



A HUNDRED YEARS OF MISSION COOPERATION

The Impact of the International Missionary Council 1921-2021



Editor: RISTO JUKKO

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**World Council
of Churches**
Publications

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PREFACE

This book is the fruition of an 18-month study process related to the centennial of the International Missionary Council (IMC), which was established at Lake Mohonk, USA, in the autumn of 1921. The IMC had a unique role in the formation of the ecumenical movement and world mission. In fact, it has been said that until the founding of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in 1948, the IMC represented *de facto* the ecumenical movement. And even after this creation in 1948 of two global ecumenical bodies “in association,” the IMC continued its work. It was not until 1961 at the WCC assembly in New Delhi, India, that it was integrated into the structures of the WCC, becoming the WCC Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME).

The CWME inherited the IMC legacy of fostering mission cooperation and unity, organizing world mission conferences (roughly one per decade falling between the WCC assemblies), and putting out the missiological journal of the IMC, the *International Review of Mission(s)*. The CWME has kept these three legacies, knowing its past and looking toward the future.

The 11th Assembly of the WCC in Karlsruhe, Germany, was originally planned to be held at the end of the summer of 2021, which would have offered the CWME an excellent platform to celebrate world mission and the one hundred years’ legacy of the IMC. However, the COVID-19 pandemic changed the plans, and the assembly was postponed to 2022.

How did the CWME decide to celebrate the centenary with its partners? The CWME nominated a steering committee to lead the process, and the committee started a world-wide research process to explore the impact of the IMC in various parts of the world. What had happened because of the existence of the IMC? And what might have happened without a global ecumenical body such as the IMC? What is there to be celebrated, and what are the failures to learn from or repent? Out of this, initially 16 study centres or groups, based in all eight regions of the WCC, responded positively to the steering committee’s invitation to participate in the study process. The steering committee organized the study process in the manner that the IMC, and later the CWME, has followed: by fostering unity and mission cooperation. Not all the regional study centres or groups were already existing bodies. Theologians and practitioners of various institutions and actors have come together to cooperate and create unity locally, and in some cases regionally. Denominationally, these study groups have often gone beyond the member churches of the WCC. Even in the study process, the steering committee was

pleased to note how mission creates unity and cooperation. And the immediate impact likely hides deeper, invisible, and unexpected longer-term processes.

The book is divided into two parts. The first part provides background reading for the reports of the study process produced by the study centres. In the first chapter, Rev. Dr Michael Biehl from the EMW (Association of Protestant Churches and Missions in Germany) describes the IMC centenary study process in detail so that the reader understands the origin and purpose of the texts in this volume. In the second chapter, Prof. Rev. Dr Kenneth R. Ross from the Church of Scotland introduces the reader to the hundred-year history of the IMC-CWME. In the third chapter, Dr Eleanor Jackson, UK, describes the life and activities of the IMC in Britain from the beginning to 1968. The IMC had an office in London and in New York. The fourth chapter brings the reader from Europe and USA to Asia, as Dr Marina Ngursangzeli Behera (Oxford Centre for Mission Studies) describes mission in Northeast India in the early 20th century and its perspective of the IMC.

The second part of the book contains 13 regional reports. The study centres have chosen different approaches and reporting styles, even if the common factor has been to concentrate on the past, that is, the historical legacy of the IMC-CWME in their respective regions, rather than to describe the current situation or reflect on the future. Two study centres are from India and two from Africa.

In the pages of the reports, it becomes clear how diverse and multifaceted mission has become in the world through the ten decades of the existence of the ecumenical mission movement in the form of the IMC-CWME. Mission has contributed significantly to a growing movement of the establishment of Christian churches in the world, especially in the 20th century—what scholars call “World Christianity” or “Global Christianity.” This could not have come into existence without mission.

Based on the reports, two questions can be explored. The first relates to the fact that for some 30 years now, the majority of Christians have lived in the global South. Their faith is the same as those living in the global North, and yet there are different nuances. What is their understanding of mission in today’s world? How do they do mission “from the margins”? The second question relates to the fact that many of these Christians live in conditions that threaten their existence, because of wars, famines, climate change, droughts, floods, earthquakes, tsunamis, poverty—and the list can be continued. What hope can the gospel—the good news of Jesus Christ—give to those who are most vulnerable and often wounded?

I want to express to my deep gratitude to all the study centres or groups and individuals who have contributed to the IMC Centenary study process. And the process is not over. We are planning to publish a second volume in the near future, presenting another series of the reports of the regional study centres but focusing more on the current situation of mission in their regions and reflecting also on the future. We know that mission will continue—as it is God’s own mission. Structures may vanish, but the missionary God will not. That is our hope.

