly, migration is providing windows into contemporary forms of oppression and, at the same time, paths toward human liberation. Undeniably, contemporary migration constitutes a wound of our time. Such an argument finds basis in the fact that many migrants themselves are victims of injustice before, during, and long after migration. First and foremost, the majority of the world’s migrants and

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would-be-migrants come from developing countries that suffer not just from the uneven distribution of the world’s wealth and resources but also from regional and global economic and political policies that burden or further disadvantage their countries of origin. Migrants are victims, as well, of the injustice within their own countries, particularly in the hands of their government, who not only cannot provide them with jobs but also exploit them by creating a migration industry that turns migrants into primary exports or cash cows for their remittances. Migrants also suffer in the hands of various local and transnational vultures from exploitative recruiters, coyotes, and abusive employers, to multinational companies, banks, and agencies that prey on their (migrants’) vulnerability.

Moreover, there is a growing restriction on people’s ability to move, particularly for those who move for economic and political reasons. For example, in the face of fears of terrorism and under pressure from rising anti-immigration sentiment among their citizens as well as right-wing political parties, destination countries are making it difficult for (unskilled) workers and asylum seekers to enter or settle. Indeed, local communities’ growing negative perception of migrants, which is nurtured by negative stereotypes or xenophobic attitudes expressed in problematic public discourse and policies, has made the migration process more daunting and increasingly life-threatening, for migrants. This is particularly true for those who resort to engaging the services of human smugglers and/or take perilous journeys via harsh deserts or merciless seas. 2015 saw record number of such deaths in the Mediterranean alone, with 3700 migrants dead in their attempts to reach Europe.⁸

Even when migrants do get inside the destination country legally there are still a host of problems that they face disproportionately. They could suffer, for instance, from inequities in the educational or health care system. For women there could be an added gender dimension to these inequities, especially for those who may be dependent on male family members for their visa or for access to health care and other social benefits. Migrants’ experience of problematic treatment could happen even in churches or places of worship. In some cases migrants encounter resistance, especially if they do not share in the destination country’s dominant religion. At the height of the debate on the European migrant crisis, for example, the media highlighted these words of a Hungarian bishop: “They’re not refugees. This is an invasion... They come here with cries of Allahu Akbar. They want to take over.”⁹ In a recent interview with the Czech Republic daily newspaper the Archbishop of Prague Dominik Duka also indicated it was logical that Christians are accepted first because they share a common tradition and culture that makes their assimilation easier.¹⁰ Aside from this problem that primarily stems from differences across religious traditions there is also the problem rooted in differences within religious

⁶ A ‘coyote’ is a guide who takes migrants across international borders in exchange for money.
traditions. Within Christian communities, for instance, immigrant and local congregations experience conflicts because of racial and ethnic differences in religious practice as well as differences due to socio-economic class.

The Gifts of Migration

At the same time, it cannot be denied that the movement of peoples across international borders offers hope and possibilities in a number of ways. For most migrants it means a (better) job and quality of life and, in many cases, (better) social opportunities. Migration also often means, for migrants, a broader experience and perspective of the world, in general, and other people and their cultures, in particular. Last but not least, migration could also mean greater well-being not only in the form of better economic conditions but also a deeper sense of self-worth and a higher level of self-development. For poorer migrants’ immediate families it means having the much-needed money or resources for necessary living expenses and, possibly, the chance of migrating overseas, especially in view of the phenomenon of chain migration.11

For the countries of origin, the migration of its citizens, whether temporarily or permanently, means some form of economic hope, especially in view of remittances. Though they are not a cure-all, recent studies on migrants’ remittances have pointed out that they help ease poverty in countries of origin. For example, The Economist argues that for many poor countries remittances provide more than aid and foreign direct investment combined. Close to 50% of Guinea-Bissau’s GDP, for instance, comes from remittances.12 There are also the so-called ‘political and social remittances’—the ideas, behaviours, identities and economic resources that flow from host-to-sending country via migrants and their transnational networks—which promote entrepreneurship, community development, as well as greater political consciousness and participation in sending countries.13 For destination countries, especially those with falling fertility rates, exploding elderly population, and a dwindling pool of people in their working age, migrants provide a certain sense of stability not just economically but also demographically. Last but not least, migrants also offer hope in the way they revitalize and enrich the cultural and religious landscapes of destination countries as they bring their rich cultural and religious traditions. Away from their home country and in search of company, familiarity, and acceptance migrants find religion to be a deep and enduring source not only in expressing and holding on to their cultural identity but also in making sense of and dealing with the (dis)continuities and (dis)empowerment that are brought by migration. Consequently, the rich religio-cultural gifts they offer, the economic and political challenges they encounter, as well as the way their social and religious transnational networks play a vital role in their struggles, provide fertile ground for theological discussion. The next section explores some of the key theological themes that are relevant to the challenges and gifts posed by contemporary migration.

Theological Reflections

As could be seen in the previous sections human mobility, particularly in its contemporary forms, comes not only with profound benefits but also

11 Chain migration is the process whereby migrants facilitate the movement of family members (nuclear and extended).
considerable challenges. Indeed, while migration comes with great difficulties it also brings some positive changes, making it a rich source for learning about and understanding the human condition. Some of the key theological themes arising from this double-edged character of migration will be engaged in this section.

**Migration and salvation**

A case could be made for the link between migration and salvation. Indeed, one might say that migration could serve as a heuristic lens on the meaning of, and quest for, salvation today. People move in order to survive and, in many cases, thrive despite obstacles and unjust policies that they encounter in the migration process. In the annals of human history, borders have been redrawn, people’s stories have been re-written, and identities and subjectivities have been transformed because groups or masses of people crossed either by land, sea or air. Indeed, time and time again people’s liberation, or the need for it, is caused by human movements. Even Christianity’s central narratives are embedded in migration stories. In the Hebrew Bible the central story, in which the liberation of the chosen people themselves is rooted, is the journey out of Egypt and into the promised land. In the New Testament, in the meantime, Jesus’ role as an itinerant preacher is a critical part of his ministry. Then there is Paul and his followers whose multiple journeys back and forth across the Roman Empire gave birth to and nurtured the early Christian communities. The early Christian movement itself was called the ‘Way’ (Acts 9:2). In fact, Christianity would not be the global religion that it is today without the countless Christians who crossed the seas and continue to travel overseas to propagate or witness to their faith.

The combination of profound oppression in the midst of glimpses of human liberation also makes migration a lens for a contemporary understanding of salvation. As could be seen in the preceding sections migration provides windows into human suffering and, at the same time, human well-being; it is rich with situations where death meets life and hope overcomes fear and despair. This dialectic underscores the notion that redemption’s ‘already’ aspect is as real as its ‘not yet’ aspect. It drives home the point that the divine is both present and absent and life is both horror and love. As Silvano Tomasi stresses “migration is graced even in difficult circumstances. ... [It can be seen as] part of the ongoing mystery of redemption, contributing to solving the great problems of the human family. [Migrants] are, thus, also part of God’s plan for the growth of the human family in greater cultural unity and universal fraternity.”

This ensemble of conditions and experiences embedded in contemporary migration is a reminder that salvation never takes place in isolation but in communion; it is not achieved in a static state but in dynamic purposeful life-changing movements. Migrants move in order to live. In the process they encounter death but, like Jesus, dying is not the last word but the life that comes after death. Migration is, thus, a microcosm of the Christian belief in dying to live.

**The border as theological frontier**

To migrate is to cross borders. For today's migrants, however, borders are no longer just the political membranes through which goods and

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people must pass, in order to be deemed acceptable or unacceptable. In recent times we have seen the fortification and militarisation of borders. Still, migrants continue to cross the border because to them it is the gateway to the land of their dreams or, to refugees, the gateway to security. Thus Jerry Gill posits in *Borderland Theology* that while the borders in question do not have to be geographical borders, these national boundaries do provide especially fertile ground for borderland reflection and witness in the twenty-first century.  

For migrants, especially those who are unskilled and/or irregular, to cross the border today is to live on the border. For the border, as Gloria Anzaldúa proposes, is an open wound. As a visible (physical) and invisible (political) fortress it is a gaping wound that serves as a testament to the violence of difference and the ever-widening gap between the haves and the have-nots. This is because “on top of the walls at the frontiers among nations there are borders inside our cities, borders in schools, borders in health care, borders within workplaces. Borders intend to impede that the poor become our neighbors.”

They are like bleeding wounds inflicted by discrimination and infected by a sense of loss and isolation.

Borders serve as indicators of the limits of existence, identity, and belonging. When one crosses the border, one traverses the yawning gap between being a citizen to being an alien or a foreigner, a visitor, a guest, in short, an outsider. To cross the border is to live on the margins and be a stranger. Xenophobia—fear of the stranger—is the curse of the migrant for today’s migrant is today’s stranger—’the image of hatred and of the other.’ As people left at the borders or pushed to the margins, migrants are today’s marginal(ised) people or, in Gustavo Gutierrez’s words, ‘icons of the poor in the modern globalized world.’

What gets lost in the discussion on the exclusionary nature of borders is that authentic borders are actually meeting points. They exist not to separate but for people to meet. They are not meant to ward off or drive people away but they are places where we meet people halfway. As Justo González notes, “a true border is a place of encounter [and] is by nature permeable. It is not like a medieval armor, but rather like skin. Our skin does set a limit to where our body begins and where it ends. But if we ever close up our skin, we die.” Space creates presence. Space empowers presence.

Indeed, while many migrants are pushed to live in ghettos or on the fringes of their destination countries they refuse to be marginal(ised) completely, and often create spaces for themselves to survive. Their strategic forms of struggle for recognition and their creative use of ‘imposed shrunken spaces’ (e.g. using abandoned shop lots for gatherings) have a revelatory quality. Their transformation of highly public and core spaces, e.g. parks into ethnic centres gives us a glimpse of how marginal(ised) existence can be transformed into spaces of presence. These reconfigurations of borders into ‘spaces,’ by migrants bring a new frontier into theology. For one, their collective protests, ethnic centres, transnational families, and networks challenge theology to articulate home not as a place “but a

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movement, a quality of relationship, a state where people seek to be ‘their own,’ and [be] increasingly responsible for the world.”

In a nutshell, the border constitutes a frontier for a theology on migration today in the way it simultaneously symbolizes the human drama of exclusion and inclusion, of death and life. To be sure, the border is a site not only of the pathos of migrants but also a marker or a symbol for freedom, a new home, and a better life. This demarcation—i.e., the border—is both a barrier and a gateway between hope and despair, dreams and nightmare. Crossing it makes a lot of difference, if not all the difference, between a life of poverty and misery and a life of promise and possibilities.

The challenge of the stranger

The barriers that migrants oftentimes experience are not only physical but also political, economic, racial, and religio-cultural. Such barriers result in further estrangement of migrants, and challenge theology to articulate a way of understanding and dealing with strangers that is more just. The Bible provides some rich clues for such a theology. For example, being a stranger is the primary condition of the people of God (Ex 23:9; Deut 24: 18) and migration is woven into this ‘stranger condition.’ “The land is mine,” says the Lord, and we “are but strangers and guests of [his]...” (Lev 25:23). As David acknowledges in prayer, all comes from God and we are strangers before God, settlers only, as all our ancestors were (1 Chron 29:14–15). God even commanded the Israelites to love the stranger, as they were also strangers in Egypt (Deut 10:19). In fact, many other laws in the Hebrew Bible were put in place to protect the stranger (Ex 22:20; Lev 19:33–35; 24:22; Deut 14:28–29; 16:14; 24:14; 26:12–15; Num 15:15-16; 35:15); to the point that anyone who does not respect the rights of the stranger will be cursed (Deut 27:19). The New Testament, and Jesus himself, also has very specific exhortations to show goodness to the stranger, not only because it is a recognition of our fundamental Christian identity as strangers but, most especially, because Jesus himself, by his incarnation and by being an itinerant preacher, took on the conditions of a stranger. Moreover, Jesus advocated for the care for the stranger (Matt 25:36).

The Christian tradition is rich, as well, with exhortations on how to treat strangers, particularly in relation to hospitality. For example, in the time of the Fathers of the Church, the time of pilgrimages and huge forced migrations, hospitality to pilgrims and displaced people were a major concern. John Chrysostom’s Treatise on the Priesthood even says that one of the main pastoral concerns for a bishop was providing the necessary funds to assure a worthy welcome to strangers and the care of the sick (Treatise on the Priesthood, III, 16).

As such, theological construction of the self, or of ourselves as Christians, cannot be separated from the acceptance of the stranger, just as the identity of the Israelites as a people of God is very much linked with the stranger. The God we

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believe in is a God of the stranger (Deut 10:17–18; Ps 146:9). Hence, Christian theology cannot but articulate a theology of migration with the ‘stranger’—particularly the biblical concept of the stranger—as heuristic lens.

Conclusion

It can be said that the search for greater opportunities and a better life binds all people on the move. This hopeful quest for greater happiness, prosperity, and well-being is the enduring theme of wave after wave, generation after generation, of migrants worldwide. The reality, however, is that the migrant journey is never easy. Its roots and tentacles of misery and injustice make it, in the words of the Vatican II document Gaudium et Spes, a “grief and anguish of people of our time” (GS, no.1). And yet contemporary migration also offers hope in the way it provides paths to human liberation, making it not only a sociological fact but also a theological event.

Migrants are, first and foremost, human beings. This fundamental idea, in itself, carves out a space for theological reflections on their plight. This is particularly true for theologies whose primary purpose is to deal with historical reality and raise it to a theological concept. This is because migration is not only rearranging human geography and redefining cultures and religions; it is also reshaping identities and subjectivities. It is not only bringing new forms of oppression; it is also paving other paths to human survival and liberation. This dialectic between oppression and survival towards liberation provides gifts and challenges for theology on many fronts, making migration a valuable place in articulating contemporary forms of understanding and forging relationship with the sacred.

Migration in the Perspective of Early Christianity

Werner Kahl

Recent processes of global migration as well as the philosophical and theological discourses on this phenomenon—postcolonialism and the theory of transculturalism—bring into sharp focus the significance of the realities of migration, diaspora existence, translation, identity change, and power structures not only in contemporary times but also in the Early Christian movements of the first century CE. They present a unique resource in uncovering migration and diaspora existence as necessary conditions for the successful spread of the belief in Christ in the Hellenistic world, moving from a matrix of constructing reality in a Semitic language and in a particular Jewish encyclopedia of Galilee/Judea into other cultures of Greco-Roman antiquity.

The New Testament is the result of—and it reflects—cross-cultural processes, as becomes apparent by the following observations:

- The 27 writings collected in the New Testament canon were composed and written in koinē, the common language and lingua franca in much of the Hellenized world. Their authors were probably all Jews, either narrating incidents that happened in Galilee and Judea or interpreting the significance of these events for Greek-speaking Jews and gentiles.
- These writings witness certain transformations and modifications of Jewish beliefs, redefining the belief in Christ as a way of adapting it to recipients of various cultures
in the Greco-Roman world, with Early Christianity as a cross-cultural phenome-
non. Migration and diaspora existence as social phenomena underlie much of the history of Early Christianity.

Many of these aspects have been observed and discussed in classical exegesis. From the perspective of *Intercultural Biblical Hermeneutics*, however, these aspects are being placed at center stage of critical reflection. This emphasis is indicative due to the following two-fold observation: Cross-cultural processes represent a central feature of the spread of Early Christianity; as such, they correspond to an understanding of the meaning of the gospel amongst Hellenized Jews as essentially involving the transgression of boundaries.

In what follows I will concentrate on an analysis of Luke’s *Acts of the Apostles* from the perspective of experiences of migration and diaspora existence. In the process I will occasionally refer to relevant passages in other New Testament writings. These writings provide ample evidence for the centrality of the social phenomena of migration, displacement, and diaspora existence in Early Christianity.

In this article I will discuss a selection of passages in Acts that reflect experiences of migration and diaspora for the first-generation believers in Jesus as Christ. Luke presents with his Acts of the Apostles a particular construction of the spread of the Christian faith, covering the three decades from the thirties to the fifties of the first century. He remoulded and adapted memories concerning this spread as to fit the agenda for the unfolding of his narrative. The main narrative move of Acts is programmatically expressed in the last clause of Acts 1:7–8: “He said to them: ‘It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.’”

Jesus is addressing his disciples before his ascension into heaven. The scene is located close to Jerusalem at Mount Olive. The remaining eleven disciples are identified by name (v. 13). They are not Judeans but Galileans (cf. v. 11). In accordance with the proclamation of verse 8, they do not return to Galilee, their country of origin, but to Jerusalem (v. 12). In Judea, however, their particular northern dialect of Aramaic would betray their origin.

The proclamation of verse 8 should not be taken literally. It only roughly describes the program of the dissemination of the witness to Christ. It should be noted that it was not the addressees of this proclamation—Jesus’ disciples—who traveled ‘to the ends of the earth’ as witnesses of Christ (the same holds true for Matt 28:16–20). Those who eventually gave witness to Christ in the wider Greco-Roman world were not among the disciples of Jesus. Most of them were representatives of the Jewish diaspora in various regions.

It is important to Luke, however, to emphasize that the witnessing activity of the disciples would begin in Jerusalem, and that the core of the

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3 The quotation is taken from NIV.
disciples of Jesus would remain there. By insisting on remaining in Jerusalem, Luke corrects another tradition that was favored by Mark, and followed by Matthew (Mark 16:7, Matt 28:5). Here the women at the grave are instructed to inform the disciples that Jesus would go ahead to Galilee and that the disciples would see him there. This motif occurs in two following narrative moves in Matt 28. In verse 10, the proclamation of verse 5 is reiterated to the women, this time by Jesus himself. And verse 16 recounts the encounter of the disciples with Jesus at a mountain in Galilee, presupposing that the disciples had left Jerusalem and traveled to the meeting place. Matthew stresses here the discontinuation of the Jesus movement with historical Israel.

Luke, on the other hand, omits the references to Galilee as the meeting point with Jesus (cf. Luke 24:6–7). In Luke’s gospel the disciples are still in Jerusalem where Jesus appears to them (Luke 24:33–36). He explains to them that repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached based on his name, for all nations, beginning in Jerusalem (Luke 24:47). Luke is here in agreement with Paul who insisted that Israel would continue to be the favored subject of God’s dedication (cf. Rom 9–11). The gospel from the Pauline-Lucan perspective fundamentally means the complete inclusion of ‘all nations’ into the covenant of God with his beloved people while not losing their cultural identities.

The programmatic announcement in Acts 1:8 provides the structure of the whole narrative. The story begins with events concerning the witnessing activity of the disciples in Jerusalem and Judea (Acts 1–7), moves over to incidents occurring in Samaria (Acts 8–9), and from there lays an emphasis on the proclamation of Christ among ‘the nations’ (Acts 10–28). The narrative describes in particular a move from the margins of the Roman Empire to its center, ending with Paul’s house arrest in Rome.

The apostles engaged in giving witness to Christ are subject to the works of the Holy Spirit. According to Acts, it is the divine spirit who, as the main active subject of the process, brings about the worldwide spread of the gospel. The Spirit of God initiates the global dissemination of the gospel of the grace of God (20:24; cf. 15:7) and prepares as well as directs those involved in giving witness to Christ. The title ‘The Acts of the Holy Spirit’ for the second book of Luke would be more appropriate than the traditional title ‘The Acts of the Apostles.’

The ‘good news’ spread by the apostles is that both Jews and gentiles “may be saved by the grace of the Lord Jesus” (15:11). According to the reconstruction presented by Luke in Acts, it was due to divine grace that the former difference between both groups before God with respect to eligibility for salvation has been overcome. The insight into the universality of salvation was made possible by divine revelation, not by human calculation. During the unfolding of the divine plan as presented in the narrative program of Acts, the circle of peoples included in salvation was progressively widened: In the beginning Jews and proselytes from the diasporas were included as potential recipients of the gospel (chapters 1–8), then Samarians were added (chapter 8) before non-Jewish and uncircumcised people of the ‘nations’ were regarded as worthy of salvation (chapters 9–28)—first so-called God-fearers, non-Jews who believed in the God of Israel and who observed certain Jewish laws (chapter 10), and then Greeks and other uncircumcised peoples of the Greco-Roman world (chapters 11–28).

Jewish migrants with a diaspora background played a significant role in spreading the gospel in the Greco-Roman world of the first century. It is historically plausible that those who were raised as Jews in non-Jewish contexts of Mediterranean antiquity were prepared to interpret the meaning of Christ in terms of an inclusion of non-Jews in salvation. And they were able to
communicate the gospel across cultures in ways that could be plausible and relevant to non-Jews. In what follows I will trace their vital contribution to the spread of the belief in Christ as instruments of God in the narrative of Acts.

Besides the fact that the disciples of Jesus remained in Jerusalem as migrants from Galilee after the experiences of Jesus’ death and reappearance, migrants from regions beyond Palestine first come into play as potential instruments of evangelization in Acts 2:1–13. At the Jewish festival of Shavuot which concludes the Pesach celebrations after fifty days (LXX: pentēkostē), many diaspora Jews and proselytes witnessed the presence of the Holy Spirit with the apostles in Jerusalem. According to 2:5, these witnesses ‘lived’ in Jerusalem, meaning they had migrated permanently to Jerusalem and were not just visiting for the festivities. The Holy Spirit manifested itself in the ability of the Galilean disciples “to speak in other tongues” (2:4), i.e., in languages different from Aramaic, their mother-tongue. The Jews and proselytes from the diaspora witnessing the event were amazed to hear the Galileans praise God in their various languages (2:7–8, 11–12). It seems significant that this event led to the formation of the first transnational and intercultural community of Jewish believers in Christ. According to 2:37–47, Jews and proselytes from Galilee, Judea, and the diasporas of various countries began to pray and eat together, and they shared their belongings.

Intercultural communities with people representing various origins and languages tend to be fragile compositions. Disruptive and disintegrative forces constantly threaten these communities. To regard one another as brother or sister with equal dignity and rights across cultures was not the rule even within ancient Judaism, and what is today referred to as Early Christianity was initially a complete Jewish phenomenon.

One intercultural conflict involving migrants in the formation of the first community of Christ believers is reflected in Acts 6:1–6. According to this passage ‘Hellenists,’ Jews who had migrated to Jerusalem from the Hellenistic world, complained that the ‘Hebrews,’ Jews from Judea and Galilee, did not take good care of the Jewish widows with a migration background. Seven Hellenistic migrants from among the community were chosen to organize the daily feeding of the widows, amongst them one Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch in Syria. Two of these seven men, Stephen and Philipp, are presented as the first migrant witnesses of the gospel in Acts. And both of them were instrumental in communicating the gospel to non-Hebrews.

In Acts 7, Stephen is challenged by other diaspora Jews, “some of the so-called synagogue of the Libertines, Cyrenians and Alexandrians, and by those from Cilicia and Asia” (7:9). The witness of Stephen eventually led to his becoming the first martyr, a ‘blood witness’ of the Jewish-Christian movement. Ironically, Saul/Paul, himself born and raised in the diaspora and responsible for the killing of Stephen (7:58), later in the narrative becomes the prime example of a migrant evangelist among non-Jews. The first persecution of the Christ believers in Jerusalem, which was also led by Saul/Paul (8:1–4), caused a forced migration of most members of the Christ-believing community in Jerusalem. They were dispersed not only in Judea but also in Samaria where Philipp began to preach (8:5–25) causing Samarians—whom Hebrews despised as a mixed people and regarded as neither Jews nor gentiles—to accept the gospel (8:12–14) and to receive the Holy Spirit (8:15–17).

The same Philipp was led by divine revelation to the road to Gaza where he encountered an Ethiopian eunuch who served as a high-ranking official of the Ethiopian kingdom. This person was on his way back home from Jerusalem where he went to pray. Most likely this Ethiopian was a Jewish proselyte, and as an Ethiopian he would have been circumcised in any case. He accepted
the teaching of Philipp about Jesus and he allowed himself to be baptized. We are not informed about his further development, but the message about Christ might have traveled with this proselyte to Ethiopia shortly after 30 CE.

Acts 9 does not narrate a ‘conversion’ of Paul. Before and after his dramatic encounter with the risen Christ, he remained a Jew. He was also not ‘called’ into his particular ministry but forced by divine intervention to serve as a “chosen instrument to carry the name of Christ before nations, kings and the children of Israel” (9:15). So also in the case of Paul we have an example of—spiritually—forced migration. As someone who was born and raised in the diaspora, in Tarsus of Minor Asia, Paul initially tried to convince other diaspora Jews of his belief in Christ, first in Damascus (9:20) and then among Hellenistic Jews in Jerusalem (9:28–29). These first attempts by Paul were apparently not successful.

According to the narrative of Acts, Cornelius, who had migrated to Caesarea as a Roman centurion, became the first non-Jew in the strict sense that accepted the faith in Christ (10:1–11:18). He was not a proselyte but a so-called God-fearer (10:2), a non-circumcised (11:3) Roman who believed in the God of the Jews. Because of his acceptance of the message about Christ as preached to him by Simon/Peter, his ‘whole household’ received the Holy Spirit and was saved (11:14–15).

The narrative of Acts communicates a gradual process leading eventually to the preaching of the gospel to uncircumcised non-Jews living outside of Palestine who did not have any relationship to the Jewish tradition. The first such instance is reflected in Acts 11:19–26. Of those Christ believers who had been forced by persecution to leave Jerusalem, some migrated to Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch in Syria “proclaiming the word to Jews exclusively” (11:19). Some of the Jewish migrants, who had been originally from Cyprus and from Cyrenaica in northern Africa, were the first to address also non-Jewish ‘Greeks’ (hellēnistes) with their preaching, and the addressees responded in accepting the message about Christ. This happened in Antioch. Barnabas and Saul/Paul also lived and taught in this city for about one year (11:26), and it was in Antioch that “the disciples were first called Christians,” followers or adherents of Christ (christianoi). The first transcultural and trans-ethnic community of Christ-believers consisting of both Jews of various origins and uncircumcised non-Jews was created in Antioch by migrant diaspora Jews. Acts does not inform us about the motivation or situation behind the decision to include non-Jews into the community. It was obvious to people in Antioch that here a new social phenomenon of a mixed community took shape which transcended Jewish experiences and concepts: the non-Jewish believers neither had to be circumcised nor did they have to follow Jewish dietary laws as the preconditions to be counted among the community of the divinely chosen ones. They only had to adopt the belief in the one God as he had been witnessed in the Jewish tradition and they had to accept that Jesus is the Christ (cf. Acts 20:21). This was not a Jewish synagogue community but a new kind of ecclesia community whose adherents were called by others ‘Christians.’ It is not clear if Jewish Christ believers were included in that term; yet if so, this would not have put them in a position of contradiction to Judaism.

The Jews Barnabas and Saul/Paul were sent out from Antioch into further migration at the instigation of the Holy Spirit with the objective to evangelize the gentiles (13:1–3). These two apostles served together with three others as prophets and teachers in Antioch. Two of those three colleagues were diaspora Jews with an African origin: Symeon who was also called Niger (from Latin: ‘black man’) and Lucius from Cyrene in northern Africa. The Holy Spirit instructed them together with Manaen to single out
Paul/Saul and Barnabas for their particular responsibility of preaching to the gentiles. It is significant that two of the three pairs of hands that were laid onto Barnabas and Saul/Paul as a way of blessing them for their journey belonged to Jewish migrants from Africa.

In the narrative of Acts, political and spiritual factors forced Paul and his companions into migration towards the West, resulting finally in Paul’s arrest by the Romans and in his transfer to Rome where he awaited his trial. On his journeys in the Hellenized Roman Empire, Paul increasingly, but by no means exclusively, preached about Christ before non-Jews, i.e., members of various ethnic groups who believed in a multitude of gods. As a diaspora Jew who was born and raised in Minor Asia, Paul shared with these addressees of his sermons a common language, Koinē-Greek as the lingua franca of the Roman Empire.

Cross-cultural communication in general and interreligious encounters in particular cause misunderstandings. Acts reflects the challenges of cross-cultural communication that Paul encountered while preaching as a Jewish migrant and cultural outsider in various regions of Minor Asia and Greece. One such incident is represented in Acts 14:8–18. According to the passage, Paul on his visit of Lystra in the Roman province Galatia, accompanied by Barnabas, commanded a man lame from birth to stand on his feet. Polytheistic witnesses of the event concluded that some of their gods were involved in the miracle. This comes to expression by a comment passed in their mother tongue: “The gods have taken on human shape and have come down to us” (14:11). To them, Zeus appeared as Barnabas and Hermes as Paul. As was demanded by tradition, the local priest of Zeus was getting prepared to sacrifice offerings to ‘these gods.’ In a dramatic attempt to dissuade the people from so doing, Paul insisted that he and Barnabas were ‘merely human beings,’ and by referring to the one and only god of his Jewish tradition, he pointed to the numinous subject who had brought about the miraculous restoration.

Paul himself, however, had caused the misunderstanding. In commanding the lame man to rise and walk, Paul appeared as an immanent bearer of numinous power, i.e., as a god in human shape. As the agent of a transcendent god, Paul would have been expected to refer to a god during the healing performance. Paul, however, did not do so. The polytheistic inhabitants of Lystra had no choice but to make sense of the miracle within their traditional frame of reference, their encyclopedia, so they had to conclude that gods had appeared before them. From their cultural perspective, this interpretation was evident, and it took Paul great efforts to convince the inhabitants of his human nature (14:18).

Luke was keenly aware of this danger of misunderstanding among polytheistic audiences, especially with respect to miracles. Therefore Luke regularly presents Peter and Paul as agents of God in miracle-healing stories, and as petitioners and/or mediators of numinous power. In the miracle healing stories of Acts, the apostles typically appeal to God through prayer, command healing in the name of Jesus, and/or lay on their hands on a person in need signalling that divine healing power was transferred through the apostles in a particular case. Immediately preceding our passage, Luke has the polytheistic readers of his work understand that only God is the miracle worker: “… the Lord causing signs and miracles to happen through their hands” (14:3; cf. 5:12; 19:11; and even with respect to Jesus of Nazareth: 2:22).

4 The only other passage where a similar misunderstanding is narrated is Acts 28:2–6.
In general, however, Luke presents Paul as a person who tried to avoid or at least minimize resistance to his message in order to maximize the positive reception of the gospel amongst various groups of addressees. As far as possible, Paul would adjust to the culture and to the expectations of respective listeners. He did so as a Jew who had come, by means of a miraculous event (9:1–19; cf. 22:3–21; 26:9–20), to believe that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ. Following this strategy, he could have his assistant Timothy—an uncircumcised Jew: his mother was a Jew and his father a non-Jewish Greek—circumcised “because of the Jews in those regions” (16:1–3). Paul did not reject Jewish customs for Jews, including himself (cf. 21:20–26). To him, circumcision for Jews still remained important as an identity marker deeply rooted in Jewish tradition, but not as a means and sign of salvation.

The letters of Paul are in agreement with this Lucan presentation of Paul’s strategy to evangelize peoples with a variety of cultural traditions on his journeys. Of course, he did not “preach [kēryssō] circumcision” (Gal 5:11) since circumcision was not part of the kerygma, the salvation message. Paul himself clearly brings to expression his strategy to communicate the gospel in his multi-cultural encounters, in 1 Cor 9:19–23:

19 Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. 20 I approached the Jews as a Jew, to win the Jews; those under the law as someone under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law; 21 those not having the law as someone not having the law (though I am not without the law of God but in the law of Christ), so as to win those not having the law. 22 I approached the weak as a weak person, to win the weak. I have approached all people in all various ways so that by all possible means I might save some. 23 I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may serve as its co-worker.6

It is in line with this strategy that Paul had Timothy circumcised and that Paul underwent the Nazarite vow in Jerusalem (21:17–26). At the same time, this strategy necessitated Paul’s refusal of the Jewish demand of circumcising Titus, his Greek companion (Gal 2:3). According to Paul’s understanding of the gospel, it was a question not of ethnic belonging, of gender, or of societal status that decided over one’s inclusion in God’s family, but of belonging to Christ (Gal 3:26–29). This interpretation allowed for a high degree of flexibility in preaching the gospel to different audiences, which resulted in the successful translation of the gospel amongst various cultural groups of peoples in the Mediterranean world.

One remarkable example of Paul’s ability to adjust his message with great freedom and flexibility to audiences of polytheistic cultures is the report of his speech before philosophers in Athens (Acts 17:16–34). Here Paul is able to connect positively to traditional customs and philosophical insights shared by his listeners. He skillfully focuses his speech on the common ground of Jews and polytheistic philosophers, for instance the notion that ultimately God who created the world and who sustains life is one, and that he cannot be captured in human creations. Paul carefully avoids any references about Christ that might be misunderstood as suggesting that

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6 My own translation. In this passage Paul does not specially qualify his being a Jew or being weak. The reason is that he regards himself as a Jew and a weak or ill person.
Christ was another god. Instead Paul consequently introduces Christ in passing as a ‘certain man’ appointed by God (17:31).

Paul was a diaspora Jew who was born and raised in the multicultural metropolis of Tarsus, a rich Minor Asian city well known in antiquity for its philosophical schools and large Jewish community. His mother tongue was Greek. His upbringing prepared him sufficiently for his later engagement as a sensible cross-cultural evangelist in migration. In Acts this multi-faceted translation ability is not presented as a divinely bestowed gift. Spiritual revelation with respect to Paul had the foremost function to direct his travels at particular turning points, beginning with his encounter with the risen Christ in chapter 9, via his call to migrate to Macedonia (16:6–10), and ending with his final return to Jerusalem (20:21–23), which led to his capture. In addition, it is the Holy Spirit that enables the apostles to preach freely and boldly (4:31; cf. 28:31).

But in Acts, the Holy Spirit is not featured as the subject who enables apostles and believers to miraculously speak other languages spontaneously for the sake of evangelizing other peoples. Acts 2 describes a unique event which took place among the Galilean followers of Jesus and which was witnessed by Jews from various diasporas present in Jerusalem. These Galileans did not evangelize among people speaking other languages, and they did not migrate into the surrounding Greco-Roman world as evangelists. The disciples and earliest followers of Jesus were largely representatives of the uneducated strata of Jewish society in Galilee (cf. 4:13). It is not a coincidence that these Galileans are not featured in Acts as evangelists beyond the traditional Jewish territories. Historically speaking, they were not able to do so. It rather was the human resources—language ability, cross-cultural experiences, and sensitivities—of migrant diaspora Jews from Hellenized Mediterranean cities of the Roman Empire that provided the backbone for a successful communication of the gospel to various peoples. In this regard, the narrative presentation of Acts is historically plausible.

Louis H. Feldman has pointed out “deep Hellenization of Judaism in Asia Minor and hence the existence of a common language of discourse with non-Jews” as one of the most important preconditions for successful missionary endeavors by Jews among non-Jews, attracting quite a number of non-Jews as proselytes or as ‘sympathizers’ to the Jewish faith.7 The same holds true for the Christ-believing Jewish evangelists of the first century. The turn of these evangelists towards non-Jews was part of general Jewish missionary endeavors in the first century CE. Their interpretation of Christ’s death and resurrection as the salvific event that alone grants access of non-Jews to the chosen community of God made it much easier for non-Jews to identify with the—christologically reconstructed—Jewish tradition.

Luke, with his focus on Paul, of course, only represents a cross-section of the phenomenon of the spread of the belief in Jesus as the Christ in the first century CE. This limitation is most likely due not to an extraordinary importance of Paul in and for Early Christianity but to Luke’s personal acquaintance with Paul.8 Many other Jewish migrants from the diasporas were involved in the spread of the belief in Christ, some of whom are mentioned in passing in Acts. The memories of their efforts have not survived.

8 Of all the gospel writers, Luke betrays the closest affinities to Pauline theological thought, both in his Gospel of Luke and in Acts.
Migration and Mission
Pastoral Challenges, Theological Insights

Stephen Bevans

Italian scholar Gaetano Parolin notes that only in recent years have Christians begun to think about the phenomenon of migration in the context of the church’s evangelizing mission.\(^1\) Pope John Paul II’s 1990 encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*, for example, includes the care and evangelization of migrants among the ‘new worlds and new social phenomena’ that make up mission *ad gentes*;\(^2\) and the 2004 Instruction *Erga Migrantes Caritas Christi* specifically links the phenomenon of migrations to mission.\(^3\) Among Protestants and Evangelicals, there have appeared, for example, works by Jan Jongeneel, Samuel Escobar, and Enoch Wan as essays in a special issue of *Missiology: An International Review*, and Gerrit Noort.\(^5\)

Such a recent connection, however, is rather odd. In reality, mission and migration have been closely intertwined since the earliest days of the church. According to the Acts of the Apostles, Christian mission, and indeed the emergence of the church itself, has its origins in the dispersal of the Greek speaking disciples after the martyrdom of Stephen (Acts 8:1). Missionaries Prisca and Aquila had been expelled from Rome by the Emperor Claudius and settled in Corinth, where they presided over the church that met in their house (Acts 18:1–3). Although Christianity may well have existed in India since apostolic times, concrete evidence of Christians there can be traced back to Thomas of Cana, a merchant who settled in Cragamore around 350, along with some four hundred migrant Christians. About the same time, Christianity reached Ethiopia through Frumentius, a Syrian youth who had been sold into slavery and transported to the kingdom of Axum.\(^6\) We know that there was a Christian presence in China by the middle of the seventh century, brought by Syrian monks who traveled along the famed Silk Route across Asia, frequented as well by many Christian merchants who found hospitality in the monasteries the monks had founded along the way.\(^7\) Similarly, the migrant condition of peoples throughout history has stirred up the church’s missionary zeal. The Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, for example, responding to an emerging multiculturalism caused by human mobility in medieval Europe, “issued a decree requesting the bishops of the dioceses where people of different ethnic back-

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\(^1\)Gaetano Parolin, *Chiesa Postconciliare e Migrazioni: Quale Teologia per la Missione con i Migranti?* (Roma: Editrice Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 2010), 389.


ground dwelled to provide the latter with a ministry respectful of their different rites and languages.”

Sierra Leonean scholar Jehu Hanciles writes of the “inextricable connection between migration and mission in the Christian experience” and suggests that the church’s and theology’s neglect of this connection is due to the ‘unwarranted distinction’ between ‘church’ and ‘mission’ that theology has made for at least the last two centuries. Indeed, in Roman Catholic official documents—despite the recent connection with mission—migrations are more readily linked to reflections on pastoral care than to true missionary work.

Hanciles argues that in our day, characterized by “the greatest movement of persons, if not peoples, of all times,” the migration of peoples within the Global South but perhaps especially from the South to the Global North is ushering in a new missionary era, both in terms of pastoral practice and theological insights. In these pages, therefore, following Hanciles’ lead, I would like to reflect on these theologically rich connections. After a preliminary reflection on the nature of mission itself I will reflect on the connection between migrations and mission in three parts. A first connection will reflect on the practice of mission among migrants in terms of the mission’s multifaceted nature. A second will reflect on the fact women, men and children who are migrants are not only objects of the church’s evangelizing mission, but subjects of mission as well. A third connection will reflect on how the experience of migrations offers to the church new understandings and paradigms of mission itself. Migration, I hope will be clear, is not only a major theme in missiological thinking today. It is a major source of missiological thinking as well. Conversely, reflecting on migration through the lens of mission can offer greater theological depth to the phenomenon of migrations.

Mission

In a colloquium at Catholic Theological Union several years ago, Vietnamese theologian Peter Phan observed that “mission is not an innocent word.” For many people today, ‘mission’ carries negative connotations of violence against innocent people, destruction of cultures, disregard of venerable religious traditions, and imposition of foreign languages. Theologians like Native American Tink Tinker, for example, write that “Given the disastrous history of euro-western mission practices... it would seem that there are no missiological projects that we might conceive that have legitimacy of any kind.”

Such words need to be taken seriously. Missions and missionaries have caused untold damage to cultures and peoples, and Christians have to confess that humbly. There is a thread, however, of contemporary scholarship—both Christian and secular—that argues that the value of Christian mission is precisely that of preserving local cultures and languages, and being on the side of local peoples over against colonial abuse. Australian historian Robert Kenny writes that because

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10 Parolin, Chiesa Postconciliare e Migrazioni, 389–91.
11 EMCC, 96.
12 See Hanciles, Beyond Christendom, 377–8 and Parolin, Chiesa Postconciliare e Migrazioni 391.
they often took the part of the peoples they evangelized, missionaries were often blamed for local uprisings, such as a slave rebellion in Guyana and the Maori uprising in New Zealand.\textsuperscript{14} Gambian church historian Lamin Sanneh, has written powerfully that an inbuilt ‘translatability’ of the gospel motivated missionaries in Africa (and by implication, in other parts of the world) to make the scriptures available to local people in their own languages. This fact not only allowed local people to understand and eventually interpret the Christian message in terms of their own experience. It also preserved languages that may have been lost in the acids of modernity and globalization, and subsequently preserved whole cultures as well.\textsuperscript{15} Andrew Walls, the eminent Scots historian of world Christianity, writes that, because of the Scottish education of Rev. Tiyo Soga, the first ordained Xhosa minister, “the Cape newspapers could not ignore him or misrepresent his people”.\textsuperscript{16}

‘Mission’ is surely not an innocent word, but it is not an entirely disreputable one either. Nevertheless, to be adequately defended, mission must first be shorn of many false understandings. We can no longer think of mission as the only way to save souls. At least within Roman Catholic teaching and in many other Christian traditions, we can confidently say that salvation is possible outside of explicit faith in Jesus and baptism in his name. We can no longer conceive of mission as going ‘from the West to the rest,’ but as a multi-directional, mutual, and relational reality. Nor can we employ the overtly military language of ‘conquering the world for Christ’ by missionaries marching to ‘Onward Christian Soldiers.’ The theology of mission has changed radically and drastically in the wake of the demise of colonialism, the renaissance of the world’s religions, developments in the social sciences, and the re-emergence of the doctrine of the Trinity as central to Christian faith. The sketch of mission theology that follows takes into account these changes in the social, political, religious, and theological context.

Mission, in the first place, is primarily the work of God in the world. The first act of mission is God’s act of creation, and from the first nanosecond of creation God has been present in it through the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. Australian theologian Denis Edwards writes of the Spirit as “the power of becoming, the power that enables the self-transcendence of creation in the emergence of the universe and the evolution of life on Earth. The Spirit of God is creatively at work... celebrating every emergence, loving life in all its fecundity and diversity, treasuring it in its very instance.”\textsuperscript{17} While of course we cannot speak of the Hebrews’ consciousness of the Spirit as a distinct person, the Old Testament does speak of God’s healing, life-giving, creative, and prophetic nearness as wind, breath, and water.\textsuperscript{18}

‘In the fullness of time’ (Gal 4:4) God’s Spirit took on a human face, as it were, in Jesus of Nazareth. It was the Spirit that descended upon Jesus at his baptism in the Jordan (Mark 1:10), anointing him to do the Spirit’s work: “to bring glad tidings to the poor... to proclaim liberty to captives and
recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord” (Luke 4:18–19). The Spirit’s work passes on now to Jesus as he speaks God’s mercy and love in parables, heals those who are ill and frees those in the grip of Evil, and includes all in his company and ministry. Jesus truly possesses and is possessed by God’s Spirit.

After Jesus’ death and resurrection, that Spirit descends upon and anoints the disciples, who gradually but surely realize that they are called to continue Jesus’ work of bearing witness to the Spirit’s continuing creation, healing, and reconciling the world. It is the reception of this mission that creates the church, and why the church is “missionary by its very nature.” The church now shares and continues Jesus’ mission, as Jesus had continued the Spirit’s mission from the first moment of creation. The church is a sacrament, the concrete presence and agent, of what God is doing in the world.

Mission, then, precedes the church. Mission “is not about the church, but about the Reign of God. The church is the sacrament of that Reign, its anticipation, sign, and instrument. Mission is for creation, not for the church. It is the self-giving of God to the world. In solidarity with the world, it is the church for the world, but above all the church with others. Mission should therefore be understood not as “mission of the church, but the church from and in mission.”

Mission is carried out both within the church (ad intra) and beyond the boundaries of the church (ad extra). On the one hand, as Paul VI noted in his 1975 Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Nuntiani, Christians need first to be evangelized themselves before they dare evangelize others, and much of the ‘pastoral work” of the church is about equipping people for convinced, effective witness and ministry outside the boundaries of the church. But we might say that mission proper is the mission ad extra—witnessing and working outside the church in the world: proclaiming, witnessing, working for the establishment of God’s Reign in history. In Redemptoris Missio, John Paul II speaks of three aspects of mission. First is ‘mission ad gentes,’ that is the witnessing and proclaiming of the gospel and its values in situations and among peoples where it has not yet taken root or is yet unknown. This says the pope, is mission in the proper sense, and it is clearly mission ad extra. John Paul also speaks of the everyday pastoral ministry of the church as missionary in some sense—clearly mission ad intra. A third aspect happens both inside and outside the church and is the aspect of mission that the pope names the ‘New Evangelization.’ This is the task of re-evangelizing women and men in situations where once the gospel flourished, but is no longer a vital force in peoples’ lives—as in contemporary Europe, for example. To do this, the church needs to be evangelized itself, so as to be a more credible sign to people in these situations (and so ad intra), and it has to find ways of communicating the gospel more clearly and more credibly (and so ad extra).

Already in 1963 at the Mexico City meeting of the Committee on World Mission and Evangelization, mission was characterized as taking place on six continents, or, as Michael Nazir-Ali expressed it, mission is ‘from everywhere to everywhere.’ Today, while we still speak about

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19 Vatican Council II, Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity (Ad Gentes, henceforth AG), paragraph 2.
21 Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Nuntiani (henceforth EN), paragraph 15.
22 RM, paragraph 33.
23 Michael Nazir-Ali, From Everywhere to Everywhere: A World View of Christian Witness (London: Collins / Flame,
mission crossing boundaries, the boundaries that are meant are not only oceans and national borders, but also—and perhaps principally—various peoples who have not yet heard the gospel, or who have ceased to believe, or who have particular needs—like youth, the hearing impaired, artists, or those on the margins of society like migrants and refugees.

Contemporary mission theology has suggested that a more appropriate understanding of mission ‘ad gentes’ (literally: ‘to the nations’) might be to speak of mission ‘inter gentes’ (literally: ‘among the nations’). Mission is carried out in dialogue. Mission is first and foremost about relationship, about listening, about learning from the people we live among. This is another aspect of understanding mission as participating in God’s own mission: since God is in God’s self a communion of dialogue, so participation in God’s presence and saving work must reflect that dialogical life.

What Roger Schroeder and I have proposed, however, is that mission might best be characterized today as lived out in a prophetic dialogue. In other words, while everything said above obtains, missionaries do indeed have something to share, and often they have something that challenges. Christian life in community is a prophetic witness to the love and, indeed, communal nature of God. It also is at times a counter-cultural prophetic witness to an alternate lifestyle. Proclaiming the message of the gospel and telling the amazing story of God taking on flesh in Jesus is also a prophetic task, as is the obligation to confront people and structures with situations of injustice and evil. Mission, then, is a life lived in prophetic dialogue, or, as South African missiologist David Bosch has spoken of it, ‘bold humility.’

Roger Schroeder and I have also suggested, citing the phrase of John Paul II about mission being a ‘single, complex reality,’ that mission today is constituted by at least six elements. Mission, in the first place, is about witnessing to and proclaiming the gospel of and about Jesus Christ. Second, it takes place when the church celebrates the Liturgy, and when Christians pray and practice contemplation. Third, working for justice, peace, and the integrity of creation is a ‘constitutive dimension’ of missionary work. Fourth, Christians participate in God’s mission in the world when they participate in any form of interreligious dialogue. In the fifth place, mission takes place when Christians make efforts to communicate the gospel in ways that honor particular contexts—through what Protestants


27 RM 41.


tend to call contextualization and Catholics speak of as inculturation. Finally, as has become evident from the work of U. S. theologian Robert Schreiter, mission involves as well the difficult work of Christians toward reconciliation at all levels.

Connection I: Mission among Migrants

How might the church carry out mission among migrants? It of course needs to be done with great sensitivity to the dignity of the people among whom the church ministers, with a basic attitude of ‘bold humility’ or ‘prophetic dialogue’ as I have sketched out above. We might also look at the various elements of mission and see how migrants might experience the church’s evangelizing activity in a multitude of ways.