Risto Jukko, Editor

Director, WCC Commission on World Mission and Evangelism

Chair of the steering committee of the IMC centenary study process

Geneva, July 2022

PART I

Introduction

CHAPTER 1

The Study Process of the IMC Centenary

Michael Biehl

When the 11th Assembly of the WCC planned for 2021 in Karlsruhe, in the midst of the pandemic, needed to be postponed to 2022, the question arose as to how the 100th jubilee of the foundation of the International Missionary Council (IMC) could be celebrated. The council had been founded in 1921 at a conference that convened at Lake Mohonk, upstate New York, close to the dates foreseen for the 11th assembly a hundred years later. In 1961, at the 3rd Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in New Delhi, the IMC was integrated into the WCC as the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME). When a commemorative event that had been planned for the Karlsruhe assembly had to be given up and a separate conference could not be planned because of the pandemic, the idea was born to make a virtue out of necessity and to initiate a global online process of reflection and discussion on cooperation in mission in the last 100 years. This idea, inspired by the study process towards the jubilee of the Edinburgh 1910 world missionary conference,¹ was proposed to a number of academic institutions in all of the eight regions of the WCC. Fourteen agreed to join the online study process. Many of those who agreed to join had in times of pandemic started to work online by necessity, which certainly helped to promote this idea. They had learned to appreciate how different parts of the world could easily be bridged by being connected online around the world. The second aspect of the proposed study process was that it should be academic and ecumenical through the participation of researchers and study groups from different backgrounds and by including movements that had been outside the IMC and that are outside the WCC even today.

With this in mind, the process focused on reflecting missiologically on the significance and impact of IMC-CWME, globally and regionally, particularly in light of perspectives from the global South. One of the basic assumptions

1 See Daryl Balia and Kirsteen Kim, eds, *Witnessing to Christ Today: Edinburgh 2010 Vol. II*, Regnum Edinburgh 2010 Series, 2 (Oxford: Regnum Books, 2010); Kirsteen Kim and Andrew Anderson, eds, *Mission Today and Tomorrow: Edinburgh 2010*, Regnum Edinburgh 2010 Series (Oxford: Regnum Books, 2011).

of the study process was that there is a renewed need to look into cooperation in mission from the perspective of the regions, to identify challenges to unity in mission and steps toward overcoming divisions that have been detrimental to witnessing to Christ. An important dimension of this approach was that this could be studied by centres in regions where the mission societies and councils that formed the IMC had not been present or actively involved. What would the history of the IMC look like when put into the frame of a wider panorama of mission taking place around the globe that was not connected to the IMC? What influence did the IMC-CWME have on the ground in the different regions?

A steering committee was formed under the leadership of Dr Risto Jukko, director of the CWME, and comprising four members of the commission, Ms Jingqin Gu (China Christian Council), Dr Rubén E. (Tito) Paredes (Peru), and Prof. Kenneth R. Ross (Edinburgh/Malawi). There were two additional members: Dr Marina Ngursangzeli Behera, from Mizoram, Northeast India, working with the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies (OCMS) in the UK, and Dr Michael Biehl, working with the *Evangelische Mission Weltweit* (EMW) in Germany, which is a specialized ministry of the WCC and an affiliated body of the CWME.

The proposed agenda for the process invited the study centres, in a first phase from January 2021 to November 2021, to look back into the decades of the founding of the IMC in their region and to study relevant movements and whether cooperation in mission among them took place. In focus of the second phase from November 2021 to June 2022 was set on challenges and opportunities in mission and cooperation in mission in today's world. The study centres were invited to come up with recommendations and proposals for the future agenda of mission that could inform the work of the next CWME, which will be newly appointed in 2023 after the assembly in Karlsruhe.

As a pivotal event in the process, a conference was planned to mark the centenary. The conference was planned to be online but to touch ground near, and partly at, the original site at Lake Mohonk, in upstate New York, US, in November 2021, one month later than the founding event. In the middle of 2021 it became obvious that to convene at Lake Mohonk would not be possible because of the travel restrictions imposed due to the pandemic. The steering committee eventually hosted the online conference from the Ecumenical Centre in Geneva.

One of the challenges of this model was the different time zones. Being located in Geneva, halfway between New Zealand and Peru, made it somehow possible to adjust the times—even though some at the margins of time zones faced the challenge of getting up very early or staying up late.

The Conference

The concept of the conference was that it would be organized following the time zones and create an ongoing series of regional sessions. The centres were invited to present their preliminary reports on the topics researchers had chosen and to share their initial findings.

The journey around the globe began with the report of the study group in New Zealand, presenting mission among and by Māoris. The focus was on the inculturation of the gospel into the worldview of the Indigenous people, and the thesis was brought forward that the Indigenous understanding of unity in diversity in turn shaped their mission. The journey led from there to Latin America and the Caribbean. The speakers from the participating centres characterized both regions as excluded or neglected because they had been deliberately excluded from the World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910 and subsequently from the efforts to establish the IMC. They also presented how independent and vital missionary efforts developed there in spite of their exclusion in the beginning.