Witness and proclamation

“The first means of evangelization,” wrote Pope Paul VI in 1975, “is the witness of an authentically Christian life.” In the context of witness among migrants, perhaps the most important witness of individual Christians and the Christian community as such is the offering of hospitality. Hospitality might be practiced by individual families offering a temporary home for newly arrived migrants or refugees, whether Christian or not. It might be about making special efforts to invite members of migrant communities to join a neighborhood parish or congregation at church on Sunday. Or hospitality might be practiced by making the facilities of the parish or congregation available to particular migrant groups for their own liturgical or social celebrations, or inviting the diverse groups to participate in a common liturgy on the church’s great feasts of Christmas, Holy Week, Easter, or Pentecost. Again, a way of offering hospitality could be to include hymns or prayers in the language of migrants in the Sunday liturgies, or making a real effort on the part of both pastors and people to learn languages like Spanish, Tagalog, Vietnamese, or Yoruba.

Such witness has an impact for the church ad intra, since it is an offer of hospitality to those who are already Christian. But it can very well have an impact ad extra as well, since those who are not Christian will experience the welcome that Christians give to them, and to their fellow Christians who are of a different culture and background.

But witness is never enough. The person of Christ needs to be explicitly proclaimed, and his message of God’s love for the world and the need to love one another needs to be clearly expressed. This, of course, will happen first of all ad intra as migrant peoples join in celebrations of Eucharist and hear the scriptures proclaimed, especially if it done in their own language and with sensitivity to their cultures. When the time is ripe—and only then—such proclamation can be offered to those who are not Christian. Spanish theologian Felix Barrena Sánchez cautions, however, that the sharing of the explicit gospel with non-Christian migrants is an action that should only be done after the local church has made a clear commitment to hospitality, antiracism, xenophobia, education, dialogue, proper pastoral care, and justice. While proclaiming the gospel is part of the church’s mission ‘beyond the shadow of a doubt,’ it needs to be done in the

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34 EN, paragraph 41.
context of the dignity of every person and with respect to a person’s religious freedom. A pushy, manipulative proselytism is something totally to be eschewed. Proclamation indeed remains ‘the permanent priority of mission,’ but what is clear is that it cannot be abstracted from the other constitutive elements of mission about which I will discuss below.

**Liturgy, prayer, and contemplation**

What has come to the fore in missiological discussions of the past several years is how liturgy is and can be an act of mission, and how essential prayer and contemplation is for the work of mission. As U. S. Lutheran liturgist Robert Hawkins writes, “the church lives from the center with its eyes on the borders.” Because mission is the participation in the missionary life of God, “to encounter God at the center is to participate in God’s life at the boundaries; to participate in God’s boundary-crossing mission is to drawn always to the center.”

We again see the interconnection of the six elements under discussion when we see the importance of making space in our churches for migrants to celebrate their own liturgies in their own languages, or of making sure that our regular liturgies are welcoming to migrant communities. At all liturgies in a parish or congregation, there could always be included prayers for migrants, or making sure that our regular liturgies are welcoming to migrant communities. At all liturgies in a parish or congregation, there could always be included prayers for migrants, and prayers for particular groups of migrants or refugees in special times of crisis or suffering (e.g. the displaced Africans during the crisis in Libya, the displaced Japanese after the earthquake in Sendai, refugees from Ivory Coast during the Civil War). Pastors could make sure that migrants are regularly mentioned as examples in homilies, and music ministers could regularly include songs of pilgrimage and migration.

In the same way, Christian prayer and contemplation—both public and private—could focus on the plight of migrants and refugees in the world. Christians might spend one day a week focusing on migrants or refugees from a particular place or on a particular continent. Scalabrinian Gioacchino Campese has published a small book of meditations to be used during the Stations of the Cross, and the Chicago neighborhood of Pilsen stages a way of the cross that focuses on issues in their heavily migrant community every Good Friday. Scripture scholars have written eloquently about ways to read the Bible from the perspective of migration. Such practices of Bible reading could become acts of contemplation that would help Christians see more clearly and become more aware of the plight of migrants and refugees around the world and in their own neighborhoods.

**Justice, peace, and the integrity of creation**

Once more we see the interconnection among the various elements of mission when we reflect

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37 RM, paragraph 44.
40 Bevans and Schroeder, *Constants in Context*, 362.
on mission as working for justice, peace, and the integrity of creation. A Christian community by its witness to justice and inclusion within the church is witnessing to the world outside it to the radical equality and basic dignity of every human being, made in God’s image. As Gaetano Parolin writes, “the denunciation and vigilance against any racist or xenophobic sentiment or legislation in defense of the rights of migrants needs to be accompanied by the witness of communities that become models and symbols of inclusion.”

Furthermore, a community engages in mission by speaking out in statements and in demonstrations against unjust treatment of migrants, for more just immigration laws, for amnesty for migrants without proper documentation. Justice ministry is carried out by Christians lobbying for just treatment of immigrants, organizing workshops to conscientize people about government abuses and migrants’ humanity. Hand in hand with the struggle for the rights of migrants is the struggle against the poverty in which many migrants live—in their new countries, in refugee camps, in the countries from which they have migrated in search of a better future.

Many migrants and refugees are on the move because of violence in their home countries, and so peacemaking is a sine qua non in which the missionary church needs to be involved. This is not a ministry for everybody, and involves a great amount of training, native skill, and—at times—considerable risk. But that the church should be involved in such work is undeniable. One thinks of the great work of the San Egidio communities in situations of violence, and the work of the Krock Institute of Peace Studies at the University of Notre Dame both in terms of training peacemakers and on the ground peacekeeping work. My colleague Robert Schreiter and Krock Institute director Scott Appleby have made several trips to the southern Philippines to help in peacekeeping efforts between Christians and Muslims.

On the other hand, the presence of migrants often incites violence toward them in the countries they have moved to. We see such violence in Europe, against Muslims and Africans, for example. We see it in Australia against Indian immigrants. And we see it in the United States with violence and hatred against migrants from Latin America. Efforts like the U.S. Catholic Bishops’ statement Welcoming the Stranger Among Us are written to help Christians understand the gifts that migrants bring, and are aimed to diminish reactions such as racism and violence against migrants.

At first the struggle for ecological integrity may not seem to have much to do with mission among migrants, and yet there are many ecological conditions—lack of water, encroaching deserts, persistent droughts, for example—that force people to leave their homes and relocate either in their own countries or abroad. Christians living and ministering in those lands can work for greater ecological consciousness and responsibility through education, working for ecological legislation, and doing their own part to care for the earth, like planting trees, rationing water, and recycling materials.

In places where migrants have settled, they often live in ecologically dangerous areas. In Chicago, for example, the heavily Latino/a area of Pilsen is dominated by a coal-burning plant that

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43 Parolin, “Quale missione con i migranti?”: 396.
46 Hanciles, Beyond Christendom, 217–8.
spews toxic waste into the atmosphere and around the neighborhood. Christians in such areas need to get involved in working for issues of ecojustice—again by education, by working with local politicians, and demonstrations and lobbying of the local government.

Interreligious dialogue

Interreligious dialogue is “not an option, but an obligation inherent in the church’s mission of migration.” Although many migrants are Christian, many of them are Muslims, Buddhist, Hindus, or members of other religions. Probably the most common and most accessible form of dialogue is what is commonly known as the ‘dialogue of life.’ First and foremost, the dialogue of life is practiced by members of host communities and migrant communities getting to know one another, learning about one another, offering hospitality to one another, discovering the gifts that each religious community can offer to the other. A second kind of dialogue is the ‘dialogue of common action,’ in which members of various religious communities work together on common projects—perhaps as simple as a building project in a neighborhood, or as complex as organizing respective communities for a demonstration or a door-to-door campaign for more just immigration legislation. Perhaps more difficult for ordinary people is the practice of the ‘dialogue of theological exchange’ and ‘dialogue of sharing spirituality,’ but such dialogue can certainly go on among various religious leaders in the Christian host communities and communities of migrants of religious ways other than that of Christianity. Dialogue might also go the other way where there are large communities of Christian migrants—for example, Filipinos in Malaysia or Singapore—who are working or have settled in non-Christian countries.

Inculturation

Part of the hospitality involved in authentic witness is the effort to ensure that Christian migrants can worship in ways that they feel comfortable. This can be done, of course, by providing space and times for migrant communities to worship by themselves, with their own customs and in their own languages. But perhaps more important for the church as a whole is to find ways by which members of migrant communities can both be integrated into the wider church while at the same time making sure that they experience a worship that they can understand and to which they can relate.

Ideally, members of migrant communities would have their own ministers, but when members of the host communities minister among them, the imperative of inculturation in mission demands that these ministers work for competence in their languages.

The U.S. Bishops’ document Welcoming the Stranger among Us emphasizes the need for members of host communities and migrants alike to develop skills of intercultural communication. Such skills are the result of “sustained efforts, carried out by people of diverse cultures, to appreciate their differences, work out conflicts, and build on commonalities.” What the acquisition of such skills point to is that the task of inculturation is not a ‘one way street,’ but the work of all parties to better understand one another in terms of culture, history, and customs. Members of host countries and cultures need to be sensitive to the cultures of migrants, and make efforts to communicate the gospel to them in ways that they can understand. But migrants also have an obligation to learn to communicate their faith in ways that their hosts can understand. Bring such mutual understanding about is

a major task of the church’s missionary activity in the context of migration.

Reconciliation

Migration is often the result of being uprooted from one’s homeland, sometimes very violently, and so the ministry of reconciliation and healing is a key element in any kind of missionary work among migrants, as migrants leave their homeland, experience the traumas of transit, and as they settle into their new place of residence. Especially among refugees, memories need to be healed. The past needs to be remembered, but remembered differently, and the lies that had been told about certain ethnic groups or political convictions need to be recognized as such and the truth needs to be told.

There are several levels of reconciliation, and all of them are important in the context of mission among migrants. I have already spoken above about personal reconciliation, or the healing of the scars of violence, abuse, and discrimination inflicted on individuals. There is also the need for cultural reconciliation as various migrant communities experience conflict, prejudice, suspicion and misunderstanding with members of the host culture and with other migrant communities as well. A third level of reconciliation is described as political reconciliation, such as the role of the Truth and Reconciliation commissions in places like South Africa, Argentina, Guatemala, and Rwanda. Finally, there is need for eclesiastical reconciliation as various groups experience cultural clashes specifically within the church community.

Because the healing experienced in reconciliation at every level is primarily God’s work, it is a particularly good example of how mission is carried on among migrants. But God’s work needs to be concretized through ministers of reconciliation, and so Christians who work in this area of mission need to be both carefully trained and to develop a deep spirituality, rooted in contemplation and deep compassion.

Connection II: Mission of Migrants

Migrants who are Christian are not only objects of the church’s mission. Perhaps more significantly, migrants are also subjects of the church’s mission. As Jehu Hanciles has put it strongly, “every Christian migrant is a potential missionary.”

Migrants can be missionaries within their own communities, working among both Christians and non-Christians. But they can also be—and many see themselves as—missionaries to the peoples among whom they are making their new home. One can easily see how migrants might participate in every element constitutive of mission. Migrant Christians witness by their lives of faith and by their vital and vibrant church communities, and are not shy to proclaim their faith to any and all. They have founded many indigenous churches in the lands of their migration and have set up programs of adult education and

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50 See Schreiter, “Migrants and the Ministry of Reconciliation,” 118–21; Schreiter, The Ministry of Reconciliation; Schreiter, Reconciliation.
51 Bevans and Schroeder, Constants in Context, 391–2.
52 Schreiter, “Migrants and the Ministry of Reconciliation,” 114.
53 See Schreiter, The Ministry of Reconciliation.
54 Hanciles, Beyond Christendom, 6, 296.
55 Ibid., 298, 324–49.
catechesis in many of them. Members of migrant communities serve their own communities as presiders at liturgy, and can present the Christian message afresh to other Christians. They can be active in working for justice, peace-making, and in issues around the integrity of creation, and can be mediators in helping their own members understand the host culture, and helping their hosts understand their cultural values and faith expressions. Migrant Christians can engage in interreligious dialogue at every level, especially with members of their own cultural and ethnic groups, and they are perhaps the best church agents in the ministry of reconciliation among their own congregations. In addition, they can be bridges between their own migrant communities and the host communities, as various personal, cultural, political, and ecclesial actions of reconciliation are needed.

Jehu Hanciles describes several aspects of the missionary impact that Christian immigrant congregations have had, focusing particularly on the United States, but quite relevant as well to other countries. First, he says, “the new immigrant congregations are performing a vital missionary function by their very presence.” Sociologically speaking, while isolation from one’s own land can cause some diminishment in religious faith, other religions become more attractive in a new environment where these religions are more widely practiced. Migration itself, says Timothy Smith, is ‘often a theologizing experience.’ A good many Koreans, for example, become Christians after they have arrived in the United States, and there is a high rate of conversion among Taiwanese and Chinese immigrants as well. Hanciles notes that immigrant congregations not only work for the conversion of their own, but reach out beyond their ethnic group. Indeed, “these congregations represent a cutting edge of Christian growth in America.”

Second, immigrant congregations “represent the face of Christianity to a goodly proportion of the nation’s disadvantaged and marginalized population.” This is because many congregations are in areas of cities that are the home to the poorest of the poor, where of course many of their own people live as well. The witness of such congregations is a particular kind of witness (Hanciles acknowledges the origin of this phrase in a work of Martha Fredericks).

In the United States (and, I would say, elsewhere), Christian migrants experience a relatively secular environment, and this is in strong contrast with their home countries, where they are members of vibrant Christian communities with strong commitment to evangelism. Especially Africans, Hanciles says in the third place, see a country like the United States as a mission field, and they are enthusiastic missionaries in what they see is a context that needs a renewal of the Christian faith.

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57 Hanciles, Beyond Christendom, 297.


59 Hanciles, Beyond Christendom, 297.

60 Ibid., 298.

61 Ibid.

62 Ibid., 298–9.
Fourth, unlike Christians in the West, migrants from Africa and Asia are much more used to religious plurality. Because of this, their capacity “to maintain effective Christian witness in the face of religious plurality enhances their missionary activity.” In addition, they are quite disposed, in the absence of the conflicts that pit religions against one another in their home countries, to various forms of dialogue, especially the dialogue of life. Hanciles suggests that they might even make ‘common cause’ against the secularism in which they find themselves in Western countries.

Fifth, Hanciles believes that, having learned to adapt to Western culture, migrants to the West will more easily be open to adapting to other cultures, making them capable of being missionaries in the ‘wider global context.’ Indeed, he says that many African pastors living in the United States feel that they have great resources and possibilities for a truly global outreach.

Migrants, however, are not just becoming missionaries in the West. Hanciles gives two examples of African migrants within Africa and the amazing work that they have done. Quoting Dr. Tokumbo Adeyemo, Hanciles argues that Africa has made a transition ‘from mission field to missionary force.’

A first example is that of Christian migrants in Kenya. Twenty years ago, migration to Kenya was negligible, but after a number of political and economic crises in East Africa Kenya received a steady stream of migrants and refugees from Uganda, Burundi, Ethiopia, Somalia, and the Sudan. Ethiopian and Eritrean evangelicals in particular discovered an openness on the part of non-Christian Ethiopians and Eritreans that was not possible in their home countries. In 1988, Ghanaian Michael Ntumy went to Liberia as a missionary and in a year he had planted four churches. At the outbreak of the Liberian civil war, Ntumy and his wife and children decided to stay in the country despite the dangers especially to Ghanians. Eventually Ntumy was held hostage in a refugee camp and began holding church services there. He had amazing success, and even some of his captors found Christ through his ministrations. He escaped the country in 1991 and then went to Ivory Coast “where he learned to speak French fluently and planted 278 churches in five years.”

These are, of course, dramatic examples, but they are not the only ones. As Christian Africans, Asians, and Latin Americans move around the globe they are having an impact on the churches in their new homelands, despite the conflict and tensions that such encounters generate. In Western countries, Catholic Filipinos are influencing the parishes in which they settle, and migrants from Latin America to the United States are changing the face of the Catholic Church and of United States culture. The task of the church is both to recognize the gifts and challenges that these migrants bring, and call forth and enhance these gifts for missionary service within the church and beyond the church in the world.

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63 Ibid., 299.
64 Ibid.
65 Ibid.
66 Ibid., 218.
67 Ibid., 219.
68 Ibid., 220.
Connection III: Migration and Mission

Theology

Toward the end of his dissertation on mission and migration, Gaetano Parolin writes that reflecting on mission among and of migrants “does not exhaust the contribution that migrations have offered to mission. The phenomenon of migrations helps as well to better define the concept of mission itself.” This section will explore Parolin’s statement.

In the first place, we know that mission is not ours. It is first of all God’s work, sending the Spirit into the world from the beginning, becoming flesh ‘in the fullness of time’ (Gal 4:4), only becoming ours through Christ’s gift of the Spirit. Analogous to migration, we are ‘migrants’ into God’s ‘territory.’ Mission is ours, but it is ours because of God’s hospitality and grace. If we fully recognize what we have been given our response will be adoration and contemplation. Our task in mission will be ‘to see and to discover’ what God is doing in the world, rather than thinking of ourselves as bringing and managing something.

Second, God comes to us as a migrant—a stranger, a missionary. As such, God offers to the world a gift “but does not impose, does not oblige, does not force us against our will.” Since mission is participation in God’s missionary life and work, mission is done in imitation of God. Mission influenced by an understanding of migration, in other words, “is always service, respect, acceptance and hospitality in regard to the Other.”

Third, mission done in the light of migration is a radical commitment to the marginalized. Whether mission is carried out among or by wealthy Nigerians or Indians, economic migrants in Singapore, or refugees—in many ways the poorest of the poor—migrants remain marginal to their adopted society in one way or another, and so mission is done among or by the marginalized and often the very poor. A bit earlier on in his text, Parolin writes about the mission of Jesus, the mission that Christians surely imitate. Jesus, he says, “knew the bitterness of the refugee, the sorrow of one who had been uprooted, the alienation that comes from being a stranger. The emptying of his status as God to take on the form of a slave has its parallel in the experience of migrants.”

Fourth, mission is about the creation of a ‘Pentecostal communion.’ Just as migrants are both a gift and a challenge to the new places where they settle, and just as the new culture is both a gift and a challenge to the migrants who settle there, so mission is about the recognition of the beauty and power of diversity on the one hand and the challenge of unity in such diversity on the other. Those engaged in mission need to approach the people among whom they work with deep respect, recognizing the holiness of their cultures. But they always have something to give, to add, to challenge. Mission is always done in ‘dance’ of ‘prophetic dialogue.”

Fifth, migrants as strangers and guests are marvelous images of any Christian who crosses boundaries of cultures, peoples, generations, or gender. When one is a stranger, one is vulnerable and even suspect, and so one has to act carefully, with respect for the strange situation one

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70 Parolin, Chiesa Postconciliare e Migrazioni, 461.
71 Ibid., 463.
72 Ibid.
73 Ibid.
74 Ibid., 460.
75 Ibid., 465–7.
76 Bevans and Schroeder, Prophetic Dialogue, 156–7.
is in, and grateful for any hospitality that is offered. One listens, learns to see and appreciate the new situation. One does not make judgments too quickly. One asks appropriate questions in a polite, non-judgmental way. As a guest it is always important to be on one’s best behavior, and not to abuse the hospitality that is offered. Guests may certainly offer to help the host—say, in doing the dishes or clearing off the table—but it is important to discern just when this is appropriate. Otherwise it may be interpreted as brashness or ingratitude. Parolin refers here to Claude Marie Barbour’s concept of ‘mission in reverse’—the conviction that those who enter a new world must first be evangelized by the people who are there before one can dare evangelize them.77

All of this, finally, leads to a profound missionary spirituality, one of both docility to the Spirit and imitation of the Lord Jesus in kenosis. Mission is a journey, like migration, into the unknown. Missionaries, like migrants, need to trust in God’s providence as they leave so much behind and learn to take on a new identity. As Parolin writes, “migrations are a metaphor of mission as going beyond, as continual ‘going out.’ The suffering of those who are obliged to migrate reminds us of the relativity of national boundaries. The face of the migrant reminds us of the beauty of God who embraces the entire human family and of that God’s word is offered to the whole world, not only to God’s own family and to the church” (472).78

In sum, although I have only presented a sketch of Parolin’s longer and richer development, the experience of migration offers a fertile set of metaphors to deepen the Christian understanding of mission.

Conclusion

We live today in an ‘age of migration,’79 and this great ‘new world’80 presents Christians with both an opportunity and a challenge. The opportunity is to become engaged in missionary service of people who are often the poorest of the poor, and who are always on the margins of the societies to which they migrate. The challenge is to serve in such a way that migrants can realize their own missionary potential and that Christians, by identifying with migrants, can learn anew the power of the Spirit and the humility of its Lord. The church has always been deeply affected by the migration of peoples, and—by God’s grace—has always responded to migrants’ needs. Today, however, in the context of a globalized world and a flourishing world Christianity, Christians need to realize, perhaps like never before, that its mission to witness ‘to the ends of the earth’ (Acts 1:8) will be carried out in large part among the world’s migrants, and will be shaped by them as well.

78 Parolin, Chiesa Postconciliare e Migrazioni, 472.
80 RM, paragraph 37.
Mission as Hospitality towards ‘The Other’

Tim Noble

In this paper, I want to look at the idea that Christian mission includes hospitality towards ‘the other’ as a necessary component. I do this with special attention to the current refugee and migrant situation in Europe, and more particularly still, with attention to responses in the Czech Republic. I do this through an examination of the story of the Final Judgement in Matt 25.

I want to argue that the service of ‘the other’ in love is itself not just an integral part of mission alongside the proclamation of the gospel, but in and of itself part of the proclamation. A good example of what I mean here is found in the Roman Catholic rite of ordination for deacons. This rite contains a short segment in which the deacon is presented with a copy of the gospels and told: ‘Receive the Gospel of Christ, whose herald you now are. Believe what you read, teach what you believe, and practise what you teach.’ These are not so much three successive stages as a holistic attitude to the task of proclamation, in which faith is necessarily passed on (taught) and practised.

The Final Judgement

The story of the Final Judgement in Matthew is well known, but in order to see if it has anything to say to us as a missionary text it will be necessary to look at it again more closely. The gospel of Matthew has long been held to have a special interest in mission. It begins with the contextuaising history of Jesus (the genealogy), which sets him within a broader world than just that of Israel. Jesus is also the son, first of Abraham, and only then of David, and thus is linked with the blessing that Abraham is for all the nations (Gen 12:3). In the birth narrative, the wise men who come to visit from the east again induce the world outside Israel into recognising the importance of Emmanuel. The journey to Egypt allows Jesus to return as the new Moses, setting

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1 This paper is prepared as part of the Norwegian Funds’ grant NF-CZ07-ICP-4-4472015, entitled ‘The Churches’ Response of Welcome to the Migrant Other’.
2 Darrell Jackson and Alessia Passarelli, Mapping Migration: Mapping Churches’ Responses in Europe (Geneva: World Council of Churches Publications, 2016) note ‘an emerging global consensus that Christian witness (some would say ‘mission’) is better conceived as arising from an ethic of love (Matt 25) rather than an ethic of obligation (Matt 28:18-20)’.
3 ‘The Rite of Ordination of a Deacon’.
4 Whether this is a story or a parable is, it seems to me, a still unresolved question. Jiří Mrázek, Evangelium podle Matouše (Prague: Centrum biblických věd AVČR–UK, 2011), 426, affirms that it is a parable. Other writers are equally adamant that it is a story; see, as simply one example, Joong Sook Suh, ‘Das Weltgericht und die Matthäische Gemeinde’, Novum Testamentum 48, No. 3 (2006): 217–33, 217.
his people free. Matt 10 is the most concentrated teaching on mission in the gospels. Throughout the gospel there are also encounters with people from outside Israel. The meetings with the centurion in Matt 8:5–13 and the Canaanite woman from the region of Tyre and Sidon in 15:22–28 are noteworthy in that they are occasions when Jesusspecifically praises their faith. And of course there is the so-called Great Commission of 28:18–20.

To turn now to the Final Judgement, at the end of the last main discourse of Matthew’s gospel. For my purposes, it is important to consider the identity of the ‘least of my brothers and sisters’ (τούτων τῶν ἀδελφῶν μου τῶν ἐλαχίστων). There are here two contrasting positions—one exclusive, in that it is only Christian disciples who are referred to, and the second universal—in that it refers or can refer to anyone. The obvious parallel is with the end of the missionary discourse in Matt 10:42, where anyone who gives a cup of cold water to one of the little ones in the name of a disciple will receive the disciple’s reward. However, there are two significant differences in the Final Judgement. First, chapter 10 does not refer to the brothers and sisters of Jesus, and second, there is nothing about the disciples. This may be part of the universalisation of the message of Jesus. The missionary discourse is restricted to Israel as addressee, and to the disciples as ‘actors’ or ‘missionaries’, whilst here the addressee is, essentially, the whole world, the actors precisely those who respond to the needs of ‘the other’.

The other passage of relevance is Matt 12:47–50, about the mother and brothers of Jesus. Told that his mother and brothers are outside, Matthew tells us: ‘And pointing to his disciples, he said, ‘Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.’ This passage is somewhat ambiguous, since it begins with Jesus pointing to the disciples, but then continues by including all who do the will of the Father. The question may be whether they do the will of the Father because they are disciples, or they are disciples if they do the will of the Father. Bearing in mind the words of the Sermon on the Mount, I would suggest that the second is the more likely. It is the active doing of the Word that authenticates discipleship, because the disciple is to be like the Master, who both teaches and practises his teaching.

The argument for the universal interpretation of the ‘least of my brothers and sisters’ is strengthened by situating this discourse in relation to the Sermon on the Mount, and by attending to what is actually said (and, equally importantly, to what is not said). We should see all of humankind (all the nations) as brothers and sisters of the Son of Man, as those who are under the reign of God. This is the lesson that Jesus has learned throughout the gospel, where he has come to see that his mission is not just to Israel, but even

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9 I have looked in more detail at these encounters in Tim Noble, *Drawing Together on Holy Ground: Mission from the Perspective of the Other* (Habilitation Work, ETF-UK, Prague, 2015), 35–8, with more bibliographical references.
12 See Gnilka, *Das Matthäusevangelium*, 374.
13 See on this, Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 81.
more to those outside, for it is there that he encounters people of great faith. Faith is displayed everywhere, and it is displayed in terms of actions towards ‘the other’, who is not the disciple, but the one in immediate need.

Applying the Final Judgement to Mission Today

Thus far I have argued that the story of the Final Judgement, in its Matthean context, argues for the centrality of care for ‘the other’. Now I want to look at this dimension as an integral part of the mission of the church. The story is the summary of the teaching of Jesus that Christians are called to bring to all the nations, as they go out baptising and making disciples. I would also say that, to some degree, the attitude towards ‘the other’ is the precondition rather than the consequence of discipleship. It is because of the care for ‘the other’ that the person can be taught the teaching of Jesus and can be baptised and become a disciple, since in the depths of their being they have truly understood what it is to be under the reign of God.

However, the question still remains as to what this means in practice today. One could in this respect go down the track of what Karl Rahner called ‘anonymous Christianity’. This is a contested and often misunderstood term, and although I agree with much of what Rahner says in this respect, it will not be the path I choose here. Instead, I want to look at what the tasks set out in the story of the Final Judgement (feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, welcoming the stranger, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and those in prison) might mean in practice, and why they are not just a corollary of the mission of the church, but at the very heart of it. In part, this is to revisit the so-called ‘ecumenical—evangelical debate’ of the 1960s and 1970s. This was largely resolved through the influence of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelisation, beginning with the Lausanne meeting in 1974, and reaffirmed on various occasions since. However, perhaps we need to go beyond even the ‘both—and’ of the holistic vision of mission developed there and elsewhere, to say that there is only one mission, as there is one body, and that care for ‘the other’ is not something that we do as well as proclamation, but that our proclamation must involve what the Catholic tradition has tended to call the ‘corporal works of mercy’, and that our engagement with ‘the other’ in their need is a proclamation of the saving power of Christ in our lives and in the lives of all the nations.

In terms of our responses to those who come to us from outside—migrants, refugees, asylum-seekers—there are obvious conclusions to be drawn. We welcome the stranger as stranger, because the stranger reminds us of what we have, of God’s care for us, and in responding to the stranger, we live out for them and for ourselves the reality of what God has already done. And the welcome of the stranger will include such things as giving food and drink, clothing and, perhaps most importantly, time, time spent

14 This is criticised by Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 485–6. Rahner, though, is interested in how Christian theology can deal with the question of the other non-Christian in a way that does not exclude them from access to the salvific plan of God made manifest in Christ. In other words, this is an intra-Christian problem, or as Rahner says, it is ‘first and foremost a controversy internal to Catholic theology’. See Karl Rahner, “Observations on the Problem of ‘The Anonymous Christian’,” in Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations* Vol. 14 (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1976), 280–94, 280. This essay contains references to previous treatments of this issue by Rahner.
16 Most notably in the final document of the 2010 Cape Town meeting, the *Cape Town Commitment*: https://www.lausanne.org/content/ctc/ctcommitment.
in visiting, in being with ‘the other’ and getting to know them.

The giving of food and drink has a literal and a more metaphorical level, and should always start with the literal. Human beings may not live by bread alone, but they will not live long without bread, or without food and water and clothing. The provision of clothing especially, however, is not just a physical need, though it is that too. In the ancient cultures of the Near East nakedness was even more of a social taboo than it still is in most of our contemporary societies. To be unclothed was to be removed from social interaction. Thus, by clothing the naked we bring them back into society, and by welcoming the stranger we do the same, giving those on the margins a place of security and safety, and giving them, ultimately, life.

I think that none of this is too problematic, and even those who most fiercely oppose allowing migrants to live in our country would agree that one should not turn away or ignore the genuinely starving or refuse to clothe the naked. So perhaps we should focus most on the final action of which Jesus speaks in the story of the Final Judgement, the visiting of those in prison. Leaving aside the historical context of imprisonment in the first century (where of course the need for food, drink and clothing were paramount, since they would not be provided by anyone else), we can take this as the test case for the welcoming of migrants.

This is not, of course, to suggest that migrants are in some sense similar to prisoners, but it is to remind ourselves that this is how they are often viewed, as people who should be kept locked away because they have broken the law—hence the use of the absurd phrase ‘illegal migrants’. There are, of course, people who have broken the law, sometimes in a destructive way. And yet there is no distinction in the gospel between those who are, arguably, justly imprisoned and those who are, clearly, unjustly imprisoned. We are called to visit them regardless of their guilt or innocence.

First some figures. The November 2015 issue of the Global Terrorism Index considers figures from 2014. Terrorism is, clearly, a huge global problem, and there was an 80% increase in fatalities in 2014 compared with 2013. In 2000, there were 3,329 terrorist-related deaths; in 2014, there were 32,685. This is horrific number, though—to put it into perspective—in 2012, there were approximately 437,000 murders committed across the world and, in 2013, some 1.25 million people died as a result of traffic accidents. This is in no way to wish to compare one violent death with another or to minimise the felt impact of terrorism, but to set out the actual, as opposed to the perceived, risks.

In the Global Terrorism Index there is a short contribution on the question of migration and terrorism. The first point to be made is that we are undoubtedly facing a huge problem, caused by the ongoing civil war in Syria, and what

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17 See on this, David Hutchinson Edgar, Has God Not Chosen the Poor? The Social Setting of the Epistle of James (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001); see also Bruce Longenecker, Remember the Poor: Paul, Poverty, and the Greco-Roman World (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010).


19 Global Terrorism Index 2015, 2.


21 The figures are from the World Health Organisation: www.who.int/gho/road_safety/mortality/traffic_deaths_number/en.

22 Dr Khalid Koser and Amy E. Cunningham, ‘Migration, violent extremism and terrorism: Myths and realities’, in Global Terrorism Index 2015, 83–5.
amounts to civil war in Iraq and Afghanistan. The war in Syria has resulted in one in three Syrians having to leave their place of residence.\textsuperscript{23} Most who have left the country are housed in refugee camps in countries such as Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey,\textsuperscript{24} but clearly a significant number have attempted to make their way to EU countries,\textsuperscript{25} many hoping to settle in countries such as Germany, France, the UK or in the Scandinavian countries. Again, without wishing to deny the large numbers of people involved, we should also recognise that the figure of just over one million refugees in 2015 that is often quoted amounts to approximately 0.25\% of the total EU population (and approximately 0.15\% of the total European population). To put this again into some more manageable perspective, in a small town of 5,000 people, that would mean about twelve new people moving in, or in a city like Plzen with some 167,500 inhabitants, it means an extra 420 people, considerably less than the number of students who come each year to study at the university. In other words, whilst the numbers are not negligible, neither are they unimaginably large.

The second question is whether migrants themselves are prone to become terrorists. Most migrants have left their homes because they are fleeing state-sponsored or other forms of terrorism. It is possible, though, that leaving people stuck in refugee camps may, long-term, prove more likely to radicalise people.\textsuperscript{26} Incarcerating asylum-seekers is, at best, likely to cause long-term psycho-social problems, and to create conditions for radicalisation that were not previously present. The authors of a brief report on migration and terrorism in the \textit{Global Terrorism Index} conclude that ‘far from being a reason to stem migration, the rise of violent extremism should be a reason to promote it.’\textsuperscript{27}

Of course, there is an element of risk in everything we do. So in this instance, the first task of our politicians should be to enable a proper risk assessment. Is it riskier to alienate large numbers of people, both within and outside the country, or to welcome ‘the other’, even if of course we cannot completely guarantee that there will not be problems? Either way, there is the potential of violence, so a proper appraisal of the facts needs to be made. If we are worried, it should be at the rise of far-right violence rather than the minimal risk of Islamic or other religious fundamentalism.

What are the specifics of the situation in regard to mission?\textsuperscript{28} I think we need to start by asserting our own deepest held beliefs, and one of those is that we are called to love our neighbour as ourselves, and that we cannot do this by excluding from the list of possible neighbours all those whom we have decided that we do not and

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\item[23] See figures at: www.internal-displacement.org/middle-east-and-north-africa/syria/ Of a total estimated Syrian population of about 18.5 million, some 6.6 million have left their homes, and almost a further five million have left the country.
\item[25] Eurostat, the EU Statistics Office, reports that there were 1.26 million asylum claims in EU countries in 2015, more than double the number in 2014: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Asylum_statistics
\item[26] Koser and Cunningham, “Migration, violent extremism and terrorism: Myths and realities,” \textit{Global Terrorism Index} 2015, 84.
\item[27] Ibid., 85.
\item[28] See also here the work of Jackson and Passarelli, \textit{Mapping Migration}. The theological chapter (Chapter 3), written by Darrell Jackson, is found at 39–46.
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cannot love. Even, or especially, in the unlikely case that someone who wishes to live among us would be a terrorist and thus potentially our enemy, we have a special duty of love towards them. We hear, even in the Czech Republic, politicians who call on Christian values as a reason for excluding ‘the other’, especially the Muslim ‘other’. But if our Christian beliefs and values mean anything, they mean that we should love and welcome ‘the other’, regardless of whether it is to our direct benefit—‘for sinners also love those who love them’ (Luke 6:32).

Furthermore, to be recognised as amongst those whom Jesus considers as belonging under the reign of God, and therefore followers of Jesus, it is necessary to welcome, feed, clothe and visit ‘the other’. This is not something apart from the mission of making disciples and baptising, but an integral part of it, because if we do not do it, we cannot make disciples and baptise because we are not followers of the Lord. In our complex modern world, the precise ways in which we do this will differ. But each of us has the opportunity to do something to help, by engaging in conversation with our neighbours who may, through ignorance or fear or prejudice, show antagonism to ‘the (migrant) other’. Even if we cannot always—or even often—change their mind, we can and should say that, precisely as Christians, we are not frightened of the appearance of Muslims or other refugees amongst us, but welcome them because they are the least of the sisters and brothers of Jesus.

Conclusion

In this brief paper, I have argued, through an analysis of the story of the Final Judgement in Matt 25, that the care of ‘the other’ in need is an integral part of the mission of the Christian church. It is not so much something that is done alongside proclamation, but it is proclamation in deed, the praxis of kerygma. To follow Jesus is to do as Jesus did, both in his words and in his actions, which together form a whole. Therefore, to welcome ‘the other’ is never an optional extra for Christians. It is our task as Christians to call our governments to task when they refuse to welcome ‘the other’, or when they try to stigmatise ‘the other’ as terrorist, threat and risk.

We do well not to underestimate the fear of the unknown that lies behind the rejection of ‘the other’ by some of our fellow citizens. It is a genuine fear, and not entirely ungrounded. But we should then, as individuals and as churches, do all we can to help people realise that their fear is largely misplaced. We should speak out about the duty and the privilege of loving ‘the other’, of caring for those in need, and of showing them the best of our values and our lives. We speak about a Christian Europe, but a Europe that excludes, and that preaches hate, is not Christian and is not worth defending. Throughout its history, Europeans have tolerated, and at times even welcomed, ‘the other’, and when they have done so, it has enriched them. The history of this is admittedly mixed, with plenty of negative examples, but we can reclaim the centrality of love of the neighbour as the driving force of Christian life and mission, and seek to revive the best cases and make them the norm.

Although terrorist acts in Europe are very rare (though more common than they once were), they do unfortunately succeed in instilling a sense of fear into people. But acts of love also occur, and an act of love may have less direct media impact than an act of hate, but in the long term it can also change the world. By refusing to reject and hate ‘the other’, because of their religion or their race or their language, or for any other reason, we are saying a firm ‘no’ to terrorism, and ‘yes’ to the possibility of the brothers and sisters of Jesus living together in peace and love. This is our opportunity, this is our mission.

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29 See Jackson and Passarelli, Mapping Migration, 43.
The Role of Religion for the Integration of Migrants in Europe

Some Reflections

Doris Peschke

Religion as a factor of integration—or perhaps more aptly disintegration—has been the focus of much discussion since September 11, 2001. After 9/11 and other similar acts, religious fundamentalists have claimed religion as a justification for criminal and terrorist acts that have posed a security threat or caused immense damage to many societies. Religious fundamentalism, however, rarely involves mainstream religion, and is often part of religious affiliations that may conflate violent extremism with passionate religious belief.

States which desire to fulfill their responsibility to uphold security will likely seek to control and prohibit fundamentalist religious practice, particularly when it threatens the lives of citizens or the fundamental values of a nation. At the same time, European states have taken on the obligation to ensure that “[e]veryone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief, in worship, teaching, practice and observance”1. Striking a balance is therefore paramount.

Migration has led to ethnic diversity and religious diversity across Europe. An estimated 26 million Christian immigrants (56% of the foreign-born population) and nearly 13 million Muslim immigrants (27%) live in the 27 countries of the European Union. However, when internal migration within the European Union is excluded, and only people born outside of the 27 E.U. nations are counted as immigrants, the share of Christian immigrants (42%) and the share of Muslim immigrants (39%) are much closer. Nevertheless, Christian immigrants (about 13 million) still clearly outnumber Muslim immigrants (about 12 million).2 As a result of migration, all major world religions can nowadays be found in Europe; however, given the fact that the majority of persons move within Europe but also considering the raise of Christianity in the Southern hemisphere, the majority of migrants in Europe today belong to Christian churches.

Despite this reality, the majority of Europeans generally do not perceive their countries as immigration countries. The mobility of Europeans is cherished—it is a fundamental freedom for citizens of the European Union (EU) as laid down in the EU Treaty. However, migration from outside the EU remains largely disputed by the publics and governments of European Member States.

In order to investigate the role of religion in integration I shall focus here on the role and views of Christian churches. The Churches’ Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) represents European Protestant and Orthodox churches

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which are active in advocacy and integration work with migrants and refugees.

The first paragraph considers how religion is experienced by migrants in Europe. A second part of the reflections presented here will then specify the particular role of Christian churches, before a concluding section will offer a consideration of governmental, respectively institutional responses.

How Does Religion Play a Role in the Life of Migrants?

Religion may play a role at different levels of migrants’ individual and collective life:

- Religion can constitute a very personal issue regarding the spiritual life of an individual.
- It may instigate community building, or even may become the basic justification for community life.
- At national level, religion can also be seen as an instrument for political and social cohesion, though on the contrary some states choose to leave religious issues completely in the private sphere. Religion can also become a major cause of conflict within a state.

All three aspects may affect the way migrants integrate with their host societies. Not only are individuals influenced by religion, but community life and the internal cohesion of a country may be as well. I consider each of these dimensions in turn.

Religion and personal identity

For many persons religion is a component of their personal identity. Their religion is the basis for their value system, which also shapes their daily life. The teachings, the traditions and the habits of a particular religion will influence those who believe in it, shaping their behaviour and their way of approaching situations, and how they relate to one another and to others. When religion is an important part of an individual’s identity, even if such a person migrates to another country he or she will carry with him or her these elements of faith.

Religion may also become an important part of the identity of a migrant, even if he or she had rather little interest in religious matters until leaving his or her home country. In new situations such as those incurred through the process of migration, having left behind family and social links, individuals may join religious communities more eagerly, not least because they may feel the need to defend their identities.

Whether religion serves as a positive or negative factor in the personal process of integration depends in part on how this religion, and religion in general, is perceived and lived in the host country. In some cases religion can serve as an isolating force, while in others it creates possibilities for a sense of belonging. Religion may, moreover, become an instrument and opportunity for migrants to develop a transnational identity, or one that crosses borders from the host society to the sending society. In other words, the migrant may define for him or herself a new identity comprising components from both societies. Religion may help to add plausibility and relevance to this process, for instance in intertwining individual biographies with religious narratives.

Religion and culture, both of the host and origin country, interact very directly, while at the same time it is important to distinguish between culture and religion—for example by recognizing
that religion is not just a part of culture but in- 
forms, shapes and challenges it as well\(^3\). A trans- 
national identity would not be just an amalgam of two cultures but something completely new, something which may prove valuable for both societies. A precondition for establishing such an identity is an open and tolerant receiving soci- 
ety, where the local faith communities also acknowledge and practise such values.

Religious convictions and rules influence reli- 
gious believers in nearly all parts of daily life: 
whether they may concern prayer times, wor- 
ship rituals, religious holidays, fasting times, or 
rules on the preparation of food. In addition, 
health and health care may be affected by reli- 
gion as well. We may think here of gender-re-
lated religious prescriptions and traditions 
which migrants seek to maintain in the host coun-
tries. For instance certain migrant women may find it difficult to access health services be- 
because of their religious beliefs.

The education of children is also widely based on 
religious values or religiously inspired tradi-
tions, as is the setup of family life. The well-
known conflict between first and second gener-
ation in migrant communities is often centred about the varying degree of intensity in religious practice, which sometimes differs across gener-
ations. This becomes particularly evident when second generation migrants, often born and 
raised in the host country claim their rights on 
integration and full political and economic par-
ticipation on the grounds of a perfect assimila-
tion of their peers’ (distant) social and religious attitudes.

Religious laws further influence working condi-
tions, the rhythm of the workday, and how free time should be spent. For example, clothing and 
food rules may impede migrants from working in 
certain types of employment, for instance those handling alcohol, or there may be issues of ‘service’ that conflict with clothing and food norms. The question of equal rights for men and 
women may create critical situations where these come in conflict with interpretations of re-
ligious principles. The Employment Act 1989\(^4\) in 
Britain, by way of illustration, exempts turban-
wearing Sikhs from requirements to wear safety helmets on construction sites.

Religion and community life

Often religion is not only a matter of personal conviction; the believer may be requested to 
participate actively in community life, as a non-
renounceable part of his or her faith. If believers migrate abroad, they will put much energy into 
finding or rebuilding in the host country a faith community in which they can actively live out their faith.

The degree of religious observance in migrant 
communities can have a positive or a negative ef-
fect on the integration process. They may pro-
vide the migrant—in the first phase of integra-
tion—a feeling of home and belonging which in-
culcates a sense of security and mutual support.

However, if over the long term these communi-
ties become closed and/or marginalised by the 
host society, creating a ghetto-like situation, this could become counterproductive for the inte-
gration process. ‘Parallel lives’ may arise, which may in turn impede communication between the 
host society and migrants. On the other hand if 
such a community is an open or even a mixed

\(^3\) Churches’ Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) and Conference of European Churches (CEC), *Response to the Council of Europe White Paper Consultation on Intercultural Dialogue*, May 2007 (http://www. cec-

community with migrant and autochthonous members, where a common faith is the binding link, this may serve as a bridge between these communities and allow for a smoother integration process.

Finally the religious community may play an important role in directing migration movements. Sometimes migrants choose the country or even the town of destination because of particular religious links in that place. They may be aware that in a certain city there is a community which professes the same creed and where it will be easier to feel at home and to receive support. In this way religion may become a pull factor for migration, as has already occurred with Christians from the Middle East. Hagan and Ebaugh provide evidence for this point in their study of Mayan immigrants from Guatemala to Houston, Texas. They describe how migrants use religion in all stages of the migration process, including initial decision-making, preparation, the journey, the arrival, in settlement, and in the development of subsequent transitional linkages.

Religion and the state

As long as society was considered homogenous, governments did not consider the question of religion a priority, despite the fact that no society has ever been totally homogeneous and migration has always existed. Today migration is a structural factor affecting all states, as they are heterogeneous, religiously diverse societies. However, one result of the September 11, 2001 attacks is that religion has since been perceived as more of a threat than an opportunity for immigrant integration and societal cohesion by the public authorities and many who live in migrant-receiving societies.

Merely focusing on fears of violent extremism ignores more comprehensive modes in which religion affects the public administration of migrant-receiving countries. The role of religion within the legal system and administrative functioning of states differs widely across the world, and indeed in Europe. There can be total division between religion and state, or religion can be a dominant factor affecting the design of legislation and administrative outputs. In between these two extremes there is a large spectrum of diverse approaches to the question of the public treatment of religion.

Problems may arise if migrants who come from one system must cope with the opposite situation in the host country. An example could be a person or a whole community which derive from a state which operates under Sharia law and now must learn to live in a secularised state in the industrialised world. The religious needs, the strong convictions, and values these persons carry with them may create conflicts with the policies and the way of life in the host country. Social cohesion may be put at risk. This becomes even more important when religious institutions from the country of origin continue to influence the life of migrant communities in a country of immigration.

As previously mentioned, religion can be important for all parts of daily life, and legislation and public administration will have to keep this in mind when designing policies for migrant populations.

To take just a few examples by way of illustration: the public health system may be affected, as states may grapple with whether and how to provide culturally-sensitive care; labour legislation needs to consider the issue as well, considering for instance workplace accommodation with respect to migrant workers’ religious pre-

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scripts; and in schools and educational institutions problems may arise from the confrontation of a public and private concept of religion. The issue of religious schools, and how they accommodate various faith communities, is of fundamental importance in this regard, and in Europe alone a whole range of diverse approaches to religious education can be observed. Most obviously, France in 2004 decided to prohibit the wearing of headscarves in schools in order to respect the principles of French secularism. Furthermore, commerce and industry may be influenced by consumer behaviour based on religious rules and the same may be said for cultural and scientific work.

A number of lessons can be drawn from these reflections among which the following salient points merit to be highlighted:

1. Migrants need to express and to live their religious creed. This can be a tool for stabilisation, allowing them to avoid marginalisation. Meanwhile, the loss of religious identity may lead to the loss of ethical values, which can cause migrants to feel even more disoriented and uprooted in the host society.

2. Religious communities of the host society and of immigrant communities could promote exchange and sharing, thereby serving as a bridge for integration. These links can help avoid marginalisation and frustration of migrant faith communities, which furthermore can help prevent radicalisation.

3. The religious communities of the host society may be enriched by the contributions of migrant religious communities. Intercultural experiences can be fostered and eventually transferred into other sectors of social life. Social capital, thought to be of basic importance for social cohesion, will be increased if the religious experience of migration movements is addressed appropriately.

All stakeholders in the society and governments must work together to pursue this aim.

What Could Be the Role of Christian Churches in Immigrant Integration?

Many European countries either have nationally recognised Christian churches or historical connections with Christianity. For the reasons suggested above—that religion plays a central part in the daily lives of migrants, in the development of communities, and in defining how the state should respond to new migration—it is plausible that religious organizations like churches can have a significant impact on migrant integration. However, is this something with which they should feel compelled to get involved? And how should they go about doing so? This section considers these questions.

Why should churches feel the need or the wish to become active in this field?

Churches are faith communities and as such have a religious mandate, which compels them act. More practically, many migrants are or have become Christians. Consequently, churches will better serve their constituents if they are sensitive to the needs of migrant populations among their membership.

The Christian mandate is based on the Bible, from which through a meticulous process of theological interpretation Christians elaborate their code of conduct. A careful hermeneutical analysis of biblical references related to migrants can offer valuable ethical insights and directives which Churches and Christians should respect when dealing with migrant populations. Some of these are:

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1. Human dignity must be respected in any case and in any situation.
2. Christians should love their neighbours—migrants may become neighbours.
3. Migrants and refugees must be received and protected.
4. All human beings are ‘citizens in the household of God.’ This means that they are equal and have rights and duties like citizens; they are not only guests or ‘Gastarbeiter.’
5. Christians are convinced that there is a total truth, but that only God is the owner of this truth. Human beings have only a partial insight into this truth. Therefore, Christians must respect the conviction of others, even if these do not correspond to their own.
6. The Christian faith has at the same time both a universalistic approach, believing in the Universal Church, and a conviction that individual spirituality is part of personal faith. Both aspects are part of the Christian identity.

How should churches get involved?

On the basis of their creed churches may be involved in the field of migration in different ways. First, churches can become active parts of the civil society, in a way similar to other social actors, and assume their responsibility to protect the human dignity, rights and freedom of migrants. Secondly, one would primarily think of churches acting as faith communities, which share a creed with certain migrant communities, and thus seek to explore avenues of common religious practice and theological exchange.

In the following I will discuss each aspect in turn.

Churches defending migrants’ and refugees’ rights:

Churches are faith communities and, as such, see themselves as responsible for participating in civil society. It is not sufficient for churches to live in a ‘spiritual ghetto’. This responsibility within the state makes them active players as far as social cohesion is concerned. Churches are frequently involved in advocacy for the respect of human rights and the dignity of all human beings. Many Protestant Churches believe that in this sense churches are similar to other parts of civil society and faced with the same conditions and constraints; they do not claim a privileged status for churches. Furthermore, when working for issues of social and economic justice, many churches believe they should not distinguish between migrants of their own faith and those belonging to other creeds, but should support and work with migrants of other denominations.

This form of work takes two directions. On the one hand the advocacy work on migration and asylum policy and legislation, and on the other hand the solidarity programmes to support individuals.

In terms of advocacy on migration policy, churches monitor and lobby decision-makers in order to promote a coherent migration policy which respects values such as human rights, solidarity, sharing of responsibility, and non-discrimination.

For example, the Churches’ Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) is committed to advocacy work at the European level, mainly with the European Union and the Council of Europe. Recently CCME worked together with other Christian organisations on establishing fair conditions for forced removal measures, in order to insist on the respect of human rights of migrants and asylum seekers. CCME prepared a document with 12 basic criteria for a coherent migration...
and asylum policy. It also criticised the EU Directive on family reunification, which does not respect the rights of children and the right to live in a family. Anti-discrimination measures have been an important issue of our commitment, as has the fight against trafficking.

With regards to religious issues more specifically, churches also lobby and monitor progress on religious freedom. They seek freedom not only for their own communities but also for other creeds and faith communities. Churches insist on appropriate legislation as regards religious freedom. There must be full respect for religious minorities, even if these are not Christian. In this context the debate on common values—particularly on how far faith communities can push their right to promote certain religious rules which may seem not compatible with the perceived basic values of the host community—requires special attention. A balance must be found between religious freedom of any particular religious community and the basic values and the freedom of all other citizens and communities which the state has the duty to protect.

With regards to solidarity and support for migrants, European churches promote and implement programmes of mutual support for migrants in order to encourage their integration and full access to equal rights in all parts of civil life and society. They run programmes on housing, education, access to the labour market, counselling for migrants and refugees, legal assistance and empowerment by leadership training, and support to migrant associations. Churches promote language schools and courses for vocational training, as well as they support refugees who wish to study or to get a professional formation. They run homes for refugees and for unaccompanied minors, for mothers with small children, and for other vulnerable groups. They also protect women who have become victims of trafficking and violence.

Host and migrant church collaborations: ‘Uniting in diversity—to be church together’

A particular question arises when migrants and refugees share the same creed as a religious institution in the host state. Because many migrants are Christians, churches are not merely involved in assisting migrants with their social needs or giving them legal assistance in order to defend their rights. There is also a spiritual link with important theological implications.

Migrants who belong to European churches are not guests but equal partners in these churches. This is important to state, although European churches are not yet always aware of this fact and its implications.

It is a great opportunity that in church people of all stripes can meet on equal footing. Economic, social or cultural status should not be of any importance. All church members are partners with equal rights and duties. This may be the basic understanding of churches but reality sometimes does not live up to these ideals. In many cases churches provide patronising assistance without drilling down into the deeper questions, such as how to engage migrant partners and empower them. In this respect Christian congregations often resemble society at large.

The reverse—where migrants have difficulties incorporating into the existing Christian community—can also occur. The missionary process has begun to be inverted. Missions are no longer primarily going from North to South; instead, Christians from the Southern hemisphere often have a strong missionary attitude towards the secularised industrialised World. It is not always easy for existing communities to accept this, because it is easier to welcome a guest than a full participant in internal ecclesial decision-making processes. If immigrant Christians seek to change existing liturgy or to introduce new theological thinking, many European churches may oppose these trends.
Within Christian churches in Europe a similar process is taking place as in European society as a whole. How can we live together in a multi- or intercultural environment? Churches have probably an even bigger responsibility in finding ways to make these relationships work, as this is part of their creed. As a letter of St. Paul’s notes, they should be “...no longer guests but citizens...” (Eph. 2,19). Churches must find ways to make this a reality within their own communities.

Building an intercultural reality

European churches approach this situation of multicultural transformations in very different ways: In some countries, the local churches have chosen to encourage a separate development of migrant and native churches. As a result, migrant churches have prospered and are in some countries now majority churches, as for instance 'black majority churches’ in the UK.

In others, the phenomenon was seen mainly as a question of providing assistance. Migrant churches started to develop and the local churches supported them often financially without trying to build up a real mutual understanding and exchange.

We find a particular context and approach within local minority churches, such as the Protestant churches in Southern European countries. For instance, in Italy migrants constitute at least half of the Italian Protestants, representing a very small minority in a predominantly Catholic country. Migrants can be found worshipping in all Italian Protestant churches, and in many communities they are the majority population, often representing more than 60 percent of membership⁷. The Italian Protestant churches were unprepared for this situation and have undertaken various models of cohabitation, sharing and learning. In the course of this process these churches confronted themselves with a number of questions: how can migrant believers become fully equal members of their local churches? How can cultural and theological differences become a resource and not a source of conflict in a multi- or intercultural community?

When it is difficult for migrants to successfully merge into the host community’s religious life, they will often seek other ways to fulfil their desire for worship. It may be still too early to judge what model has the best prospect of ensuring an intercultural community where all parts fit in the society, have equal rights, and are empowered to share in its development. Most options have both advantages and disadvantages.

For example, many migrant Christians prefer to build their own churches which allow them to live their faith as they did at home. They may use their mother tongue and reproduce their religious traditions. This is a model often preferred by first generation migrant Christians. It certainly provides members with a sense of belonging and a feeling of home, but if links with the rest of the society are weak it may not be helpful for the integration process.

The model of the mixed congregation—where local people and migrants worship together—is another approach which can lead to very different results. However, this model has risks as well. When the local church promotes a process of assimilation and insists on migrants living their faith exactly in the same way as local people do, the migrant-origin section of the congregation may feel that their identity and values are being undercut.

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The other possibility is for all parts of the congregation to try to grow together, learning from each other and developing a new model of religious practice. This model fits well with the Christian belief in the Universal Church, where all are equal and have equal rights and duties. It would be a model of empowerment of all members, of real partnership. This is the model for which Italian Protestant churches actually aim; however, it sets a high target and thus there is a long way to go.

To be successful in reaching this objective of a faith community where each member has equal rights and possibilities is of double importance: on one hand it helps Christians to achieve some of the core requirements of their faith; and on the other it is an approach which fosters the process of integrating migrants into our societies. Positive religious integration could serve both as an example and as a tool for a broader degree of societal integration. Churches, or other faith communities, in the receiving countries could become important bridge-builders between various sectors of society, allowing for the positive exchange of ideas and the building of connections. Values of the secular society, such as democracy, human rights and active participation could be transferred through this channel, while important inputs from migrants could find their way into the receiving society. These might include community relationships, mutual support and solidarity, cultural contributions and other specialist expertise.

Among the key points to retain from the above discussion are the following aspects:

Churches and all faith communities in receiving countries have a role to play in the migration process. They can serve as a bridge between different cultures and communities, but if they do not live up to this responsibility, for example if they are exclusive or dominant or if they do not share values, power and resources, they may contribute to a negative process which alienates, frustrates and marginalises migrants.

In order to allow faith communities to play a positive role, governments will have to design and enforce appropriate legislation on both migration and asylum issues and on religious freedom. With regards to this latter point, a balance needs to be struck between the fundamental human rights and the needs of all faith communities, the respect of freedom of all citizens and values considered fundamental for the dignity of human beings and the functioning of the civil society.

Institutional Responses

As mentioned above, guarding religious freedom and providing space for religious practice of various faith groups is important in Europe, as is the principle of equality. Here I consider particularly the role of Europe as regards these issues. The European Union has the competence to act on equality on the basis of Article 13 of the Amsterdam Treaty, as well as Article 21 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU, which may become binding with the passage of the new Treaty of Lisbon. At the same time, the EU has accepted that any legislation with regard to religion shall be the sole competence of Member States and EU legislation will not interfere with national regulations.

Similar to the approach on integration of migrants, the Union has little power but a lot of influence. On integration, with the development and adoption of integration indicators, benchmarks for integration of migrants have been agreed and will be monitored. On religion, no instrument has yet been developed.

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On national or local levels however, governments have started to establish relations with faith communities, thus recognising the new diversity present in European societies. Particularly in local jurisdictions, city councils, or communes, the recognition of the role of religious community in social cohesion is more developed. At this level, migrant congregations play an enormous role in the social inclusion of marginalised ethnic minorities and newcomers in society. However, migrant congregations often lack official recognition and status as a religious community.

In the framework of the research project ‘POLITIS—Civic Participation of New Citizens’

9, an inquiry into the activation of immigrants was undertaken between 2004 and 2007. In the interviews, which did not focus specifically on religion, the role of religious communities was nevertheless referred to as an important factor. However, the most striking finding probably was that migrants’ participation in migrants’ association or congregation does not preclude their participation in mainstream society organisations. If persons are active, so may be concluded, the process of further civic engagement seems a logical step.

Providing more opportunities for migrants to engage and become active seems vital when we seek their integration and participation in society. Institutions at local, national, EU and indeed European levels can provide more space and support to active engagement by according an official status and recognition to religious communities. Many obstacles of mutual understanding in multicultural and pluri-religious societies can be addressed through developing and providing mediation, which may also help host societies to understand better the needs and aspirations of migrant newcomers.

Conclusion

While the contemporary debate may be concentrated on issues of religious fundamentalism, this paper has demonstrated that the relationship between religion and migration is far more complex. Even ‘old’ religions like Christianity can create challenging situations for individuals, communities, and governments. However, it should not be forgotten that religious organisations can also serve as social, legal, and spiritual support networks for new arrivals.

The key takeaway from this set of reflections is that religion is a core—yet often poorly understood—vehicle through which the process of migrant integration occurs. Religious communities and migrant communities can both be enriched, spiritually as well as institutionally, by building connections with each other. These relationships require a positive legislative environment, as well as openness to compromise and change from both the existing and newcomer religious representatives. Given what is at stake, it is imperative that all involved actors make the effort to foster an active and positive role for religion in the integration process.

Language, migration, religion and identity: four terms which are closely related and which mutually qualify and mutually determine each other. Certainly, each of the four terms can be taken individually and make sense, but they apply to each other as few terms do.

Language stands out as one category if we think of the significance of the ‘Word’ in the Old or the New Testament, to say nothing of the significance of language in worship—an aspect which is prominent for each and every religion. Language qualifies the inward and outward results and effects of every religion.

Language is a crucial factor in determining any religion and, I would say, from a theological and anthropological standpoint, it is a precondition for survival in any society. The significance of language becomes even more obvious in the context of migration.

If we deal with the question of migration and the formation of identity in a human being, the topics of religion and language are also of vital importance. Each society, each culture, and therefore each religion, is formulating the conditions and expectations which are imprinted on the process of identity formation. Within each identity belongs an ideology, a perspective of the world which moulds the orientation and the norm of each individual being.

Undoubtedly, this ideology or this perspective of the world is also shaped by a multitude of factors of socialisation. However, language, migration and religion play leading roles.

Language, migration, religion and identity—four terms which refer to each other, and which I would like to highlight in the following, as I elaborate on the question of how multilingualism is experienced in religious communities.

Language has always characterised human beings and has always defined them. Language as humans practise it is an acquired skill, which is only natural for them. Therefore, theology and philosophy also have always found expression in some conceptual system, usually that of the prevailing mode, or modes, of thought of the theologian or philosopher’s time.

The philosopher of speech, Wilhelm von Humboldt, characterises this anthropological peculiarity in the following words:

As a true and inexplicable wonder it (scil. the language) breaks forth from the mouth of a nation, and—very often overseen—every single day, it is even repeated in the mumble of each child...

The ‘mumbling of each child’ develops itself through socialisation into a language which, in the words of Hegel, can be determined as ‘mediation’ or ‘intercession’—the German word Hegel uses is Vermittlung. Hereby language is mediating between the human being and the world, which only becomes the world through that very act of mediation.

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In that sense, the world is always a world mediated through language. It is only by a second step, says Hegel, that language is mediating the human being within the world. Only in that second step does language become a theoretical tool in the discourse of the world.

Even if Hegel understood language in its role as mediator, we have to realise that all those insights lead to the problem of language at its beginning: if we look at the book of Genesis, we see that God has created the world by his Word.

If we argue from a theological point of view, we have to accept his Word as the beginning of every being.

In contradistinction to the Hellenistic philosophy of nature or the religious myths of creation, we have to deal in the biblical case with creatio ex nihilo—creation out of nothing! God created the world out of nothing. No being existed before the Word of God was spoken.

The Early Church father Augustine emphasises that we are not in a position to question the creative Word, because God has created everything through his word.4

In view of his own development of language, Augustine compares the ease with which he learned Latin, his vernacular, with his difficulty in learning Greek. In both cases, he identifies learning the language with learning the words. The only difference is in the method of teaching. He learned Latin ‘amidst the flattering of nurses, and the jesting and pleased laughter of elders leading’ on him, but Greek was taught with ‘the painful pressure of compulsion’.5

Next to this quite human experience of Augustine, which can be translated by the modern saying, ‘Free curiosity is of more value in learning than harsh discipline’, Augustine helps us to understand the linguistic relationship between God and humankind. Therefore, the human being occupies a particular position: it is God who speaks to him and gets into contact with him—if the human being did not exist, it is probable that God’s Word and God’s revelation would have died away in his creation. The human being and his ability to use words have co-evolved since the beginning and they influence one another. That influence goes far, and it is in this way that the human being stands in relation to God.6

This mediating role of language between God and his creation, the human being, is not only found in Christianity. For a scholar of religion, language is one of the most striking phenomena.7 Language plays an essential role in worship (prayers, liturgy), in orally handed down religious stories (myths, legends), in the delivery of dogma, in the delivery of religious convictions (mission) and in the broad field of religious rites (blessing, malediction, oath).

Language is an essential aspect of religion, and this implies not only what has been said above: but speechlessness and the failure of speech (especially in mystery cults) here also are an important aspect which should not be neglected. In more recent times, if we look at language and religion, two other aspects have become of crucial importance: non-understanding of language and multilingualism—and these especially in times of migration.

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6 Nevertheless, it needs to be stressed that God also communicates with the human being through the body, the senses and its presence. Therefore, language has not to be understood literally but can manifest itself in several ways.
Multilingualism in the Bible and Contemporary Diaspora

The theme of 'language' is not one of the most prominent topics of the Bible—language as such is dealt with only in a few passages. From the Old Testament I would recall the ætiological tale from the tower of Babel (Gen. 11) and the confusion of languages and dispersion of the tribes as a punishment from God.

In the New Testament, the story of the coming of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2) becomes important if one deals with language—especially in our case where we are dealing with migration and multilingualism in a religious setting.

That passage speaks about the wonder of Pentecost. The disciples and an indeterminate number of believers are gathered in 'one place' (v. 1). The house in which they are gathered is filled with a 'sound, like the blowing of a violent wind' (v. 2)—and 'all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit' (v. 4). As a reaction to that event, they began to speak in different languages (v. 4) and to preach 'as the Spirit enabled them'.

The believers were assembled in the house in a group which is biblically referred to as a 'house-congregation'. We are not talking about 'a temple', as is sometimes done in exegetical research.

We understand the term 'the whole house' not merely as a locality but also as something intensely personal: the whole group of residents in that house are addressed and touched by the Spirit. This implies the youngest, the employees, the servants, the farm labourers, the relatives present, the women and the paterfamilias. No one is excluded from that experience; the whole house is included!

It is a congregation of equals. Irrespective of their social position, they are all filled in the same way with the Spirit and are therefore enabled to preach and to hear the gospel in different languages. The congregation which is filled with the Holy Spirit is a congregation where every individual hears the gospel in his own language (v. 6) and therefore from a (more or less) equal position.

Although this 'linguistic individualism' undoubtedly caused many troubles and tensions, it seems that it did not bring any form of separation. The Spirit-filled congregation, with its multilingualism, seems to be the congregation which is desired by God.

In this congregation, where everyone hears the gospel in his mother tongue (v. 8), one is not giving up identity-building characteristics such as language and culture but, rather, these are included in the hearing of the gospel.

This goes hand-in-hand with the theological conviction of Paul. In the famous passage in Gal 3:28, commonly we read: 'There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Jesus Christ.' This common version would create homogeneity without making any distinction. But this is not implemented by Paul. With Paul, we can see that in Gal 2:1–11 he is already focusing on the steady diversity of the members of the congregation in Antioch—even if problems occur! In his argument, Paul is cer-
tainly not arguing in favour of removing diversity. His aim is to win the members of the congregation for a *modus vivendi* in the congregation which includes diversities and strangeness so that they grow together into a single community. It is not the difference and diversity which will be obliterated, but rather the discrimination and the degradation of human beings due to the differences in their cultural background and sexual orientation, but certainly not for their linguistic abilities.

Therefore, it makes more sense to read Gal 3:28 as: 'You are all sons of God [...] regardless of whether you are Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female, for you are all one in Jesus Christ.' In general, we can recall how, in early Christianity, intercultural and cross-boundary encounters and challenges were on the daily agenda of young congregations.

Now, having had a brief look at the biblical and pneumatological aspects of the influence of language and identity, I would like to stress the anthropological reaction of multilingualism by focussing on Christian migration from Africa to Europe. Africans who come to Europe, whatever their motives, are ‘jumping into cold water!’ The cultural differences are vast. Everyone who has stepped into a different cultural context knows what it means to overcome cultural limitations and to enter into a new context.

One of the crucial differences between westerners coming to Africa and people from Africa coming to Europe is that the former usually have a work contract for a few years and the opportunity to return to their home country, and so they have a degree of financial and social security. These are privileges that most Africans in Europe can only dream of!

The situation of Africans abroad is far more difficult: in most European countries, they have to overcome the language barrier, and they are looking for work after their arrival rather than before leaving for Europe. For Europeans coming to Africa, the work contract is the reason for their move to the new country. Again, unlike their European cousins, Africans in Europe are often confronted with a very hostile environment, which has its origins in racist ideologies. The resulting cultural shock is probably much bigger than it might be for Europeans moving to Africa.

Very often, Christian communities and congregations of African background are the places where Christians of African origin migrating to Europe take refuge. As Christians, they know that there is no Christianity without being part in the Christian family. The new relationship found in Jesus Christ can be seen as the basis of a new social relationship.

These Christian communities, often an oasis in the midst of a fairly hostile environment, are their refuges. Again, they exercise an influence on their identity.

In line with the *symbolic interactionism* of G.H. Mead, I see social reality, the whole surrounding reality of a human being, not as something static, but as a process which is mediated in a symbolic way, whereby each individual has constantly to bargain his role and his interest. In this process, identity does not become an unshakeable rock, says Mead, ‘but can be compared with a whirl in the social stream.’ Identity is influenced from different angles and finds itself in a permanent process of change.

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One could also compare identity in a situation of migration with a process of *permanent balance*—a balance between new circumstances, changes and conflicting situations.

I understand the phases of identity of Christians of African origin in the Diaspora to be along these same lines. They are constantly balancing. Their identities are similarly shaped by internal and external factors.

In order to better understand this process, I have introduced the following three phases of the process of finding identity, in which language plays a crucial role:

1. The phase of seclusion.
2. The phase of opening.
3. The phase of interculturation.

These are not evolutionary phases, where one necessarily follows the other.

They occur in theological and sociological situations, when a congregation or a church moves backwards or forwards in whatever identity phase she happens to be in. There are many possible explanations for this ebb and flow within the phases.

The growth and maturing of the next generation, who already speak the language of the new environment—for example, German—can cause the shift to the next phase, e.g. to the phase of Opening. They can bring along German friends who attend the service and the Bible study groups, and they too will have linguistic influence on other members of the congregation.

At the same time, considerable fluctuation in the membership of these congregations can also lead to regression in their identity process: churches of African origin in the Diaspora regularly welcome new members, who are still very much rooted in their African cultures and traditional approaches, and attached to their African vernaculars. These challenges can often cause congregations to split. These churches can often have to organise splits between members, one group for those who are at home in a European setting, and another for those who have recently arrived from Africa.

I am therefore talking about *alternating phases*—that is, phases which alternate between each other.

To describe them briefly, the following phenomena can be observed:

**The phase of Seclusion:**
- They speak their African vernacular (e.g. Twi, Lingala, Yoruba...) in the congregation and in private.
- Missionary enterprises rarely or never take place. Congregations and churches are often so busy with their orientation process that they are unable to run missionary activities.
- It is rare that a church in this phase will recruit people from the ‘host country’. They are mostly mono-ethnic, which leads to cultural peculiarities.
- Due to the orientation process, almost no ecumenical contacts exist. Instead, one finds a fear of proselytising.
- Due to isolation and the lack of ecumenical contacts, theological heresies are very free to develop.\\(^{14}\)

**The phase of Opening:**
- Congregations which find themselves in the phase of Opening use a European language or the former colonial language. With this, they want to demonstrate, on the one hand, that their membership is

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\(^{14}\) An example of a theological difference is to be found with the Kimbanguist Church from DR Congo, which established a ‘Kimbanguist Trinitarian Theology’ at home, but which flourished even more strongly in the context of migration and Diaspora: cf. Benjamin Simon, "Gemeinschaft und religiöse Praxis im diasporalen Kimbanguismus," *Zeitschrift für Mission* 31, No. 1/2 (2005): 40–53.
already multilingual, and on the other hand, they demonstrate their interna-
- There is an openness towards each Christian individual, irrespective of na-

- Duties include missionary activities, in-

- Ecumenical co-operation begins to show results and fruit.

The phase of Interculturation:

- Europeans have found their way into their respective congregations and are found even in leadership roles.

- There is a mutual exchange: peculiarities of the European and the African traditions influence each other. So I am using the term ‘interculturation’ to describe this mutual exchange between cultures.\(^{15}\)

- The leadership of these congregations and churches also wants to evangelise amongst Europeans, so they lead campaigns and crusades amongst them.

- Crusades demand from the congregations that they inculturate certain aspects: sermons are mostly translated into the language of the host country or even given in the appropriate vernacular. In the sermons, one focuses on subjects within a European context.\(^{16}\)

- Several languages are used as a way of interacting.

While Christian congregations of African origin are going through these three phases, language plays an important role. With an increase in self-confidence and missionary endeavour, the young congregation or church moves further from using the vernacular (the phase of seclu-

- In the phase of interculturation, there is a clear development towards one common language. In the beginning it is, for most members of a community, a foreign language. It is only in the second or third generation, where that common language may move from being an ecclesiastical language to becoming the essential language for members of the community.

This development of the three phases is an unconscious process. After a certain period of con-

- Nevertheless, I am speaking here about an unconscious process, because the language challenge adjusts itself in time.

It is different for congregations which are form-

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\(^{15}\) The term ‘interculturation’ was first used by the Catholic Theologian Joseph Blomjous. More than thirty years ago, he had already opted to speak about ‘interculturation’ instead of ‘inculturation’. The term ‘interculturation’ shows that one is not moving between ‘two monolithic systems’, but rather between ‘multiple cultural orienta-

which become one congregation through the amalgamation of several congregations. This is especially the case if cultural traditions are related to the language. Then, all linguistic groups have a strong interest in their cultural survival.

Language has an identity-forming aspect, which should not be neglected.

Religious adherents—believers—want to address God in their mother tongue. They don’t want to have to search for the right words in a foreign language while they are praying.

Nevertheless, congregation members form a family, a family which includes each of the members of the ‘house-congregation’ (Acts 2). They want to celebrate together and perceive themselves as ‘on the way,’ but this will only happen if ‘under-standing’ takes place.

To surrender to the challenges of the ‘common way’ of the congregation in a multilingual congregation, it is, in my view, necessary to call in the ‘Hermeneutics of the Stranger’.

The Hermeneutics of the Stranger as a Method of Approach to Multilingual Congregations

In his ‘Hermeneutics of the Stranger’, Theo Sundermeier sees ‘the crossing over’ in this encounter (Begegnung) in the process of migration not as a negative moment but rather as something positive—positive for both sides. On the one hand, this is demanding and, on the other, challenging to one’s identity. Therefore, plurality is seen as a blessing rather than as a threat or menace.

To recognise and accept such a plurality as an improvement, as something positive and a blessing, requires, in my view, that we come together and get to know each other in a patient way.

So the four steps which Sundermeier develops in his ‘Hermeneutics of the Stranger’ can help in the process of orientation and can act as a support on the way together.

Sundermeier distinguishes the following four levels:

1. ‘The Level of Phenomena’, which describes and analyses the environment.
2. ‘The Level of Signs’, in which the context is taken into account.
3. ‘The Level of Symbols’, in which symbols are compared and in which one develops a certain empathy for the stranger and ‘the other’.
4. ‘The Level of Relevance’, which brings us, the Stranger, closer, but without any mutual loss of respect.

In the following, I would like to look at these four levels from the perspective of multilingualism and migration, and the extent to which they can be useful to us on our path towards living together in a brotherly and sisterly way.

The level of phenomena

During the first intercultural meeting, where language, the colour of skin, social aspects and many other differences are apparent, some kind of threat can emerge. Too much foreignness at one time can evoke fear or a state of anxiety. These can lead us to rush to conclusions without proper reflection. They narrow the perspective and allow for only a very selective interpretation.

18 This ‘advance’ can be understood culturally, socially and religiously under others.
and explanation. One of the most difficult exercises at this point is to abstain from judgement and to let the phenomena have a neutral effect on us.

These cultural expressions lead to a certain distance and, to a certain extent, this distance is necessary. At this point, such a distance is perfectly legitimate.

**The level of signs**

Each culture presents itself to the outside. When one arrives in a country with a foreign culture, one attracts attention: one is not aware what the customs and the rules are, one doesn’t know whether one’s behaviour is appropriate for the culture or not. One is not sure when to be quiet or when to talk, not sure when to sit down or when to stand up, and so on.

Each culture has to be felt, has to be heard, has to be listened to, and has its unique tastes and smells.

In semiotics, much has already been elaborated on the meaning of signs in cultural contexts: aspects such as language, gestures, clothes and rules of behaviour are all signs which unite a group inwardly and demarcate a group outwardly. These are limiting markings.

When several cultures come together and wish to co-exist, they all have these limiting markings, so it would be convenient to be able to read these foreign signs.

This step requires a certain amount of sympathy. To face the signs of the others with sympathy means, in the first instance, not understanding them as signs of demarcation directed towards us, but rather as signals of ‘being different’, set up as signs of protection for both sides.

Here sympathy implies a willingness to learn and an openness to foreign signs and cultural peculiarities. Nevertheless, they should be read in their context and not be detached from it.

Ethnological research speaks here about ‘participatory observation’: one starts to understand by participation, without becoming a part of it totally, without ‘going native’. One starts to accept and tolerate the unfamiliar signs, dishes and the foreign mimic, and one eventually begins to understand.

As a hermeneutical key to this understanding, one can see the intercultural coming together during celebrations, festivities and ecumenical encounters. These are the events which help to overcome foreignness, events in which one is taken by the hand and led through ritual behaviour, leading us, in effect, through the unknown. This participation and the consequent observation precede understanding.

**The level of symbols**

If, on the one hand, at the level of signs, we are talking about understanding, on the other hand, this understanding implies also, to a certain extent, alienating oneself from one’s own culture and embarking on the new. Nevertheless, I am not here suggesting that one becomes part of the new, of the foreignness, or giving up a hitherto existing identity.

Those who leave their culture in favour of another will soon realise that, most of the time, they have a marginalised position in the new context and culture. If I talk about alienation, I mean empathy. One develops empathy for the

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20 By ‘cultural phenomena’, I include language, cooking, smells and so on.
foreignness, the stranger: one is able to transfer oneself into the culture of the stranger. One becomes acquainted with the cultural changes and the linguistic challenge.  

The level of relevance

The fourth and final level of the Hermeneutics of the Stranger is best described by using the term ‘re-spect’. It is a term which is always qualified by a certain relationship. If we look at the word re-spect etymologically, it deals with looking backwards—taking a careful look back. No one will be overwhelmed or deluged with different opinions. Here, where respect rules, the most important heritage of the Enlightenment has succeeded: the equality and equation of every single human is presumed. This is the case, regardless of one’s cultural, ethnic or linguistic origin. Here, respect should not be regarded as a type of behaviour which bulldozes, but rather, we refer to a recognition of respect. The stranger with his foreign cultural assets is recognised and accepted as an individual person, with his own identity and, as such, we owe him respect.

Pluralism as Advance: a Progress in Process

In times where globalisation is going hand-in-hand with pluralism and migration, it’s a great help to be aware of biblical plurality and not to be led by a narrow human outlook, stimulated by ethical and cultural barriers. As we highlighted at the first step, plurality of language is a sign of a spirit-filled congregation. Language is mediation! It is this, and only this, which makes interpersonal relationships possible. But it is not only interpersonal relationships that are shaped by language; it is also the Word of God, which addresses us humans. It is with (any kind of) language that he builds and nourishes the relationship between him and ourselves. Language can be seen as fundamental to the interrelation and the interaction between God and humans. Language presupposes the revelation in Jesus Christ.

Therefore, congregations and churches with multiple languages do have a variety of perspectives on issues concerning the community and interaction.

In a second step, we saw in biblical texts how far diversity, plurality and a variety of languages and the will of God are interacting. The wonder of Pentecost created amongst humans a reflection of God’s longing for multilingualism. It seeks—it even creates—cultural and linguistic pluralism! God wants this cultural abundance and cultural variety. From the moment of the incarnation of his son Jesus Christ, he made obvious that contextualisation is part of his being. It does not thwart God’s plans, if we are guided by cultural diversity.

Plurality, on this occasion, is understood as a situation willed by God. Therefore, we should not speak of plurality as a sacrifice or a threat, but rather as an improvement and as something positive.

Therefore, congregations and churches of multiple languages are foreseen in the will of God and his gift of variety.

Since language and culture are, first of all, matters which divide and segregate, one has to be clear about the methodological steps one chooses. To enhance such a process consciously, we have seen that, on the third step, the ‘Hermeneutics of the Stranger’ is a considerable help in overcoming barriers encountered in situations

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Faith and Security in the Light of Current Migrant Issues in Germany

With Special Attention to Women’s Experiences

Uta Andrée

This article deals with the question of how migration, security/insecurity and faith are interrelated. I was invited to develop this contribution for a debate which was going on in Kenya, where theologians and researchers in religion ask about the interrelatedness of social and existential security and faith, and within this topic about the experience of insecurity and migration. Many African countries are experiencing a deep security crisis, and churches and bodies of civil society are trying to understand and react to this threatening situation.¹

Before I began reading round this topic, it became clear to me that it was difficult to relate faith and security in a merely theoretical way. The first two paragraphs of this article which are biblical reflections on faith and security could not be regarded as satisfactory if they did not echo the reality of migrants in Germany and the voices of the women who tell us their story.

¹ The Centre for Christian-Muslim Relations in Eastleigh of St Paul’s University and Egerton University hosted the Conference on ‘Faith and (In) security in Africa’, 4th–8th July 2016.
If we consider the threefold combination of migration, faith and security/insecurity, migration seems to be the key to understanding the two other subjects. Talking with refugees, migrants, asylum-seekers and other who are 'victims of realities that oblige them to leave and of realities that they find in the society where they arrive', we immediately come up against issues of faith and of security/insecurity. Both seem to be intrinsically related to migration. Every migrant will refer to any kind of protection, providence or even the absence of God, but there is no absence of a deep consciousness of a reality called God. Even the most commonplace experiences are often related to God. A single migrant living on the streets of Hamburg once told me that God is good: in Hamburg he provides a natural shower every day, and while many people may not like the steady rain in Hamburg for him this comes from God. And the second issue that comes up in many conversations with migrants and people who live in socially unstable conditions is that of security and insecurity. The biggest threat is insecurity: never knowing anything about one's own future is the greatest form of insecurity. But there are many more tangible factors related to this experience: the state authorities of the foreign country, arbitrary treatment, attacks by other foreigners or the local population, being recognised as illegal or even being recognised as someone who did something wrong, even if you don't know what it was, and how to conduct oneself.

Migrating people have a deep understanding and feeling for matters of faith and of insecurity. In their lives, both aspects come together in a very personal way. That's why I understand the authentic voices of three women who live in Germany under very different circumstances, but who, in Section Five of this article, talk about similar experiences—and these form the heart of my considerations.

Security from a Biblical Perspective

But first let's examine the sources of our faith: how does the Bible as a testimony of faith talk about security/insecurity and migration?

'Leave behind your security in the world and achieve heavenly security.' This can be somehow formulated as a slogan that stands behind many implicit calls that we find in biblical texts.

I will take briefly three examples:

Psalm 69:1–4, 31, 34

Save me, O God, for the waters have come up to my neck. I sink in deep mire, where there is no foothold; I have come into deep waters, and the flood sweeps over me. I am weary with my crying; my throat is parched. My eyes grow dim with waiting for my God. I will praise the name of God with a song I will magnify him with thanksgiving. For the Lord hears the needy, and does not despise his own that are in bonds.

Someone is praying to the Lord. He is in deep tribulation. Nothing is secure in his life; these few verses of the beginning of the psalm describe the threat that comes from the forces of nature; water is all around; the praying person is in danger of drowning. Other passages of this
long lamentation also describe his totally unstable situation regarding the community he lives in. People mock him (verses 8 and 12) and hate him (verse 5). Judges grieve him (verse 13). He lost contact with his family (verse 9). He is probably trapped in a deep hole; and his keepers don’t give him food or water (verses 15, 16 and 22). This psalm explores the situation of someone who has lost every kind of security. And then in contrast with this scene, the psalm ends with the praise of the Lord. The experience of loss is intimately connected with trust in God. And we can—daringly—deduce that such loss is the precondition of the deep insight the praying person gains in God’s providence. In this regard, we could also go back to Job and his suffering, which deprives him of all earthly joy, yet doesn’t separate him from God.


As they were going along the road, someone said to him, “I will follow you wherever you go.” And Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.” To another he said, “Follow me.” But he said, “Lord, first let me go and bury my father.” But Jesus said to him, “Let the dead bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.” Another said, “I will follow you, Lord; but let me first say farewell to those at my home.” Jesus said to him, “No one who puts a hand to the plough and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.”

To follow Jesus means leaving behind your normal life. Everything that counts in the world—a secure home and place of refuge, family, parents and friends—is denied in these strong words that Jesus addresses to those who want to follow him. The new life in Jesus goes along with a radical rupture with the old. Being called or fit for the kingdom of God implies earthly insecurity.

2 Corinthians 12:9–10

The Lord said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.” So, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell within me. Therefore I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions and calamities for the sake of Christ; for whenever I am weak, then I am strong.

Paul’s missionary experience was full of setbacks and trials. Not only the burden of traveling and his life as a wanderer afflicted his life. It is also assumed by many exegetes that Paul suffered from a disability or illness (‘A thorn was given to me in the flesh’—2 Cor 12:7; ‘See what large letters I make when I am writing in my own hand’—Gal 6:11; ‘It was because of a physical infirmity that I first announced the gospel to you’—Gal 4:13–15). Despite these conditions, Paul gives thanks for his weakness. God inverts earthly values, convictions and appearances. We can easily include insecurity as part of his weakness, despite which Paul is happy to persevere for the sake of Christ.

Migration in the mirror of biblical texts—a warning

Many of the biblical allusions to the renouncing or loss of security in the world are linked with symbolic or actual migration settings. People leave their familiar dwelling places and set out. We know many biblical figures chosen by God who only fulfil the will of God while migrating or being displaced to new places, a new future, or new settling. I don’t have to repeat here the various stories of Abraham, Hagar, Joseph, Ruth, the holy family—to mention only a few.

Settling, having a stable home, living in peace is never guaranteed in the biblical stories. Even the dwelling of God himself in the newly-built or rebuilt temple in Jerusalem causes many debates and uncertainties (2 Sam 7,1–7; Hag 1,2–11).
If we now apply these reflections on the biblical findings to the situation of today’s migrants, we run the risk of trivializing the sufferings of all these refugees, homeless and migrating people, and make their fate appear trivial. We will face this same danger when examining systematic theological reflection on security.

That’s why we should put an emphasis on the fact that the biblical appreciation of migration is a secondary reaction to the experience of the people. The appreciation of migration has to be understood as a way of interpreting a difficult situation in which people have sought God’s will and presence in their endangered lives. Under God, the appreciation of migration means making sense of migrants, with God choosing to align himself with the poor and the homeless, the persecuted and the weak. A biblical appreciation of migration should be understood as a tool of interpretation exclusively available to those who share this particular experience. It is misrepresenting God’s view of his people if we glorify migration or even migrants, without realising that their situation can only be seen as God’s will by the migrants themselves rather than by those who sit in warm and comfortable houses.

Jorge Castillo Guerra points to the ‘discernment that migrants represent a major sign of the presence of God within our contemporary history’. The starting point of a theology of migration for him is ‘the faith, experience, and sapiential knowledge of the migrants’. But we who are not migrants must be careful not to be the ones who claim, albeit correctly, how God is present in the lives of migrants; it is only they themselves that can say this. We are listeners and learners who can only participate in the presence of God if we truly search for fellowship with those who are signs of the presence of God.

Security from a Lutheran Perspective

In the current revival of Martin Luther’s theology—coinciding with the 500th anniversary of the publication of his Ninety-Five Theses in 2017—it is often quoted that Luther distinguishes between security (securitas) and certainty (certitudo). The allusion made to this distinction states that securitas is a doubtful state and that certitudo is what brings people to a healthy self-understanding. On this interpretation, securitas sounds like property, material abundance, satiety and selfishness, while certitudo stands rather for a positive certainty, a relaxed self-awareness that takes into account the relativity of all responsibility for oneself.

Securitas and certitudo became the keynotes for today’s Sunday sermons and theological reflection to indicate right and wrong self-consciousness and lifestyle.

If we carry this very popular conviction over to the migration issue, we fall again into the huge error of romanticizing migration as an example of certitudo. Whoever is cast into a situation where nothing is stable or taken for granted, can easily lose the security of a wealthy, settled, secure existence. The most cynical expression of this would sound something like this: How fortunate are those who suffer from the deprivation of migration, because they have the chance to experience real life.

But what did Luther really say? How can we learn from his conviction and avoid such absurd cynicism? We first have to acknowledge that Luther drew a clear distinction between issues of heaven and issues of earth, as he has made clear in his distinction between the two kingdoms, realms or regimes. God rules in two spheres: one is the kingdom to his left and other is the kingdom to his right. The left-hand kingdom is determined by the earthly conditions of everyday life.

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3 Ibid., 243.
4 Ibid., 253.
in the community. In the left-hand kingdom, the rules and laws are executed by kings and chancellors, lawyers and hangmen, who carry out what is demanded by God’s sovereignty. Security is an important issue in this sphere, and its provision one of society’s greatest achievements. There is nothing negative about securitas in this context. That’s why Luther took his stand on the side of the princes and dukes, when the peasants tried to revolt against the leaders of their time. Security carries a high value and—in Luther’s mind—had to be defended even at the cost of unjust conditions in a state.

Certitudo is something that Luther can only apply to the affairs of the right-hand kingdom, including the distinction between securitas and certitudo. God rules through the gospel: it is the Word and grace which is predominant in the right-hand kingdom. Securitas and certitudo in this respect refer to salvation. What does it mean to be certain of salvation? That is the question in the right-hand kingdom. Here the negative description of securitas is relevant: a person—but especially the church—who is sure of salvation, fails in his or her understanding of it. Self-assurance in salvation implies the harsh judgement of God. Whoever is certain about his own salvation will settle back and cultivate the status quo of him or her being the homo incurvatus in se ipsum (‘turned/curved inward on oneself’). Satan is challenging us here on earth, that’s why we can never be certain about our heavenly salvation. That’s when certitudo comes into the discussion. Luther prefers to talk about certitudo salvationis. This kind of security or certainty is more about longing than being. Certitudo expresses more a certainty about a relationship than about facts. To be sure, knowing that God loves me is different from being certain that God will let me into paradise at the end of my life. Certitudo as an attitude of faith is fine. But this kind of security can also turn sour, while certitudo can only be adequate if it expresses hope rather than conviction.

This short excursion into the Reformation tradition shows that security—theologically speaking—is an enigmatic term. To consider security in a purely positive sense neglects the ambivalence of psychological and spiritual self-assurance and perseverance. To consider security in a purely negative way insults the unimaginable suffering of those who lack any form of security—for instance, those fleeing from a country at war to find a place of safety and a better and more secure life.

5 ‘Zu Ps. 68 (69) spricht Luther von den ruhigen und sicheren Zeiten als den gefährlichsten für die Kirche, aber auch für den einzelnen Christen. Kein Kampf scheint so notwendig wie der gegen das Gefühl der Sicherheit des Heils.’ Referring to Psalm 68 (69), Luther talks about times of calmness and safety as being dangerous not only for the church, but also for the individual Christian. No fight seems to be as important as the fight against a feeling of safety in salvation matters. ‘nulla enim pugna hodie tam necessaria quam contra pacem, securitatem, accidiam et tepiditatem. Et hic opus est, ut totis viribus et armis contra staremus’ (W3, 417). ‘Vides itaque, quam vere periculosa sint tempora istius pacis et securitas... Quia quando non es in inferno vel morte, confidenter potes timere iram dei et nondum sperare ejus misericordiam. Necdum enim dignus et aptus es, ut misereatur tu i.’ (ibid., 433). ‘Quando tepidus es et non in inferno cum corde tuo, scias ibi periculum tuum adesse et pacem et securitatem tibi insidiari ad interitum (ibid., 432)—Alfred Kurz, Die Heilsgewissheit bei Luther: eine entwick- lungensgeschichtliche und systematische Darstellung. (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann 1933), 91.

6 ‘Die Kirche ist spiritualis, sofern sie verstanden wird als occulta in diesem Leben, die ihr Vertrauen nicht auf irdische Machmittel setzt, sondern weiß, dass sie verfolgt sein muss und daß die gefährlichste Verfolgung die ist, nicht verfolgt zu sein, sondern in securitas zu leben.’ (The church is spiritualis, as long as she is understood as occulta in this life, and doesn’t use instruments of power but knows that she will be persecuted—and that the worst kind of persecution is not to be persecuted but to live in securitas.) Gerhard Ebeling, Lutherstudien, Vol 1 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1971), 31.
Migration-related Security Issues in Germany

In 2015, the highest number of refugees ever recorded in history entered Germany. This was due to political decisions in southern European countries to open their borders to the north, and also to the conviction of the German chancellor Angela Merkel that a humanitarian tragedy had to be avoided. The challenge of welcoming and registering thousands of people who needed food and accommodation raised important security issues. In this chapter, I will briefly describe four aspects of this. First, in the refugee camps there was the challenge of meeting and living together with people of different cultural, social and religious backgrounds and, in some cases, this became quite difficult. Second, the German population reacted in very different ways to the new situation, many of them open-mindedly and with a strong commitment to help, but others with attitudes of hostility and concern. Third, criminal attacks, mainly the sexual harassment of the local population by foreigners made discussion of the issue difficult and weakened the broad consensus of the German nation after it had been called to support the cause of the refugees. Fourth, terrorist acts, especially the attacks in Paris in November 2015, and the debate on the radicalisation of religious groups, raised serious questions for those involved in the struggle for the human rights of asylum and security.

Violence among migrants in refugee camps

Imagine the scene: 1,000 refugees in one camp, representing many nations, and ethnic and religious groups. No sensitivity to the different cultures or their understanding of the relationship between men and women. No clear prospects for those who were detained, and endless waiting to register for asylum. This is the cocktail which caused conflict and even violence among the refugees in their camps. Of course, mutual respect was often lacking among the refugees, while different experiences, levels of education, and different values and convictions were at the root of many difficult situations within the camps.

A very prominent and rather sad example of this was the murder in September 2015 in Delitzsch, when a young man from Morocco killed a Tunisian of the same age. One policeman was quoted as saying: How come that people are prepared to risk their lives and travel across the Mediterranean Sea, only to be murdered in a German asylum-seeker’s camp? The authorities saw an increasing number of attacks among migrants, especially thieving and bodily injury. The perpetrators were often under the influence of alcohol or drugs, which play a major role in aggravating such situations. Women also suffer severe attacks. Specifically, male Wahabi Muslim groups oppress and attack women who do not follow their strict religious rules. Furthermore, there are groups of people living together in a confined space, who back in their home countries might belong to groups at odds with one another, who

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7 The number of refugees had been on a slight increase since 2012, but the official number of more than one million asylum-seekers in 2015 was more than double that of the year before. And in comparison with other years (like 2003 to 2011) it was ten times more. The situation changed at the beginning of 2016 when the borders were closed again. Numerous camps—legal and illegal—were again overcrowded in southern Europe, and the governments of Greece and Italy didn’t know how to cope. In addition, difficult and questionable negotiations took place with Turkey, to allow refugees with a reasonable prospect of being granted asylum to travel to Germany, and to organize some kind of refugee exchange. These are only brief details, but more material may be found at: www.bamf.de (accessed 5th May 2016).

might even kill members of another group. In asylum camps, it could happen that someone from one tribe has to live next to someone whose ethnic group had killed a brother, mother, father, etc. So, under these conditions, violence is a daily challenge.

Violent attacks of right wing movements against migrants

A busload of refugees arrives in the late evening of 10th December 2015 in a small town in eastern Germany (Jahnsdorf near Chemnitz). The inhabitants of the village are standing by, waiting to stop the migrants from entering the house provided for them by the authorities. The pictures of a mob of 30–50 people attacking the bus, shouting racist and other discriminatory slogans, shocked many Germans. The police was unable to protect the refugees in this clash.

This is only one example of public opinion indicating that a growing number of people in Germany don’t want to be part of a welcoming society. Right-wing groups called for demonstrations in the streets which started at Easter 2016 in German cities like Dresden and Leipzig, under the banner: We are patriots who are fighting against the Islamisation of Western Europe. These groups are encouraged by officially registered political parties, like the successful right-wing ‘Alternative for Germany’ (Alternative für Deutschland). Their claims and stance incite violent talk and action against foreigners.

Violence of migrants towards inhabitants, especially sexual violence and robbery

An incident on New Year’s Eve 2015–16 disturbed the situation in Germany and complicated relations between the migrants and the German population. Many people were upset about incidents in Cologne, Hamburg and other big cities. What happened? On the night of December 31st 2015, large groups of male migrants from the Maghreb countries appeared on Cathedral Square in Cologne, and surrounded German women to isolate them from their peer groups, before attacking them sexually and stealing valuables, committing serious rape and causing injury. Similar attacks occurred in Hamburg and other places.

Many women were so shocked that they did not immediately call the police. Police who were present did not interfere quickly enough, while the politicians and media tried to underplay or even deny that the aggressors were foreigners in order to prevent xenophobic reactions. All this led to a big debate on responsible attitudes and cultural or religious bias towards women. Some public swimming halls registered a violation of women’s privacy, while some even prohibited male foreigners entering their establishments.

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The right-wing movement is much stronger in eastern Germany. Reasons for this can be given, but these do not excuse the violence of those in the former GDR. Infrastructure and the economic situation in eastern Germany is weak by comparison with the former FRG in the west. Many people living in the east consider themselves as the losers in the 1990 reunification. They got used to always blaming others for their fate, either the state or—in our case—foreigners.

10 PEGIDA (Patriotische Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes).


Such incidents show that security can be under threat when different cultures, value systems and customs clash. But it also shows that a society can be secure for everybody only if people are prepared to face up to violations of their rights. There can be no exceptions nor any complacency, because this will have a negative effect on all foreigners who stand to suffer most from cultural and religious excuses for their misbehaviour.

**The increased danger of terrorist activities**

“With the large number of migrants coming to Europe, it was easier for terrorists to enter European countries as well, and plan their cruel attacks.” This was the easiest explanation given for the incidents of 13th November 2015, when Al Qaida terrorists attacked several places in Paris, chiefly the Bataclan concert hall and a football match with thousands of spectators, and killed 130 people, while 350 were injured. Linking migration and terrorism in this way is the simple answer given by those who feel threatened and insecure themselves. They need a group which they can blame for such terrorist incidents. There needs to be an explanation which does not have to do with oneself. They cannot accept the deeper analyses of a worldwide system of injustice and exploitation which has led to unimaginable inequalities—well-being in North and West at the cost of the sufferings of the rest of the world. This deeper analysis with all its daily implications on consumption and economics, lifestyle and attitudes, doesn’t fit the self-understanding of many who, having worked hard for what they have, are convinced that they deserve to live in peace and wealth. On this reading, Luther’s warning against depending on one’s own works and one’s own merits, becomes very up-to-date.

I do not want to excuse terrorist attacks; they are without any doubt horrible and only to be condemned. But an attitude which leaves this problem for underdeveloped areas of the world to wrestle with, but without considering our own involvement with it is both dangerous and irresponsible.

The impact of the November 2015 attacks in Paris on the situation of migrants and their security in Germany was considerable, as they were seen by many as potential terrorists. Even if someone does not know a migrant personally, the collective itself was a potential danger. We can conclude that it was mainly migrants in Europe, and especially the Muslims among them, who suffered most from the attacks in Paris. Unfortunately, Islam is not often seen as a heterogeneous religion, but only as a violent, fanatic and fundamentalist anti-western ideology. Only good education in schools and awareness among the wider population can avoid such a distorted view of Islam.

**Consequences**

It is a matter of fact that bad news always carries further than good news. The four aspects referred to above, which spell out the situation in Germany’s increasing insecurity—experienced by foreigners and inhabitants alike—should not destroy the memory of a wave of welcome: Germans working voluntarily day and night at railway and bus stations to receive the refugees and guide them; churches, mosques and secular associations together opening their doors to offer overnight accommodation. The sense of solidarity was immense, as was pride in being an open country, that so many people have been trying to reach.

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Case Studies of Women in Migration in Germany

For the interviews I wanted to conduct with migrant women, I first tried to get access to a refugee camp in Hamburg to talk to women who had joined special groups for female refugees, but the psychologists and social workers responsible for them strongly advised me not to confront these people with their recent history, especially as I was someone from outside who could not immediately establish a relationship of trust with them. Many were so traumatised that they could neither talk about it, nor trust me, and were hardly able to cope with their everyday lives.

I was a little bit disappointed by this sense of rejection and turned—as I thought at the start—to more usual migrants, whom I knew from my own surroundings. I thought this would not be as intense an experience as contacting ‘recently arrived women’. However, the opposite was the case: I was tremendously touched by what my interviewees shared with me, and there were moving stories of faith and security. I only knew these sisters very superficially, and had no insight into what they had gone through and what a huge impact it still had on their everyday life. My mind was really changed and it was a gift for me, that these three women opened up and gave me some insights into their sorrows, their thinking and their lives.

All of them agreed with the abstract of our conversation, which I will present later in this chapter.

Thrown into a new life

My first interviewee was a 29-year-old woman from Syria. She came to Germany in 2013. Her husband had already left Syria for Germany in 2009. He had come to study. His last visit to Syria took place in 2011, but as he had not served in the military, he was a wanted person in his country. This was his last possible visit to his wife and family. Military service is an important issue. Men who did not serve are still sought by the police. They cannot opt out legally, because they do not have access to their documents. They cannot travel and have no means of proving their identity. One of my interviewee’s brothers lives in Turkey for this very reason.

In 2013, my interviewee decided to join her husband. She left her parents and took the plane to visit an uncle who lives in exile in Spain. From Madrid, she planned to journey onward to her husband. She travelled to Germany by train. She remembers her great fear of the confusing situation at the station in Paris and recalls people who helped her, providing her with orientation. The scariest moment was immediately after the French-German border when police entered the train and checked the passengers. In a jumble of thoughts, she wondered whether it was better to hide in the toilet, to explain her situation or to pretend to be asleep. She opted for the last of these. Nobody noticed her, nobody approached her. She was safe.

Today, three years later, she lives in Germany as a refugee. After lengthy procedures, having engaged a lawyer who fought her case, and after enduring experiences of both hope and despair, her status was confirmed. Today she attends a high-level German course at the university. She gets subsidies from the German authorities. She is safe.

But what is the price for this safety? Sometimes she feels as though she has been thrown into a new life and cut off her old life. Everything that happened before her flight seems no longer to be part of her life. She is like a new-born, and nothing links her with her old life. But there is no return. The constant worry about her parents and relatives back in Damascus has no solution. She cannot get there as this part of her life is now unattainable. Sometimes she feels as if these two
parts of her life are like being split between dream and reality. Everyday life in Germany is demanding: she is successful, she works hard, she functions. But this seems to be just external; internally, her feelings, her thoughts and her heart are with the family back home. Something is broken within her; the relationship with her own life is broken.

Many people helped my interviewee to reach the point where she is today: some were like angels, but it is difficult to express thankfulness. She never wanted to become a refugee. It hurts to think of herself as this persecuted, dependent, destitute, awkward and unskilled refugee, simply being one of these thousands of Syrian migrants, who are not welcomed as everybody in Germany likes to affirm.

Life in Germany is tiring, bureaucracy is exhausting, the language is difficult, relationships can be tricky. You are always on the receiving end, you are always the petitioner and the applicant. One day someone brought my interviewee to an office where harsh-looking men and women seemed to be waiting for her. After some words of introduction which were not understood by her, they started questioning her about her stay in Germany; there came one question after another—about the route of her flight, about her family, about her past and present, about her husband, about her feelings, her anxiety. She ended up crying, unable to respond any more. What was this interview for? Who were they asking all these questions? Where had the person she trusted brought her? What did she do wrong? After her collapse, someone tried to calm her down and—slowly, very slowly—she eventually understood that this was a practice session whereby the lawyers of the NGO were preparing her for the official interview in front of the court. Why is life so inscrutable?

Another day, an officer in the foreigners’ department called at eight o’clock in the evening and announced that my interviewee should be at the office at eight in the morning with her suitcase and all her belongings. He did not give any explanation, but just said that she would get to know the reason, and when she would appear. Only later did she become aware that they were providing a place for her in a refugee camp. They expected her to leave her husband and live 40 km outside the town. Only a quick intervention by her lawyer, who had always been supportive, could protect her from this doubtful relocation.

These two incidents are just one example of the frequent situations in which she didn’t understand what was going on and in which she felt she was at people’s mercy. And she is not an ignorant, gullible young woman. Back home, she had position and status: she was an ambitious and progressive young graduate. At the age of 26 she could have graduated with two diplomas from the University of Damascus.

Now she lives in a mostly hostile environment. What about faith? Does she visit a mosque to follow her religion? No. A simple answer: migrant Muslims in Germany relate to religion very differently than they do back home. They are almost only men, and they have beards. She laughs at this, saying: “No, that is not my religion. God is in my heart; he sends people to help me. I don’t need to go to the mosque.” Back home, the mosque is the meeting point, a place for social life and encounter, not so much for the proper observance of religion or obedience to God. In general, meeting people from Syria is not that easy. The mentality of Syrians seems to be quite similar to that of the German. It is not easy to make friends. And what is more, in these times one has to be careful, because there are also spies among their compatriots.

**Stolen identity**

My second interviewee asks me to let her pray before we start our conversation. She calls the Holy Spirit to guide us, to be with us and to bless
this encounter. I am impressed how naturally she makes the sign of the cross and talks to our God. She takes charge and I am thankful for her assertiveness.

She comes from Togo, one of the smallest African states—since 2005 under the rule of President Faure Gnassingbé, son of the dictator Gnassingbé Eyadéma, whose long-lasting regime is known for political oppression and human rights violations. Telling the story of my interviewee means telling two stories: the chosen path of her husband who was a political activist during the worst period of Eyadéma’s reign; and her own path, which unfortunately and fatefully depended on his. ‘This is love!’ was her simple and convincing commentary, with nothing to regret, nothing to complain about: ‘If you love a person, you follow him.’

Eyadéma and his combatants did not only steal her husband’s rights and opportunities, he also cut her off from a life of dignity and self-determination. One very symbolic example of this indignity was that she had to change her name. Her Christian name had been taken from the Old Testament and meant so much to her, but her passport merely stated that she was born on Wednesday, which was the traditional African way of naming, with no other name allowed.

She had had a good life in Lomé, the capital of Togo, including a sound secondary school education. She trained as a dressmaker, with three years in African style and three in western style. She is a professional, but today she rarely uses her skills as African certificates are not recognised in Germany. Further training would be necessary, but there is little chance of her having access to any. Because of her flight to Germany she was robbed of her vocation. Her abilities are not recognised, and thus she is not recognised.

Leaving the country became inevitable at the beginning of the 1990s when her husband and some friends at the University of Lomé openly defied Eyadéma’s system. Many students were arrested, and two of her friends even died. The young couple fled to the neighbouring country of Benin, where they first stayed in Cotonou but then later had to flee again from their dictator’s henchmen, whose influence extended even beyond his own country. What did she feel when she had to flee again? Her simple and bitter answer: “You don’t have the choice: that’s why you do not raise this question!”

In the area southeast of Benin, she found a place to settle, as people from her ethnic group lived there and among them she could start a new life. Their first son was born and life seemed to gain stability. She made friends and established a small training centre for young women and taught them sewing, knitting and crochet. Life could have become acceptable. But her husband kept on the move, and he was not safe. In 1997, the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCR) advised him to apply for political asylum in Germany. Many years of separation followed. Maintaining contact was difficult, as her husband had to change his identity, and the process was not easy: he had to go through long times of uncertainty and waiting. There was no chance of reuniting the family. Years later, a friend in France offered to help. He was prepared to pretend that he was the father of the boy and thus bring my interviewee and her son to France. A risky decision, but the prospect of separation was not bearable any longer. With the journey to France, the darkest years in her life began. Absolute poverty, responsibility for the child, but no means of maintaining a dignified or worthwhile life, with the permanent fear of dying in a foreign land. She experienced the reality of homelessness. Fear and insecurity gripped her life. It was hard for her to remember who she was. Her suffering was beyond words.

In 2006, the agony came to an end: three days before she was required to leave France, the news that saved the situation came from the German authorities—that she could join her husband. Looking back to this time brings a lump to
her throat: "It is as if I had forgotten myself. Thinking of these calamities still makes me ill. How did I survive? My soul doesn’t allow me to think of all these sad years.”

Life is still not as should be, as the wounds are still there and fear returns during the night. Nothing changed regarding her stolen identity. Her name is still 'born on Wednesday', the dream of her own small dressmaker’s boutique is still unattainable, and her life is still far from secure. But she has regained some stability and is coming to terms with her fate. Her daughter was born in Germany. Her child’s innocent questions help her to find new answers about what she had to go through. God had provided shelter. Her mother’s wisdom proved correct: “You are not alone! Somebody is there.” And that was God.

**Being a foreigner**

My third interviewee comes from India. As a Christian in India, she experienced what it meant to be a foreigner long before going abroad. Belonging to both the Christian minority and the Dalit community always implied a sense of not belonging to the national Indian identity. This is perhaps one reason why the encounter with foreigners from outside the country—namely Danish missionaries who were frequent guests in her church and school, and very supportive of her, was never a matter of surprise or estrangement. As the daughter of the director of the Danish school, she was somehow a foreigner in her own country. Her family came from the tradition of the caste-free society, which was founded in the middle of the nineteenth century and, as such, they had always stood apart from the rest of society. “When I came to Germany, in a way I felt very comfortable living among Christians and the fact of my being a Christian did not any longer make me a member of a minority community.”

But she never planned to migrate to Germany. “I had such a mission for my church!” She was the first woman to study theology in her church. Women’s ordination is still not very common in Lutheran churches in India. She finished her master’s degree and was full of enthusiasm, ready to serve the church and contribute to mission among underprivileged and marginalised people. The encounter with her bishop turned out to be a great disappointment. "We do not ordain women, and as you have a German husband, you can go to Germany and serve in the German church."

They met through a student exchange programme. And they managed to balance their dual citizenship of Germany and India. This seems to be their shared responsibility—namely, to balance the identity of the family. They tell their two children that they live in Germany, but that they also belong to India, that language can help to overcome barriers, and that the colour of one’s skin doesn’t define one’s identity. It is all a matter of achieving equilibrium in everyday life but it also involves questions of behaviour and defending one’s own convictions. My interviewee is a liberal pastor, largely influenced by liberation theology and very sensitive to the abuse of power and discriminatory attitudes and activities. She usually maintains silence, but in certain situations she has to speak out even when language limitations really hurt her. She remembers one day in her study course when they were discussing whether preaching should be political.

My interviewee’s only brother did not agree at all with her marriage, because it didn’t fit in with the Indian way of getting engaged. So even if this young woman has an open, modern mind and progressive and liberal convictions, family matters really can create problems for her. When she and her husband had to make the decision to go to Germany, she began a PhD project and did some intercultural and interreligious research on her Indian background, but the expectation of
her family was that she should not spend her time being dependent on her husband. The conviction of her Indian family was that a woman has to be professional and do a good job. All five of her sisters are successful and working in good positions. By contrast, her German mother-in-law expected her to stay at home, to keep the children, and to provide a comfortable home for the family. It is the opposite of what Germans themselves might expect. Foreigners are often considered to have old-fashioned and conservative world-views, which conflicts with progressive German lifestyles, which are the very opposite.

Today, my interviewee works as an assistant pastor in a German parish. Her life is full of challenge. Language is the first and overwhelming obstacle. But many other things more or less related to this challenge make life difficult. How do you teach religion in a German school class, if you yourself never attended a German school? How do you gain confidence if you are the only foreigner in the congregation and you are the one who is preaching? How do you react to the prejudices of the people who think that you came to Germany for economic reasons? How do you preach if you have so many things to criticise but you don't want to attack the people?

And the expectations are high. She is the first foreigner in her German church to go through such training and formation. She is fighting for coming generations to have great opportunities and to make the church more open towards the intercultural community. She is fighting for women so that they no longer have to listen to people saying: “It is not insulting you, but…” “It has nothing to do with you, but…” Statements like this concern her, and most of them do in fact feel insulting. In spite of all these difficult experiences, she doesn’t ever want to be in charge of a specialised ministry for ecumenically or interculturally liberal Christians. She wants to work in an ordinary German parish and prove that language, ancestry and skin colour don't matter; what matters are solidarity and openness towards one another and sensitivity for the poor and excluded, who are also present in German society.

Conclusion

A theology of migration and reflection on faith and security in the life of migrants has to start with the voices of those who can help us understand the inhuman and unjust conditions found in many parts of the world, who can tell us about enforced family break-up and the ordeal of migration, and who can share with us the dream of peace and security in life. The theology of migration should focus on migrants, refugee and displaced persons. External observation can only partly help one understand what it means to be a migrant.

Understanding aspects of faith and security in the lives of migrants can only take place by listening and giving an opportunity to those who have the right to talk about it. That’s why my conclusion has to be brief. It is a simple appeal: listen to those you are talking about, and you will learn much. Anyone from outside coming to questionable conclusions in any other way only runs the risk of doing harm to those whom we are talking about. Let migrants speak for themselves!
Learning from One Another

Bianca Dümling

Germany has become a multicultural country, a home for people from all over the world. This is seen in the establishment of many foreign-language communities, especially in all the big cities. These Christians from Africa, Asia or Latin America bring the overseas heritage of the Reformation back to Germany—the so-called ‘Reverse Reformation’. This is a chance to learn but also a challenge for both sides—a process which is not yet complete.

The ghost of the Reformation was carried, especially during the missionary movement of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, throughout the world. This is where the socio-cultural, religious and historical contexts of this theological movement were shaped. The translation of the Bible into one’s mother tongue gave believers from all over the world the possibility of reading and interpreting the biblical texts themselves. That is how the Reformation contextualised itself far from the country of its birth.¹

Worldwide migration movements, along with escape and banishment, have led to a diversification of German society in recent decades. More than half the migrants in Germany are Christians. A great number also claim roots in the Reformation. They bring their beliefs, their piety and their traditions with them. However, the cultural, verbal and theological differences, as well as their reservations and preconceptions, prevent these Christians from finding their place in ‘The Church of the Reformation’ in Germany. So they establish other communities in order to create their own religious and socio-cultural home.

The Reformation is coming back—changed, enriched and revitalised but also in a somewhat foreign and challenging form. But who is behind the carriers of this ‘reverse Reformation’? How does it develop and what content and characteristics are found in the term of ‘reverse Reformation’?

Five Examples: Carriers of the ‘Reverse Reformation’

The carriers of the ‘reverse Reformation’ are those who bring their faith traditions to Germany and who want to share their experiences with their fellow countrymen. As examples, five people will be introduced who carried the ‘reverse Reformation’ to Germany in different ways. These portraits are based on real life-experiences, but they remain anonymous.

Eun-Mi from Korea: thirty years ago, as a nurse, she moved from Korea to Germany and married a German. For several years she was active in the Korean Presbyterian community. As she was at the same time part of the Protestant national church, she decided to get involved in her local church. Today she has taken responsibilities on the church board. She has brought to it her passion for praying and, among other things, organises regular morning prayer. Through Eun-Mi, the ‘reverse Reformation’ has come directly to the Protestant national church.

Pastor Frank from Ghana: There are many students who return to Ghana after their study trip having lost their faith. In secular Germany, without church communities in which they would have felt at home, that is what happened. So, in the 1980s, Pastor Frank was sent by his Ghanaian church to establish a community for Ghana-

¹ See Bianca Dümling, Migrationskirchen in Deutschland. Orte der Integration (Frankfurt am Main: Lembeck, 2011).
ian students in Germany. Today, he leads a community that not only offers a home for African migrants but for people from all over the world. At the same time, he actively dictates the shape of ecumenical Christianity at regional and national levels. From the diversity of his community, he takes the ‘reverse Reformation’ into the migrant context of Germany, and through his ecumenical relationships, into the church landscape of Germany.

Ricardo from Brazil: After studying theology, Ricardo was assigned by the governing body of his church in Brazil to found a community in Germany. During his language studies, he initiated a home community held in Portuguese. This was attended mainly by Brazilians. However, from the start, his goal was to develop a German-speaking international community, and the services were translated into German. Later on, a German pastor was recruited. At first, they worshipped once a month in German, and six months later, twice a month. Small groups take place in different languages so that everyone can feel at home. Pastor Ricardo considered the multicultural reality of German society and integrated German culture with his community work to bring a Reformation content back into everyday life.

Pastor Thankgod from Nigeria: To him, Germany is a country of mission. He came to Germany as a missionary to bring the gospel to the German people. He believes that Martin Luther was used by the Holy Spirit to awaken Germany religiously. However, in his eyes, the power of the Holy Spirit went missing. He is convinced that God uses him to bring back the power of the Reformation. Because of their cultural and theological influences, as well as language differences, only very few Germans find their way into his community. Nevertheless, Pastor Thankgod consciously sees himself as a carrier of the ‘reverse Reformation’ which, according to his vision, will lead to the awakening of the German population.

Pastor John from Sri Lanka: He came to Germany as a refugee. At first, he only met with family members for prayers and Bible reading in his flat. This familiar community grew and developed into a Tamil community. Today it worships in Tamil with German translation—especially for second-generation young people. Here, the heritage of the Reformation acts mostly in the specific cultural context.

Content and Characteristics

Each of these stories is unique; the cultural and personal backgrounds are all very different. Nevertheless, there are special characteristics and spiritual vitalities which the carriers of the ‘reverse Reformation’ have in common. Based on the main points of the Reformation, the so-called *particula exclusiva*, the similarities may be explained.²

*Solus Christus—Christ alone*

Jesus Christ is given a special meaning and exclusivity. Through the crucifixion and the resurrection, God acted through Jesus Christ for the salvation of humanity: he took away their sins and his death was separation from God. Many carriers of the ‘reverse Reformation’ see Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour, with whom they have an intimate relationship. They believe that he performs miracles today, and specifically intervenes in people’s lives. This is also true of the family and such matters as obtaining visas or employment, or the healing of illnesses. In times

of emergency, rejection or unfamiliarity, it is Jesus Christ himself who loves, cares for and saves them, according to their needs and based on their experiences.

*Sola Gratia—Through mercy alone*

The basis of the Reformation states that God sets his love through Jesus Christ on humans solely in his mercy. Such mercy and the awareness of God’s love are present on a daily basis. Through the mercy of God, they feel cleansed of all their sins. Their deep gratitude becomes clear through their worship and praise, during services, their personal prayers, and also in the everyday language. Hence, great contentment often shows through despite life’s difficult circumstances.

*Sola Scriptura—Alone with the scripture*

The Bible was understood as the word of God, and therefore as a precise guide to all theological statements and clerical practice. Central to Christian belief is the Good News of Jesus Christ, his life, death and resurrection which the New Testament spells out. The Old Testament deals with promises that are later fulfilled by Jesus Christ. The word of God and its infallibility holds a central role for many carriers of the ‘reverse Reformation’. The Bible serves as the guide of choice for all ethical challenges and life’s questions. Through the daily reading of the Bible, biblical passages are embedded deeply in the heart and are called upon in daily life. Although only a small number have studied theology, they know the Bible very well. The word of God begets faith and love of God, his power and his promises which still apply today. They link up with migration and the experiences of Christian people, and in that they find strength, solace and hope. The Bible is their constant companion—during worship, on the train on their way to work, while for one African public toilet cleaner it even lies on the table.

*Sola Fide—Through the faith alone*

God’s actions, done in Christ, out of mercy and through the Word, are in correspondence to faith of human beings. Faith is a new existential attitude towards God and themselves. By faith, humans accept god’s justification as a new self-interpretation. In faith, human beings believe that God accepts them despite everything. Belief exists independently of theological education or social status. All Christians are the same, and all share in the priesthood of all believers.

Belief in Jesus Christ as Saviour, in the mercy of God, and in the power of the word of God, is the hallmark of many carriers of the ‘reverse Reformation’. They believe in the power of worship and expect God to intervene in world affairs or in the healing of illnesses. This faith strongly influences the life of congregations and the individual’s personal spirituality. Through daily morning prayers, all-night prayers, regular fasting periods, healing services and retreats, this faith takes shape.

Linked with this is belief in the power of the Holy Spirit who speaks to everyone and distributes his gifts to each. The priesthood of all believers gains a new dimension. The ability to lead a church community is not based on technical studies or the passing of a test but on the individual appointment and the anointing of the Holy Spirit. For many communities, it is very important that all its members take on responsibilities.

Conclusion: to Initiate New Processes Together

The ‘reverse Reformation’, with its spiritual vitality and cultural diversity, faces a sophisticated
Reformation tradition in Germany. The task that the church faces is engaging in a dialogue which enriches and challenges, and that can trigger new Reformation processes with everyone involved. Joy in faith and devotion, faithfulness in prayer, and the knowledge of biblical texts enrich and refresh communities nationwide, even where church attendance decreases and the average age of worshippers increases.

The benefits are two-way: the carrier of the ‘reverse Reformation’ can profit from German culture, the ability to reflect, organisational strength and diaconal commitment. Both Reformation traditions have their strengths and their weaknesses. On the negative side of the ‘reverse Reformation’, there is always a selective emphasis of particular verses which are taken out of context. Furthermore, in some situations the spiritualisation of everyday situations and certain challenges must be viewed critically as they can lead to great emotional damage and even spiritual abuse. In the context of the regional church, the communities are shrinking. The strength and hope of the Christian faith are overshadowed in many places by a sprawling bureaucracy.

The meeting of the ‘reverse Reformation’ with the many facets of Protestantism is locally a great opportunity for the future of the church in Germany. In different spiritual gifts and cultural strengths lie great potential if people listen to and learn from one another. This includes not denying the faith of the one and conceding the Holy Spirit to the other. The process of the ‘reverse Reformation’ is not yet complete. It is hoped that the contextualised ‘reverse Reformation’ in Germany will send out carriers of their own who in return will bring their experiences back to the original countries of the ‘reverse Reformation’.
Transforming Society

Introduction

Lars Röser-Israel

For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me. (Matt 25:35–36).

This powerful and well known quote from the Gospel of Matthew can be one point of access to the social dimension of Christian faith. In the history of Christianity, it inspired many to love their neighbours and to social commitment, although this history of caritas is very ambiguous. To tell the story of Christianity as one of pure success would be a lie. In Matt 25, when the righteous ask Jesus at the last judgement when they did any of the described deeds to him, he answers, “as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.” In his teaching, Jesus shifts the view to the needy. The victims are now in focus. It does not matter why they are hungry or strangers. Neither their cultural background nor their political opinions matter. And it does not matter who is helping the needy. In the centre, there is relationship. There is an I and a Thou. Neither is isolated, rather they are connected. Their point of connection is need and help. This perspective on the victims is grasped by many essays in this section from different points of view. They offer nuances of perspectives. The victim is not a victim as such, but a person in a specific situation, with a specific biography and a specific need.

Yet in Matt 25 the story is not only about earthly righteousness. Jesus is identified with the needy. He himself is encountered in the needy. The relationship of I and Thou is extended to Jesus. One can interpret this as God’s condescension into the world. The Trinitarian God is himself in relationship. And he relates himself to the world and its people. God is approaching us in the needy, the hungry, the stranger. In this perspective, the question of social justice becomes a theological one. ‘Transforming Society’ means overcoming injustice and violence. As Christians, we can see these phenomena not only as insuperable evil, but also perceive the encounter with the needy as an encounter with God and as God’s requirement. Although the ideal society is not accessible or manifestable, but an eschatological promise, this doesn’t release Christians from personal responsibility.

The necessity to contribute to a transformation of society is obvious, but the way to reach this aim is not self-evident. Therefore, each essay in this section is in dialogue with different sciences. Only through this dialogue can appropriate answers be found. Theology and Christianity need this relationship to participate in the transformation of society. In recognition of its own ambiguity the church can go this way only in humbleness, not with the attitude of superiority.

In his contribution on the ‘Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace’, Fernando Enns gives a survey on the development of this guiding metaphor of the recent ecumenical movement and then reflects
upon it theologically. The program of the ‘Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace’ was passed at the 10th Assembly of the World Council of Churches held in 2013 in Busan, Korea, where the GETI movement also started. This ‘Pilgrimage’ takes up the proceeding decisions and developments of the ecumenical movement. Now it is crucial to no longer merely recognise the metaphor of pilgrimage as the church’s (or churches’) socio-political aim, but also as its pathway of justice and peace. This should overcome a polarisation of the ecumenical movement between a faction mainly concerned with doctrinal matters and another dealing with social and ethical questions. Following Dorothee Sölle, Enns explains the ’Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace’ in terms of Trinitarian theology as a via positiva, via negativa and via transformativa. God the Creator has provided all of life. Through Christ, he humbled himself through suffering, exclusion and discrimination. And in the Holy Spirit he transforms the broken relationship of humanity with its surrounding world.

Since the second half of the 20th century, memory and narrative are key issues considered in the sciences as well as in the society’s popular themes, as Miroslav Volf recounts. Beginning with this observation, he asks in his contribution, how to remember well so that remembrance is not only the key to salvation, but also to damnation, as e.g. the war in former Yugoslavia showed. Memory can also imply that victims are identified by their victimhood and thus, the future is determined by the past. Justification for victims means that they are no longer the sum of their deeds, thoughts and feelings. Christian hope and promise break through a future extrapolated from the past. The Exodus story reminds us, that an ethical obligation is derived from such a memory of God’s saving action for the victims: ‘Do unto others as God has done to you.’ Eventually the reconciling message of the Cross means that this reconciliation applies also for the wrongdoer. This overcomes the polarity between the innocent victim and the guilty perpetrator.

In her contribution, Cornelia Coenen-Marx gives an overview on the future challenges for the churches’ welfare work using the example of Germany. She describes these challenges in light of the changing social situation in Germany as well as regarding the changing organisational structure of church welfare work. Many different crises led to a changed situation of the welfare-state: The more the state abrogates its responsibility for social care, the more this work is done without payment by volunteers. Mostly women who are supported by their spouses care for the senior family members in addition to upbringing the children. At the same time, the church is under greater competitive pressure due to the changed circumstances in welfare work, since the principle of subsidiarity was superseded by the principle of competition. In this situation, the prospects of the churches’ welfare work lie in its good linkage to the local neighbourhoods and parishes. Thus, the churches’ welfare organisations can react to these challenges locally and likewise be advocates against structural injustice.

René Girard begins his reflection with the observation, that the contemporary (Western) society is the most concerned about its victims compared to any others historically. An outside viewer – so to speak an extra-terrestrial viewer – could get the idea, that this fact arose from an ancient society long time ago being very superior to the current society, whose memory is still sublimely alive. Such a powerful society never existed in the past. Only our contemporary society brought up the concern for the victims. Girard sees this compassion as originating in Christianity, from which modern humanism derives. He doesn’t want to diminish the mass of victims of the current society, but he also states that this society saves more victims than any other. Girard sees the foundation of this concern
for victims in Jesus’ message of the coming kingdom of God, which carries the idea of a nonviolent society into the present.

The Orthodox churches are challenged by a modern, deeply changing world. Georgios Vlantis describes this challenge as paradigmatic for the church itself. In the heritage of the Orthodox churches this tension between preservation and innovation appears very concisely: Orthodoxy wants to preserve the thoughts of its patristic sources, such as Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nazianzus who understood themselves as innovators. Vlantis describes the attempt by some Orthodox churches to identify the churches’ message with national values as a misguided answer. In contrast, he sees the Orthodox churches’ contribution towards an ecumenical hermeneutic of change in their sustenance of the sense of continuity, their emphasis on the mystery of faith by Christians confessing rather the non-knowing nescience than the knowledge, and in stressing the eschatology which is perceptible in the Orthodox liturgy. The churches’ main task in a changing the world is to jointly search for its questions.

Joerg Rieger’s plea for a theology of the multitude finds its initial point of departure in an increasing injustice in society. He names the New Testament terms laos and ochlos as theological categories to overcome a society divided into an elite one percent and the remaining 99%. Following Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, he introduces the term of multitude. Using this term, he wants to take up the concerns of the so-called working class including also the unemployed and poor. The idea of the multitude conceives of this group not as a uniform mass as attributed by the ruling class, but internally differentiated. Therefore, relationship is the adequate category to describe the multitude. For Rieger, this has a theological impact for the Trinitarian-relational concept of God. Such a concept of God can grant power to change society including liberation theologies of different religions. Therefore, crucial is rather the religion’s image of God than the religion itself.

In contrast to the secularisation hypotheses Edward Kessler describes in detail how religion in most regions of the world is an important and growing dimension of society and politics. This is true especially for the Global South, while in the Global North there is a growing number of non-religious people. At the same time, an increasing religious plurality can be observed everywhere. Therefore, the reaction against religion must avoid both extremes: the connection of religion only with fanaticism and violence as well as the negation of any non-religious approach to life. The current challenges aim, among others, to instruct people in religious literacy as well as to create an environment that allows religious plurality. Also, another aspect of religions, is the necessary to gain appreciation for, and to cooperate with, each other.

Using deeply impressive images Harold Wells sketches a modern apocalypse, based mainly on climatology. He clearly stresses the scientific consensus on the global warming resulting, especially from the exploitation of fossil fuels such as coal. If humanity doesn’t counteract this self-made development, the point-of-no-return will be reached and the apocalypse will become inevitable. In the second part of his contribution Wells inquires as to the theological implications of this challenge. In his answer, he follows the theology of the Cross, connected in the 20th century with liberation theology. In the same manner, the theology of the Cross and eco-theology must be correlated today, he claims. God is neither a deus ex machina nor a powerless God, but is to be understood in the dialectic of weakness and power. For the church, this implies being a servant church and fulfilling its responsibility
for this paradox within God by being in the forefront of ecological questions.

Two authors coming from Slovakia and the Czech Republic address the theme of transforming society from a post-communistic perspective. Michal Valčo refers to a desire for communist society in the post-communist era, since the issues communism tried to deal with weren't resolved by capitalism either. Indeed, he reveals this desire as glorification. The problem of communism is not its failure to realise a good idea, but a mistake Marx and Lenin were ensnared with: Valčo confronts the notion of economic equality leading to an ideal society, and counters this with his theological critique, namely, that anthropology—sin, in theological terms—is the reason for a poisoned society. Neither communism nor capitalism respond to this issue in an adequate way. But the approach of communism creates an unfree society. Karel Floss, protagonist of the Velvet Revolution, brings Christianity and social democracy together. He sees the current situation of post-communist society as capitalistic and as an aberration of the Velvet Revolution. Therefore, the church must support social issues expressed in the gospel.

In his contribution, Peter Pavlovic presents three statements by the European Christian Environmental Networks (ECEN), the main working group of the CEC (Conference of European Churches) regarding environmental issues: The first is the statement of ECEN’s 10th assembly on the responsibility of the churches for the issue of climate change. The statement of the 11th assembly deals with the importance of water for a sustainable future. The last is the joint statement of CEC, the Council of European Bishops’ Conference and ECEN from 2016, which stresses a call for prayer for creation.

In the final article, Elizabeta Kitanovic presents the work of CEC concerning human rights. Since Christians have a responsibility to foster human rights and freedom for all people, the CEC establishes its advocacy on these issues. Through their connections to the European Union as well as the United Nations and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, among others, CEC is a strong voice, which addresses these questions.
Walking Gently with Your God

The Ecumenical Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace—a New Direction for the Ecumenical Movement

Fernando Enns

You have been told, O humankind, what is good and what God looks for in you. Nothing other than to practise justice, to love kindness and to walk attentively with your God.

(Mic 6:8).

The Tenth Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) will above all go down in the annals of the ecumenical movement as the one that took the decision to blaze a new trail: the ecumenical 'Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace'. In so doing it has chosen a new comprehensive programmatic approach, which, especially for the World Council of Churches, brings together into one coherent relationship the many different activities and dimensions of the ecumenical movement. That gives them a common direction, which will strengthen the unity of the churches and will also open the door for new relationships, above all with other religions. During the Assembly the metaphor of pilgrimage was, however, being used in such a many-facetted way that already there cautionary voices were being raised. If in fact it were merely to be a new name for what was basically going to be continued in exactly the same way, and if that metaphor continued to be used in a random way, then nothing would be gained. The effectiveness of this new ecumenical approach will have first to be demonstrated. That will be dependent on whether it in fact succeeds in enabling the churches of the oikoumene (a) to arrive at a common interpretation, and (b) to move forward on this pilgrimage to a changed and changing ecumenical praxis. Neither will be possible without serious wide-ranging theological reflexion, which does not necessarily have to precede the new path to be followed, but must at least be in parallel with it. The determination 'will to do this' does seem to be there.

In this article, the process leading to that Assembly decision will be reviewed, so as to show which ecumenical processes in the recent past have led up to it and in what respect this new orientation undertaken by that decision can find an interpretation, or at least some force. Secondly, I shall then develop a proposal that demonstrates the various dimensions of such an ecumenical pilgrimage of justice and peace, with the aim of producing an initial common interpretation of what it would contain.

Steps Leading to the Ecumenical Pilgrimage—the Earlier Model of a ‘Just Peace’

The continuation of the conciliar process

It was the 6th WCC Assembly in Vancouver, Canada, that launched a ‘Conciliar Process for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation’, and thereby influenced all ecumenical processes.

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3 Ibid, paras 10–2, 244.
First, the emphasis was here placed on the central witness of the Church and the churches for justice, peace, and the protection of the natural world, and on how these areas are dependent on one another as regards content. Secondly, it also, though, presupposed that the method to be used would be that the ecumenical movement—according to the understanding of the member churches and the self-understanding of the WCC itself—would have a conciliar nature, by means of which wisdom would be sought by taking counsel together in mutual responsibility. That can only take place in the form of processes. The idea of the new ecumenical pilgrimage draws explicitly on that understanding and continues it.

A ‘Just Peace’ as a new ecumenical paradigm in ecumenical theology and social ethics

A decisive stage in the continuing conciliar process immediately prior to the Busan Assembly was the ‘Ecumenical Decade to Overcome Violence: Churches Seeking Reconciliation and Peace, 2001–2010’. It was initiated by the 8th WCC Assembly in Harare, Zimbabwe, in 1998 and culminated in the Ecumenical Peace Convocation (IEPC) in Kingston, Jamaica, in 2011.4 For its method, this decade was able to draw on the previous Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women, but it also attempted to follow a comprehensive programmatic approach that was to contribute to bringing coherence to all WCC programmes and ultimately to give them, and thereby the WCC as a whole, a more distinct profile. That this only partially succeeded need not be gone into detail here.5 It should, however, not be forgotten that the determination to achieve such coherence has meanwhile taken many forms, as the decision for the pilgrimage shows.

Yet more important is the link with the contents in the results of that Decade to Overcome Violence. At its conclusion there emerged yet more clearly a comprehensive consensus of the ‘just peace’ as helpful, because such an approach seems to be able not only to hold linked together the three key concerns of the conciliar process, but also to be in accord with its contents. That can be seen in exemplary fashion in ‘An Ecumenical Call to Just Peace’.6 That call was issued in response to a WCC Assembly recommendation at Porto Alegre, Brazil, 2006, and it was built on insights gained in the course of the Decade.7 As a key document of the IEPC it was then further enriched by an international team of experts in the form of an accompanying document.8 That contributed in its turn to the future preparations for the 10th Assembly, giving it a decisive orientation, not least in the choice of the theme for Busan: ‘God of life, lead us to justice and peace.’

The ‘Just Peace’ is defined as ‘a collective and dynamic yet grounded process of freeing human beings from fear and want, of overcoming enmity, discrimination and oppression, and of establishing conditions for just relationships that privilege the experience of the most vulnerable and respect the integrity of creation.’9 That explicitly indicates that a ‘just peace’ is not to be understood simply as a reversal or the opposite of the concept of the ‘just war’, but goes much further: “In addition to silencing weapons it embraces social justice, the rule of law, respect for

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7 Ibid, 1.
8 Ibid, p.1, the ‘Just Peace Companion’.
9 Ibid., para. 11.
human rights and shared human security.”¹⁰ The scriptures of the Old and New Testaments make “justice the inseparable companion of peace (Isa 32:17; James 3:18). Both point to right and sustainable relationships in human society, the vitality of our connections with the earth, the ‘well-being’ and integrity of creation.”¹¹

In the Just Peace Companion, this is given further detailed concrete shape. In fact, this is made clear in that the traditional style of purely moral appeal is definitely abandoned. The ‘just peace’ is itself embedded as a new model in ecumenical theology, biblical and theological (and especially ecclesiological) foundations are laid down, so as to set out the various areas in which it can be lived out: just peace in small communities, just peace between peoples and within nations, just peace in economical relationships, just peace with nature. (In discussions following the IEPC it was constantly recalled that the important dimension of just peace that is ‘peace with oneself’, the intrapersonal dimension, is to be added.) All further reflection on the contents of an ecumenical pilgrimage of justice and peace will follow on in a meaningful way from those experiential areas.

The expression ‘Pilgrimage of Just Peace’ was not adopted and that was due to the vehement questioning of a small group of critics, who—in my opinion rightly—pointed out how the concept was misused in political circles and who unanimously asked what and whose law and justice was here being meant. They further saw the danger that justice could be reduced to the status of a weak adjective qualifying peace. During the official Ecumenical Conversations on just peace in Busan, the various interpretations were noted. In the event, however, as I saw it, hardly any difference prevailed.

The pilgrimage metaphor—against the reduction of a just peace to a socio-political aim

Within the Ecumenical Call to Just Peace, the meaning of the pilgrimage metaphor emerges in several ways, but no explicit explanation of it is given. The Preamble reads: “Inspired by the example of Jesus of Nazareth, it invites Christians to commit themselves to the Way of Just Peace.”¹² This discipleship theme is then later expanded—one could say ‘interpreted’—by the relevant further theological framework of God’s loving purpose for creation that makes such discipleship possible: “Just Peace is a journey into God’s purpose for humanity and all creation, trusting that God will ‘guide our feet into the way of peace’ (Luke 1:79).”¹³

The concept of ‘Pilgrimage’ itself then appears: “The Christian pilgrimage toward peace presents many opportunities to build visible and viable communities for peace. A church that prays for peace, serves its community, uses money ethically, cares for the environment and cultivates good relations with others can become an instrument for peace.”¹⁴ However, even here there is some ambivalence. Are we here being invited to go on a pilgrimage towards just peace, or, rather, are we to go on a pilgrimage of just peace? In the first case, just peace would be the goal of the pilgrimage, which is too often reduced to a socio-political goal, or—in extreme cases—merely eschatologically ‘transfigured’; in the second case, just peace would in fact be understood also as a matter of practice, the way in which we live. Already at this point all these elements appear and remain important if the richness of this metaphor is to be made fruitful. However, there is here at least some verbal inexactitude. Now it has become sharply necessary

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¹⁰ Ibid., para. 10.
¹¹ Ibid., para 3.
¹² Ibid., Preamble.
¹³ Ibid., para. 12.
¹⁴ Ibid., para. 29.
to provide some deeper theological explanation of how these different elements relate to one another. There is certainly here a great ecumenical possibility to provide clarification.

**The Pilgrimage of justice and of peace—a journey of the churches**

During the meeting of the WCC Central Committee in 2012 in Crete—that is one year after the IEPC and one year before the Busan Assembly—some decisive proposals had to be dealt with. In the Programme Committee (a sub-committee of the Central Committee), inter alia, a letter from the delegates of the churches in Germany (the Evangelical Church in Germany and the Mennonite Church in Germany) was to be discussed, containing the following proposal:

We should very much like to discuss with you how our community of churches in the WCC and our common commitment for a just peace on earth could be strengthened by a conciliar process with the theme ‘Turn to life: Justice and Peace in light of Climate Change’ that would continue until the Eleventh Assembly.\(^{15}\)

The letter explained in detail that climate change also represents a spiritual crisis, as the IEPC had already stated:

The environmental crisis is profoundly an ethical and spiritual crisis of humanity. Recognising the damage human activity has done to the Earth, we reaffirm our commitment to the integrity of creation and the daily lifestyle it demands.\(^{16}\)

This proposal focussing on ‘climate justice’ did, however, find no consensus in the Programme Committee, since the challenge of climate change is, by far, not seen in all parts of the oikoumene as the decisive challenge facing the churches. The discussion thus ended in the following decisions: (1) It seemed appropriate to create a comprehensive programmatic thrust to continue the concerns of the earlier Decade to Overcome Violence (and thus the link with a just peace); (2) the spiritual challenge of the present crises should be presented in the form of a pilgrimage; and (3) in so doing, it was decisive that the churches and the WCC should themselves make this journey if they wished to become credible in their concerns for a just peace. Thus the proposed pilgrimage of the churches would itself have to be characterised by justice and peace. (The decisive push for that came from a delegate from Tanzania.) Finally, the Central Committee made the following recommendation indicating the way forward:

That the World Council of Churches launch a pilgrimage of justice and peace... at the Assembly in Busan (until the 11\(^{th}\) Assembly) for and of the churches to focus on faith commitments to economic justice (poverty and wealth), ecological justice (climate change, etc.) and peace building. That the World Council of Churches initiate a broad theological study process of the issues related to the pilgrimage of justice and peace in order to connect to the theological work on ecclesiology (undertaken by Faith and Order), unity, mission (CWME) and others within the member churches.\(^{17}\)

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\(^{15}\) Letter dated 28 June 2012 (author’s own records)


\(^{17}\) WCC Central Committee, *Report of the Programme Committee* (Document no. GEN PRO 10) 28 August–5 September 2012, Kolymbari, Crete, Greece, para 10, b and c.
The Busan Assembly adopted this comprehensive proposal and included it word for word in its Programme Guidelines. At least three reasons may have been decisive for reaching this wide ecumenical consensus:

1. The key concerns of the ‘just peace’ continue to be an urgent challenge to the churches in their differing contexts, and also as a world ecumenical community. While the emphasis in particular contexts may be different (economic justice, environmental justice, climate justice, non-violent peace-building, and restorative justice), these mutually interdependent dimensions are seen by all in this globalised world as urgent questions for the unity, theology, and witness/mission of the Church and the churches. It would thus seem that only a comprehensive approach such as this is equal to the task in view of the complexity of the challenges.

2. The multiple repetitiveness and largely unproductive polarisation in many ecumenical discussions in the past (which go right back to the beginnings of the modern ecumenical movement, in the Faith and Order movement on the one hand, and the Life and Work movement on the other) between, on the one hand, an ecumenism largely concerned with dialogue on doctrinal matters, and, on the other, an ecumenism dealing mainly with action on social and ethical questions, could finally be overcome by such an integrated theological study process. Such a study process could bring together the expertise to be found in the individual commissions and working areas (Unity, Mission, Dialogue, Public Witness, and Ecumenical Formation) in such a way that a common clear position could result, inasmuch as current social crises and political and violent conflicts pose theological questions to the churches of the oikoumene and their self-understanding. All too often these issues have been dealt with separately as a task for efficient, politically oriented advocacy work, which has increasingly given rise to the concern—and not only for representatives of the Orthodox churches—that it is no longer recognisable to what extent action is in fact being taken by the churches of the oikoumene (as opposed, for example, to any non-governmental organisation).

3. If there is now going to be a greater concern to establish more securely the spiritual roots that do not only motivate the socio-political activity of the Church and the churches, but also demand it and strengthen it, then above all those traditions that have the liturgy at the centre of their church life and activity will feel themselves directly addressed. Moreover, many others are more and more feeling a need for deep spiritual renewal, as they increasingly recognise that the Church’s action in matters of just peace, if limited to political campaigning alone, falls short and is ultimately doomed to remain powerless and ineffective. The IEPC had already, inter alia, described just peace as ‘a pattern of life that reflects human participation in God’s love for the world.’ The dynamic character of just peace as gift and calling of the Church and churches was in that decision conceived as a pilgrimage to be undertaken together.

The Message of the Busan Assembly combines all this in one single challenge to ‘all people of good will’ to join in this pilgrimage.
The ‘Oikoumene in via’—Transformative Spirituality and the theological Trinitarian foundation of Just Peace

An initial attempt will now be made to describe more exactly the ecumenical pilgrimage of justice and peace in light of the most recent discussions within the WCC.

Firstly, in the IEPC evaluation, which had significant influence on the preparations for the Busan Assembly (inter alia, in the Assembly document ‘Statement on the Way of Just Peace’); secondly in the new mission and evangelism statement presented at Busan (‘Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes’); and, thirdly in recent debates in the newly elected Central Committee (‘An invitation to the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace, 2014’).

In the ‘Just Peace Companion’ which accompanies the Ecumenical Call to Just Peace, helpful reflections are to be found which make it clear how the pilgrimage undertaken by those who wish to join it will itself be marked by justice and peace.

Just peace

...is not simply assenting to a set of ideas about God’s design for the world. To be agents of God’s peace requires putting on the mind that was in Christ Jesus (cf. Phil 2:5)... In order to have that mind of Christ, peace-building requires entering regularly and deeply into communion with the Triune God, along the ways that Christ has set out for us. It is that presence in God that makes it possible for us to come to discern God’s working in our world.21

That belief can keep Christian hope (as distinguished from optimism) alive:

Hope... is something that comes from God, who is the author of peace and reconciliation. Hope is something that we discover, drawing us forward into the mystery of peace.22

It is clear that this growing awareness of ‘participating in God’s Mission of justice and peace (missio Dei)’ enables the churches to have fresh confidence to be able themselves to become ‘communities of justice and peace’,23 That opens up decisive trains of thought for further discussion on ecclesiology in the WCC.

The Just Peace Companion had already made an attempt in broad outline to give just peace a Trinitarian theological basis:

In its own finite way, spirituality mirrors the loving relationships between the persons of the triune God who sustains, transforms and sanctifies a broken world.24

The Central Committee gave further thought to this in 2014 in its Statement on the Way of Just Peace: “The movement of love which is essential to the Triune God manifests itself in the promise of justice and peace.”25 These reflections become even more clear if they are linked with the three different dimensions, which in the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace are in a dynamic mutual relationship with one another, as the Central Committee has now taken up, following on from the fundamental differentiations made by Dorothee Sölle in her ‘mystical way’.26

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22 Ibid., ch. 2, para. 61
23 WCC, An Invitation to the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace, WCC Central Committee, 2014 (hereafter ‘Invitation’)
24 WCC, Just Peace Companion, op.cit., ch.2, para.62
25 WCC, Invitation, op.cit., II
The Via Positiva—celebrating the blessing of creation.

In the form of articles of belief the Assembly stated:

Together we believe in God, the Creator of all life. Therefore we acknowledge that every human being is made in the image and likeness of God... In wondrously creating a world with more than enough natural riches to support countless generations of human beings and other living things, God makes manifest a vision for all people to live in the fullness of life and with dignity, regardless of class, gender, religion, race or ethnicity.\textsuperscript{27}

The ecumenical community begins its pilgrimage of justice and peace not as seekers, but as those who have been found.\textsuperscript{28} To begin with there is amazement at the goodness of creation, and the awareness that we are part of it—which means nothing other than that we know that we are in relationship, with God, with our fellow creatures and with one another, long before we ourselves form these relationships: we are created in God’s image, we are formed according to the community within the Godhead. God’s dealings with creation do not begin with original sin, but with original blessing. This sense of amazement leads us immediately to praising God and to celebrating together, as a natural reaction to “God’s great gift of life, the beauty of creation and the unity of a reconciled diversity.”\textsuperscript{29} That holds before us a vision of the possibility of a life in just, non-violent liberated relationships—and not only in the relationships of humans with one another. This amazement at the miracle of life can produce in us the strength to seek to maintain these vital relationships by our careful stewardship. How else could an appropriate theology of creation be described?

The Via Negativa—being freed from power and violence

Together we believe in Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace. Therefore we acknowledge that humankind is reconciled with God, by grace, and we strive to live reconciled with one another. The life and teachings, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, point toward the peaceable kingdom of God. Despite persecution and suffering, Jesus remains steadfast in his way of humility and active non-violence, even unto death. His life of commitment to justice leads to the cross, an instrument of torture and execution. With the resurrection of Jesus, God confirms that such steadfast love, such obedience, such trust, leads to life. By God’s grace we too are enabled to take the way of the cross, be disciples and bear the costs.\textsuperscript{30}

However, just because the Pilgrimage to Justice and Peace begins with being found and not with condemnation—in the ontological and not the chronological sense—in the words of Dorothee Sölle) “is what makes the horror about the destruction of wonder so radical... Mystical spirituality of creation will very likely move deeper and deeper into the dark night of being delivered into the hands of the principalities and powers that dominate us.”\textsuperscript{31} “The pilgrimage will lead us to the locations of ugly violence and injustices. We intend to look for God’s incarnated presence

\textsuperscript{27} WCC, Statement on the Way of Just Peace (hereafter ‘Statement’)
\textsuperscript{28} Sölle, Mysticism and Resistance, op. cit.
\textsuperscript{29} WCC, Invitation, op.cit., IV
\textsuperscript{30} WCC, Statement, op. cit., 1
\textsuperscript{31} Sölle, Mysticism and Resistance, op. cit., 92
in the midst of suffering, exclusion and discrimination.” The painful element in the pilgrimage is seeking the divine incarnation precisely in the places apparently abandoned by God where violence and injustice harm life or even destroy it. A pilgrimage of justice and of peace, if it is to become a path followed by the churches in discipleship to Jesus and sharing in his sufferings, cannot be a ‘dream journey’ which passes by horrors and the distress of the helpless. “Following Jesus means meeting him wherever people suffer injustice, violence, and war.” That is exactly in accord with the line taken by the new WCC Mission and Evangelism Statement when it speaks of ‘Mission from the Margins’. Indeed, wherever possible, those ‘on the margins’ must themselves become the decisive guides pointing the way to the churches in all their decisions, because the dimension of pilgrimage that is changing the oikoumene does not allow us to pass them by, but rather involves “kneeling down and learning to walk upright.” For only here, by actually encountering suffering in the places of our own powerlessness can our “relation to the basic realities of ownership, violence, and the self is changing.” That can lead the Church to ‘repentance and—in a movement of purification—liberate us from obsession with power, possessions, ego, and violence, so that we become ever more Christ-like.” The ‘Just Peace Companion’ indicates how “Putting on the mind of Christ, being formed in Christ, involves spiritual practices and disciplines that embody peace in our own bodies.” In that way the pilgrimage is also described as a learning curve as we “learn to give up looking for justifications of what we have done and train ourselves in the practice of justice.” The pilgrimage will only become credible if it is a journey of repentance. It may be that this becomes the greatest challenge for the oikoumene—for how else could a Christology of just peace be described?

The Via Transformativa—resistance

Together we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Giver and Sustainer of all life. Therefore we acknowledge the sanctifying presence of God in all of life, strive to protect life and to heal broken lives... We can state that: the Holy Spirit assures us that the Triune God will perfect and consummate all of creation at the end of time. In this we recognise justice and peace as both promise and present—hope for the future and a gift here and now.

It is only in our becoming one with Christ—which is not to be misunderstood as self-realisation—that Sölle sees that we gain strength to resist injustice and violence. Pilgrims can thus become healed healers. “Salvation means that humans live in compassion and justice co-creatively; in being healed (saved) they experience

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32 WCC, Invitation, op. cit., IV.
33 Ibid, II.
34 WCC, Official Report, op. cit., 121
35 Dorothee Sölle sees this as the teaching role of the poor. Cf. Mysticism and Resistance, op. cit., 285
36 Ibid., 92
37 WCC, Invitation, op. cit., IV
38 WCC, Just Peace Companion, op. cit., ch. 2, para. 60: communal acts of worship in order to be nourished by God’s Word and by the Eucharist; making prayers of intercession as part of our mindfulness of being formed in Christ; seeking and extending forgiveness, so as to create truthfulness in ourselves and to forge the space for others who need to seek repentance; washing one another’s feet, so as to learn the ways of service; engaging in times of fasting, to review our patterns of consumption and relationships to one another and to the earth; consistent and sustained acts of caring for others, especially those most in need of healing, liberation, and reconciliation; consistent and sustained acts of caring for the earth.
40 WCC, Statement, op. cit., 1.
also that they can heal (save).”\textsuperscript{41} That is the third dimension of the pilgrimage. In their own self-transformation can the courage and strength grow (in the churches) “to resist evil—injustice and violence.”\textsuperscript{42} And so the pilgrimage is much more than fresh programmes of action or fresh advocacy strategies—all of which are meaningful and necessary—and its first aim is a ‘life in God’ which causes transformation into a “gentle relationship with creation and a morality of enough,”\textsuperscript{43} in order to resist the immense economic and ecological injustices. This transformative spirituality is seen as a gift of the Holy Spirit that guides us into all truth (John 16:13). How else could a pneumatology of just peace be described?

A ‘realised eschatology’, which is already anticipating in the present time the salvation of the world in all its brokenness and is seen as participation in the great mission Dei, can provide the theological framework to hold together the spiritual, ethical and theological dimensions of the pilgrimage of justice and peace in its threefold aspects of via positiva, via negativa and via transformative. The self-understanding of the oikoumene, and also of the churches themselves, and their mission and service in the world, could thus not remain basically unaffected. How else could an ecclesiology of just peace be described?

Concluding remarks

Many young people also participated in the Busan Assembly, as delegates of their churches, as stewards, and in the programme of the Global Ecumenical Theological Institute (GETI)—a very successful study programme accompanying the Assembly. In conversations with these participants, one complaint particularly emerged: the perceived gap between the claims of the oikoumene and what it is in reality. Their theoretical knowledge of the history and theology of the ecumenical movement as well as the many valuable unforgettable encounters ‘in the margins’ of the Assembly stood in sharp contrast to the institutionalized oikoumene that they observed during the Assembly. The extent to which the ‘business’ of the oikoumene and the churches is marked by power, influence, money and sometimes injustice seemed in parts to these young participants shocking and unattractive.

One can dismiss that criticism by pointing out the inevitable tension between an ecumenical movement ‘at the margins’ and ‘at the grassroots’ on the one hand, and on the other hand the ecumenical institutions ‘at the centre’ with their concerns for continuity and mutual accountability. It would be futile to play these off against one another. It does, however, remain important to hold the dynamism of these two opposites together to avoid the situation where the movements get nowhere because they are individual initiatives and the ecclesiastical institutions ‘at the centre’ with their rigidity in officialdom, structures and procedures. It is to be hoped that the pilgrimage of justice and peace, now begun, can make here a quite decisive contribution—that is, unless it becomes relativized into a merely new ecumenical metaphor, but rather has real concrete content and is then actually lived out, not as a burdensome obligation but as a way of living in constant development, for individuals and for whole communities. We do not necessarily have to look to the ecumenical ‘centres’ for decisive initiatives here. The pilgrimage will simply happen when people are walking it as forgiven disciples of Jesus Christ. It is to be hoped that ecumenical and church institutions will be caught up in this movement and ‘walk gently.’

\textsuperscript{41} Sölle, Mysticism and Resistance, op. cit., 93.
\textsuperscript{42} WCC, Invitation, op.cit., IV.
\textsuperscript{43} Letter of the delegates from churches in Germany, op.cit.
Memory—why are we concerned these days about memory? There is in academic circles, across nearly all fields of inquiry, a veritable boom in memory studies. Why is that? Why has memory become so significant a topic? And such an interdisciplinary topic?

Some people suggest that the fast-paced societies of today make for the kind of world in which memory holds a very precarious status. Today we are much more orientated towards the future than we are towards the past, we live by 'leaning forward', so to speak, without much looking back. Somehow memory does not seem to have a hold on us, and just for that reason we need to retrieve this sense of remembrance, of memory, in the fast-paced society in which we live—hence all the studies. And maybe that is true.

Maybe it is also true that in the modern world we, as scholars put it, construct our identity in narrative terms, which is to say that we think of who we are in terms of stories about ourselves. If in earlier days you had asked a person, ‘Who are you?’ that person might have responded by naming his father or clan. To define his identity, he might also have told you about a particular job he was doing. Today we do not do that. Today we tell stories about ourselves. And for stories about ourselves, memory is foundational. So perhaps the reason for the boom in memory studies lies in our propensity toward this narrative construction of personal identity. Perhaps.

I think, however, that the principal reason we are seeing this booming interest in memory lies in our tendency to remember most the suffering we have undergone. The last century—the 20th century—was one of two great wars, two world wars, and countless other conflicts. Is it not interesting that we started seeing the memory-studies boom towards the latter part of that century? Especially prominent has been the Jewish experience during the Second World War, the Holocaust. Initially, remembrances of this experience were almost suppressed; but in the 1960s, at a certain distance from the events themselves, people started talking about their experiences, and then we began hearing and reading reflections on those memories.

Probably more than anyone else in the public arena, Elie Wiesel has championed the importance of memory. In his Nobel Prize acceptance speech he made the now famous remark, ‘Salvation lies in memory’. Wiesel’s declaration meant that by remembering, we honour those who have suffered and we honour the dead. Not to remember would be adding insult to injury. He also meant that by remembering, we protect the weak against future suffering. Those future weak might be ourselves, and they might be others, but we remember for the sake of all potential future victims of wrongdoing.

This sense that we need to remember has been inscribed in the character of Western culture, certainly, but it has also been inscribed in almost all cultures of the day, and very starkly. As I was reflecting on this phenomenon and its causes, it seemed clear to me that we should remember. But at the same time I was left with one fundamental yet unanswered question: How can we remember well?

A few years after receiving his Nobel Prize, Wiesel wrote a short piece reflecting on the possible dangers of memory. In it he noted how, during the war in former Yugoslavia toward the
end of the last century, memories fuelled hatreds. Might, then, not only salvation but also damnation lie in memory? For poignant memories can generate conflicts as well as urge us to struggle for justice and to protect the innocent. In fact, just because memory can be a source of protection it can also become a source of aggression. A shield can very easily morph into a sword. A good offense is said to be the best defense.

So memory often has this dual and ambiguous status. It has a potential as a protective force, as well as potential to generate conflicts and deepen those that already exist. And, if one looks beyond personal conflicts between people to collective conflicts between groups, one often sees that the retrieval of memory results in its recasting in competing ways by different groups; and these different understandings of history have conditioned serious conflicts, even terrible wars. Such has happened between Bosniaks,Croats, and Serbs in former Yugoslavia.

Hence for me the question became: What would it mean to remember well? What would it mean to remember so that memories served to heal? And heal both rememberers who have suffered ill and perpetrated ill? What would it mean to remember for a third-party object of others’ misuse of memories? What would it mean to remember in a reconciling way? What would it mean to remember so that memory bridged rather than deepened the ravine that keeps people apart?

To look for answers I explored the resources of the Christian tradition. Two ‘sacred’ memories captured my imagination: the memory of Exodus and the memory of the death and resurrection of Christ—the two great saving events in the history of the people of God. These became my guides for reflecting about the nature of remembering well in a violent world. And several reflections surfaced as primary to this task.

Truth for All

The first has to do with truth in remembering. In the memory studies of today, there are scholars who distinguish very sharply between memory, which they say has to do with personal or collective identity, and more objective, factual history, which has to do with what transpired in the past. Memory is less interested in truth; history is all about discovering truth. Not only are they distinct from each other—they contrast with each other. I find this an impossible contrast, however. Many arguments have shown that history involves more than gathering and organizing facts. But more important for me is memory’s interest in the finding of truth.

If I tell a story to a few friends—a story my friends know something about—and I do not tell it quite correctly, one of them might say, “Wait a second, Miroslav. It didn’t happen that way!” and give his version of the story.

For example, consider this scenario: I like to ski—I am a skier. Suppose I have gone skiing with a friend of mine, and I tell my group that he and I turned left off the chairlift and went down the slope called ‘Dropout’. But my friend said “No, Miroslav, you’ve got it wrong. We turned right. And we went down the slope called Wipe-out. Right?” How I told the story how I remembered the events, the correctness of my memory matters. We want to get it right.

Imagine, now, that same story told this way: “Well, we took the chairlift to a double black diamond run. I turned left and went straight down the double black diamond; but my friend he chickened out. He went all the way around the back side of the mountain to be safe.” My friend protests: “Miroslav, what are you talking about? It was you who chickened out! You didn’t want to ski down that slope. I had to drag you down!” Now my story reflects ill on my friend, and he is rebelling. Why? Because this untruth is injurious to him, and shows him in a bad light.
Now imagine that a wrongdoing is involved in a story that I tell. And imagine that I tell the story in a way that reflects inaccurately who did what to whom. Obviously, informed people would resist, and that is really what the conflict of memories is often about. Truth profoundly matters to us because every untruth is a form of injustice. I do you an injustice if I inaccurately represent your actions towards me or my actions towards you, especially if those actions concern matters of right and wrong.

Sometimes people differentiate between the cognitive side of remembering as having to do with retrieving the truth, and the pragmatic side of remembering as having to do with our use of memories. I believe that is a useful academic distinction, but retrieval and use always happen simultaneously. Cognitively, remembering is not simply a matter of the retrieval of truth. It is also a matter of doing something to someone else by telling a story—whether in my mind or out loud—in a certain way. Cognitive remembrance has a moral dimension, and it produces either justice or injustice. To tell a story inaccurately is to perpetrate injustice; that is why telling the truth matters profoundly.

Of course, when it comes to memories it isn’t always easy to identify the truth. Things get complicated. Perspectives differ. ‘Facts’ conflict to how we tell those stories, those memories. But when memories are rightly told, truth-finding can happen in complex, conflict-laden situations.

Healing for the Self

This brings us to my second guide for remembering well in a violent world: healing for the self. The two components of this guide—the memory of the victim, and the memory of the wrongdoer—are not always identical. Neither are the ways in which we heal memories as victims and heal memories as wrongdoers. Leaving the memory of the wrongdoer aside for our purposes here, I will address only the memory of the victim, of the wronged person.

What does it mean for a victim to remember well—to remember in a healing manner? Often when a person has been wronged in a major way, the past violation begins to dominate the whole of that person’s identity. He lives in the past. He becomes self-defined by the wrong done to him. He thinks of himself principally as the victim of his individual or collective violator.

The Christian story is in a profound way the story of the liberation of the self from captivity to past wrong that he or she has suffered (and done!). For the Christian, a key element of human identity is encapsulated thus: ‘I am not the sum of my deeds, thoughts, and feelings’. I am not the sum of what I have done and what others have done to me and how I have reacted. Instead, most profoundly I am who God sees me to be. My identity does not lie in my own hands. My identity does not lie in the hands of someone else. My identity lies in the hands of the divine author of my individual existence—God, who sees my identity in Jesus Christ.

Now the communal or individual self that has been injured does not only draw its identity primarily from the past. The injured self often projects that past into the future. So the future becomes the extension of the past! The resulting fear of the future begins to dominate our understanding and expectations of it. And now we are captive to the past to such a degree that not only is our identity defined by it, but our very future is defined by it as well.

The Christian faith offers a response to this problem as well. In a book entitled *Theology of Hope*, theologian Jürgen Moltmann elaborated the fundamental concept of promise, which inherently has to do with the future. He distinguished between a future that is extrapolated from the past and projected into the future, and a future that comes to us anew, from without,
afresh from God. ‘Promise’ is the carrier of that future—that adventus—which comes to us from God. It is not an extension of my past into the future; rather, promise is a gift of God from outside.

Abraham and Sarah could not conceive a baby. Then the Lord announces: “In a year you will be with child.” That is promise. It is not a future extrapolated from the past. It is a future that comes because God gave the word of promise. Without delving into the metaphysics of this issue, I believe that in the Christian account of things the future does fundamentally come from outside. It is a divine gift, not a simple extrapolation from the past. And therefore the past need not—indeed cannot—dominate the present or the future. We live by promise, not by the past.

Care for Others

To review, my first guide for remembering well had to do with truth and its importance. My second guide was about healing for the self—one’s present identity and expectations of the future. My third guide considers care for others—how a victim should remember her suffering for the sake of other people. Those who have suffered wrong often tend to be self-absorbed—not in a negatively qualified sense, but in a naturally self-protective sense. For personal suffering calls attention to oneself. But often that absorption in one’s own suffering leads a victim to forget the suffering of others. Because of this self-focus, victims will sometimes, in their quest for self-protection, repeat against others the very wrongdoing which they themselves have suffered! Their inward focus makes them aware mainly of their own needs and interests and blinds them to the wellbeing of others. In a world of competition for scarce resources, such victims sometimes turn into victimizers.

In the story of the Exodus and the Old Testament teaching based on that story, we read a repeated statement: ‘Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt. And the Lord, your God, has freed you from slavery’. And then comes a ‘therefore’—sometimes explicit, sometimes implicit, depending on the translation: ‘And therefore you should treat an alien in your own midst with care, with attention’. Of course, the instruction embedded in this last statement is, don’t treat aliens in your midst like you yourselves were treated in Egypt, namely, as things to be disposed as one wishes. Rather, treat aliens the way God treated you by delivering you from the land of your slavery. Remember your enslavement, and emulate God’s liberating action of you in your dealings with outsiders.

Note that the remembering goes beyond the memory simply of slavery. The command is not, ‘Remember that you were slaves in Egypt’, with the implication not to treat slaves the way ‘you’ were treated; rather, it is, ‘Remember that you were slaves and that God delivered you’, with the subsequent command to ‘do unto others’ as God has done to you. The memory of deliverance is the fundamental memory here, and it lays the foundation for remembering in a way that cares for others.

There is also in the story of the Exodus a kind of dark story of memory that does not bear on the treatment of aliens. That story is the memory of Amalek. The memory of Pharaoh. The memory of those who tried to obstruct the Hebrews’ liberation by God. From the Old Testament story of the Exodus to the New Testament story of the liberating death and resurrection of Christ, there is a kind of shift. The human obstructionists—the ‘Pharaohs’ of the story—have been transposed to the power of evil that rules the whole world. The reason for this shift lies in the universal significance of Christ’s death and resurrection. And that pushes for reconciliation between wronged and the wrongdoer.
Reconciliation

How might the memory of the cross and resurrection bear on remembering in reconciling ways? When in 2 Corinthians the Apostle Paul says, ‘One died for all’, he means that, as one man, Jesus Christ died for the wrongdoing of all people; therefore, Paul says that all have died (2 Cor 5:14). Apart from the soteriological importance of Paul’s statement, it has significant ethical dimensions that bear on the way Christians relate to others and each other, and how we remember wrongdoing suffered.

First, if One died for all, One died for me. Let’s assume that I am a victim—a victim for whom ‘One died’. If One had to die for me, the implication is that I, though I am a victim, am nevertheless not sinless. I am not bathed in the light of innocence while my wrongdoer is enveloped in the darkness of utter guilt. It may be true that I have suffered wrong, but I have also, perhaps in a different setting, done wrong. The line that separates the wronged and the wrongdoer is not so sharp if it is true that One died for all. So any remembrance of the wrongdoing must not only entail remembering the guilt of the wrongdoer; it must also entail remembering the non-innocence of the person wronged.

The second ethical implication of One’s dying for all stems from the fact that One also died for the wrongdoer. If in the death of Christ ‘all have died’, in some sense the wrongdoer’s wrongdoing has already been atoned for. The wrongdoer’s deed is not unaffected by the cosmic event of the coming of God into the world and the death of Christ on behalf of humanity. That misdeed has been qualified and changed in its very character. It is true, I would grant, that in order for this transformation to take place fully, the wrongdoer would have to repent of the deed, and other things would have to happen as well. Nonetheless, the very fact of Christ’s death for all changes ontologically the character of the wrongdoer’s deed. I cannot remember the wrongdoer’s deed without remembering its having been atoned for when Christ died for all—including that particular person who did that particular wrong.

Third and finally, the death of Christ is a reconciling event—not just between an individual and God, but also between human beings. In the most profound and true sense, we can say that in Christ we have been reconciled with each other as human beings. Have been reconciled—past tense. So memories of wrongdoing must be framed by the memory of the reconciliation that has in some sense already occurred.

Now that is a very difficult thought. And sometimes when I think about the implications of this statement for the world to come—namely that transformed victims and wrongdoers will inhabit the same world of love—I am reminded of a story told by my very good friend Carlos Eire, professor at Yale and an ex-Cuban. He was one of 10,000 children who at the age of ten were airlifted from Cuba. Carlos came to the United States without parents, without anyone he knew. In Cuba he’d belonged to the upper-class Cuban establishment. His father was a very important judge. But now Carlos had lost everything—his whole life in Cuba. There are many ex-Cubans like Carlos in the United States, and it is very hard for them to live with the memory of what they have lost. There is a community of ex-Cubans in Chicago to which Carlos’ mother belongs, for whom Carlos, when he visits her, serves as a kind of theological advisor. One day his mother’s friends, reminiscing about their beautiful life on that wonderful island, were thinking that Castro’s life was nearing the end, that he might die any day. And it occurred to them to ask the question: “What would happen if Castro were to repent on his deathbed? Would he go to heaven, or not?” It was a burning theological question for them, and they couldn’t decide the answer. So they waited for Carlos to come so they could ask him: “What would happen to Castro if he were to repent?” And Carlos
said: “You know, this is what the Christian faith teaches: If you repent, your sins will be forgiven. And if Castro repents, he is going to be in heaven.” One of these ladies responded: “You know, if Castro goes to heaven, then I don’t want to go there.” Her basic idea was that a heaven which accommodated Castro was no heaven at all. She and Castro could never both belong in her concept of heaven. And that is the understandable attitude of many victims about reconciliation with their victimizer. They want exclusion, permanent exclusion. In contrast to this powerful urge to exclude stands this immensely offensive claim by the Christian faith that a world of the reconciled is possible.

Love

Let me conclude. Remembering well, understood from a Christian standpoint, starts by answering the question: how does the one who loves remember? The Christian faith says that God is love. That is the most profound Trinitarian reality of the life of God. In God’s very being, God is love. And towards human beings the deepest expression of that love is the coming of God in the person of Christ to die for the sin of the world. This, I think, sums up the Christian faith. So, from the Christian standpoint, to inquire into remembering well means asking the question from the perspective of this kind of love and informed by the vision of this kind of God.

To remember the truth about myself, to remember the truth about the other even when that truth might be unpleasant to me, shows care—shows love—for the other. Interest in truth presupposes care, just as justice presupposes care; care for myself and for the other. We care about truth and justice not for the sake of truth and justice in the abstract, but because they are expressions of love for others, love for persons. It can heal the wound of memory because the divine love sees me as more than the sum of my deeds and gives me my future as a gift. This love is a more profound reality than anything else in the world. That’s also why, even as a victim, I can care for others; the care for others is an expression of this love that I have received. And, finally, this unconditional divine love opens up the possibility of reconciliation. It enables me to see myself not simply as a victim, but as a non-innocent victim nevertheless accepted by God. Accepting myself as a non-innocent victim beloved by God in tum gives me the ability to see my wrongdoer also as a beloved child of God, so that I can imagine us both as reconciled in a world of love.

What does it mean to remember well? It means to remember as the one who loves.
Cracks in the Walls

‘Like a crack in a high wall’: this quote from the book of Isaiah was taken by the Council of the EKD a few years ago when commenting on the global financial and economic crisis. The crack which the prophet speaks about (Isa 30) is initially barely visible but it eats its way through the walls until the mortar between the bricks starts to ripple and in the end causes the whole wall to collapse. These walls represent social cohesion, and in this way are something that applies to the well-being of every single human.

The upheaval that we are currently experiencing has global dimensions. Scientists distinguish between six major interdependent crises: the ecological crisis, which culminates in climate change, the scarcity of resources and growing conflict over raw materials; the food crisis which threatens more and more people with hunger and which is intensified by global speculation over land and food; the financial crisis which, owing to inadequate political regulation and an over-expansionary monetary policy, has led to a destabilisation of democracy, the economy and employment: and the debt crisis which means that states tend to become incapacitated. Then there is the crisis of work which shows itself in the expansion of precarious employment throughout the world, leading to a worsening of the inequalities between rich and poor; and finally, the welfare state crisis which excludes more and more people from education, culture and social security. In recent years, another crisis has developed: it is about the many people who leave their homes to save their lives and to find a humane future for themselves and their children elsewhere. Wars and ecological and economic disasters which they hope to escape are strongly linked with the factors listed above. As a result, these crises pose an increasing challenge for such victims as these, for the countries where they arrive and ultimately, for Europe as it struggles with the future of its nationally orientated social and welfare states. For the industrialised countries, a further important factor has to be considered: what is considered as demographic change. While people in Europe live longer due to prosperity and good healthcare systems, there are fewer young people—a development which intensifies the social state crisis. The many young people that come to Europe after fleeing war and starvation therefore represent at the same time both an opportunity and a threat.

What is summarised here in well-known key words notably affects the lives of individuals and their families, in the workplace and in towns and cities. Our society differentiates itself further, in that it becomes more varied but it also splinters—economically, socially and culturally. The importance of employment rises but at the same time economic and social imbalances increase. This becomes clear in income and asset development—actual earnings play an ever-decreasing role—and continues with the fairness of social systems: parents of young children, women and men who care for their relatives, the chronically ill or people with disabilities, often work only part-time in precarious jobs and in the end have to live off a small pension.

1 “Wie ein Riss in einer hohen Mauer”: Wort des Rates der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland zur globalen Finanzmarkt- und Wirtschaftskrise, ed. Kirchenamt der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland, EKD-Texte 100 (Hannover, 2009).
Changes in the working life: the boundaries of gainful employment

Work is necessary to stay alive. At the same time, work is a form of self-fulfilment and can bring recognition: it links us to other people and it is part of what gives meaning to our lives. However, for many people it is also associated with major and increasing pressures. Higher achievement is expected, more customer visits, growing numbers of cases, more sales. This applies to manufacturing services as well as to the social economy. And once again the length of daily and weekly working hours increases. In the course of global competition, we are witnessing an expansion of operating and opening hours into round-the-clock factories and call centres. Electronic networking enables the outsourcing of production and services, and reaction time decreases. 'Just in time' is the expectation not only in the logistical world: modern employees are called to be flexible, mobile and available at all times. Therefore, chronically ill or older people have to withdraw from their working lives before they reach retiring age. And low-skilled people have considerable difficulty in finding work at all—even though German and European labour market policy—under the title of 'employability'—is active in keeping many people in the job market or in enabling them to get into employment. In the end, anyone unemployed is usually not only faced with financial problems but often feels excluded from the life of society. Nevertheless, employment covers only part of what is needed in society. Caring for and nurturing the family and the neighbourhood are also a form of work. The goal in this case is not the manufacture of a product and, unlike paid work, its quality cannot be measured by the standards of good management, efficiency and time savings. As these caring activities are mostly carried out by women and covered by the spouse’s income they are consequently connected with little or no payment. This also applies to the traditional female occupations of domestic science, education and caring. This downgrading of care work with the significant wage differentials in the 'gender gap' and poorer pensions for women has led to blatant injustices—even though the professional care worker is exposed to the same pressure as in other service occupations. Their part in society is essential to employment and their links with schools and education is, in terms of participation, also not without problems. For the unemployed, pensioners, families and women it can mean that they are socially excluded—although you can find many, especially among the elderly and socially committed women, who could get involved in society. The importance of civic engagement has been stressed and politically promoted in recent times; but an often overlooked fact is that you need to be able to afford volunteers. Usually, the socially committed are well-off, well educated and well connected—while those who are socially disadvantaged and cannot find access to the labour market may not have the necessary networks and resources to work as volunteers. With state funding, a new grey area is developing in Germany between employment and volunteering, all these have to be seen critically. The danger that these little jobs take the place of professional employment is not to be discounted.

Families in the ordeal: opportunities beyond the economy?

According to Time magazine, among the trends in western society that change our lives is that of ‘singlism’. Apparently, living alone is the best way to live out the individualistic values of modern society: freedom, self-fulfilment and self-determination. And many couples experience

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2 This grey area includes tax and social security contribution reduced jobs as e.g. so called ‘450-€-jobs,’ the German federal volunteers service, civil work or instructor fees. They all are often employments in the social sector with less social security.
phases in life in which they live separately for professional reasons. One couple in three is affected by it in the first few years of employment; for many it is the price you pay for career mobility. In her book ‘Love out of the Suitcase’, Alexandra Berger names all the forms of mobile living: ‘female, mobile, childless’; ‘male, mobile, children—a lifestyle at the woman’s cost’; ‘mobile couple, missed family life’. Lengthy periods of training, difficult vocational demands and, indeed, time spent commuting, are the reasons why the birth of children is continually pushed back in their résumé, so that the desire to have children is not met as planned since time has become scarce. Reproductive medicine plays an increasingly important role in family planning. A third of all children, twice as many as twenty years ago, are also born out of wedlock. The proportion of single parents and of cohabitation has increased significantly, and because parents have changing partners ‘patchwork constellations’ are on the rise. For the first time in history, families no longer form the majority of households. On average, those who have to provide for children are financially worse off than those without children. And households in which there is only one income have proportionally less money than two-income households. The same applies to the pressures associated with the care of relatives. Because of the need for care and solidarity within the family, but also because the funding of care and the public services is not sufficient, the majority of care is performed by the family, in most cases by daughters and daughters-in-law who already find themselves under a heavy workload because of their own children, their job and the care of grandparent. Elderly people without family members—which in line with the demographic change is not a rare situation—represent another problem. Whilst the birth rate stagnates at a low level, the number of the very old and of dependants increases. More than 40% of 70–85-year-olds now live in one-person households—a practical but also an emotional challenge, especially when they are no longer able to support themselves. Not only must the health and social system react to this situation but neighbourhoods and parishes also need to create caring communities.

The face of the cities and communities: Division and participation

Increasing income differentials, increasing social differences between employed people and those receiving help, between educational winners and losers, and also between the employable youth and the elderlies, lead to growing divisions in society. The formation of parallel societies of different ethnic groups, migrants and those indigenous to the country has to be added. Already, using maps, we can see how social segmentation expands. The city centres are attractive to mobile young people and also to the elderly. Rents are rising and more and more people have no choice but to move to the suburbs. The ‘gentrification’ of entire metropolitan districts leads to the displacement of tenants on low incomes. Although the need to invest in social housing and create diverse districts is undisputed, it is difficult for boroughs that are in debt to ensure integration. A growing number of citizens depend on transfer payment—as the received income is not enough to feed the family, and people who are long-term unemployed do not benefit from the upturn in the labour market, because the insurance does not cover the costs

4 See e.g. Zwischen Autonomie und Angewiesenheit: Familie als verlässliche Gemeinschaft gestalten (Hannover: Rat der EKD, 2013).
of care. Due to financial pressures, many communities have already put the brakes on the provision of transport and energy, while housing has also been sold, and theatres and public swimming pools have been closed. Therefore, places that once offered space for people to mix in public have disappeared. At the same time, traditional social support networks are vanishing. Ten years ago 74% of the population said they could rely on family and friends in case of emergencies, but today it is only 64%. This is made worse by people frequently moving house for professional reasons, while traditional neighbourhoods are also changing. Mobility and shelter, employment and welfare are out of balance.

Migration: Changes in co-operation

Large refugee movements in recent years make this development very visible and represent the most controversial challenge to our society. People fleeing intolerable conditions first need a roof over their heads and something to eat, and then clothes and things needed for daily life. But the challenges continue: fugitives want to build a new life. They need German language courses, they are looking for work, their children need to go to school and build their own future. For those already here, they encounter different reactions. Their own unfamiliar experience of migration, with its competitive pressures and housing shortages are keenly felt. Overwhelming openness, hospitality and helpfulness, especially in parishes, is found along with scepticism, and also open hatred and actual aggression. It is not only the low-paid and unemployed that find a home in new right-wing movements but also those who have been better off since the fall of Communism and now see their prosperity endangered. In order not to let their bitterness take them over, and to create sustainable forms of co-operation with the newcomers, forms of co-operation are needed that go beyond housing and integration. It’s all a matter of participation.

Great Challenges—What Now?

So there are many points at which the walls begin to crack. Maybe we need to change many things so that the walls find a new purpose. The basic questions are: What do we want to work for in the future if it is not to be consumption? What do we want to use our time for—beyond employment? What sort of society will we get in which more and more people are marginalised because they are immigrants, unemployed, sick, disabled or old? How do we create a form of social justice in which commitment for others is not paid with poverty? What possibilities are available for those who cannot any longer keep up with the pace of the world of work or want to, but feel too young and lively not to participate in society? In short: what sort of society do we want? If this is a key question for the future, then—as members of society—we have to agree about it, even at a European level. Amitai Etzioni talks about a ‘megalog’ which societies need to hold about the major issues of the future to cope with upcoming transformations. Crucial questions are: what kind of growth do we need and how can we use our economies globally so as not to devastate regions of the world any further, while others continue to consume new luxury goods? In a networked world, it is understandable that wealthy countries with a welfare state and which recognise human rights are appealing to people worldwide. What does that mean for

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7 See Heinz Bude, Gesellschaft der Angst (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung, 2015).
the European common understanding, its economic collaboration and the development of mutual values? Christians and churches can contribute greatly to this conversation.

*Church during transformation*

Change is vital and possible. This shows the history of the ‘conciliar process for Peace, Justice and the Integrity of Creation’. There the peaceful revolution in the GDR has significant roots, even if no one would have imagined it were possible. Christians who were involved in the process in the GDR had a strong sense of what was possible, and had alternative plans long before the Wende finally came, although its speed surprised many and they were somewhat disappointed in its implementation. We must make clear that the churches were once again important participants in civil society—and were therefore central stakeholders in the major changes that took place in society. But the church itself is currently undergoing a huge process of organisational transformation: in *diaconia* and constituted church, in the relationship between different communities, such as individual community members and their churches, and not least the place of the church in society.

*Diaconia* for the sick and in care for the elderly, child and youth welfare, and social welfare among the oldest institutions of this sort, they form the roots of today’s social state. Its founders—Johann Hinrich Wichern, Theodor and Friederike Fliedern, Amalie Sieveking, Adolf Kolping, Friedrich von Bodelschwingh, and many others—were innovative spirits. With their commitment, they responded to the social deficiencies which accompanied the industrialisation with transformational experiences. As a result, their initiatives were marked by great social foresight. So Wichern’s brother houses gave training and work to young men from difficult backgrounds, so that they could create a future for themselves and others. And the Protestant deaconess’s homes offered care for the sick, but also career opportunities and, like a family, provided a network for unmarried women. For the founders, as for the volunteers and staff of the institutions, not only was their Christian faith justification for their commitment but they also found fulfilment in the community and its lifestyle.

Today clubs, associations and the different ideological entities are financed through state resources if they comply with quality and legal requirements. Behind this is the belief that free organisations are able to achieve more and are closer to the ones in need than the state itself due to their motivation and their voluntary engagement. Against this background of ‘subsidiarity’, *diaconia* and Caritas were able to develop into a distinct organisation in the growing welfare state of the 1960s and 1970s, thanks to public funds and church taxes. Now, however, we anticipate a decrease in revenue from taxes and social insurance. In addition to the changes of the welfare state in the context of the neo-liberal ‘economisation’, growing secularisation and religious pluralism play a role.

One consequence of these developments is a new entrepreneurial culture in the social and health sectors: the diaconal organisations are in competition with other institutions of social welfare in matters of quality and profitability. Corporate businesses arise—hospital and elderly care home chains that have to compete with private providers. With this development, the nature of employment is changing as well as demands on the employees. Individualisation, mobility and competition moved into the church’s traditional culture of service community (*Dienstgemeinschaft*) and solidarity. Competence is already more important than membership. This is how such facilities respond not only to their changed economic situation but also to their change in lifestyle. The equation of life and career no longer appears attractive; care has also become a ‘job’.
Meanwhile, however, countermovements show that people in social, nursing and medical professions are sustained by their motivation and seeking workable relationships and ethical orientation. As the topic is again dominant in the whole of society, religion has also again become a talking-point for the caring professions—not least due to migration and the increasingly complex ethical issues concerning increasingly available medical resources in biogenetics, prenatal diagnosis or in the debate on assisted dying. Therein lies a new challenge for the churches as providers of the diaconal institutions—considering religious and ethical education programmes as well as pastoral care for people who work in social services or as volunteers. As on the one hand, diaconia and and its catholic counterpart Caritas increasingly perform their services in an entrepreneurial manner, and also cooperate with businesses as sponsors on the other hand they try to win people for the care work as well as to avoid losing their roots in the neighbourhoods and the networking with local initiatives and support groups—not least in order to find out early where social innovations are being developed.

**Perceiving and employing potentials—new roles of church and diaconia in neighbourhoods**

Young people without any training, people on benefit, the elderly on small pensions, all have something in common: they feel that they are not important to the rest of society and feel they do not belong. This is also true for those who no longer feel at home in their own country because they cannot understand different social processes—even if they are not immediately affected. And what about those who have fled to us from abject poverty and war in the Middle East or in North Africa? Can they hope to receive education, work and integration? To encourage the ‘socially deported’ as well as ‘new arrivals’ is crucial; if social development benefits merely the interests of the middle class, divisions will harden. In this situation, the churches have to take on the role of an intermediary. Integration in schools and places of employment can build bridges, while co-existence in communities and neighbourhoods is essential.

Images and stories emanating from the co-existence of different people, of cross-border charity, mutual care and fraternal participation replicate the stories of the New Testament. Nevertheless, it does not come naturally for indigenous and migrant communities to worship together or for people with disabilities to become members of a church council. Even the great story of diaconia and Caritas in the nineteenth century is hypocritical: on the one hand, they were innovative in their appreciation and concern for people with disabilities and long-term care needs and for overburdened families; on the other hand, with the building of institutions in which a ‘special world’ developed, they brought about a concept of exclusion. Today’s challenge is to reverse that movement and for the social services to reintegrate such people in the communities and neighbourhoods, in the schools and companies, and to create areas where people can meet—without losing or reducing their expertise and the quality of their professional work. One key in this situation is co-operation between the church, diaconia and Caritas, together with other providers. These processes are not possible without civic initiatives and effective networks between different organisations—those in ‘caring communities’ rely on co-operation with professional bodies for co-ordinating activities and creating community meeting spaces.

With their community spaces, volunteers and their links in the neighbourhoods, such as the churches and diaconia, are able to provide important resources. With their closeness to the people in the neighbourhood—the elderly, families, sick people—church communities live in a different sphere and have a different ‘time re-
gime' from other enterprises and service providers. With perseverance, they can initiate social and political participation. Christian groups are used to forming new and innovative models of co-operation in L'Arche communities, in hospices, in shared homes, in refugee churches. Thus, they also have the ability to interact with others in civil society. Therefore, an important task of the churches is the support and encouragement of civil social initiatives, networking with other organisations and experts as well as offering advice and support for individuals and groups. If the economy and social coexistence, work and family, the co-operation between the generations is out of kilter, it needs the church to give a voice to the excluded.

The Modern Concern for Victims

René Girard

Above one of the portals of many medieval churches is a great angel holding a pair of scales. The angel is weighing souls for eternity. If art in our time had not given up expressing the ideas that guide our world, it would rejuvenate this ancient weighing of souls, and citizens would have a weighing of victims sculpted over the entrance of our parliaments, universities, courts of law, publishing houses, and television stations.

Our society is the most preoccupied with victims of any that ever was. Even if it is insincere, a big show, the phenomenon has no precedent. No historical period, no society we know, has ever spoken of victims as we do. We can detect in the recent past the beginnings of the contemporary attitude, but every day new records are broken. We are all actors as well as witnesses in a great anthropological first. Examine ancient sources, inquire everywhere, dig up the corners of the planet, and you will not find anything anywhere that even remotely resembles our modern concern for victims. The China of the Mandarins, the Japan of the samurai, the Hindus, the pre Columbian societies, Athens, republican or imperial Rome—none of these were worried in the least little bit about victims, whom they sacrificed without number to their gods, to the honor of the homeland, to the ambition of conquerors, small or great.

An extraterrestrial who heard our words without knowing anything about human history would no doubt imagine that there existed, somewhere in past centuries, a society very superior to ours in terms of compassion. This imagined society must have been so attentive to the sufferings of the unfortunate that it left an undying memory among human beings and that we make it into the fixed star about which our obsession with victims turns. Only our nostalgia for such a society would enable this alien to understand our severity toward ourselves, the bitter reproaches we make to ourselves.

Of course, this ideal society has never existed. Already when Voltaire composed his Candide in the eighteenth century, he searched for one and found none superior to the world in which he was living. He therefore had to make up a purely fictional society.

The world in which we live day by day usually doesn't furnish us with satisfying material for condemning ourselves. But that doesn't keep us from repeating, with a hue and a cry against the contemporary world, accusations we know to be false. Never was a society, we often hear, more indifferent to the poor than ours. Yet how could this be, since the idea of social justice, as imperfectly realized as it may be, is found nowhere else? It is a quite recent invention.
If I speak as I do, it is not to exonerate our world of all fault. I share the conviction of my contemporaries about its guilt, but I am trying to discover the place and point of view from which we condemn ourselves. I think we have excellent reasons to feel guilty, but they are certainly not the ones we state.

To justify the curses we rain upon ourselves, it is not enough to realize that we are the richest and best equipped of all the societies in history. The rich and powerful were not lacking even in the most miserable societies, and they showed utter indifference to the countless victims about them. Our world must be under an injunction that it imposes on itself. The generations just preceding us already heard the same summons, but it wasn’t nearly as loud and urgent. The more we go back in time, the weaker the summons sounds. This suggests that in the future it will become even louder. Since we cannot pretend to hear nothing, we condemn our deficiencies, but we don’t know why or in the name of what. We pretend to believe that what summons us is something everyone has always heard, but in reality we are the only ones who hear it.

By comparison to the means at our disposal our good deeds are insignificant, it is true; our failures are horrible. We have good reasons to blame ourselves, but where do they come from? The worlds that preceded us shared our concern, our worry, and our solicitude so little that they weren’t sensitive enough to reproach their own indifference. If we question our historians, they will invoke modern humanism and other ideas of the same kind that enable them never to mention religion and to say nothing about the role of Christianity. The latter, supposedly null and void, can hardly have failed to play a role in the origin of these ideas.

In France humanism developed in opposition, of course, to the Christianity of the prerevolutionary regime, which was accused of complicity with those in power, and quite rightly so. From one country to the other the sudden turns of fortune are different, but they cannot conceal the true origin of our modern concern for victims; it is quite obviously Christian. Humanism and humanitarianism develop first on Christian soil.

Nietzsche proclaimed vigorously against the hypocrisy of his own time, which was basically the same as our own but not as gross. Nietzsche, the most anti-Christian philosopher of the nineteenth century, identified the source of our guilt in an era when it was less evident than today. It was already a caricature of Christianity but less caricaturally obvious than today.

If there is a Christian ethic as such, it is essentially love of one’s neighbor or charity in the old Christian sense. It is not hard to locate its origin:

‘Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you since the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave me to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, sick and you visited me, in prison and you came to see me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, thirsty and give you to drink, a stranger and welcome you, naked and clothe you, sick or in prison and visit you?’ And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.’

(Matt 25:34–40)

The idea of a society alien to violence goes back clearly to the preaching of Jesus, to his announcement of the kingdom of God. This ideal does not diminish to the extent that Christianity recedes; to the contrary, its intensity increases. The concern for victims has become a paradoxical competition of mimetic rivalries, of opponents continually trying to outbid one another.
The victims most interesting to us are always those who allow us to condemn our neighbors. And our neighbors do the same. They always think first about victims for whom they hold us responsible.

We do not all have the same experience as St. Peter and St. Paul, who discovered that they themselves were guilty of persecution and confessed their own guilt rather than that of their neighbors. It’s our neighbors who kindly remind us that we should be compassionate, and we render them the same service. In our world, in short, where we are all bombarding each other with victims, the final result is what Christ announced in words that the modern concern for victims clarifies for the first time:

The blood of all the prophets, shed since the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah.
(Luke 11:50–51)

This teaching has come to be verified with a considerable delay from the schedule the first Christians anticipated, but the important thing is not the date of the verification, but that it is verified.

From now on we have our antisacrificial rituals of victimization, and they unfold in an order as unchangeable as properly religious rituals. First of all, we lament the victims we admit to making or allowing to be made. Then we lament the hypocrisy of our lamentation, and finally we lament Christianity, the indispensable scapegoat, for there is no ritual without a victim, and in our day Christianity is always it, the scapegoat of last resort. As part of this last stage of the ritual, we affirm, in a nobly suffering tone, that Christianity has done nothing to ‘resolve the problem of violence.’

In our perpetual comparisons between our world and the others everything possible to conceal the overwhelming superiority of our world, which, in any case, is in competition only with itself as it takes in the entire planet. Whether we examine the matter attentively or not, we easily see that everything people say about our world is true: it is by far the worst of all worlds. They say repeatedly—and this is not false—that no world has made more victims than it has. But the opposite proposition is equally true: our world is also and by far the best of all worlds, the one that saves more victims than any other. In order to describe our world, we must multiply all sorts of propositions that should be incompatible but now are true simultaneously.

The concern for victims leads us to the sound opinion that our progress in ‘humanitarianism’ is very slow and we should certainly not glorify it, in order not to slow it down even more. The modern concern for victims obligates us to blame ourselves perpetually. Our concern for victims is characteristically never satisfied with past successes. It never praises itself or tolerates its own praise. It tries to turn attention away from itself because we should be attentive only to victims. Our concern denounces its own laxity, its Pharisaism. Our concern for victims is the secular mask of Christian love.

In short, what prevents us from examining our concern for victims too closely is this concern itself. Whether this humility is feigned or sincere, it is compulsory in our world, and there is no doubt that it stems from Christianity. The concern for victims does not operate on the basis of statistics. It operates on the Gospel principle of the lost sheep for whom the shepherd will abandon all his flock if need be.

To prove to ourselves that we are really neither ethnocentric nor triumphalist, we thunder against the bourgeois self-satisfaction of the last century, we ridicule the foolishness of so-called progress, and we fall into the opposite foolishness: we confess to being the most inhumane of all societies. Yet modern democracies can de-
fend themselves by pointing to a mass of accomplishments so unique in human history that they are the envy of the rest of the world.

The gradual loosening of various centres of cultural isolation of the past, we always use two weights and two measures. We do began in the Middle Ages and has now led into what we call ‘globalization,’ which in my view is only secondarily an economic phenomenon. The true engine of progress is the slow decomposition of the closed worlds rooted in victim mechanisms. This is the force that destroyed archaic societies and henceforth dismantles the ones replacing them, the nations we call ‘modern.’

Since the fashion is one of weighing victims, let’s play the game without cheating. Let’s examine first the scale that holds our successes: since the High Middle Ages all the great human institutions have evolved in the same direction: more humane private and public law, penal legislation, judicial practice, the rights of individuals. Everything changed very slowly at first, but the pace has been accelerating more and more. When viewed in terms of the large picture, this social and cultural evolution goes always in the same direction, toward the mitigation of punishment, greater protection for potential victims.

Our society abolished slavery as well as serfdom. Later has come the protection of children, women, the aged, foreigners from abroad, and foreigners within. There is also the battle against poverty and ‘underdevelopment.’ More recently we have made medical care and the protection of the handicapped universal.

Every day we cross new thresholds. When a catastrophe occurs at some spot on the globe, the nations that are well off feel obligated to send aid or to participate in rescue operations. You may say these gestures are more symbolic than real and reflect a concern for prestige. No doubt, but in what era before ours and under what skies has international mutual aid constituted a source of prestige for nations?

There is just one rubric that gathers together everything I am summarizing in no particular order and without concern for completeness: the concern for victims. This concern sometimes is so exaggerated and in a fashion so subject to caricature that it arouses laughter, but we should guard against seeing it as only one thing, as nothing but twaddle that’s always ineffective. It is more than a hypocritical comedy. Through the ages it has created a society incomparable to all the others. It is unifying the world for the first time in history.

How have all these things actually come to pass? In each generation legislators questioned more radically an ancestral heritage that they felt was their duty to transform. Where their ancestors saw nothing to be reformed, they discovered oppression and injustice. The status quo had long appeared untouchable, determined by nature or intended by the gods, even by the Christian God. For centuries successive waves of concern for victims have revealed and restored new types of scapegoats at the lowest levels of society. Only a few spiritual geniuses in the past suspected that the unjust sufferings of these scapegoats could be eliminated.

The modern concern for victims comes to the forefront for the first time, I think, in the religious institutions we call ‘charitable.’ This begins, it seems, with the ‘house of God,’ that extended arm of the Church that quickly became the hospital. The hospital welcomes all the crippled and ill without distinction of social, political, or even religious identity. Inventing the hospital meant dissociating for the very first time

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1 The term in French is ‘l’Hotel-Dieu,’ which has no exact equivalent in English. It is the name of the most ancient hospital in Paris. The author’s point is that the creation of such a house where the sick and wounded are cared for is the first of its kind in history. It evolved into the modern hospital. —Trans.
the idea of victim from all concrete ethnic, regional, or class identity. It is the invention of the modern victim concept.

The cultures that were still autonomous cultivated all sorts of solidarity—familial, tribal, and national—but they did not recognize the victim as such, the anonymous and unknown victim, in the sense in which we say ‘the unknown soldier.’ Prior to this discovery there was no humanity in the full sense except within a fixed territory. Today all these local, regional, and national identities are disappearing: ‘Ecce homo.’

The essential thing in what goes now as human rights is an indirect acknowledgment of the fact that every individual or every group of individuals can become the ‘scapegoat’ of their own community. Placing emphasis on human rights amounts to a formerly unthinkable effort to control uncontrollable processes of mimetic snowballing.

What we have a foreboding of, at least vaguely, is the possibility that any community whatever may persecute its own members. This happens whenever crowds mobilize suddenly against anyone, anywhere, anytime, in any way, no matter what the pretext. It also happens, more frequently, when societies become permanently organized on a basis that privileges the few at the expense of the many, when unjust forms of social life continue for centuries, even for millennia. The concern for victims seeks to protect us against the countless varieties of the victim mechanism.

The most effective power of transformation is not revolutionary violence but the modern concern for victims. What pervades this concern and makes it effective is a true knowledge of oppression and persecution. It seems that this knowledge was at first very limited, and then it became bolder by virtue of its early successes.

To summarize this knowledge, we must return to the analyses of the preceding chapter: it is the knowledge that separates the ritual meaning of the expression ‘scapegoat’ from its modern meaning. It deepens continually, and soon the mimetic reading of the structure of persecution will become more and more widespread.

The evolution I am rather haphazardly summarizing forms the basis of the effort of our societies to eliminate the permanent scapegoat structures that form their foundation, and this occurs to the extent that we become aware of their existence. This transformation comes across as a timeless moral imperative. Societies that did not see the need for transforming themselves are nonetheless altered, always in the same direction, in response to the desire to make amends for past injustices and to bring about more ‘human’ relations among their members. Each time a new frontier is crossed, those whose interests are damaged oppose this change intensely. But once the situation has been altered, the results are never seriously contested.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries some people realized that this evolution was on the way to creating a group of nations whose uniqueness in terms of progress was further enhanced by their rapidly accelerating technological and economic progress. It was mostly the privileged classes, of course, that benefited from this technological and economic progress, and they fell into an overweening pride and extraordinary insolence. It is possible to view the great catastrophes of the twentieth century as in part the inevitable punishment of this pride and insolence.

We can compare ancient societies to one another, but the global society now in the making is truly unique. Its superiority in every area is so overwhelming, so evident, that it is forbidden,
paradoxically, to acknowledge the fact, especially in Europe. This prohibition stems from the fear of a return to tyrannical pride. It is also the fear of humiliating nations that don’t belong to the privileged group. In other words, it is once again the concern for victims that dominates what it is permissible and impermissible to say.

Our society perpetually confesses to crimes and faults of which it is certainly guilty when considered against our absolute standard, but it is innocent relative to all the other types of societies. We certainly have not ceased being ‘ethnocentric.’ But it is evident also that we are the least ethnocentric of all societies in history. We are the ones who invented the concept five or six centuries ago—Montaigne’s chapter on the ‘cannibals’ is proof of that. To be capable of such an invention, it is necessary no doubt to be less ethnocentric than other societies, which are so exclusively preoccupied with themselves that they never forged the notion of ethnocentrism. Even if our self-criticism is superficial, we are the only society that ever invented this unique intellectual activity.

Our world did not invent compassion, it is true, but it has universalized it. In archaic cultures it was practiced within extremely circumscribed groups. Their borders were always marked by victims. Mammals mark their territorial borders with their excrement. Human beings have long done the same thing with that particular form of excrement that we call their scapegoats.

The Changing World as Challenge to the Churches

An Orthodox Perspective

Georgios Vlantis

Das ist die Sehnsucht, die durch alle Werke Augustins hindurchklingt: Die Sehnsucht nach ewigem Frieden. Er, der ein Leben lang ruhelos unterwegs war, war doch ruhelos nur um der letzten Ruhe willen, die ihm in diesem Leben fort und fort seine geheime Unruhe blieb. Dass ihm all sein Sinnen und Sehnen in diesem einen zusammenlief, in dem Verlangen nach einem letzten Stille-Sein, zeigt, wie tief er ein Mensch der Antike gewesen ist. Aber dass er diese Ruhe nicht anders fand denn in der Liebe und in dem Frieden (pax!) Jesu Christi, zeigt, wie echt er Christ geworden ist.¹

In the concluding remarks of his doctoral thesis Joseph Ratzinger is not only summarising central constants in Augustine of Hippo’s character and thought; furthermore, he is pointing out the exceptional position of peace and tranquillity in the world of ideals emphasised during antiquity. In various Christian modifications, this—typical for the ancient thought—longing for peace, he-

¹ “This is the longing echoing through all of Augustine’s works: The longing for everlasting peace. He was restless during his whole life, but he was only restless for his last rests sake, which remained the hidden unrest in his life again and again. All his meditation and desire converging in this longing for a last tranquillity shows him as a person of the Classical antiquity. But finding this tranquillity only in the love and peace of Jesus Christ shows how truly he became a Christian.”—Joseph Ratzinger, Gesammelte Schriften, ed. Gerhard Ludwig Müller, Vol. 1: Volk und Haus Gottes in Augustins Lehre von der Kirche (Freiburg i. Br.: Herder, 2011), 418.
**Transforming Society**

sychia, tranquillity, theoria, etc. deeply penetrates the Middle Ages; it also characterises Orthodox spirituality till nowadays. On the contrary, modernity, according to Hans Blumenberg's analysis, is characterised from its very beginning by a radical re-evaluation of the concepts of motion and change. This development is closely connected to the gradual secularisation of the dominant worldview. Motion and change are not any longer mainly associated with the confirmation or disturbance of an eternal order. They do not mark a situation of ontological inauthenticity. They are powers which lead to fullness of life: "Im Anfang war die Tat"—and action accompanies life as its most necessary condition. According to the dominant currents of modernity, motion, change, and action do not have a transcendent prime mover as ontological cause, but the human beings themselves. They are regarded as confirmations of the independence and autonomy of the human being.

These thoughts already touch the issue of the complicated relation of the Orthodox world to modernity. I regard this as a key issue, if we want to understand the Orthodox reaction to the changes and challenges of our world. Therefore, I decided not to offer one more description of crucial problems we are facing today, but to focus on the understanding of change in Orthodox theology and history. A short overview will follow concerning current Orthodox reactions to a changing world. I will conclude with some thoughts on the theological potentials of the Eastern Church concerning modern challenges and will elaborate them in an ecumenical perspective.

**The Ambiguities of Change in Orthodox Theology and History**

Either identifying itself as traditional, as 'Church of the Fathers', faithful to the authenticity of the Christian doctrine, or polemised as traditionalistic, archaic, resistant to change, the fact remains that Orthodox theology, mentality and aesthetics are decisively shaped by its past.

Nevertheless, great authorities of the Eastern Church were conscious of the novelty of their changes and challenges of our world.
They were aware that they developed teachings which had never been articulated in that depth previously: One may think, for example, of Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nazianzus who elaborated pneumatology. Both of them saw change not as contradiction to the past but as a legitimate development, a constructive growth in the understanding of biblical truth (both Fathers support their views with numerous biblical citations); they both regarded this process as fruit and gift of the Holy Spirit. One may argue that profane historians are not happy with metaphysically supported notions of historical linearity. However, when the Orthodox Church speaks of an organic growth of doctrine it does not (or should not) propose a methodology for the study of history: it rather makes a theological confession considering the peaks of its theology as expressions of its continuity with the apostolic origin and as tangible results of the energy of the Spirit in the Church.

Orthodoxy emphasises continuity; but change is also present in its history. The Eastern Church insists on its loyalty to the patristic worldview; but if the above-mentioned Fathers, Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nazianzus, could somehow transfer themselves from the fourth to the fourteenth century, they would notice self-evident affinities as well as notable changes in their Church: a more profound christological teaching, a conciliarly condemned Origen (their beloved Origen!), a complicated administrative system (and an excommunicated Rome), an almost homogenic ritual and a new paradigm in religious aesthetics. This does not necessarily mean contradiction to the past or betrayal of the Christian faith, but proves that change takes place in the Churches, whether they want to accept it and name it as such or ignore it, insisting one-dimensionally on their continuity with the past.

On the other hand, it is true that in the Orthodox context the will for creative theological work gave gradually its place to an over-emphasis on the concern for faithfulness to tradition. Even the word ‘novelty’ (καινοτομία, νεωτερισμός) became an accusation implying heretical teaching, inauthenticity of doctrine and break in continuity of faith.

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8 Taking into account Kant’s radical critique to teleology one may say that such schemes seem not to be convincing any more in interdisciplinary scientific discussions. The critique exercised against schemes of historical linearity in the last centuries includes not only theological, but also profane ones, like Hegel’s and Marx’s. See the classical work of Karl Löwith, Meaning in History: The Theological Implications of the Philosophy of History (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949). However, this philosophical critique did (or does) not prevent Orthodox theologians from developing concepts of theology of history with nationalistic teleological implications. See e.g. Victor Roudometof, Nationalism, Globalization, and Orthodoxy: The Social Origins of Ethnic Conflict in the Balkans (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2001); Pantelis Kalaitzidis, “The Temptation of Judas: Church and National Identities,” Greek Orthodox Theological Review, no. 47 (2002): 357–79.
11 See e.g. Trine Stauning Willert and Lina Molokotos-Liederman, eds, Innovation in the Orthodox Christian Tradition? The Question of Change in Greek Orthodox Thought and Practice (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012) and especially the chapters “How Can We Speak of Innovation in the Greek Orthodox Tradition? Towards a Typology of
own.” John of Damascus declares in his *Dialectica*. Some centuries later the Byzantine theologian and philosopher Theodoros Metochitis will claim that everything has been said and nothing else can be added; we trace expressions of a *grand ennui* during the last centuries of Byzantium, while it hopelessly struggled for survival.

One may dispute to what extend theological reasons led to this kind of traditionalism; historical and cultural factors should not be ignored, too. The centuries of Muslim and communist oppression and the hard fate of the Orthodox people in general strengthened this concern for preserving tradition untouched and nourished the aversion against anything which may endanger the religious and cultural identity. A faith in danger means also an identity in danger. Under such circumstances the potentials of change cannot unfold themselves easily; innovation may be interpreted as alienation from the very core of the Christian message. But the paradox is that by being focused on preserving everything unchanged, Orthodoxy did actually change compared to its more fruitful and innovative past. Steps undertaken e.g. in the fourth century concerning dogmatic teaching, liturgical expression or administration would be unthinkable for this church nowadays. But who can predict the future?

The Orthodox Churches Facing a Changing World Today

Are we allowed to identify Orthodoxy with stagnation, with outmost resistance to change? I think this is too essentialistic to be true. The twentieth century has proven that the Eastern Church and its theology are able to develop creative and inspiring insights when acting in more or less liberal political contexts: the Russian diaspora or the Greek theological generation of the ’60s constitute paradigm shifts in the Orthodox thought. Nevertheless, in both cases theologians want to establish their new perspective by a hermeneutic approach which regards change mainly as a return to the Fathers, as a coming back to the authenticity of the patristic heredity after centuries of serious alienation. Georges Florovsky spoke of a ‘Babylonian captivity’ of the Orthodox theology in categories of the Western thought. The initially Lutheran context of this expression has been easily forgotten; any positive influences of the contact of Western theology with Orthodoxy are hardly seen.


15 See Pantelis Kalaitzidis, "From the ‘Return to the Fathers’ to the Need for a Modern Orthodox Theology," *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly*, no. 54 (2010): 5–36.
The fall of communism and further global geopolitical changes of the last decades led to a renaissance of religious life in many traditionally Orthodox countries. At the beginning one could experience there the almost absolute dominance of views that attempted to redefine the public role of Orthodoxy in a rather defensive way. Nowadays new voices become audible to criticising the theological nationalism, the polemic anti-westernism, the aggressive anti-ecumenism and the ideological anti-modernism of older theologians. Even taboo issues like the ordination of women or homosexuality are now being discussed in the Orthodox world and certain approaches bringing new impulses are surprising. Younger theologians seek the encounter with the modern world beyond the prejudices of an anti-modern rhetoric and try to benefit from the potentials that modernity and post-modernity offer to Orthodoxy.\(^16\)

One should of course be aware of the asymmetries and non-tautochronies in Orthodoxy throughout the globe in its confrontation with a changing world. For instance, the theological profile of the Orthodox Church of Finland differs decisively from the one of the Church of Poland; the ecumenical openness of the Orthodox in Germany is not self-evident for their brothers and sisters living in Bulgaria or Georgia; Greek theologians rejecting modernity do not inspire their modern American Orthodox colleagues.\(^17\) Since Orthodoxy is on its way to its Holy and Great Synod, one wishes that this conciliar event makes a serious contribution to overcoming tensions in the polyphonic Orthodox world, which emphasises its unity but cannot—and should not—hide its diversity.\(^18\)

Nevertheless, we should not underestimate the power of Orthodox voices still seeking for a nationally oriented restoration of an imperial paradigm, suggesting an exceptional, privileged relation between them and the state (synallelia-symphonia). In Russia—and this is not the only example—a view is being articulated that almost identifies the message of the church with the values of the nation and interprets the Christian faith in normatively understood terms of culture. From that imaginary identification of church and nation follows implicitly that the non-Orthodox ‘others’ have to be seen as second class citizens concerning their devotion to the state. Various laws against a vaguely defined proselytism show that the very existence of other confessions or faiths is interpreted also as a direct or latent threat to the national security.\(^19\)

This kind of theological nationalism is in traditionally Orthodox countries associated with an aggressive anti-westernism which I already mentioned above; according to a theology of history adequate to this view, considerable demands of the liberal society are nothing more than ideological products of the West, which is seen as if it has lost its connection with the authenticity of the biblical message. The history of changes which marks the development of the

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\(^18\) Nevertheless, one should not be over-optimistic concerning the expectations from this event. See the various critical assessments published in the special issue of *Religion und Gesellschaft in Ost & West* 11.–12.2014.

Western world is understood as history of a fall from an idealised Christian past; therefore one is not willing to differentiate between the theologically acceptable and the legally possible. The demanded free space for the expression of individuality is often regarded as an ex definitio illegitimate and sinful variety of individualism.\textsuperscript{20}

This way ascribes to the secular society a solely negative content. It sees no liberating potential in secularisation but only a demoralisation process. Of course similar voices are mutatis mutandis observed in other, non-Orthodox churches, too. Some argue for the need of an Orthodox-Catholic alliance against modernity; the aim of it should be not the restoration of sacramental unity, but the establishment of a front for the promotion of what is regarded as traditional Christian values.\textsuperscript{21}

Towards an Ecumenical Hermeneutics of Change: An Orthodox Contribution

Does the turbulent situation described above imply that Orthodoxy cannot contribute fruitfully to the ecumenical discussion on unity and variety? Sometimes exactly such turbulences carry seeds of change; here I note certain potentials, deficits and tasks:

1. The Orthodox Church is bearing witness to a great theological tradition. In a world of fluid identities it is important to remind of a heredity, which can also be a chance. It is crucial for Christians to offer a sense of continuity, of a community diachronically connected to the biblical message. Stubbornly dwelling in the past is theologically problematic. However, the same can be said for an almost neurotic adjustment to the \textit{Zeitgeist}. Tradition helps Christians discern the spirits and provides them with criteria to exercise their prophetic task. In this respect, Orthodoxy has a lot to offer from its hardly known treasures.

2. The Orthodox emphasis on apophaticism may contribute to an ecumenically fruitful theological re-evaluation of change. The realisation of the limits of reason and language, the respect for the mystery of the unknown, the resignation from any totalitarian hermeneutics gives respectable space for the unfolding of the potential of the ‘other’. Apophaticism implies that variety does not have necessarily to be subordinated to a pre-existent scheme of unity. It may as well be an opportunity for the enrichment and extension of this scheme. Churches argue against each other on issues which they claim that they know better than their dialogue partners. I think it could be fruitful in the contexts of both ecumenism and evangelisation, if Christians realise and confess together what they do not know. In other words, if they could present themselves as an ecumenical community willing to listen to and reflect on the questions of our world rather than behaving like a group of people who have all the answers already. In this way, they could gain credibility as well as


benefit from the openness to inspiring changes.  

3. A decisive Orthodox contribution to the discussion on unity and variety depends on the clear response of the Eastern Church on the ecclesiological status of the other churches. One may say that the reluctance of Orthodoxy is related to its above mentioned apophatic tradition, which demonstrates a considerable aversion against scholastic definitions. Nevertheless, *theologia negativa* should not serve as an alibi for an undifferentiated preservation of the ecclesiological model of the ancient heresiology. If one ascribes to the ecumenical partner even only the negativity implied by the term ‘heresy’, there can be no space for the variety mirrored in them, since their ‘otherness’ is regarded only as alienation and inauthenticity. The Eastern Church should go beyond the bipolar scheme Orthodoxy-heresy, elaborating further towards an ecclesiology which will take generously into account the *in via* situation of churches seeking the restoration of full visible unity. Otherwise, the strong anti-ecumenist tendencies will continue to thrive and be active in the Orthodox world insisting on their argumentation that is based upon a dualistic, undifferentiated use of the old ecclesiological scheme.  

4. Such a dynamic model accentuates the need for a profound eschatological perspective in ecumenism. The Orthodox focus on eschatology and the experience of its foretaste in liturgical life provide impulses for new understandings of catholicity. In Orthodox theology catholicity is indeed no measurable fact, but an eschatological quality, a demand, an appeal and a witness to the world to come. The Church is catholic insofar as it is eschatological, insofar as it prepares the world for the anticipated fullness of life. In the spirituality of the Eastern Church positive change is understood in terms of transfiguration, as an experience of grace *in via* towards the eschatological future.  

5. But who decides what constitutes an acceptable, positive change and what not? In various cases the ‘otherness’ of the ecumenical partners or certain developments in their churches have been instrumentalised as alibi for ending the dialogue with them. Take for example the reaction of the Russian Orthodox Church to Margot Käßmann’s election at the presidency of the EKD. It seems sure that a rapidly changing world will be also a world of considerably changing Churches, a world where the ‘noi pensiamo in secoli’ will lose a lot of its fascination. Churches claiming that they have definite answers will be surprised to realise that they first have to

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learn what the questions are of this changing world. Therefore, even if Christians disagree on the solutions suggested, they have to keep on talking to each other; there should be no taboo issues for ecumenism. Of course, a constant focus on difficult themes leads often to frustration; ignoring the sensitivities of the partner proves to be ecumenically unconstructive. The discussion on moral discernment shows exactly how great the challenges are and how difficult it is to keep the desired balance.  

Epilogue

Ratzinger’s text which I quoted at the beginning goes on and concludes as follows:

Longing for eternity has to be accompanied by the will to take time in its concreteness seriously and to profit from it. This is the great teaching of the incarnation; the Churches have to experience and practice this teaching in apophatic humility, prophetic rigidity and eschatological generosity. And they have to practice it together as changing Churches challenged by and also challenging a changing world.

Theology of the Multitude

Joerg Rieger

Life-and-Death Matters

The world as a whole is facing an unprecedented crisis. While living standards have increased for some, inequality is more pronounced today than ever before and affects more people than ever. Large and growing parts of humanity are forced to struggle for survival every day, even in the wealthiest countries. Inequality in the United States, a country that often takes pride in being the leader for others to emulate, is especially troublesome. In Dallas, Texas, for instance, nearly one in four residents are already forced to live in poverty, and the number is rising.  


27 "You can’t do Augustine more injustice than to separate him from the circumstances at his time in order to mark him as a timeless thinker. Something different happened in his work and thinking: the apprehension of the one truth of Jesus Christ amidst the vividness of the recently lived presence. Only thus, Augustine is timeless."—Ratzinger, Gesammelte Schriften (see note 1), 418.

Even the environment is pulled into this life-and-death struggle. Global warming may not erase life on earth altogether, but many life forms are faced with extinction as the polar ice caps are melting, sea levels are rising, and climate is changing due to actions by humans. While this may not mean the end of humanity as a species, the people hit hardest are those who do not have the means to protect themselves from severe weather and pollution.

These problems are not merely social in nature. They are theological at their very core because they are tied up with the ruling classes putting themselves in what is often considered to be God’s place. An old definition of sin illustrates the problem. When Augustine talked about the sin of pride in the fifth century, he had in mind human beings playing God. The Roman Empire of his time and the growth of an imperial church provided plenty of examples. Today, we know that pride is not necessarily the problem of humanity as a whole, but the problem of a small elite who have the power and the means to create the world in their image and for their interests. Many working people, women, and minorities are never given the opportunities to play God as they are reminded of their bondage every day. Members of the middle class perceive themselves as closer to the 1% and share in a certain level of pride, but the truth is that the system is chipping away at their positions at an alarming rate.2

The theological nature of these life-and-death struggles has often been forgotten even in the theological traditions that continue to take seriously the utterly destructive nature of sin. The theological lesson we must learn is that those who put themselves in the place of God are putting themselves in the place of an idol. The all-controlling God who acts from the top down, alone and without inviting the participation of the people and without the need to listen to anyone, is not the God of Jesus Christ or the people of Israel. We have to sound the warning of Anselm of Canterbury of the eleventh century who, in conversation with his student Boso, famously said: “You have not yet considered the weight of sin.”

In the midst of this deepening crisis that is becoming increasingly a matter of life and death, theology is not a luxury, but finds itself at the heart of efforts to present alternative ways and solutions. If another world is possible, as the World Social Forums have stated, another theology may be possible as well. And another theology, in turn, will contribute to another world. While the powers that be keep telling us that there is no alternative—this has been the message of empires throughout history and is internalized to a greater degree today than ever before—alternatives exist and that theology can help us to identify them.

The good news is that we do not have to start from scratch. Alternative theologies have been around since the days of old, and many fresh approaches have been developed in recent decades. The various liberation theologies in all parts of the world, Latin American, African, Asian, European, Oceanian, North American, and theologies in the feminist, womanist (African American women), and mujerista (Hispanic/Latina) traditions have made important contributions. The same is true for queer, postcolonial, subaltern theologies, and the theologies of minorities, including Latino/a, African American, Asian American, Native American and First Nation, and others in North America. This list could be continued. In addition, religious traditions throughout history have contributed not only to

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2 The implications for the middle class are worked out in more detail in Joerg Rieger, No Rising Tide: Theology, Economics, and the Future (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 34–9 and elsewhere in that book.
resistance against empire and oppressive powers but also to new constructive approaches. In the eighteenth century, for instance, early Methodism was shaped in close connection with the labor movement in England and abolitionist sentiments in the United States. Evangelical traditions, in a curious reversal of mainstream evangelicalism today, promoted alternative ways of life and egalitarian relationships including the ordination of women. In Roman Catholicism, monastic movements like the Franciscans, founded in the early Middle Ages, have upheld some of the ideals of the founders, like the value of poverty, and in more recent decades the Catholic Worker movement has made a difference.

While we are grateful for all these traditions, which have provided important challenges and insights, we have to push further today for the sake of survival of a large part of humanity and the planet. Today it is clearer than ever that a single group cannot accomplish the needed transformations and we need each other more now than at any time in history. Facing the pressures surrounding us, there is no other way forward than to unite, while maintaining respect for the differences among us. These are the issues that a theology of the multitude seeks to address.

The Multitude in Theological Terms

The multitude is a term that symbolizes this coming together in ways that respect different traditions, cultures, and ways of life. The multitude stands for what has often been described as unity in difference. Multitude is a term that describes a deep concern of the biblical traditions. At the heart of the Jesus movement was not what has often been referred to as the demos of the Greek, the assembly of privileged citizens from which the word democracy comes. At the heart of this movement were the laos and the ochlos, both of which describe the common people in contrast with the privileged citizens of the empire or of the religious elites. Laos is a term used for a broader group of people than the privileged demos. In the New Testament, the term laos refers to the common people. It speaks of “the new laos of God [that] incarnates not a nation but a multitude, a ‘popular’ people, a new experience of humanity without exclusions.”  

Ochlos in the New Testament means a “crowd, multitude, the common people.” Korean minjung theology focuses especially on ochlos in the gospels and in the Pauline writings. According to Korean New Testament scholar Ahn Byung Mu (1922–1996), the ochlos in Mark’s Gospel gathered and followed Jesus and formed the background of Jesus’ activities (2:4, 13, 3:9, 20, 32; 4:1; 5:21, 24, 31; 8:1; 10:1). The ochlos were against the rulers and they were clearly on Jesus’ side, in contrast to the ruling class from Jerusalem who attacked and criticized Jesus (2:4–7; 3:2–22; 11:18, 27, 32). The Galilean ochlos, as amorphous and diverse groups of people from the lower class, is whom Jesus’ message addresses. The call to follow him is not only for the twelve disciples but also for the ochlos as a whole (Mark 8:34). Mem-

bers of the laos and ochlos assembled for the most part outside the established institutions, in fields, on mountains, and by the water.

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3 Néstor Míguez, Joerg Rieger, and Jung Mo Sung, Beyond the Spirit of Empire: Theology and Politics in a New Key (London: SCM Press, 2009), 201. It is the voice of the laos that “shows the limits of power, returns meaning to the political, puts into play the hope of the excluded, and redeems the human in the creature, and, with it, the whole dimension of creation,” ibid., 202. For more in-depth definitions of laos and demos see ibid., 23–4, note 15.

4 Strong’s Concordance, see http://concordances.org/greek/3793.htm

Adopting the term multitude in theological discourse also means to acknowledge the contributions of Korean minjung theology. The term minjung can be translated as multitude and combines several of our concerns. Minjung reminds us of the notion of class, a concept that has been uncovered again by the Occupy movement. Minjung theologians have pointed out the parallel between minjung and the ochlos in the New Testament. Jesus identified his work with the ochlos, and they were the ones who went to hear him speak and witness his healing. Jesus accepted and supported them and he was criticized for associating with them, since they were the marginalized and alienated class. 6

Unlike traditional preachers who presented good ideas from elevated positions like pulpits and lectors, Jesus not only preached to the multitude but organized it as well. As Richard A. Horsley has pointed out, this was one of the key reasons why the representatives of the Roman Empire, both political and religious ones, wanted to get rid of Jesus, the son of Joseph. His contemporary, the peasant prophet Jesus the son of Hananiah, who went around delivering oracles of judgment and deliverance, was merely beaten by the Romans and set free, because they believed that he was merely deranged. 7

In addition to the significance of the term multitude in our theological traditions, multitude has also been prominent in current debates about resistance to empire and domination. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, in particular, have provided some insightful definitions and distinctions that help us deepen our theological reflections. In contrast to the term ‘the people,’ which often tends to describe a unified group, the term multitude allows for and welcomes differences among various members. In contrast to the term ‘the masses,’ which tends to level the difference of those who are part of it, the multitude invites difference of expressions, multiple identities, and shades of colors and hues of its parts.

The multitude picks up the concerns of working people, the so-called working class, because it values the notion of production. While the multitude is forced to endure the pressures of the system, it does not remain passive. Working people make substantial contributions to society, which are often overlooked and underappreciated. Hardt and Negri extend the multitude to the unemployed, unpaid domestic laborers, and the poor, who also make substantial contributions to society, concluding that “the multitude gives the concept of the proletariat its fullest definition as all those who labor and produce under the rule of capital.” 8 This understanding of the multitude matches many of the biblical and liberation theology traditions, according to which the laos and the ochlos are not primarily the recipients of welfare but agents who make a difference. Marginalized women, for instance, make a difference in ways that the status quo would never expect. In the parable of the widow and the unjust judge, a widow’s stubborn insistence on justice persuades an unjust judge to grant her justice (Luke 18:1–8). In the story of the widow’s offering, Jesus compares the dedication of a widow to the shallowness of the wealthy (Mark 12:41–44). And a Gentile Syrophoenician woman does what systematic theologians of the status quo have always thought to be impossible: she changes Jesus’ mind (Mark 7:24–30).

While the multitude is productive in surprising and unexpected ways, those who live parasitic lives have excluded themselves from the multitude. Against common opinion, parasitic lives are lived not by the poor and the unemployed

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6 Ibid., 136–40.
7 See Richard A. Horsley, Jesus and Empire: The Kingdom of God and the New World Disorder (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 51 and 129.
but by the rulers, who siphon off the wealth of the multitude for their own individual enjoyment. Jesus cautioned his followers: “You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be the first among you must be slave of all” (Mark 10:42–44).

For good reasons, Hardt and Negri focus on economic class, in part because this concept has not received enough attention in recent debates, but also because the multitude needs to be understood in terms of economic production. It is both the “common subject of labor, that is, the real flesh of postmodern production,” and “the object from which collective capital tries to make the body of its global development.” As the multitude is constituted by labor, it is unified by outside pressures: “Capital wants to make the multitude into an organic unity, just like the state wants to make it into a people.” This forced unification, however, can be used by the multitude to its advantage, since “through the struggles of labor, the real productive biopolitical figure of the multitude begins to emerge.” Since capital is not limited to what happens at work we need to keep in mind the broader ramifications of economic matters, which ultimately include religion.

Religious and theological reflections have a role to play not because the religious world is untainted by and independent of the world of capital, but because alternatives present themselves in the midst of the pressures of life. Confronted with the life-and-death struggles of our age, we are experiencing what has been called ‘grace under pressure.’ A theological surplus emerges where we least expect it, not in spiritual retreats to the mountaintops or in individual enlightenment in isolation, but in the midst of struggle.

In order for theology to contribute to alternatives, it must confront the ways that religious sentiments and concepts have been used to reinforce the top-down domination of the 1%. Capitalism’s faith in the so-called invisible hand of the market, which benefits the large corporations and the wealthy far more than the 99%, is only the tip of the iceberg. The notion of sin, even if not always used explicitly, is usually turned against the multitude. People who are unemployed are portrayed as idle and lazy and the contributions of working people are devalued and downplayed, so that their wages and benefits can be slashed and their jobs sent overseas. Participants in the Occupy movement have been treated similarly, as they are also accused of being lazy and parasitic, and they are frequently criminalized by the media and the authorities.

The Multitude-in-Relation

The multitude is all about relationship. This may sound like an odd claim in a world that has been shaped by the individualism of neoliberal capitalism. For over three decades, neoliberal capitalism has successfully promoted strong private property rights and weakened labor rights. As economic profit has been privatized and distributed among the few, debt has been communalized and pushed off to the many. Free markets and free trade are not equally accessible to all individuals, as neoliberal economic theory suggests, but favor the strong over the weak. These

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9 Hardt and Negri point out “that the rulers become ever more parasitical and that sovereignty becomes increasingly unnecessary,” ibid., 336.
10 Ibid., 101.
11 The phrase was coined by Ernest Hemmingway. For a theological interpretation of grace under pressure, see Joerg Rieger, *Grace under Pressure: Negotiating the Heart of the Methodist Traditions* (Nashville, TN: General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, 2011).
examples indicate that the premises of individualism that people exist in isolation and that economic success or misfortune is created in isolation are not true. Individualism is the creed of the elite, because it allows them to cover up the relationships that favor some and not others. The 1% want everyone to believe that success is self-made, because this belief hides their debt to the community and allows them to blame all those who are less successful—the 99%. The creed of individualism is often padded with images of God who resides at the top as a lonely individual and of isolated believers whose main concern is their individual salvation. This creed shapes not only the lives of the elites but also the lives of many who belong to the 99%, including the poorest of the poor, because many of them dream of becoming wealthy and powerful some day.

Nevertheless, the creed of individualism does not benefit the multitude. Very few ever get the opportunity to “pull themselves up by their own bootstraps.” The so-called American dream, promoting the idea that all individuals have the opportunity to move up the social ladder, rarely proved workable for the masses. When workers in the United States were better off, for instance, it was not because of individualism but because they had strong unions, which fought for eight-hour workdays, rest on weekends, pension plans, and various protections from exploitation. Likewise, when civil rights were granted in the history of the United States, whether voting rights for women and minorities or racial integration of public spaces, it was due to communal action rather than the creed of individualism or strong individual leaders. Not even some of the greatest individuals, such as a Martin Luther King, Jr. or a Mahatma Gandhi, would have accomplished much on their own.

The multitude knows that individualism is a lie and that relationship is a fact of life, for better or worse. We owe everything to others, including the things that we take for granted, such as our ability to learn to speak a certain language and express ourselves so that others can understand. This is one of the basic insights of the Christian faith and of many other religions as well. Our lives are constituted by relationships, which include our relation with the divine, but also our relations with our parents and relatives, our teachers, and friends. Moreover, our lives are also constituted by relationships with service providers, a global workforce, and our environments, and it is not always clear where one of these relationships ends and the other begins, including our relationship with the divine.

The Jesus movement understood itself in terms of all these relationships, but Jesus was also quite aware of the tensions. It is these tensions that the creed of individualism overlooks as well. When the family as an institution turned into another kind of individualism, because elite families who benefited from political and religious advantages turned against the many other families who did not enjoy such benefits, Jesus pronounced a challenge to the family. In the presence of his own mother and siblings, he refused to acknowledge the bonds of kinship and designed his movement to provide relationships that would prove to be more helpful: “Looking at those who sat around him, he said: ‘Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of my God is my brother and sister and mother’” (Mark 3:34–35). The notion of justice in the Bible is embedded in the affirmation and restoration of such relationships; it is not an abstract principle of fairness, personified by a blindfolded woman holding a pair of scales. Justice is bringing those who have been treated unjustly back into the community and challenging those who have promoted injustice and curbing their transgressions.12

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12 Most interpreters are now agreed on the centrality of the covenant and of relationship in the understanding of the biblical notions of justice, both in the Hebrew Bible and in the New Testament. See, e.g., Christopher D.
Many of the liberation traditions and theologies share such an understanding of relationship and justice, and today it is revived and revitalized in the Occupy movement. One way in which the Occupy movement gives expression to these relationships is through its understanding of class, which is at the core of the movement. Class, in this context, is presented not as the existence of independent strata in society—the most common definition in the United States today, if class is discussed at all—but as matter of relationship between the classes. That the 1% and the 99% are deeply related is not a new insight for those who have experienced exploitation in more dramatic forms, but it is a fresh insight in the public discussions in the United States and other countries, which have been shaped by neoliberal capitalism.

Many biblical traditions, and particularly Jesus' own proclamations in the gospels, speak of relationship and justice that reverse the dominant social order. The parable of the unforgiving servant (Matt 18:21–35), for instance, is not a moral tale that people should forgive others because they have been forgiven by God. It is a reminder that forgiveness of debt is a way of life that makes more sense for working people than the individualism of the wealthy and the masters. The servant whose debt has been forgiven by a very untypical master, who acts against the logic of all masters, is now free to forgive the much smaller debt of one of his fellow servants. This ability to forgive debt is where true wealth lies, as it creates stronger relationships and solidarity among the servants that are worth much more than petty sums of money. If the master changes his mind in the future and starts clamping down on the servants again, it is the relationship among the servants that will protect them and enable resistance.

Mainline theology either pays little attention to relationship or moralizes about it. When pastors talk about relationship from the pulpits, for instance, they often morally exhort people to be less individualistic, thereby perpetuating the myth that individualism is real. But many liberation theologies have recognized the reality of relationship for years. Womanist theologies, for instance, are aware that the life and circumstances of black women are tied to those of the black men, and to those of white men and women, and many others, for good or for ill. While unjust relationships along the lines of gender, race, and class are mostly invisible for those who benefit from them, those who feel the pressures in their own bodies are sorely aware of what is going on. Rather than being 'special interest theologies' for individual minorities, liberation theologies insist that we are always related and prophetically denounce the oppressive natures of many of our relationships.

That we live in the complex intersections of race, class, gender and sexuality should not be a cause of frustration, but a call to develop less oppressive and more productive relations. In order to develop these relations, theologians of various liberative traditions have at times taken recourse to the ancient Christian doctrine of the Trinity. The doctrine of the Trinity presents an


image of the divine as multiplicity and the heart of the universe as relational and non-hierarchical. It speaks of the first and the second persons of the Trinity as sharing the same quality of being and intimately related to the Holy Spirit. The Cappadocian theologians of the fourth century used the term *perichoresis*, referring to the divine relationship of embrace and interpenetration, to describe this dynamic relation. In the beginning is not one single God who then produces a Trinity; in the beginning is a relationship that models the sort of unity in difference that is also characteristic of the multitude. There is no going back to some primordial unity without diversity.

While humans never know relationships that are completely devoid of pressures and distortions, relationships have a productive quality that can never be completely erased. Relationships are produced and can grow stronger even under the greatest of pressures, such as the solidarity of African Americans confronted with the harsh realities of slavery, the solidarity of women confronted with the pressures of unrelenting patriarchy, and the solidarity of workers confronted with ruthless exploitation in their workplaces. Hardt and Negri argue that today the metropolis is the place where great pressures are condensed in such a way that new solidarity emerges. For this reason, they consider the metropolis as “one vast reservoir of common wealth.”¹⁵ The Occupy movement appears to prove them right to some extent.

Yet the multitude that is formed in these contexts is not without its problems, and it does not form spontaneously. The organic image of the body, which the apostle Paul adopts to describe the church as the body of Christ, helps us understand what is at stake. This image was originally promoted by the philosophers of the Roman Empire in order to remind the subjects of the empire that they are organically related, but in such a way that there can be no shifting of positions, resulting in an organic hierarchy. The feet can never dream of becoming the head and vice versa, but head and feet need each other. Neoliberal capitalism has forgotten even the wisdom of the Roman Empire, as it treats workers as expendable and of little consequence. Paul, on the other hand, turns this hierarchical image of the body upside down:

> The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect. (1 Cor 12:21–24)

This reversal is not primarily a pragmatic one, seeking to promote harmony within the body, but finds its justification in God’s own rationale: “God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member” (1 Cor 12:24b).

As a result, the body of Christ models the multitude, where “if one member suffers, all suffer together with it” and “if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it” (1 Cor 12:26). This kind of multitude requires work. It does not arise out of thin air, and it can always be coopted by the status quo. Hardt and Negri are right that the debate needs to be shifted from being the multitude to making the multitude: “the multitude is formed through articulations on the

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¹⁵ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Commonwealth* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009), 153. This includes geographical concentration of workers and other resources. In the past, the factory was the site for the working class’s production, organization, and rebellion; now the metropolis has taken over these functions, ibid., 250.
plane of immanence without hegemony.”

This formation includes the formation of nature, rather than leaving behind nature, as capitalism does.

The good news is that, as Hardt and Negri point out, the production of the common always involves a surplus that cannot be expropriated by capital or captured in the regimentation of the global political body. This surplus, at the most abstract philosophical level, is the basis on which antagonism is transformed into revolt. Deprivation, in other words, may breed anger, indignation, and antagonism, but revolt arises only on the basis of wealth, that is, a surplus of intelligence, experience, knowledges, and desire. Here is a parallel to my notion of a theological surplus. In other words, the status quo that is presented to us as the only reality does not have the last word: another world is possible.

Deep Solidarity

One of the biggest challenges for the emerging relationships among the multitude is how to develop a broader and deeper form of solidarity. Well-meaning proponents of relationship and solidarity have often had to fight the blatant rejections of relationship and solidarity of the 1%. It is unfortunate that many middle-class and poor people echo the powerful when they reject other people out of hand, such as the immigrants or lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people. One way the proponents of relationship and solidarity have fought this battle was by proclaiming that we do not need to be afraid of other people, that others are humans too, and that ‘others are just like us.’ Parents often tell their children that others are just like us, in order to reduce their fear of others. The problem with this approach, however, is that although it is preferable to the blatant rejection of others, it tends to turn other people into mirror images of one’s own self, without recognizing them for who they are. The result is that others can still be misused for one’s own purposes.

One of the criticisms leveled at the Occupy movement is that it is predominantly white and middle class and that there are relatively few minorities involved. But as I have shown, there have been efforts made to value and respect minority voices, for instance by giving them priority of speech in the general assemblies. In Dallas, for instance, different groups collaborated across differences, from established groups like Move-On and the unions to small art collectives and racial minority groups. This does not always happen in Texas, and it should be noted that the homeless were part of the movement, too, and that a community of Hare Krishnas brought food every day. It should also be added that involving the middle class in the Occupy movement is a more important accomplishment than it might seem at first sight, especially when the middle class begins to realize that it is not out there merely to help others but that it is itself deeply affected by the economic crisis, and thus shares in some structures of oppression with the rest of the 99%. This is the first step toward what I am calling ‘deep solidarity.’

The Occupy movement has, therefore, shown a path for developing unity in diversity in powerful ways. One practical example is ‘Occupy Homes,’ a branch of the Occupy movement, which started in Minneapolis and Atlanta. Cat Salonek, an organizer with Occupy Homes in Minneapolis, notes that this spin-off of the Occupy movement is aware of what she calls the ‘unchecked privilege on the plaza.’ Not everyone

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16 Ibid., 169.
17 Ibid., 171.
18 Hard and Negri, Multitude, 212.
19 See also Joerg Rieger, Christus und das Imperium: Von Paulus bis zum Postkolonialismus, transl. Sabine Plonz (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2009), where the notion ‘Christological surplus’ is developed.
can afford to stay in tents for extended periods of time. Privilege is addressed in Occupy Homes as people meet face-to-face with families who are threatened by eviction and with people in struggling neighborhoods. People gather with a specific purpose—preventing the foreclosure and eviction of a house—and these projects bring people together and keep growing as more foreclosures are addressed. As a result, whole neighborhoods are being organized. Occupy Homes also brings together different sectors of the Occupy movement, including a faith component, as some of the work is done and presented in round table discussions in churches.

As the 99% are beginning to understand their deep solidarity and thus their fundamental unity, how to deal with difference remains a fundamental issue. One reason is that difference has often been used by the 1% to divide and conquer the 99%. Differences of race, ethnicity, and gender have been used for the benefit of the system. When white landowners in seventeenth-century Virginia used the category of race to play off white peasants against black peasants, the white peasants gained some small privileges over their black peers. At the same time, they lost something much more essential, namely their deep solidarity with the black peasants, which would have put them in a much stronger position. The same is true when men and women are played off against each other in the workplace: men gain some privileges, often in terms of status and better pay, but they lose what really counts, namely the ability to organize together with women, so that all workers are better off in the end. In these examples, racism and sexism benefit the masters and the employers more than they benefit the workers.

Jewish-Argentinean religion scholar Santiago Slabodsky is right when he reminds us that the racially privileged participants in the Occupy movement fail “to understand that historically they have been beneficiaries and not victims” of institutions like slavery. As we remember the history of slavery, however, we also need to keep in mind that not all white Southerners benefited equally from slavery: the white owners of the Southern plantations benefited exponentially. According to Theodore W. Allen, “the poor and propertyless European-Americans were the principal element in the day-to-day enforcement of racial oppression,” as even the poorest white man “could now find price in his race.” The white landowners were more powerful and better off than ever, as the poor whites could be employed in the control of the African American slaves.

The awareness of class differences between the 1% and the 99%, which the Occupy movement promotes, helps us put the differences of race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality in a broader context. In the words of Hardt and Negri, “The multitude is composed of radical differences, singularities, that can never be synthesized in an identity. The radicality of gender difference, for example, can be included in the biopolitical organization of social life, the life renovated by the multitude, only when every discipline of labor, affect, and power that makes gender difference into an index of hierarchy is destroyed.” Rather than playing off one form of difference against another—like race against class or class against gender—the lens of class helps us put these differences to constructive use.

The privileges in terms of class, gender, and race that some participants in the Occupy movement

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22 Allen, The Invention of the White Race, 252.
23 Hardt and Negri, Multitude, 355.
enjoy can now be put to work. Certain resources of the middle class (and even of the 1%), such as academic expertise, personal and professional connections, and financial resources are useful for all members of the 99%. Instead of using their privileges to create power differentials, members of the middle class can use their knowledge, expertise, and connections to strengthen the movement. Similarly, white people can use their privileges in society as white allies in support of people of color and the immigrants. A white Anglo politician or pastor joining the cause of immigrants, for instance, could be extremely beneficial to the movement. In terms of gender and heterosexual privileges, the movement for justice can benefit from solidarity between men toward women, and between heterosexual people and lesbians, gay, bisexual, and transgender people.

It is important to realize that privilege exists, but also that this sort of privilege is often not much more than the system ‘throwing a bone’ to the privileged so that they will continue to toe the line: the middle class is hanging on to the false hope that they are more like the ruling class than the working class; members of the dominant race and ethnicities act out their whiteness, with the illusion that they are better off than and superior to the minorities; males still have some advantages of pay over women and the ‘good old boys clubs,’ but they don’t run the show just because they are male, as the janitors’ union would remind us.

As lines are being redrawn and new connections made, we will also begin to see religious differences in a new light. Many Christians in the United States assume that there is a firm line between Christians and non-Christians. But the issue at hand is not whether people profess belief in God or not; the question is what kind of God and what kind of power they affirm. The theology of the multitude often finds itself in closer proximity with liberation theologians from other religions than with some Christian theologians who uphold dominant images of God. South African Islamic scholar Farid Esack, for instance, notes a preferential option for the oppressed in the Qur’an, which is rooted in the identification of God with the oppressed. Esack observes that in some places “the Qur’an makes a clear choice for the mustad’afun [the marginalized and oppressed] against the mustakbirun [the arrogant and powerful] even though the former may not be Muslim.”

It is more important to ask how God’s power manifests itself and in what direction power flows than debating abstractly about the existence of ‘a God’ in general. This awareness opens a new chapter in interreligious dialogue, as the conversations become not only richer and deeper but allow for a better appreciation of both similarities and differences. Those who affirm power as a top-down process and those who see God or ultimate reality upholding it appear to be closer to each other, no matter whether they are Christian nor not, than those who affirm alternative forms of power that move from the bottom up.

In sum, deep solidarity has many implications, but it is a requirement for the theology and practice of the multitude. In a world that is marked by growing differentials of power, no one can go it alone. Those who belong to the 1 percent have generally done a better job of organizing and pulling together, not only in the field of economics but also in the worlds of culture and religion. Now the ball is in the court of the 99 percent.

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25 Ibid., 98. Esack finds this attitude in the Qur’an 7:136–7 and 28:5, both references to the Exodus.
The Changing Religious Landscape

Implications for Civil Society and Foreign Affairs

Edward Kessler

In 1999, the sociologist Peter Berger noted that: "the world is as furiously religious as it ever was, and in some places more so than ever."¹ He called the process ‘desecularization’. In the same year, The Economist published its millennium issue and included an article entitled 'God: After a lengthy career, the Almighty recently passed into history. Or did he?’ The reader was informed that the “test will come on Judgment Day, when man, we are told, will meet his maker. Or will it be God meeting his?”²

With 20–20 hindsight it is clear that Berger’s words were more prescient than those of The Economist, whose editor to be fair, did acknowledge his conversion of the recognition that the vast majority of the world regarded God as a factor in shaping their lives, by publishing a book entitled God is Back in 2009.³

Nevertheless, it’s worth asking to what extent we have absorbed the implications that in most parts of the world the most powerful actors in civil society are religious. The 2012 Pew Survey entitled ‘The Global Religious Landscape’ stated that 85% of the world’s population identified themselves as belonging to a specific religion.⁴ Even in a ‘secular’ UK, the figure stands at 75% (based on 2011 census⁵).

This paper will explore the implications of the changing religious landscape. As I will point out, there is increasing religious diversity around the world, not just in the West and understanding how religion interacts at local, national and international levels is key for fostering a peaceful and flourishing society. In my view, religion and society are engaged in a two-way encounter, influencing each other both for good and for ill.

The picture is made more complicated by the growth of fanaticism and violent extremism. On the one hand, there is a suspicion that religion is a primary source of all the world’s ills but on the other, a blanket denial of the legitimacy of non-religious approaches to life. Incitement to religious hatred such as Islamophobia, antisemitism and anti-Christian hatred, is also a pressing societal issue.

Another example of change is that the increasing movement of people and ideas are challenging what were once religious monopolies, such as the Orthodox churches in central and Eastern Europe or Hinduism in India. According to The Economist,⁶ in China there are more Christians than members of the Chinese Communist Party (87m) and in Russia, although religiously dominated by the Russian Orthodox Church, there are

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¹ Peter Berger, ed., The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 2.
³ John Micklethwait and Adrian Wooldridge, God is back: how the global revival of faith is changing the world (London: Allen Lane, 2009).
⁴ http://www.pewforum.org/2012/12/18/global-religious-landscape-exec/
more Muslim inhabitants than any other European country (17 million or 12% of the population) and 50% of the military (1.1m) are Muslim.7

When there is a crisis involving religion, government officials and activists on the ground need the means to quickly address the situation, which requires a nuanced approach to religious-ethno identities. Consequently, there is a need for religious literacy because, as the Harvard Divinity School Religious Literacy Project points out, "there remains a widespread illiteracy about religion that spans the globe. There are many consequences of this illiteracy, but the most urgent is that it fuels conflict and antagonisms and hinders cooperative endeavours in all arenas of human experience."8

The need to improve religious literacy is reinforced by the fact that those who identify themselves as religious do not exist only in religious communities—they live in the real world. This means that policy makers and politicians need to be better informed so that they are better able to sustain communities and to more effectively manage tension and conflict. This is particularly important where there are conflicts of interest between different nations, communities and groups which easily become ‘religionised’. People caught up in conflict can seek to define and sharpen differences between ‘us’ and ‘them’, the self and the other, and to rally support for themselves.

The Woolf Institute has specialized in the encounter between religion, civil society and foreign affairs for two decades, for example, working with the UK’s Foreign and Commonwealth Office training diplomats at different levels and undertaking global research projects such as evaluating the impact of interfaith initiatives in partnership with the Qatar National Research Fund and Georgetown University (Doha) in London, Delhi and Doha.9 Nigel Baker, UK Ambassador to the Holy See, is a leading figure in the FCO’s interest in religious issues and explains further: "I personally believe that an understanding of the dynamics of religion and faith in global society is not only a legitimate and important tool of foreign policy practice, but an increasingly essential one for our diplomats and foreign policy advisers in a modern world in which religion is ever more important as a driver of political, social, cultural and even economic motivation. In the same way that we expect diplomats to develop a keen knowledge of international economic issues, or the intricacies of multilateral negotiating techniques in areas from disarmament to climate change, we cannot ignore religion."10

It is clear then that the traditional model of understanding this relationship—secularization—is no longer applicable. When Alasdair Campbell, Tony Blair’s ‘spin doctor’ interrupted a reporter asking the Prime Minister a question about his faith in 2003 he protested, ‘we don’t do God’.11 Campbell was mistaken because ‘doing God’ is what most of the world does.

Let’s briefly set the scene and summarise the relevant demographics.

Setting the Scene: Demographics

Although there is some divergence of opinion over the extent, there is unanimity that the global religious population is growing and the

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8 The Religious Literacy Project at Harvard Divinity School, http://rlp.hds.harvard.edu/about
9 See further below and http://www.woolf.cam.ac.uk/research/research-projects-detail.asp?ItemID=645
landscape changing. The two largest religions of the world—Christianity (33%; 2.2 billion, 2010) and Islam (23%; 1.6 billion, 2010)—are growing dramatically in the Global South. According to the 2013 report by Center for the Study of Global Christianity, the proportion of Christians in the world located in Africa, Asia or Latin America will increase from 41% 1970 to 65% in 2020. In Europe and North America, Christianity is declining as a percentage of the population.\textsuperscript{12}

The Christian population is expected to increase to 2.7 billion by 2030, especially Pentecostals and evangelical Protestants whose numbers are expected to grow to 700 million by 2020, more than a tenfold increase since 1970. After Catholics (1.2 billion, 2010), this collection of Christian churches represents the largest single grouping of Christians. As much as we need to reflect on Christianity, we also need to understand the implications of the growth of Islam. The world’s Muslim population is increasing even faster than the Christian, rising from 1.6 billion in 2010 to 2.2 billion by 2030, according to the Pew report, ‘The Future of the Global Muslim Population’. Muslims will make up 26.5% of the world’s total projected population of 8.3 billion, up from 23.5% in 2010 (of 6.9 billion). Pakistan is expected to surpass Indonesia as the country with the single largest Muslim population and the largest Arab country will remain Egypt. Muslims will continue to be relatively small minorities in Europe and the Americas, but are expected to constitute a growing share of the total population. Several factors account for this growth, such as higher fertility rates than non-Muslim populations, a larger share of the Muslim population is in, or soon will enter, the prime reproductive years (15–29 years old) and improved health and economic conditions in Muslim-majority countries resulting in a decline in child mortality rates and longer life expectancy.\textsuperscript{13} One of the implications of the changing religious landscape is that an increasing number of countries with substantial Muslim communities also have large Pentecostal and evangelical Christian populations (and sizable minorities of Christians more broadly) eg, India contains 32 million Christians (and 177 million Muslims, alongside 830 million Hindus, 2011), Indonesia 24 million (and 204 million Muslims), and Nigeria 81 million Christians (and 75 million Muslims). It is surely not coincidental that in these areas Muslim-Christian tensions and sometimes conflict have increased, such as in Nigeria, where sectarian violence is common.\textsuperscript{14}

Tension and conflict are not restricted to encounters between Christians and Muslims. In China, the areas of instability and repression are areas where followers of the Dalai Lama religious live (Tibet) and in Muslim Uighir areas of north-east China. It is also worth mentioning the tension between Israel’s Muslim and Christian minorities and the Jewish majority, especially ultra-Orthodox Jews. Nearly a quarter (23%) of Israel’s population (including Jerusalem but excluding the West Bank) is expected to be Muslim in 2030 (2.1 million), a dramatic increase from 14% (0.6 million) in 1990\textsuperscript{15} and tensions seem unlikely to decline. Finally, in the Global North,
the number of people who do not identify themselves as religious is also increasing not only in the US but also in Europe. For example, in the UK, this proportion of the population has risen from 12% to 25% in a single decade, according to the 2011 census.\(^{16}\) A Pew Forum study issued in 2015, projecting the future of world religions 35 years forward, to 2050, makes interesting reading for Europeans as Europe is the only region projected to see a decline in its total population between 2010 (745m) and 2050 (700m). Although Christians will continue to be the largest religious group in the region, Europe’s Christian population is expected to drop by about 100 million people, falling from 555 million in 2010 to 455 million in 2050. Europe’s Jewish population also is expected to shrink, from 1.4 million in 2010 to 1.2 million in 2050. The remaining religious groups in Europe are projected to grow in number due to a combination of higher fertility, younger populations and net gains via migration and conversion. Europe’s Muslim population is projected to increase by 60%, growing from 44 million in 2010 to 70 million in 2050. The religiously unaffiliated population in Europe is expected to grow by about 16%, from 140 million in 2010 to 160 million in 2050. Hindus, Buddhists, members of folk religions and members of other religions in Europe are expected to experience large gains relative to their 2010 population size, but none of these groups is forecast to exceed 3 million people in 2050.\(^{17}\)

This brief overview of the demographics makes clear why policy makers and politicians need to understand the influence of religion otherwise, as the 2010 Chicago Council on Global Affairs report states, “it will be much harder, if not impossible, to accomplish important goals—including development objectives, conflict resolution and the promotion of social and human rights.”\(^{18}\) Religion can not be separated from world affairs, nor can logic be liberated from those beliefs that claim to transcend it. Religious motivation does not disappear simply because it is not mentioned; rather, as we have seen in the last decade in particular, it lies dormant only to rise up again with renewed intensity.

The contemporary religious landscape is a mosaic of different religions and beliefs, each with multiple strands influencing and being influenced by the society in which it is located. Religion is a both unifier and divider and understanding its role today requires sensitivity to nuance as well as to the specific, often local, context. Religion has seldom operated as a static bloc with set beliefs but is adaptable and in flux, shaped by and shaping its surroundings. Whilst tempting, it is a mistake to depict it as homogeneous. Religion is far more complicated.

Nevertheless, three trends can be identified, each of which has implications for civil society and foreign affairs.

**Increasing religious pluralism and diversity**

Religious monopolies are in decline. For example, Christianity can no longer be portrayed as the dominant ‘host’ religion in Europe where a previously intrinsic relationship is being weakened and belonging to a minority is the norm. This is epitomized by the UK, which is becoming less Christian, less religious and more diverse.\(^{19}\)

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\(^{16}\) Office for National Statistics, op. Cit.


\(^{19}\) ‘Living with Difference’, report of the Commission on Religion and Belief in British Public Life, Woolf Institute,
The Church no longer holds the kind of authority that it once did because the number of people identifying themselves as Christian has declined from 71% to 59% in ten years (from 2001 to 2011\textsuperscript{20}). The privileged position of the Church of England as the Established Church is being increasingly and publicly questioned, which has major political implications, including questions about the automatic inclusion of 26 bishops who sit in the UK’s second chamber, the House of Lords, as well as the future role of the monarch as Head of the Church.

Post-World War II immigration means that Christianity is becoming more diverse and immigrants from the Caribbean and, later, from West Africa, has resulted in thousands of lively black-led churches and a major black presence, for example, in the Anglican diocese of London. Between 2005 and 2012, 700 new Pentecostal churches were started, of which 400 were black majority led. In a similar way, immigration from Eastern Europe in 2000s significantly boosted Roman Catholic and Orthodox congregations. This has an earlier precedent with Irish immigration in the 19th and 20th centuries.

One response to the changing religious landscape was articulated by the Head of the Church of England, Queen Elizabeth II, during a speech in Lambeth Palace in 2012. The Church’s role, the monarch said, is not to defend Anglicanism to the exclusion of other religions. Instead, “the Church has a duty to protect the free practice of all faiths in this country. It certainly provides an identity and spiritual dimension for its own many adherents. But also, gently and assuredly, the Church of England has created an environment for other faith communities and indeed people of no faith to live freely.”\textsuperscript{21}

In the UK, non-Christian religious communities have grown in terms of numbers and also in confidence. More than one generation of Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs (Jews have a longer British history, returning in 1656 under Cromwell) have grown up knowing no other place to call home than Britain and regard themselves as belonging to the country, and do not view themselves as ‘hosted outsiders’. In today’s society, the inevitable question for all the British who identify with a religion, not just Christians, is how to be true to their own faith and identity? This is by no means a new question but requires different answers.

A Commission on Religion and Belief in British Public Life, chaired by Lady Butler-Sloss and convened by the Woolf Institute, met over two years (2013–15) and explored this question in its report, ‘Living with Difference’. The Commission made 37 recommendations to the Government, and challenged policy-makers to create an environment in which differences enriched society and contributed to its common good rather than caused anxiety. This, it argued, required that all communities should feel a positive part of an ongoing national story and the Commission proposed creating a grassroots Magna Carta style statement of shared religion and belief values for public life.\textsuperscript{22}

The religious landscape in Britain is now three-dimensional. There is a) the historic Christian tradition and culture, though with increasing numbers of people (‘cultural Christians’) who

\footnotesize{20} Office for National Statistic, op.cit.


neither believe its theology nor belong to its institutions, b) the increasing influence of non-religious worldviews and beliefs (often termed ‘secular’) and c) religious pluralism. Britain has a distinctive mix of these three dimensions, as do other western societies.

As we have noted above, the largest non-Christian minority in the UK (and Europe more widely) is Islam and Europeans will not be able to distance themselves from debates and conflicts in other parts of the world, such as the Middle East. For example, in Europe there was shock at antisemitic chanting and violence of some pro-Palestinian protestors during marches opposing Israeli military action in Gaza in the summer of 2014. Yet, there are also encouraging signs of an incipient European Islam, not dissimilar to the development of European Judaism some centuries ago, and, it is hoped, a more cohesive pluralist society.\(^{23}\) The German government, for example, is investing heavily in Departments of Islamic Studies in universities, to ease the integration of German Muslims and coping with more than 1 million new, predominantly Muslim, refugees since 2015. This is opening up new spaces for political engagement through civil society, such as refugee churches and more established Muslim groups are being used to help Muslim refugees understand Germany, its customs and values.\(^{24}\)

Thus, it is clear pluralist society is facing significant challenges, often of a religious nature. Increasing tension and outbursts of violence, both within and between faith communities, can feed antisemitism, Islamophobia and other forms of prejudice. The growth of anti-Christian hatred overseas, notably in the Middle East, is also having an impact on Christian communities in the West who are feeling under increased pressure to support their co-religionists. It is noticeable that Pope Francis is increasingly vocal in this area.

Adding to the complexity is the rise of radical (often but not only far-right) political groups and their use of religion, particularly anti-Islamic rhetoric, to further secular ideological goals. This is demonstrated by Marine Le Pen’s comments about Islam in France and by Golden Dawn in Greece.

In France, especially in urban areas, what may appear a diverse society when proportions of population are examined solely according to statistics, is in reality a predominately mono- or bi-cultural environment. North African Arab citizens (primarily Muslim) live ‘parallel lives’, without actually encountering other French communities. There remain significant barriers, which prevent interaction and mutual trust. Since the Paris attacks in January and November 2015, government measures have been implemented that show a shift towards more authoritarian governance and differentiation along ethno-religious lines. In these circumstances, it is relatively easy for extremists, of whatever persuasion, to develop myths and misinformation and stir up race and religious hatred.\(^{25}\)

\(^{23}\) For further information, see my article “Muslims and Jews in the West Today: Minority Transformations” in Welcome to the Cavalcade: A Festschrift in Honour of Rabbi Professor Jonathan Magonet, eds. Howard Cooper, Colin Eimer and Elli Tikvah Sarah (London: Kulmus Publications, 2013), 276–85.

\(^{24}\) Jan Bock, Woolf Institute researcher who is undertaking research on community relations in Berlin, stated at a conference at the Humboldt University, “The clear and perhaps unprecedented struggle of public institutions in Germany to deal with the arrival of millions of newcomers over the course of a few years opened up new spaces for political engagement through civil society. The results were mixed, however, and the long-term repercussions are not yet clear at all.” April 15th, 2016. For Bock’s reflections on the contemporary challenge of diversity in Germany, see: https://woolfinstitute.wordpress.com/2016/05/05/german-struggles-with-diversity.

\(^{25}\) See: https://woolfinstitute.wordpress.com/2016/05/19/a-french-terror-politik/ by Sami Everett, Woolf Institute researcher undertaking research on community relations in Paris.
Beyond Europe, also religious pluralism increasingly challenges what was once perceived as a religious monopoly. For example, Qatar's small indigenous population of approximately 250,000 Arab Muslims is overshadowed by the growth of a multicultural (and multireligious) society, the overwhelming majority (over 90%) of whom are expatriates, and a sizeable minority of whom are non-Muslims. Although Islam remains the state religion, it is also today one of several major world religions represented in Qatar, including Christianity, Buddhism and Hinduism. These challenges are not new to the region. Gulf countries such as the UAE, Oman, Bahrain and Kuwait have, since the early 1970s, been grappling with these same challenges in various ways, although each setting has produced its own unique set of challenges, and in turn, very different 'pluralisms' are taking shape. 

Many of these changes raise the profile of religion as a marker of identity. Immigrant communities lose their identity in their previous traditional society and find a new religious identity, sometimes centred around a place of worship, which becomes more conscious and self-conscious. The process of 'otherness' is at work and can be further heightened in second and third generation members if they feel alienated from the society in which they are living. A good example is the reaction among British Muslims in 1988 to the controversy surrounding Salman Rushdie's novel The Satanic Verses. Muslims saw themselves depicted in the Rushdie Affair as little more than an angry community of book-burners and resented the negative depiction of Islam in the media. The 1990s marked the coming of age of a new generation many of whom felt marginalized and alienated from mainstream society, convinced that however integrated and Westernized they were, their Muslimness would still exclude them from being accepted as part of Western society.

In effect, the changing religious landscape can result in a reconstruction of identity which can take a benign, pious form or a radically political one. Both have implications for the relationship between religion and the state.

**Tensions between religion, citizenship and the nation state**

Closely connected to increasing religious pluralism is a growing tension between religion, citizenship and the nation state. Before the rise of the nation state in the 19th century, Jews, Christians and Muslims defined themselves in terms of their shared laws, values, and beliefs. If and when they had to move, they would take their laws, values, and beliefs with them. It was not so much territory that defined their identity but values and a way of life, a role often played by religion. It was common to move freely between one territory and another alternating between languages without significantly losing any sense of belonging to the same community. The rise of the modern nation-state changed this by privileging territorial identity and (normally) a single language.

A characteristic of the contemporary religious landscape is that multiple forms of identity (such as ethnic, cultural and religious) are once again coming to the fore, demonstrated by the demands of minority national groups for separate

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26 The Woolf Institute is presently undertaking a research project evaluating the impact of interfaith initiatives in Doha, Delhi and London. Although it is too soon to make any conclusions, it is clear that religious pluralism is a global, not continental phenomenon. The Changing Religious Landscape: Implications for Civil Society and Foreign Affairs Dr Edward Kessler Woolf Institute, Cambridge 17 http://www.woolf.cam.ac.uk/uploads/Assessing%20the%20Effectiveness%20of%20Interfaith%20Initiatives.pdf.

rights, such as the Scottish Nationalists in the (still) United Kingdom or the Basques and Catalan peoples of Spain. Of course, a common national identity does not, in theory, contradict multiple sources of identity, commonly called a hybrid or hyphenated identity. There is no reason why a person cannot be Québécois and Canadian at the same time or Scottish and British; in terms of religion, Muslim and French, Christian and Egyptian or Jewish and Indian and so on.

Demands for greater religious autonomy are raising the political temperature. Witness in Europe pressure on minority groups to conform to European customs, for example on dress (Muslims in particular) and restrictions on religious slaughter of animals or circumcision of boys (Muslims and Jews). In Greece, the Orthodox Church is intrinsically associated with Greek national identity; Russian patriotism is bound closely with belonging to the Russian Orthodox Church. For those outside the national church there can be a feeling of exclusion with the potential for undermining co-existence, especially when national identity is defined so tightly as to exclude the ‘other’.

Post-immigration minority groups are always more conscious, and made more conscious by others, of their ‘difference’, of their identity. While this can take a colour aspect (such as black) or a national origin (such as Indian, Turkish etc), for many minorities religion has assumed a primacy or at least a salience, which can take a variety of forms such as diet but the most visible, and currently the most controversial is dress. Religious observance can be seen (literally, seen) in public places and as a result Sikh turbans and Islamic headscarves are, for example, now an unexceptional feature of British cities.

Yet, in circumstances of uncertainty and anxiety in wider society about national identity and cohesion, a flourishing of religious or ethno-religious based identities may be perceived to be inappropriately assertive and destabilising, exemplified by the assertion of French secularist identity in the controversy over ‘burkinis’ (full body swimsuits for Muslim women) in Cannes, France in 2016. The decision to ban burkinis, upheld by the French Courts, is an example of a reaction to what is perceived as an ‘over-Islamising’ of the public sphere. However, this ban has not been replicated in neighbouring Mediterranean countries such as Italy and Spain, suggesting it was specific to the French context and an example of the inherent tension between religion, citizenship and the nation state in the laïcité (secularism), model. In theory, a level playing field for all French citizens, but research shows, it can also mask difference and structural discrimination.

Cross-religion co-operation and overlapping concerns

Another striking feature in today’s religious landscape is the number of cross-religious partnerships. These include formal interfaith dialogue groups, joint political and/or social action initiatives, and the influence of diaspora communities.

Interfaith dialogue and engagement between people holding different beliefs and belonging to different backgrounds, have played a vital role in strengthening the bonds of civil society. In the words of 2015 UK report, Living with Difference, they help people ‘to feel they are a positive part of an ongoing national story... to know that their culture, religion and beliefs are embraced as

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part of a continuing process of mutual enrichment, and that their contributions to the texture of the nation’s common life are valued’.30

Participants seek to understand each other, to discover the common ground underlying their differences, to resolve their differences when that is possible, and to learn to live with them when it is not.31 It is no surprise that interfaith dialogue is seen as an important tool for fostering social cohesion, such as the ‘Near Neighbours’ programme in the UK, funded by the Government to bring together diverse communities and different faiths through a range of activities.32

In conflict situations, for example, effective dialogue enables participants to make and to receive criticism, and to point to areas where they themselves as well as others might be mistaken or misguided. Recent examples of the contribution dialogue can make in a tense situation include the public appeals for calm by religious leaders after the murder of the soldier Lee Rigby in south London in 2013 and the joint call for disarmament from Muslim and Christian religious leaders in the Central African Republic.33

A new cross-religious phenomenon is the appearance of political initiatives undertaken by theologically similar adherents of different religions who join together for a specific political goal, eg, conservative Christians, who would not normally agree with non-Christians, working with conservatively-minded Jews and Muslims on family issues in opposition to their liberal Christian co-religionists. Similarly, liberal Jews make common cause with liberal Christians and Muslims on social justice issues, showing that previous monolithic understandings of identity need to be nuanced by overlapping concerns and interaction.

Cross religious collaboration can be controversial such as conservative Christian Zionist support for right-wing political parties in Israel. Christian Zionism has its roots in 18th century European and North American Protestant expectations of a ‘restoration’ of the Holy Land as part of the ultimate providential plan for humanity; today, some Evangelicals offer unquestioned political and considerable financial support for the State of Israel, as one way of bringing about the Second Coming of Christ and the End of Days. The Christian Zionist movement contains a wide range of views but the more conservative element strongly supports Israel and especially the Settler Movement, even though their agenda is dominated by an eschatological timetable. Even though their hope is that the Jewish return to Zion will be followed by a Second Coming and the acceptance of Jesus by the entire Jewish people, their support is generally welcomed by the Israeli Government, which from the time of Prime Minister Menachem Begin onwards (1977–1983), has actively wooed this movement.34

Some of the challenges to policy makers and politicians, notably in the United States, can be found in the political consequences of interpretations that emphasise fulfillment of biblical prophecy even though the biblical promises do not define the same borders. As Madeleine Albright acknowledged in 2006, it is “hard enough

30 Living with Difference, 2015, op cit.
31 See Alliance of Civilizations (2006).
to divide land between two groups on the basis of legal or economic equity; it is far harder if one or both claim that the land in question was given to them by God.”

A third example of cross religious cooperation is Humanitarian Aid, where overlapping concerns have a practical impact. In 2012, the UK Department for International Development launched an initiative called Faith Partnership Principles. It was argued that faith groups not only gave trusted advice to their communities but faith-based humanitarian aid organisations could be more effective than secular bodies in delivering aid. They have a global reach because they represent, and are respected by, their global faith community. For example, in some African countries, 70% of health services are provided by faith groups.

The Faith Partnership Principles established a forum to discuss issues and agreed areas for joint working, which was one of the recommendations of a 2009 report, Keeping Faith in Development. The report arose from a conference with three humanitarian aid charities, Christian Aid, World Jewish Relief and Islamic Relief. Case studies produced by the three charities illustrated work undertaken in countries dominated by other religions and pointed out that a faith-base gives extra credibility with different local religious communities.

The fourth and final example is the increasing role of Diaspora communities. Changes in the religious landscape are inherently intertwined with globalization which is facilitating not only communication and the movement of ideas but also the movement of people from one country to another. This process is exaggerated by cheap travel and the impact of the social media. This means the local is truly global and diaspora communities become a significant non-state actor. Consequently, residual conflicts, arbitrary boundaries and ethnic and tribal differences can quickly resurface in different parts of the world. In the UK, localised, deep-rooted historical differences in Kashmir re-emerge quickly in the streets of Bradford and damage local communal relations. Another example can be seen in two out of the four 7/7 British suicide bombers of Pakistani origin, Mohammad Sidique Khan and Shehzad Tanweer, had previously spent several months in Pakistan where they were in contact with Al-Qaeda and went through extensive training.

The increasing interdependence of the modern world means, to adapt the famous words of John Donne, that no country is an island, entire of itself. The resulting uncertainties and consequent anxieties are an inescapable feature of the changing religious landscape.

# Conclusion

It is clear then that it is insufficient to focus on ‘rational’ motivators to understand society, such as security or economics, for they ignore role of

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religion. The changing religious landscape epitomises today’s complicated, fragmented and multifaceted world.

One conclusion is that religious literacy is required to know how to operate on local, regional, national and international levels and also whom to trust. Understanding religion’s role as a motivating force in society, has become vital. This means, for example, realising that whilst religions have many deep similarities, overlaps and commonalities, there are significant differences between them. Additionally, there are significant differences within each religious tradition, for no tradition is monolithic, none is unchanging and none exists independently of specific cultural, historical and political contexts and circumstances. Belonging (or not belonging) to a religion may be connected with heritage and sense of identity as much as to beliefs. As we have shown, religious identity is easily bound up with ethnic or national identity, thus increasingly common use of the term ‘ethno-religious’.

Religions have good digestion systems and understanding the changing religious landscape is not an option but essential. The pattern of religious affiliation around the world has changed and continues to change. The challenge today is to enhance our capacity to read this most potent sign of our times.

Fossil Fuels and Apocalypse
Theology for ‘A New Dark Age’
Harold Wells

Predictions of the future are always precarious, since no one knows the future and history is full of surprises. Yet any theologian or preacher who wishes to be ‘contextual’ must be alert to the soothsayers among us. In the urgent matter of climate change, theological reflection cannot proceed without close attention to the relevant science. The venerable British geo-physicist James Lovelock warns in apocalyptic tones of ‘a new Dark Age later in this century’ because of drastic global warming, the portents of which are already evident. Eminent because of his original discoveries in the field of ozone depletion, Lovelock should be taken seriously as a pioneer in the field of climate science.

Perhaps every epoch of history has been ‘dark’ for some segments of humanity. Jane Jacobs, who writes of a ‘dark age ahead,’ speaks of countless Dark Ages and extinctions suffered by cultural losers. Eras of darkness are about profound evil and suffering, as well as cultural loss. If we think of the brutal military conquests, mass enslavements and crucifixions of the Roman and other ancient empires; of the tyrannies and deadly plagues of the medieval period; then in modern times, of centuries of African slavery, the world wars and holocausts of the twentieth century, we might regard most of human history as dark indeed. All of the aboriginal cultures faced with European invasions experienced Dark Ages. Reaching much further back into pre-

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history, we learn from paleo-climate science that humans became almost totally extinct in a sudden cooling of the earth some 70,000 years ago—reduced perhaps to a mere 1,000 couples—the probable result of the eruption of the Toba supervolcano. So, it is not only the conflict of human cultures that brings about Dark Ages.

Talk of impending darkness is not wildly popular in our optimistic society. It is true that bright and wonderful things, too numerous to name, were accomplished in the twentieth century to overcome pain, poverty and oppression. Yet a broad literature has appeared warning of multiple crises confronting us in the decades ahead. Can theology have relevance to a time of impending disaster? Since millions of people still gather in churches weekly, church leaders surely have a role to play in preparing people to face a time of troubles in coming decades. Times of calamity also raise questions of theodicy and the kind of God that may be credible in a Dark Age. But first I shall consider the most dangerous feature of the context that we need to address.

**Context: The Burning Planet**

We live with growing awareness of multiple crises now facing humanity. Basic to these is the burgeoning human population, now exceeding seven billion; competition for costly energy resources and scarcity of fresh water; acidification of the seas, eroding soils, food shortages; and underlying most of these, climate change.

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### Glimpses into climate science

An almost universal consensus among climate scientists now affirms the fact of global warming. Here we can only glimpse some of its main features. The highly respectable, very cautious Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), drawing upon the research of thousands of climate scientists from all over the world, warn that the planet is warming at a rate dangerous to life and human societies. This warming is mainly human caused, by emissions of carbon dioxide (CO$_2$) from the burning of fossil fuels—coal, oil, gas—which trap heat in earth’s atmosphere. Australian climate scientist Tim Flannery tells us that even if we ceased burning fossil fuels today it would take centuries for the CO$_2$ to dissipate. Besides the observation of present conditions and computer models projecting climatic trends, paleo-climate records, found in layers of ice and deep-sea sediment cores, reveal much about planetary history, providing ample evidence of the power of CO$_2$ (produced in the past by natural processes over very long periods of time) to force climate change. The NASA climate scientist James Hansen asserts that, while there exist other ‘climate forcings’ (tilting of the earth, variability of the earth’s orbit, heat from the sun, volcanoes) the burning of fossil fuels today totally dominates other forcings. The unprecedented rapidity of climate change is exacerbated by the mass destruction of forests, which serve to absorb carbon, and by agriculture, especially the clearing of land for the raising of animals (and their methane emissions).

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6 Flannery, 196.
According to the most recent scientific research, global average temperatures have increased by more than 1 degree Celsius since pre-industrial times. At the U.N. conference on climate at Paris, 2015, the nations of the world agreed that, to avoid extreme catastrophe, it was imperative to keep global warming to less than 2.0 degrees C. While these temperature increases may seem trivial, we note that this is an average of the whole surface of the earth, including the oceans, which are relatively cooler than the land. Increases in land temperature vary and are much greater at the polar regions than elsewhere, where we see rapid melting of the Arctic, and the beginnings of the melting of the Greenland ice sheet and West Antarctica.

A complicating factor is that of amplifying feedbacks. The Arctic is the most important refrigerator that keeps the planet cool, reflecting light and heat back into space (the ‘albedo effect’). The reduction of ice is an important feedback factor causing the earth to absorb more of the sun’s heat. A further feedback is the melting of methane deposits in the Arctic tundra. Methane, like CO$_2$, is a greenhouse gas, and even more potent than CO$_2$, though it dissipates more quickly. Moreover, huge deposits of methane are found on the floor of the oceans, which with the warming of the seas, could bubble forth, greatly accelerating the greenhouse effect: “think of a nasty belch—it would release a tremendous amount of methane into the atmosphere that could prove such an assault... that it could represent a tipping point.”

Hansen identifies ‘tipping points’ for ‘runaway’ climate change: 1) the collapse of the West Antarctica or Greenland ice sheets, melting at a rate of 100 cubic kilometers per year, which bodes ill for sea level and storms; 2) growing accumulation of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, which has increased rapidly from ca. 270 parts per million (ppm) in the pre-industrial era to a level not seen on earth for three million years! More recent sources show us an increase in 2015 to over 400 ppm, with the rate of increase growing year by year. Hansen, Flannery and others argue that we need to reduce that to no more than 350 ppm. One degree Celsius more of additional warming would probably mean 450 ppm, a certain recipe for climate disaster; 3) massive discharge of methane deposits, either from tundra or the sea. Any or all of these could produce a runaway greenhouse effect that would be beyond human control.

Sea level rise is one of the worst consequences of global warming, threatening to flood coastal regions, including hundreds of large cities all over the world. Water expands when it warms, and with the dumping of trillions of tons of melting ice the seas are already rising at a rate of 3.2 millimeters per annum. While this seems harmless, it is already being felt by low lying islands in the Pacific and is likely to increase incrementally as glaciers and ice caps melt and feedbacks take effect. Flannery warns of sea-level rise that would...

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11 Hansen, 70–2.
13 Flannery, 196.
15 Hansen, 276, 140–2; 164–6.
be a catastrophe for much of East and South Asia, the east coast of the US and parts of Europe. It could be dramatic indeed, even several meters higher, if a large ice shelf collapses and melts. Flannery, drawing upon IPCC research, estimates that, if average global temperatures continue to increase at present rates, in 80 years global temperatures will have reached 4 degrees C above pre-industrial levels, implying a sea level rise of 67 meters, creating a planet unrecognizable and possibly uninhabitable! Apocalyp sme indeed!

The health of the ocean is immensely important to the well-being of all life on the planet. Oceans cover 70% of the earth’s surface, and like the forests, are an important carbon sink, absorbing carbon dioxide best when cold. Hansen explains that when it becomes colder it absorbs more CO2; when it warms, it releases CO2 and methane. Moreover, as CO2 increases in the air, the ocean dissolves more carbon dioxide and becomes more acidic. Acidification of the ocean is now killing the coral reefs and other marine life. A huge decline in fishing stocks and marine biodiversity is a result partly of this acidification.

Global warming also carries the implication of more violent and extreme weather, which has already been observable in recent years. Hansen explains that this is because the amount of water vapor that air can hold is a function of temperature; atmospheric water vapor increases rapidly with only a small rise of temperature. This can cause heavier rain and flooding. Greater heat can also result in more frequent and more intense hurricanes, tornadoes and typhoons. Increased heat causes rapid evaporation, drought, desertification, reduction of fresh water supplies, forest fires, and unendurable temperatures. Recently we have seen extraordinary examples of these phenomena. Thus climate change is already bringing hardship to millions of humans, as well as many other species.

All of our major informants on climate science agree that the burning of fossil fuels, and most especially the burning of coal to produce energy, must urgently come to an end.

The energy debates

Debates are ongoing about sources of the energy that drive our modern technological world. Given the rapid industrialization of parts of the developing world, will there be sufficient supply of the fossil fuels that make possible modern industry, transportation, agriculture and heating? Will our use of fossil fuels so impact the earth’s climate that we will perpetrate an apocalypse, drastically endangering our very survival on the planet?

Peak oil, or oil plateau?

Considerable debate rages about the future of oil, the main energy source for the modern world as we know it, and a major contributor to global warming, though the debate has shifted dramatically in recent years. ‘Peak oil’ refers to the assertion of many experts in the fields of petroleum geology that world oil production has peaked, i.e., that approximately half of all the available oil has already been used over the last century or so. The situation is complicated by the enormous growth in oil consumption in such developing nations as China and India. The alarm about peak oil was sounded in the 1970s

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16 Hansen, 256; Flannery, Here on Earth, 197; Flannery, Atmosphere of Hope, 30–3.
17 Flannery, Atmosphere of Hope, 56.
18 Mitchell, 7.
19 Hansen, 165–6; Flannery, Here on Earth, 198, 227; Lovelock, The Vanishing Face of Gaia (London: Allan Lane, 2009), 79.
20 Hansen, 253.
by the Club of Rome in their famous book *Limits to Growth*.\(^{21}\) Even earlier, M. King Hubbert, a petroleum geologist, predicted in 1956 the peak of U.S. oil production in the early 1970s. Geologist Kenneth Deffeyes used Hubbert’s methods to date global peak oil in the first decade of the new century\(^{22}\)—not that oil would run out, but that much of the remaining oil would not be economically recoverable even if prices rose very high. For various reasons, oil prices have already begun to fluctuate wildly.

Enforced cut backs in oil consumption would be painful, but would be good news if it diminished the dangers of climate change and forced the development of renewable energy (wind, solar, geo-thermal, biomass, etc.). Hubbert and Deffeyes were evidently right about the oil peak from the ‘low hanging fruit’ of conventional sources. However, it has been precisely this oil peak that has pushed the industry to search for fossil fuel in the most unlikely places and to sink enormous investment into methods and sources once considered exorbitantly expensive. The debate about peak oil has now shifted, as new technologies have allowed for a greatly increased oil production.

Economist Daniel Yergin tells us that deep sea oil resources which were previously not accessible are now available because of sensors that provide clarity of information and digital communication between field and technology centers.\(^{23}\) Growth of production from the deep water sector grew from 1.5 million barrels a day in 2000 to 5 million by 2009, and by 2009 underwater wells in the Gulf of Mexico were supplying 30% of U.S. production.\(^{24}\) The oil resources of the Arctic, increasingly accessible because of the melting of polar ice, is another potential source, with major development especially off the northern shore of Russia.\(^{25}\) Canada, the U.S. and other Arctic powers too are eying large potential for deposits there. Yergin also points out new production of shale oil, recoverable from shale and other kinds of rock, widely found in the U.S. and Canada. Horizontal drilling and hydraulic fracturing enabled growth in production from 10,000 barrels per day in 2005 to 400,000 by 2010.\(^{26}\)

Production of ‘dirty oil’ from the bitumen (a sticky molasses-like substance) of the tar sands, has been slated to be transported by new pipelines from Alberta to Texas and to the Pacific coast, and perhaps across Canada to the Atlantic coast. Tar sands production has more than doubled, from 600,000 barrels per day in 2000 to 1.5 million in 2010.\(^{27}\) The mining of bitumen, a bottom-of-the-barrel resource, indicates a desperate society that has depleted its cheap oil. Sadly, one barrel of bitumen (after it has undergone a pollution heavy process of recovery using much cleaner natural gas) requires the consumption of three barrels of fresh water from the Athabasca River. Thus four barrels of steam are used for every barrel of bitumen produced.\(^{28}\)

The fact that a great deal of additional oil is obtained in these ways does not negate the fact that oil resources are finite and will eventually go into decline.\(^{29}\) Yergin suggests that rather than

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\(^{24}\) Ibid. 246.

\(^{25}\) Ibid., 41.

\(^{26}\) Ibid., 261.

\(^{27}\) Ibid., 256.


\(^{29}\) Richard Heinberg, David Fridley, *Our Renewable Future: Laying the Path for One Hundred Percent Clean Energy* (Santa Rosa, California: Post Carbon Institute, 2016), 1–4.
‘peak’ we should imagine a ‘plateau’ of oil discovery and production. He writes: “The world has decades of further production growth before flattening out into a plateau—perhaps sometime around midcentury—at which time a more gradual decline will begin.”

Natural gas: new sources.

It has been common also to hear of shortages of natural gas. In 1978 the U.S. Congress enacted a ban on the use of natural gas for the generation of electricity. However, Yergin informs us that new discoveries of natural gas, together with the new technologies, have greatly increased the supply not only in North America, but in such places as Qatar, Australia, Siberia. Natural gas is also a destructive fossil fuel, but less ‘dirty’ than either coal or oil. Most dramatic is the enormous growth in the production of shale gas, widely present in North America, and newly accessible because of the technology of hydraulic fracturing, which uses large amounts of water and chemicals to extract gas from shale rock. While shale gas was just 1 percent of natural gas supply in 2000, by 2011 it accounted for 25% of gas production, transforming the natural gas market. World gas consumption has tripled over the last thirty years and, according to Yergin, is ‘the fuel of the future’.

Continuing use of coal.

Coal is “exceedingly dirty stuff,” says Hansen, producing arsenic and mercury pollution to air and water. It accounts for 40% of the world’s electricity generation and is plentiful and easily accessible in many places. In 2011 about 25 coal-fired plants were under construction in the United States. Coal accounts for three quarters of CO₂ emissions in both China and India. Until recently China was adding a new coal fired power plant every week or two, though this rate of growth has declined because of increased investment in renewables, in which China has become a leader. Still, 65% of new Chinese capacity is from coal. An ‘Asian brown cloud’ floats above south Asia, especially India, because of thousands of coal-burning power stations, tens of thousands of factories and millions of open cooking fires. Germany too, though it has made impressive progress toward renewable energy from wind, has committed (following the nuclear disaster in Japan) to phasing out nuclear power, and will resume the building of coal fired plants.

The continuing availability of fossil fuels is bad news from the perspective of climate change. Deep sea oil spills (most dramatically the Gulf of Mexico in 2010) renders our fragile oceans ever more vulnerable. Oil pipelines too are notorious for breaking and spilling. Great amounts of water needed to extract oil from tar sands and from shale also diminishes scarce sources of fresh water at a time of diminished rivers and depleted aquifers. The use of relatively cleaner natural gas for the extraction of dirty oil from tar sands is also deplorable. Since concern about peak oil and peak natural gas has declined, there is less incentive to develop all-important energy alternatives.

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30 Yergin, 227–8.
31 Ibid., 332–5.
32 Ibid., 340.
33 Hansen, 176.
34 Ibid., 400.
36 Hansen, 179–81.
Nuclear?

The question of nuclear energy as a power source for electricity is fiercely debated. Since nuclear energy production emits very little CO₂, Hansen, Lovelock and Lynus all argue persuasively for the necessity of further and rapid nuclear development as the only adequate source of energy for a transitional period prior to the full development of renewable energies. But others point out the huge expense of building, maintaining and eventually replacing nuclear power plants, as well as the waste disposal difficulties and potential danger to populations arising from nuclear accidents, earthquakes or terrorism. It seems wise to avoid the casual optimism that alternative conventional energy sources, including nuclear, will solve the problem.

Widespread agreement exists that the elimination of the use of coal is indeed urgent. Hansen declares that “coal emissions must be phased out as rapidly as possible or global climate disasters will be a dead certainty.” If coal is rapidly phased out, “the climate problem is soluble.” Gas and oil could then be phased out more gradually until replaceable by renewables.

There is not space here to discuss renewable sources of energy which produce no CO₂: wind, solar, geo-thermal, biomass, carbon neutral fuel from algae, etc. Some argue that conservation, plus renewables, can, and will eventually be, entirely sufficient, given further development. Others argue that development of renewables will not be adequate for the foreseeable future to supply the needs of modern technological societies. What is obvious is that enormous public investment in research and development of renewable sources of energy is essential. Such innovation may be the key to a viable future civilization. The question is whether the political will exists to accomplish this in time. So far politicians barely dare to raise the issue at election time for fear of losing public support. A ‘tipping point’ of public awareness will be necessary before political leaders have the courage to stand against powerful fossil fuel industries, and act decisively.

Lovelock discusses possibilities for ‘geo-engineering’ (e.g., using technology to reflect back into space the heat of the sun; injecting sulphate particles into the air to produce global dimming, etc.). But he is not optimistic that such desperate experiments would be successful, or agreed upon by a divided humanity, given the danger of unforeseen side effects. He is not hopeless, but is not optimistic that humanity will have the wisdom to take the steps necessary to cool the burning planet. He imagines a much hotter world, where humans, after many predictable catastrophes, including perhaps nuclear wars, will be reduced to about 10% of its present population, confined to polar regions like Greenland and Antarctica, the northern regions of Canada, Scandinavia, Siberia, and certain islands, like Japan and New Zealand. He fears a return to much more violent, barbarous, pre-modern levels of civilization. Hansen bemoans the low level of public awareness of the dangers confronting us, of the lethargy of some governments, which actually gag and persecute scientists who publicize climate science research. He envisages a truly apocalyptic scenario reminiscent of the book of Revelation: the ‘Venus syndrome,’ wherein life

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37 See also Kristin Shrader-Frechette, What Will Work (Oxford University Press, 2011).
38 Hansen, 172–3.
39 See the extensive, expert argument of Heinberg and Fridley, Our Renewable Future.
41 For imaginative projections into the future see Gwynne Dyer, Climate Wars (Toronto: Vintage, 2009).
42 The narrative of Hansen in Storms of My Grandchildren, especially chapter 3.
on a burning planet Earth could become as impossible as it is on the planet Venus, which early in its history suffered a runaway greenhouse effect from natural causes. He declares that if the fossil fuel industries prevail, and fossil fuels are used as they are now, this will certainly happen as we pass the tipping points and reach a point of no return. Yes, apocalypse indeed!

It is obvious that, at root, this is an ethical and spiritual matter, to which faith and theology must have something to say.

Where is Theology in All of This?

It will be difficult to convince most people that theology has any relevance at all to the multiple crises facing humanity, including climate change. Will preachers have anything to offer beyond moral platitudes about excessive consumerism and the virtue of sharing? What will Christians have to offer, first to resist and reverse the present situation, or to live well as a new Dark Age unfolds? What manner of theology and faith will provide hope and direction in the years ahead?

Possibly, a time of encroaching disaster will evoke an upsurge of popular religion. While many would, understandably, turn to atheism, many others would turn to religion for comfort and direction. Would this religion be constructive, life-giving and liberating? Or would it be fearful, harsh, xenophobic and judgmental? James Kunstler imagines a ‘Christianity Inflamed’—a stronger religion, fundamentalist and apocalyptic, severe in its moral judgments, harsh in its punishments. The civilized tolerance of liberal theologies might find little place in the face of widespread panic, want and fear.43 I suggest that much can be learned from the theologies of the twentieth century, which have reflected deeply on the realities of evil and suffering. Specifically, I suggest that a marriage of ‘theology of the cross with ecological theology will offer guidance and hope for the struggles that lie ahead.

Theology of the Cross.

The genre of Christian thought known as ‘theology of the cross’ became prominent during and after World War II. In a Dark Age this theology speaks profoundly of the suffering of God in the suffering of creation. Some of the most important theologies of the twentieth century have attempted to address this suffering in terms of a theologia crucis—a mode of thought with roots in Hebrew prophetic faith, in Jesus of the New Testament, especially the event of the cross itself, and in the theology of Paul; then explicitly in Luther. In the twentieth century theology of the cross is found in such contextual theologians as Bonhoeffer, Moltmann, Sobrino, Hall, Johnson.44 We have much to build upon in the insights of late twentieth century theology.

A theology of the cross is centered in God’s suffering love in Christ. Because for Christians Jesus Christ is supremely God’s own presence and self-revelation, the Incarnation of God’s Word in his life, death and resurrection is the bottom line norm of Christian truth. At the same time, ecological theology, emphasizing respect for God’s creation, will become more essential in a context of climate change. As the social sciences have been important dialogue partners with liberation theologies, so now ecological theology needs to be in dialogue with the sciences of energy and environment. Particularly the ‘option

for the poor,’ founded in the praxis of Jesus himself, must be a basic hermeneutical tool for theology and ethics, for the sake of the victims of global warming, but now extended to include all the myriads of non-human species disappearing as a result of human environmental destruction.

The doctrine of God.

By ‘God’ I mean the Ultimate Source, the Ultimate Meaning and Destiny of all things. ‘God’ is that which we finally worship, love and trust. Christians find the self-disclosure of God pre-eminently in the crucified Christ. Thus the God we proclaim according to a theologia crucis will be fundamentally determined by the event of the cross, for there God is revealed as the One who reigns through gentleness and love. The non-violent God of the cross has entered, in Christ, into physical pain but also into the anguish of abandonment and despair, enduring humiliation and death. Luther declared that “...it is not sufficient for anyone, and it does him no good to recognize God in his glory and majesty, unless he recognizes him in the shame and glory of his cross....”

He contrasted theology of the cross with a ‘theology of glory’ which emphasizes the power and majesty of God, but also glories in human good works, human reason, and loves the trappings of a glorious, rich and powerful church. Luther drew inspiration from Paul’s poignant words: “the foolishness of God is stronger than human strength, and the weakness of God, is wiser than human wisdom.” (1 Cor. 1:25) The manger and the cross speak to us of a God of gentleness and humility and of inexhaustible grace, a God of power, but not of brute force or domination.

If we believe that self-giving Love is the highest and deepest reality, and that ‘God is Love’ (1 John 4:8) we do not speak easily of God’s Almighty power. When we consider the randomness of the evolutionary process, the disasters to vulnerable creatures that result from volcanic eruptions, meteorites, earthquakes; when we experience the non-intervention of God in the most extreme circumstances of human evil—slavery, concentration camps, torture—we surely lament the ‘foolishness and weakness of God.’ A credible doctrine of God for a Dark Age will not speak of the ‘Almighty’ as one who controls the world and all that happens within it. It can only speak of a God of kenosis, a self-emptying God, who, in Christ, has “emptied himself, taking the form of a servant... [who] being found in human form humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.” (Phil 2: 7–8) This, then, is ‘the Crucified God.’

Dietrich Bonhoeffer stated it most starkly, writing from a Nazi prison just before his execution: “The God who is with us is the God who forsakes us (Mark 15:34).... Before God and with God we live without God. God lets himself be pushed out of the world on to the cross. He is weak and powerless in the world, and that is precisely the way, the only way, in which he is with us and helps us.” Emphatically, for Bonhoeffer (aware that no supernatural rescue was in store for the Jews), God is no deus ex machina descending supernaturally to fix up human affairs. Nor should we today expect a supernatural intervention that will fix our climate change problem, eradicate carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, or halt the hurricanes. God provides no guarantee that human beings will not destroy themselves, whether in nuclear wars or global warming.

A doctrine of God according to a theology of the cross will continue to be trinitarian. This is the

God who in Christ entered deep into the darkness in order to be fully immersed in the life of the world, and remains present with us now, inspiring and empowering, through the Spirit.

Theology of the cross can be highly congenial with recent ecological theologies if it is pan-en-theistic (all things in God, God in all things). God lives within creation as Spirit and as immanent, indwelling Wisdom. Creation, then, is not merely profane, for the divine Spirit lives within it. This is a passionate deity, who suffers the vulnerability of love and can be loved in return. We note that major theological figures such as Moltmann, Johnson and Boff share the panentheistic emphasis on God’s immanence, and have been notable as pioneers of ecological theology, linking trinitarian thought to ecological concerns. Boff finds the communal life of the triune God reflected in the intimate connectedness of the structures of creation: “If God is communion and relationship, then the entire universe lives in relationship, and all is in communion with all at all points and at all moments.”

But the question remains: Is this God powerless? Is God overwhelmed by the power of darkness and finitude? Most traditional theology taught the impassibility (the incapacity for suffering) of the omnipotent God who ‘can do anything,’ who can only act and cannot be acted upon. But since the unspeakable calamities of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries it has been impossible for most people to love or worship an impassible God. “Only a suffering God can help,” said Bonhoeffer in prison.

Yet a powerless God cannot help either. This God, after all, is the Creator, the Alpha and Omega, the eternal source of all power, who raised Jesus from the dead, against whom no power can ultimately prevail. This is the Lord of a universe of unimaginable immensity, of billions of planets and infinite possibilities, the holy One for whom a thousand years is but as yesterday. God’s limitation against evil can only be self-limitation or kenosis (self-emptying), not only in the Incarnation in Christ, but also in the very act of creation. The kenotic God whom we meet in Christ is the self-limiting Creator, who allows creation to exist in its own autonomy and freedom. Thus by the very act of creation, God makes space for vulnerable creatures to live and to love. Moltmann writes that “in the divine act of self-humiliation we also have to respect an act of God’s omnipotence.... God never appears mightier than in the act of his self-limitation, never greater than in the act of his self-humiliation.”

The paradox of God’s weakness and God’s power only makes sense in view of Jesus’ resurrection. The resurrection means that God the Creator will ultimately reign over the powers of evil, darkness and death. The raising of the crucified Jesus is the unique intersection of eternity and time, our preview (prolepsis) into the eschatological future breaking into time and history. It is not a forceful, coercive event, but hidden to all but the eyes of faith. Because of the resurrection, a theology of the cross, especially in a Dark Age, will be a theology of hope. The risen Jesus gifts us with a glimpse into the eternal Kingdom of God, which promises a “new heaven and a new

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50 Letters and Papers from Prison, 361.
earth,” (Rev 21:1) transcending history, time and space as we know it.

**Implications for ethics and church.**

It matters in practical terms what content people put into the word ‘God’. If God is the capricious all powerful monarch of the universe, ruling all by his inscrutable will, believers may be inclined to domination, over one another and over the natural realm. According to such a theology, whatever disasters occur, they will be seen as God’s will. But if God is the eternal communion of Love, and if, through the Spirit, we are gifted here and now, and beyond death, with a share in the eternal life of God, we will surely learn to love community and equality in human relations, and learn to live gently with the natural world around us.

Moving beyond the Constantinian establishment of the church as a rich, powerful institution, we can learn to be a servant church, not merely reflecting the marketing strategies of the world around us in search of success and mastery, institutional status and prestige. Canadian theologian Charles Fensham suggests that we can learn from the monastic tradition, which flourished and served in other dark times. He envisages a future Christian ecclesia—not in withdrawn celibate cloisters, but in vowed communities—that would pursue prayer, offer hospitality, preserve scholarship, and participate in God’s mission of justice, peace and wholeness.\(^{\text{53}}\) In the decades ahead this will include a degree of asceticism and an ethic of self-limitation. Modest lifestyle and ‘greening’ will be basic to the church’s integrity if we wish to live as stewards of God’s creation in a time of great deprivation. Living with respect for God’s good creation, we will have to be less concerned with grand buildings and learn to practice reverence for all living things and the earth’s delicate ecological balance.\(^{\text{54}}\)

Church leaders, many of whom have long been preoccupied with issues of sexual morality, need instead to challenge the people with questions about their automobiles, heating arrangements and use of electricity, their air flight and use of plastics and imported food. The Spirit, we may believe, is providentially at work, striving among people and movements, both religious and secular, to bring wholeness to creation.

How should Christians live politically in light of the self-giving God? Surely we will have to put our weight politically behind structures of social solidarity. If we are committed to the ‘option for the poor,’ we can learn from looking again at the tradition of Christian Socialism in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, in its many forms—communalism, cooperativism, social democracy—seeking justice in economic relations. We need to be open also to local organic farming and to green business entrepreneurs. Politicians need public support to impose taxes on carbon emissions and to reward green economic development. Why would Christians, called to live with respect in God’s creation, not be at the forefront of movements and campaigns to meet the challenge of climate change?

Despite the lack of establishment, or because of it, the churches are still in a position to inspire great numbers of people, providing opportunity for reflection, for public education and prophetic action. It is difficult to imagine most of our churches, flawed as they are, playing such a role. But churches have played a revolutionary role in the past, and can do so again. It is difficult to think of any other locus in society that is comparable in its (unrealized) potential to challenge those forces that lead us toward a new Dark Age.

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\(^{\text{53}}\) Charles Fensham, *Emerging from the Dark Age Ahead* (Ottawa: Novalis, 2008), 171.

It has been argued that, although communism as a socio-political system has ceased to exist, the reasons why it had even emerged in the first place remain the same. The culture of individualistic hedonism fuelled by anaemic reality shows and ethically dubious images by the media, as well as the educational system which is more technocratically than humanistically oriented, all represent fertile ground for preying on the state. The problem is of course more complex than this and involves the disintegration of families, a new definition of marriage, greater mobility related to global trends in the market economy, the fragmentation of cultural heritage, the low relevance and authenticity of the churches’ witness, the pressures imposed by cultural lobbying groups, etc. All these spawn cultural and societal decay followed by people’s frustration. No wonder then that, when one finds an example of reasonable political co-operation at the local level which is not stained by ubiquitous corruption and which is focused on the well-being of a larger community, one is grateful for such an initiative and does not mind that the municipal politicians involved might be communists. One is even tempted to flirt with the idea that perhaps the ‘communist ideal’ was not all that bad, had it been implemented in a better way. For instance, if Lenin had lived longer and if Stalin had never seized power, things might have been much better socially, economically and especially morally than they are today.

Here we encounter a moment when we must do some serious thinking. Is this type of thinking a logical and legitimate interpretation of history (including the nature of Marxism-Leninism as an ideology)? Or is it rather an understandable revolt against the decline at the level of politics, culture and the economy as well as morality, which we are facing today? Communism in Europe ceased to exist—thank God!—but the reasons why it had even emerged in the first place remain the same. Is it a viable solution to go back to the communist ideal in the hope that, if we ‘manage’ it better this time, we will create a social paradise on earth?

People frustrated by the situation they live in are looking for two things: somebody to blame and a quick fix of their condition. Corruption, clientilism, the disdainful arrogance of politicians and celebrities, and growing social tensions (the gap between the haves and the have-nots)—these are clearly deplorable. Those to be blamed are capitalists and their pretence of the ‘democratic state and free market’. A quick solution might be to levy a 75% tax on the wealthy (as in some European countries with progressive taxation), to continue with nationalizing major companies, and eventually to go back to a planned economy where everybody would have ‘enough’. Well, maybe not as much as they would wish but enough to survive and to foster basic civic loyalty. A political price for this social paradise would be a loss of some liberties, including religious ones as religions would be perceived as competitors in the struggle for the loyalty of citizens; political ones since, if there is to be order, there can be no opposition; and cultural-societal ones since, if we are to form a happy and peaceful society, we all must be ‘uniform’ lest we envy each other. Moreover, the cultivation of thought and free art leads to a ‘colourful world’ and a diversity which threatens unity and peace. And
what about those who would oppose us? You can’t make an omelette without breaking eggs. To put it differently, a revolution that seeks to establish the social paradise of a classless society is worth any sacrifice!

But take careful note: this solution is not Stalinism. This is the best of Lenin, Marx and Engels. These issues represent the core of their political ideology. Therefore, I am afraid to say that the assertion world communism would have developed differently if Lenin had not died prematurely, thus giving way to Stalin—in other words, that the social paradise would have worked very well—is as much a misunderstanding of history as an uncritical celebration of democracy and capitalism (especially with respect to the social situation in the Czech Republic and Slovakia).

One cannot deny that Marx had social empathy. He recognised the problem of exploited workers and the growing social tension. However, he was as wrong as Lenin in two fundamental respects: first, in locating and defining the reasons for this problem; and, second, in the suggested way of solving the problem. There is no space here for a more detailed analysis of these realities. Nevertheless, the following can be stated briefly. The root cause of the problem does not lie in external, socio-economic relationships, as Marx assumed. So, it is not true that by eliminating economic inequality (exploitation) humankind would be civilised because every person, at a personal level, would overcome the existential alienation from the product of his or her work and so become a true human (*homo faber*). By eliminating economic inequality society would not reach the final stage of real communism—a society without need for politicians or police since there is no need for coercive authority in a society without conflicts and wrongs where people will treat each other with kindness, goodwill and selflessness. Marx and his disciples (including Lenin) externalised the problem to the dimension of social and economic relations. That led to the logical conclusion that the only remedy to this ‘societal cancer’ was the firm arm of the socialist state, governed by the ‘enlightened’ politburo. That was however a major mistake!

The ‘societal cancer’ (that is, the above-mentioned corruption, clientilism, social tension, etc.) is indeed an unpleasant reality, but it is not the root cause of the problem of the human and human society. Human estrangement begins from within. The real root cause lies in anthropology. The degenerated will of the egoistic and haughty self is what poisons the quality of individual life and interpersonal relationships as well as socio-economic relationships. Liberal capitalism addresses this problem no better than Marxism by desperately ignoring it. The ideological externalisation of the anthropological problem led to false solutions which resulted in the Leninist repressions (like Stalin, Lenin also abused the secret police to persecute, torture and eliminate his opponents), cruel persecutions of the *kulaks*, Stalinist gulags, the Ukrainian genocide, staged court trials brought on by ideological justice, and countless instances of inhumane expressions of communist pragmatism: the end justified the means, and so any sacrifice was acceptable as long as the ultimate goal was revolution leading to a classless society. Furthermore, one also needs to take into account the economic and environmental devastation of the land. For instance, one can argue that the New Economic Policy of Lenin’s period was indeed an economic ‘success’ (or, more precisely, an alleviation of the overall poverty). However, one should also mention that Lenin was very hesitant to launch it as this programme of economic renewal went against the essential principles of the proletarian revolution. He was virtually forced to it by the collapsing state of the economy after the strains of collectivisation. People in cities simply had nothing to eat, urban areas were depopulated and the workers who had been the pillar of the revolution went on strike (against the communists). Therefore, the New
Economic Policy had not been Lenin’s original plan to boost the economy, but rather a concession he had to make but for which he was strongly criticised by some of his ‘dogmatic’ colleagues.

In conclusion, two things need to be mentioned. First, it can be argued quite legitimately that liberal democracy and global capitalism bring about just as many equally serious problems as communism. One must admit that this view is not far from the truth. As I have already said, the problem of liberal democracy in the context of the consumerist hedonism of western culture lies to a significant degree in the fact that (like communism) it ignores human alienation at the level of anthropology. To put the issue in religious terms, it ignores human sinfulness (be it that of a proletarian, lawyer, banker, teacher, etc.). Unlike communism, however, liberal democracy provides relative freedom to critique the system and its representatives. Therefore, this system is partially capable of reform although it will never be reformed completely, and its decay will at times seem unbearable. Second, it can be argued that, had it not been for Lenin’s premature death in 1924 and the subsequent ‘coronation’ of Stalin as head of the politburo, communism in Russia might have developed differently. In spite of his willingness to use violence in the name of the revolution (documented, inter alia, in The Black Book of Communism), Lenin would most likely never have resorted to the genocide that meant terrible death for millions of those who had been supposed to benefit from the revolution. However, neither Lenin nor Marx, nor anybody else faithful to Marxist ideology, would have turned Russia into a peaceful and prosperous country in the long term. They did not understand the root cause of the problem and therefore could not come up with an adequate solution.

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Christian and Socialism

\textit{A Czech Catholic Perspective}

\textit{Karel Floss}

It was Catholic sociologist and Jesuit Oswald Nell-Breuning (1890–1991), one of the co-creators of the Catholic social teaching, who referred to the Godesberg Program of the Social Democratic Party of Germany as a brief summary of Catholic social teaching. After all, it was the very same Nell-Breuning whose main work ‘Justice and Freedom’ (\textit{Gerechtigkeit und Freiheit}) was published in a new edition in 1985. Moreover, his insightful study on moral aspects of the operation of world stock markets won acclaim as a bestseller in 2002, in spite of the fact that it was defended as a dissertation as early as 1928.

Perhaps these brief remarks help explain why a believing Christian can have a positive and even participatory relationship to the social democratic movement. For me personally it means to give reasons why I as a Christian was not only involved in the Velvet Revolution\textsuperscript{1} actively, but also why I sought to secure the continued existence in some way of everything that was undoubtedly good in the system repulsed at the

\textsuperscript{1} The term refers to a non-violent transfer of power in 1989 in what was then Czechoslovakia.
end of 1989. That has been—and remains to be—a task much more difficult than even the most insightful Charter 77 representatives could have imagined. For instance, I have no doubts that my dear friend Ladislav Hejdánek is an important thinker but I cannot forget his fundamentally incorrect (and, in fact, essentially illogical) view that although he has (together with Karl Barth, for example) deep affinity with the basic orientation of social democracy, he can never become its particular adherent in our country unless different, for him personally more acceptable persons will assume central positions in the social democratic movement. However, such an approach lacks any logic! Why should we wait for enlightened saviors provided that a certain work is already on the right track? After all, Hejdánek did not necessarily have to be chair or vice-chair of a party, but rather its conscience and the spiritual forefather of emerging programs and of the overall political development.

The inconsistency and perplexity of this development had some time ago become fully evident in what President Václav Klaus said about Václav Havel in an article published in a Polish newspaper. It seems as a kind of frenzy that one Velvet Revolution protagonist (Klaus) attacks another one (Havel) in a way that few would have until recently expected. Especially given the fact that Klaus acted very differently at Havel’s funeral. Now, however, President Klaus labeled the central figure of the Velvet Revolution as an extreme cosmopolitan and leftist who had sought to tear down the existing human order and to promote landless modernism instead of conservatism as a sort of delayed echo of the Jacobin revolution. Almost everything in the aforementioned characteristics is imprecise if not confusing. Klaus’ article speaks of leftness on the one hand, even though it, on the other hand, argues that the distinction between the political left and right has no meaningful foundation anymore. Without further specification it mentions the allegedly problematic modernism, the threat to good old orders, strangely praising conservatism as a value. In a word, perplexity of perplexities—and all that coming from the highest representative of our country. What responses does such a situation urge in young people who are just beginning to reflect on the spiritual history of their country?

You might ask me what I personally did, and failed to accomplish with regard to this situation. I gave a lot of my precious time in the years of my quickly progressing age to the work for various meetings and assemblies as well as in regions among citizens back when I was a senator. However, my primary task was initiating and helping to develop a Christian platform within the Czech Social Democratic Party in the spirit of the aforementioned ideas of Prof. Nell-Breuning. The only main purpose of the platform was to show that the Christian message and the program of social democracy show an essential affinity. Therefore they cannot achieve their noble political goals without creative cooperation.

I supplemented this practical activity with the translation and editorial work on important relevant books as well as with my own research and lecturing. However, if these initiatives are to have also another than merely rhetoric meaning, we cannot move away from particular impacts on individual protagonists of our day either.

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2 Charter 77 was an informal civic initiative in communist Czechoslovakia. It criticized the communist government for its failures to implement human rights.
3 Ladislav Hejdánek (*1927), Czech philosopher and one of the founding members of Charter 77.
Since I have already spoken some critical words to Ladislav Hejdánek, I must also mention, for instance, Tomáš Halík who as a leading theologian in the nation of Jan Hus should be much more outspoken and especially critical with regard to the encyclicals by the pope who just resigned on his post. Halík must no doubt see that in addition to inspiring ideas these encyclicals include plenty of clichés, being Baroquely atemporal. My critique regards the omission on Halík’s part of social issues particularly. I have already earlier voiced my reservations with regard to Halík’s introduction to the Czech edition of social encyclicals. It is apparently no coincidence that the introduction does not cite one of the most thought-provoking recent theologians, Marie-Dominique Chenu, who as a key advisor to the Second Vatican Council had significantly influenced the relationship of the Roman Catholic Church to the contemporary, dynamically developing world. I will never stop emphasising that today only those theologians and thinkers are relevant who, like Apostle Paul, are able to address any official authority critically. Or are we to claim unwisely that all papal encyclicals are nothing else but important and inspiring until the end of days?

All in all I believe that most of the major Czech problems today have their origins in the unreadiness and thoughtlessness of the so-called Velvet Revolution. I personally would have never participated in it had I known that I would be to blame for bringing back primitive capitalism, or capitalism as such. After all, I cannot concur with the opinion of those Christians who with a regretful expression on their faces say that nothing else than capitalism does and can work. What a pitiful image of God’s kingdom, what a tragic expression of Jesus’ key conviction and message that we cannot be of this world! After all, I warned against such resignation right in the beginning in my address as part of the general strike in the city of Olomouc in November 1989. Back then I warned especially young people not to spoil that enormous momentum and movement by going back to the old orders. I challenged them to try and build socialism with a human face, supported by many critics of the communist establishment and contemporary intellectuals. Many features of our poverty today lie in the fact that we not only reject to admit such failures, but even pretend that we have never meant anything like that seriously. And that would be a very sad testimony about the nation’s moral qualities.

I confess that I have probably done little against such an unhealthy development. Therein lays the guilt of all of us who helped to overthrow so-called communism without knowing what to do next. The perplexity of the overall spiritual situation after 1989 (until today) can be illustrated by the infamous statement by the former archbishop of Olomouc, František Vaňák, who once said that when the State Security (StB) confiscates foreign philosophical and theological literature, it ultimately serves the purposes of the Holy Spirit as it forbids importing the ‘poison from the West’ which would at the end of the day deprive us even of those last remnants of Christian faith. Bishops did not have doubts about Western economy; they did not find Western money stinky—only Western ideas had an unpleasant odor to them. Let us not be mistaken, similar views survive here until today. Behind this perplexity there is first and foremost the basic misunderstanding, fueled by all villains of ‘this world’, namely the false conviction that the following of Jesus and political leftiness are once and for all essentially incompatible! It is the uprooting of this delusion that I expect from European and our social democracy.

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6 Tomáš Halík (*1948), Czech Roman Catholic priest, theologian and philosopher. In 2014 he was awarded Templeton Prize.
I often like to cite in an abbreviated form two passages from the Scripture that could inspire us in our further quest:

When you come to appear before me, who asked this from your hand? Trample my courts no more; bringing offerings is futile, I cannot endure solemn assemblies with iniquity...

I am weary of bearing them... learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead the widow.

(Isa 1:12–17)

He has shown strength with his arm he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent away the rich empty.

(Luke 1:51–53)

German liberationist theologian Norbert Greinacher, a close collaborator of Hans Küng but in the past also of Josef Ratzinger, told me some time ago that it was only after many years of ministry that he came to understand that the Song of Mary (Magnificat) is in fact a revolutionary song. He came to this understanding, inter alia, thanks to the ground-breaking work by the Marxist thinker Ernst Bloch, entitled very aptly The Principle of Hope. How mysterious are God’s ways! If top representatives of our country are out of their mind and behave unacceptably, it is especially up to Christians living in this country to be actively involved in public life according to the principles of the gospel.

Care for Creation and the Churches’ Work on Ecology

Peter Pavlovic

Ecological threats transcend national and confessional boundaries. Growing ecological challenges such as climate change, diminishing biodiversity, use and availability of energy and natural resources, renewables, sustainable development and others remind us with increasing urgency that successful management of these challenges requires much more than good policy decisions and available technologies. It is widely accepted that the ethical component is an important and unavoidable part of a meaningful and successful response to these challenges. Churches, religions, and faith-based communities have an important role to play in this process.

The European Christian Environmental Network (ECEN) is a church network promoting cooperation in caring for creation. The aim of the ECEN is to share information, experiences in environmental work among a wide variety of Christian traditions and to encourage a united witness in caring for God’s creation. ECEN is the main working instrument of the Conference of European Churches for addressing the need for environmental engagement and responding to climate change.

The following texts relate to the recent work of ECEN and offer an overview of some of the main issues, which are at the core of churches’ work in this field. These are three public statements.
Their aim is, however, not only to address a wide public. In their content they address some of the key content issues that mark Christian engagement with the care for creation.

The 10th Assembly of ECEN in 2014 adopted a "Letter to Church leaders and the Churches of Europe." The letter highlights five principles of Christian action that should mark churches’ work on climate change and generally on care for creation. They are summarised under five ‘P’s’: prayer, personal engagement, parochial/communal action, political dialogue and planetary awareness. The text at the same time reminds us of the urgency of action: “Time is limited... Get involved, learn, pray and take action to help bring about a successful outcome.”

The 11th Assembly of ECEN in 2016 highlighted churches’ work on sustainable development and specifically the need to turn attention to the use of water. The final statement of the Assembly—in emphasising the theological and biblical imperative to work for water justice—is a call to an action for individuals and churches. It points out: “the problems of the world, such as those related to climate change and water, are very severe. Often it is difficult to be optimistic. However, we want to emphasise the significance and perseverance of hope.” The document encourages and names several concrete areas for an action of individuals and churches in preserving water, respecting sacredness of water and enjoying water as gift through worship and liturgy. The link between theology, prayer and action is in this regard crucial.

The third document offered for consideration is a joint statement of Conference of European Churches (CEC), Council of European Bishops’ Conferences (CCEE) and European Christian Environmental Network (ECEN) ‘Time for Creation—let’s Pray Together to Appreciate and Care for the Gift of Creation.’ On the occasion of Time for Creation in 2016, which is observed in an increasing number of churches across the continent between 1 September and 4 October, CCEE, CEC, and ECEN issued a joint statement for the first time. The text is a joint call for common prayers and for strengthening ecumenical work to care for creation.

The initiative to celebrate a day of prayer for God’s Creation on 1 September, which in the Byzantine tradition is the beginning of the church year, was started in 1989 by Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios. Similarly in 2015 Pope Francis decided that 1 September will be the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation in the Catholic Church. Celebration of the Time for Creation and the Day of Creation and their place in the cycle of Christian prayers and worship was recommended by the 3rd European Ecumenical Assembly in Sibiu 2007.

The statement points out: ‘We warmly invite all European Christians, member churches of CEC and bishops’ conferences of CCEE, parishes and Church communities and every person of good will to join in Time for Creation, to celebrate Time for Creation together, within your own liturgical traditions and to uphold the common Christian faith in God the Creator. We urge you, in your respective settings, to offer, prayers for gift of Creation, and join us in praying together.’

Work on care for creation is a wide arena that invites ecumenical cooperation and joint action from churches of different confessions. This increasingly extends to seeking possibilities for exchange with other faith communities. Ecumenical actions in this specific area offer an inspiration and provides numerous good examples that can bear fruits in bringing churches closer to each other, as well as in stimulating a meaningful action in caring for earth and its future.

The following three texts are indicative of the churches’ care for creation and their work on ecology.
The Churches and Faith Communities of Europe Have a Role and a Voice in Responding to Climate Change

10th Assembly of the European Christian Environment Network (September 27th to October 1st, 2014, Balatonszárszó, Hungary)

Letter to Church leaders and the Churches of Europe

Who are we?
ECEN is a network of Christians across Europe contributing to the Conference of European Churches work on environment.

Delegates at the 10th ECEN Assembly came together in Balatonszárszó, Hungary to share, learn, work and pray for a more sustainable future. We came from a multitude of traditions that cross boundaries and have similar values and shared concerns. Even if we come from different traditions and geographical areas we breathe the same air as all other people together with all God’s creatures on the planet Earth, and we partake of the precious gifts of air, soil and all natural resources.

After sharing theological insights on our relation to creation, we learned of the latest scientific status of climate change, and dialogued with representatives from government. Following these exchanges our sense of urgency has been acutely heightened and our commitment to act and change strengthened.

What must we do?
We are called to act locally with a global outlook. As churches and faith communities we are called upon to care for our neighbour and our neighbour is every living creature in God’s creation.

We call upon the churches and church leaders across Europe to respond to the spiritual and practical crisis of climate change. We followed the inspiring address by Bishop James Jones of the Church of England to the Assembly and identified five practical action points.

Prayer
We pray as a community of faith. We listen to each other and we share our fears but we also share our hopes; fears for the foreseeable impact of climate change and hopes for the possibility of change and a renewed world.

We should follow the example of Our Lord and pray that God’s will be done on earth as it is heaven.

Bishop Jones prayer:

- Holy Jesus
- Child of Adam
- Come in Glory
- And renew the face of the Earth

Personal
Follow the example of Our Lord and teach the faithful to live accountable lives. Climate change creates hunger, thirst, sickness, refugees and destitute people and in our response to these we can serve Christ today (Matt 25:44). Through the choices we make on energy, food and water we contribute to the environmental impacts on others. We must examine our decisions in the light of Christ’s suffering, death and resurrection.

Parochial
Local churches and faith communities can show the love of God in action through caring for creation; by acting to reduce the ecological footprint of their activities and by adopting goals for the reduction of CO₂ emissions of the EU Institutions and their policies. Churches and faith com-
communities can contribute by efficient use of energy, supporting renewable energy sources and by considering disinvesting assets from fossil fuel companies.

**Political**

We call upon all churches and faith communities to address climate injustice; those who are most affected by climate change are the ones who contributed least to the problem. There is moral obligation on developed countries to lower greenhouse gas emissions and at the same time lend support to the most affected. Do not give up in the face of injustice; remember the plea of the widow in the parable of the unjust judge (Luke 18:1–8).

**Planetary**

Start a dialogue with other traditions and faiths on climate. Involve scientists and others who have studied climate change in a conversation on how to respond. And never forget those who suffer most from climate injustice; find common ground for dialogue with others to build resilience in combatting climate change.

**The pilgrimage to Paris**

Time is limited. Countries of the world will meet at the United Nations Climate negotiations in Paris in December 2015. People all over the planet hope for a fair, ambitious and binding new treaty as one way to overcome the climate threat. People of faith are making a pilgrimage, both real and metaphorical, towards this date. Get involved, learn, pray and take action to help bring about a successful outcome.¹

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¹ You can read Bishop James Jones’ practical points in full and find out more about how to get involved on the ECEN website: www.ecen.org

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Water in a Sustainable Future—“Let justice roll down like waters” (Amos 5:24)

Assembly Statement of the 11th Assembly of ECEN (Helsinki, 14 June 2016)

ECEN is a network of Christians across Europe contributing to the Conference of European Churches work on environment. Delegates at the 11th ECEN Assembly came together in Helsinki, Finland to share, learn, work and pray for access to enough safe water for all in a sustainable future. Even if we come from different heights above average sea level—consequently experiencing different effects of global warming—we share the limited availability of fresh water. We also share in the disruption of water and maritime life cycles, which have consequences for all people and all God’s creatures.

The recent Paris Agreement on climate change highlighted the need and commitment to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change, to hold the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels, and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C. It is, however, hard to understand what this goal means for our everyday life.

In reality, a few degrees is not a significant range on our home thermostats, nor in daily weather. More than ten degrees can be the difference in temperature between morning and afternoon during a normal day. We have to strengthen the understanding of what the global 1.5–2°C means for everyday consequences in the lives of communities, churches, and wider society. Education and awareness raising is integral to this process within and beyond the churches.
Without doubt, water is one of the key mediums in the climate process. The World Water Council expressed at COP21: “Climate is Water!” Even if we may not immediately feel the shift of one or two degrees in temperature, we immediately feel the lack of drinking water or the destruction of flooding.

Therefore, we translate our concern, questions, and actions into the language of water. Moreover, water has a deep spiritual meaning and is central to many biblical narratives including the creation story and baptism.

**God’s work through water**

Both the natural sciences and the bible testify that water is the source of all life. Christians believe that God works in numerous ways through water. Humans are created into close interconnectedness with water. Even our bodies consist mostly of water.

Water also teaches us humility: it reminds that there are powers vastly greater than humankind and can be highly destructive, especially as sea levels rise and flooding increases. Sea level rise is caused primarily by two factors related to global warming: the added water from melting land ice and the expansion of sea water as it warms. The frequency of severe flooding across Europe is set to double by 2050.

Flooding and water pollution not only affect human life, they also destroy habitats and other species. Extreme weather events such as violent rain, hail, and snow storms can take life away, as can tsunamis and ocean surges.

In the Finnish land of a thousand lakes, we do not forget the millions who have no access to safe water. According to the World Health Organization, globally 663 million people (one tenth of Earth’s human population) are living without access to healthy drinking water, and 1.8 billion people use unsafe water. In Europe, 100 million people still do not have a household connection to fresh water, and 67 million people have no access to improved sanitation. Human activities sometimes lead to pollution of precious drinking water resources. Industrial waste contaminates rivers and lakes, agriculture uses fertilizers and pesticides that find their way even into ground water. People are often unaware of the substantial use of fresh water supplies used in manufacturing many widely used and everyday consumer goods. This ‘virtual water’ must increasingly be part of our conversations about water in a sustainable future. Drilling for fossil fuels produces waste water above and below the surface. This can be seen especially when using dangerous methods of hydraulic fracturing.

Jesus reminds us in many ways of the importance of water for life. He asked John to baptise him in the river of Jordan (Matt 3:13f). He asked the Samaritan woman at the well: “Will you give me a drink?” (John 1:7). At the end on the cross he said: “I am thirsty.” (John 19:28). If our Lord had to ask for water several times, then it is no wonder that the access to water is also so crucial for us.

**Water and justice**

Water flows through natural circles and is continually revitalising the planet and all that lives on Earth. Yet our human industrial activity disrupts this hydrological cycle, speeding up the flows in some areas and eradicating it elsewhere. This brings about uncertainty and insecurity. Our community and national life is dependent on constancy, yet unsustainable lifestyles can undermine this.

The UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) all relate, directly or indirectly, to the importance of water to planetary and human well-being.

Yet the privatisation or marketisation of water, turning it from a gift into a profitable product or
commodity also influences access and affordability. We so often exclude people from the natural supply of a God-given resource.

In the eyes of God water and justice are meant to flow like a stream—continually available to enhance abundant life for all.

A call for action and hope

We therefore encourage individuals and our churches to take action especially by:

- Re-emphasising the sacredness and wonder of water, and its role in sustaining life and ecosystems through the whole earthly creation as it reveals the glory of God.
- Exploring hopeful responses to the water challenges we face through our worship, liturgy and action.
- Raising awareness of the value we attach to water and its use in everyday life and reminding ourselves that water is a gift for life. This includes learning about the water footprint of food production, especially for meat, and the promotion of vegetarian diets.
- Improving the knowledge and understanding the many ways water determines the quality of our life, including drinking and sanitation and how it relates to climate change through sea and maritime life.
- Preserving precious fresh water and recognising how many litres of water we use for travel, food, hygiene, washing, and so on in our private and church life!
- Reducing our water footprints! Raising our voices for people who are constantly thirsty and have no access to clean drinking-water
- Drinking pipe-line tap water rather than bottled!
- Avoiding using harmful chemicals in agriculture, households, industry, and mineral and fossil fuel extraction.
- Reducing the excessive pollution and waste of our personal water use.
- Rediscovering more contemplative lifestyles based on the quality of life for all, rather than the quantity of goods for a few.
- Engaging in the ecological debate by empowering people to share the world’s resources more equitably and promoting water as common good.
- Supporting vulnerable communities and countries as they struggle with climate catastrophe and uncertainty.

The problems of the world, such as those related to climate change and water, are very severe. Often it is difficult to be optimistic. However, we want to emphasize the significance and perseverance of hope. God is with us in all situations. So may we all work towards a better world, where justice more often flows like a rolling stream...

Time for Creation—Let’s Pray Together to Appreciate and Care for the Gift of Creation

A common statement of Council of European Bishops’ Conferences (CCEE), Conference of European Churches (CEC) and European Christian Environmental Network (ECEN), August 2016

Respect, appreciation and contemplation of Creation are the common concern of Christian Churches. The Council of European Bishops’ Conferences (CCEE) and the Conference of European Churches (CEC), on the occasion of the Day for Creation, call for common prayers and to strengthen ecumenical work to care for Creation.
According to the Gospel, responsibility for the environment can never be detached from responsibility for other human beings: for our neighbour, for the poor, or the forgotten, all in a true spirit of solidarity and love. Respecting Creation means not only protecting and safeguarding the earth, water and other parts of the natural world. It is at the same time expressing respect for human beings who share those gifts and bear responsibility for them. Therefore, together with all Christians, we endeavour joyfully to witness Jesus Christ, “for in Him were created all things in heaven and on earth” (Col 1:16).

We remember Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s thought that the most urgent problem besetting our Churches is the way in which we live our Christian life in the face of contemporary cultural and social challenges. This means we must relate to each other within the context of the world we all live in. This is an original definition of ‘oikos,’ meaning ‘the house.’ The ‘common house’ we care for, is made up of both the natural world and of human relationships.

_Time for Creation_ from 1st September–4th October (the feast day of St. Francis of Assisi in the Western tradition) is a special period in the liturgical calendars in a growing number of Churches in Europe. In this period we remember the gift of Creation and our relation to it. Celebration of this Time and its place in the cycle of Christian prayers and worships was commended by the 3rd European Ecumenical Assembly in Sibiu 2007. The European Christian Environmental Network (ECEN) has been instrumental in promoting and encouraging Christians to pray together in spirit of ecumenical cooperation and to promoting action to care for Creation. The initiative to celebrate a day of prayer for God’s Creation on 1st September which, in the Byzantine tradition is the beginning of the Church Year, started in 1989 by Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios. Similarly, in 2015 Pope Francis decided that 1st September be the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation in the Catholic Church.

We face urgently challenges of environmental degradation and climate change, and encouraged by the words of Pope Francis’ Encyclical letter _Laudato si’_ acknowledge our shared responsibility. We warmly invite all European Christians, member churches of CEC and bishops’ conferences of CCEE, parishes and Church communities and every person of good will to join in _Time for Creation_, to celebrate _Time for Creation_ together, within your own liturgical traditions and to uphold the common Christian faith in God the Creator. We urge you, in your respective settings, to offer, prayers for gift of Creation, and join us in praying together:

O Lord, teach us to care for the whole Creation,
to protect all life and to share the fruits of the earth.
Teach us to share our human work with our brothers and sisters,
especially with the poor and those in need.
Grant us to remain faithful to your Gospel as to joyfully offer to our society in different countries across the continent the horizon of a better future filled with justice, peace, love and beauty.

Amen.

Fr. Heikki Huttunen (General Secretary of CEC),
Mgr. Duarte da Cunha (General Secretary of CCEE), Rev. Dr. Peter Pavlovic (Secretary of ECEN)
Human rights, democracy and the rule of law are basic European values, on the basis of which Europe can be recognised among other continents. If these values are not safeguarded and constantly cherished in Europe, the human rights and freedoms of our continent’s people could be lost. From the French Revolution and other struggles in our past, including the Second World War and the Holocaust, to Europe’s present, the struggle for these values has cost many human lives. And we must not forget the price paid by people on other continents for actions that had their origins in Europe. Many human beings around the world and in Europe have paid with their lives for both severe violations of human rights and the struggle to defend these rights.

People were killed in the Holocaust and other horrific events in our continent because they were of a different ethnicity, religion or belief from majorities, because they were of a different sexual orientation, because they were disabled people, or because they were different in other ways. And this still continues today, thinking for example of the murder of the British parliamentarian Jo Cox during the UK Brexit referendum campaign in 2016. One of the primary tasks for us as Christians is advocacy for the wellbeing of our neighbour. Jesus said: “love your neighbour as yourselves.” We can say that we truly love our neighbour if we give freedom to him or her. A related question for us Christians is what do we do with our freedom?

We can use our freedom to work for the common good of the world, but we can also use our freedom to do harm to others, to commit sin. It is the responsibility of every individual to be accountable before God for how we use the freedom that God has given us—and it is vital that we do not lose sight of who has given us this freedom and responsibility.

As Christians, along with asking questions about our use of freedom we also need to ask what our duties and responsibilities are. Among other duties and responsibilities, we have the responsibility to use existing international systems to advocate for human rights for all human beings, however they may happen to differ from us in religion or belief, ethnicity, sex, age, or in other ways. For us Christians, all people are made in the image and likeness of God, with no exceptions, and so we have a responsibility to work for the freedom of all people.

The Conference of European Churches (CEC) has for more than two decades been working on human rights. Human Rights are in the DNA of CEC life, especially work on freedom of religion or belief. CEC has developed its work on human rights in relationship with the European institutions. Formerly, CEC in Geneva related to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the United Nations (UN) on European matters. The former Church and Society Commission (CSC) of CEC in Brussels related to the European Union (EU) and Council of Europe (CoE). With the merger of CEC and CSC, and with creation of the human rights post in Brussels more than decade ago, CEC continued its human rights work in relation to all four institutions and was mandated to more work on human rights issues. The issue at the heart of CEC human rights work is freedom of religion or belief.

On the UN level, since 1979 CEC has had consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). This means that CEC has the right to organise side events and raise awareness of human rights issues of concern to CEC member churches and organisations they part-
ner with. In the last decade CEC has had good cooperation with the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief on various issues. These issues have included but are not limited to: churches in post-communist countries with state registration problems; access to places of worship; the return of church property formerly confiscated by the state; attacks on church graveyards; graffiti on church facades; and difficult relationships with governments, including oppression and control of smaller belief communities by secret police forces, as well as the censorship of imported religious books.

Looking at cooperation with the European Union, CEC has developed close ties with the European Parliament (EP) Intergroup on Religious Freedom or Belief and Religious Tolerance, whose work they follow closely. CEC has worked with the Intergroup to host an event on violations of freedom of religion or belief in Pakistan, as well as a hearing on the situations of Christians in Egypt. In 2016, CEC, the EP European People’s Party (EPP) political group and the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS) organized a seminar on ‘The hurdles of establishing and maintaining religious freedom in the world—What must the EU do?’ The aim of the conference in the European Parliament was to make European parliamentarians aware of the very difficult situation of Christians in Syria and Iraq, and the need for the EU to make stronger efforts to protect the religious heritage of these countries.

In a conference which took place in Halki, Turkey, in 2015, hosted by the Ecumenical Patriarchate and entitled ‘Advancing freedom of religion or belief for all,’ conference participants asked European institutions to:

- Report on the state of fundamental religious freedoms of beliefs within the countries of the EU relating to the discrimination based on religion or belief, hate speech, discriminatory legislation, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism etc.
- Publish separate report on the situation on religious freedom or belief outside the EU.
- Encourage high standards and implementation of human rights in respect of the treatment of migrants and asylum seekers.

This conference also discussed the issues addressed in the EU Guidelines on the Promotion and Protection of Freedom of Religion or Belief adopted by the EU Foreign Affairs Council in 2013. The EU Guidelines are not legally binding, but they marked a great step forward. After many decades of existence, the EU has started to address freedom of religion or belief as a fundamental human rights issue outside the borders of its member states. The Halki conference also requested that CEC member churches produced a questionnaire on how EU member states and EU Delegations around the world implemented these Guidelines.

One should note here that the EU has an obligation to evaluate its human rights guidelines every three years. The evaluation of the Guidelines on the Promotion and Protection of Freedom of Religion or Belief was expected in 2016. But as this is the first time in the institutional life of the EU that this right is being seriously addressed, some possible delays can be expected.

In 2016, the EU established the new post of Special Envoy for Promoting Freedom of Religion or Belief outside of the EU. Former EU Commissioner for Education, Training and Culture (2004–2009) Jan Figel was appointed to this post. This was one more concrete step in the life

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of the EU, where the EU showed the political will to address violations of freedom of religion or belief, including forced conversion, blasphemy legislation and other matters. The establishment of this post by the European Commission was a response to the brutal killing of Coptic Christians in Libya.

The position of CEC is that the European institutions need to have external and internal cohesion in their human rights policies.

On the internal EU level, CEC has close ties with the EU Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA). This cooperation resulted in CEC being represented in the EU Fundamental Rights Advisory panel in the period in 2009/2010 and again in 2012/2014. CEC is a member of the EU Fundamental Rights Platform and uses this both to discuss issues with other members and to raise the issue of freedom of religion or belief inside the EU. For the first time in 2016, after many years of CEC advocacy for a discussion on freedom of religion or belief, the EU FRA organised a panel discussion on this issue, during the first Fundamental Rights Forum ‘Connect. Reflect. Act’. This debate and open space was welcomed by many religious and secular NGOs with the hope that this open door for discussion will develop.

In addressing the very sensitive issue of freedom of religion or belief within Europe, CEC with its partners has organised a conference on the rights of religious minorities in Zagreb in Croatia. Beside the Diocese of Zagreb and Ljubljana of the Serbian Orthodox Church, which was the host of the conference in Zagreb, CEC’s other partners were the Churches Commission for Migrants in Europe and the EP intergroup on Anti-racism and Diversity. The conference addressed the issue of ‘Religious Minorities as Part of Culturally Diverse Societies.’ Conference participants asked the European Institutions and its member states to assume responsibility for:

- preventing and punishing hate crimes and breaking the cycle of violence, also seeking cooperation with civil society, churches, and religious communities
- producing a report about the state of rights of minorities
- implementing all pertinent legislation protecting the status and rights of minorities
- ensuring conditions that enable individuals and groups to co-exist in diversity, and creating a positive climate for the expression of pluralism, tolerance, and respect as corner stones of democratic societies
- promoting ongoing dialogue between majorities and minorities, so as to form a common basis of ideals and values for convivence in our pluralistic and diverse societies.

This was one of example of how CEC advocates for freedom of religion or belief inside and outside of the EU. In CEC’s view, the EU needs to set a good example of the implementation of human rights both within and outside EU member states’ borders.

In the work of the Council of Europe, CEC is also very well positioned as it has an office in Strasbourg. CEC regularly attends meetings of the Steering Committee for Human Rights (CDDH) and meetings of the Committee on Bioethics. In

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the recent past CEC contributed with its expertise to the development of Guidelines adopted by the Committee of Ministers, ‘Human Rights in Culturally Diverse Societies.’ These Guidelines have been published in book form and include discussion of freedom of religion or belief, including the experience of implementing the European Convention on Human Rights and of the European Court on Human Rights.

In its annual Summer School on Human Rights for Theologians, CEC has involved the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) in the programme. ECRI describes itself as “a human rights body of the Council of Europe, composed of independent experts, which monitors problems of racism, xenophobia, antisemitism, intolerance and discrimination on grounds such as ‘race,’ national/ethnic origin, colour, citizenship, religion and language (racial discrimination).”

The involvement of ECRI in a CEC Summer School illustrated CEC’s role as a bridge building organisation between church human rights experts and European institutions. In ECRI’s work, it is important that the information it collects in particular country contexts is both accurate and prepared in the right format for ECRI to use. Church human rights experts can play a vital role in providing accurate well-prepared information to ECRI and other human rights institutions. This helps CEC’s and member churches’ dialogues with European institutions to play a constructive role in building a more tolerant, respectful and just world.

CEC is also present in the work of the OSCE. CEC is often invited by different OSCE institutions to contribute to their work with its expertise. The most recent such CEC contribution was to a conference organised by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODHIR) on Interreligious Dialogue for the Promotion of Tolerance and Non-Discrimination in Baku, Azerbaijan.

Another debate where CEC works with the OSCE is the issue of freedom of religion or belief and security. In this context, the interconnection between freedom of religion or belief and security is discussed. Topics raised include respect for human rights and its positive impact on society, freedom of religion or belief and social cohesion, permissible limitations of freedom of religion or belief being kept strictly in line with international human rights standards, and how OSCE participating states can create gender-sensitive legislation to advance freedom of religion or belief for all people. In a series of meetings organised on the issues of persecution of Christians, CEC also contributes its expertise based on the local experience of CEC member churches.

This input of CEC into the work of international organisations wouldn’t be possible without the active participation of CEC member churches. The participation of church human rights experts is essential if churches in Europe are to help build tolerant, respectful and human rights-friendly societies. International law and human rights standards are not perfect, but nor is anything else on this earth. As Christians, we have the God-given responsibility to work for the freedom of all people. This means that we must both use and improve the human rights tools we have for the sake of future generations who are both our present and our future.

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## Appendix

### Proof of Initial Publication

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Document/Author/Work</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The <em>Charta Oecumenica</em></td>
<td>was published in April 2001 in its final form by the Conference of European Churches (CEC) and the Roman Catholic Council of European Bishops’ Conferences (CCEE).</td>
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<tr>
<td>The document <em>Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World</em></td>
<td>was released by the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID), the World Council of Churches (WCC) and, at the invitation of the WCC, the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) in June 2011.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Apostolic Exhortation <em>Evangelii Gaudium</em> of the Holy Father Francis</td>
<td>was first published in 2013 by LIBRERIA EDITRICE VATICANA.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dietrich Bonhoeffer, <em>The Church and Peoples of the World</em></td>
<td>Dietrich Bonhoeffer held his speech on August 28th, 1934, on the meeting of the “Weltbund der Freundschaftsarbeit der Kirchen” (“World Alliance for International Friendship”) in Fanø in Denmark. The English translation was first published in International Fellowship of Reconciliation, News Letter No. 60, oct. 1948.</td>
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Bianca Dümling, *Learning from each other* was translated by Elisabeth Stief from the German version published in: *Evangelisches Missionswerk in Deutschland, ed., Reformation: global, Eine Botschaft bewegt die Welt* (Hamburg: Missionshilfe-Verlag, 2015), 153–159.


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<tr>
<th>Author</th>
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<tr>
<td>Harold Wells</td>
<td>Fossil Fuels and Apocalypse: Theology for ‘A New Dark Age’</td>
<td>was first published in: Jeff Nowers, Nestor Medina, eds., Theology and Crisis of Engagement: Essays on the Relationship of Theology and the Social Sciences in Honor of Lee Cormie (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2013), 176–191. The present version was updated for this publication.</td>
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<td>was originally published in Slovak language in: Křesťanská revue, no. 80.1 (2013), 52–54. The present version has been modified.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Karel Floss</td>
<td>Christian and Socialism</td>
<td>This article was originally published in Czech language in: Křesťanská revue, no. 80:1 (2013), 55–57. The present version has been modified. All of the footnotes have been added by the translator for clarification purposes.</td>
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