The centres in China and India then presented a look back at some of the conflicts in mission between, on the one hand, foreign missionaries and their sending societies and, on the other hand, the native churches. They emphasized the great importance and influence the missionary activities of the Indigenous churches had both on mission in the region and on the IMC. The study group in North America presented a research project on diverse missionary activities on the continent with special focus on the activities of the different ethnic groups such as Hispanics, African and Asian Americans, and First Nations people. The goal of this study was to identify cooperation as well as theological approaches that promote cooperation.

In this session, Prof. Ben Hartley presented a paper on John R. Mott, and as a surprise guest, Andy Mott, the grandson of John R. Mott, shared memories of his grandfather. In an impressive video from the historic city of Byblos, the study group in the Middle East presented the view of the different church families on their mission in history and the present, as well as conflicts between them that arose from the missionary activity among the historical church families in the region. The report of the two centres on the African continent, in Kenya and South Africa, made the diversity in the region visible, which is too often obscured by the generalizing use of the word Africa. They also emphasized the many autochthonous movements and their expressions of faith that proclaimed the Christian faith beyond the activities of Western missionary societies. And finally, the centres in Europe—in England, Germany and Romania—highlighted the diversity of northern and eastern

Europe in mission according to understandings of Independent, evangelical, mainstream Protestant, and Orthodox churches. The reports also addressed the conflicts and fragmentation in the mission movements in the 1960s and 1970s following to the integration of the IMC as CWME into the WCC.

The regional units unfolded an exciting and diverse panorama of a globe-spanning mission in which strategic efforts to carry the gospel to the non-Christian world—as had been the slogan of the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910—represented only one strand. Focusing on the history from the 1920s to the 1960s, the presentations from the centres in the various regions made apparent how mission took place in an imperial setting. They addressed how the impact especially of the First World War damaged the image of Christian nations and created doubts about Christian faith as the right way for Oceania, Asia, and Africa. It also became apparent how strongly Indigenous missionary movements shaped the history of the Christian faith in the colonies of the time. The history of mission, it became apparent, is also a history of appropriation by local actors who emancipated themselves through the Christian faith, also from the Western missionary societies, fulfilling the idea of self-propagation.

Public Sessions

In addition to the eight sessions for reports from the regions, the conference offered three public sessions.² In the first session, a case study by Marina Ngursangzeli Behera of the Oxford Centre of Mission Studies, highlighted the history of her church in Mizoram (northeast India), which was on the margins of societies in the IMC but was itself a missionary church from the beginning. This example was the more telling because, as she pointed out, mission societies and councils in mainland India prominently influenced the IMC.

Only after the regional reports, which like this lecture presented the margins of the world of the IMC as centres of mission, did Dana L. Robert of the Boston School of Theology look back to the founding of the IMC in Lake Mohonk in 1921. In addition to looking critically at the dominance of Western mission societies in the council, she put forward the thesis that, contrary to the often-used narrative of Edinburgh and the IMC as a source for the emergence of the WCC, mission contributed to the emergence of and awareness about World Christianity.

² The recording of these sessions can be found here:
<https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLI22eVXX9FYkg3BmsSCF2ddhJ0d3HnZVs>.

In the third and concluding session, predominantly younger theologians brought global South and diaspora perspectives, perspectives from the WCC-CWME and from the World Student Christian Federation. In a panel discussion, they drew together insights from the reports in the regional sessions. They identified themes and aspects that could be further developed in the study process and discussed current challenges that mission is facing worldwide.

Risto Jukko closed the conference in his function as the director of the CWME, offering some results of the conference and leading into the next phase.

This panel formed the hinge to the second phase of the study process, in which the centres were invited to address current challenges and to identify future issues from their region. They were invited to do so with particular attention to movements and actors outside the WCC. Although these have often been ignored in traditional mission reports, they can prove to be a pivot for developing new perspectives.

As mentioned, the character of the study process was academic, global, and ecumenical. The participating centres have all, with two exceptions, been theological schools within and beyond WCC member churches. This was intentional in order to be able to place the history of the IMC and the CWME in a global panorama of mission in cooperation. Not all invited centres were able to commit in this study process, and we especially missed the Pacific Region. The presentation from the study group in New Zealand showed, however, that it is closer to the oceanic world than to, for example, China or Korea even though on the WCC region map it is placed in Asia.

All sessions were opened by words of greetings from representatives of the WCC regions and related organizations. The acting General Secretary of the WCC, Father Dr Ioan Sauca, opened the conference and the words of greetings of the WCC regions' representatives connected the academic reports to the churches in the region. A special word of greeting was given by Elona Street-Stewart of the United States. She had been invited to welcome the conference when it had been planned to convene close to Lake Mohonk. She spoke on behalf of the First Nations people who had settled the Lake Mohonk region prior to the occupation by white settlers. The word of greeting was kept in the program after the relocation of the conference to Geneva. Her greetings are a reminder that cooperation in mission as it was organized in the IMC witnessed to Christ but that receiving the gospel initiated an often painful story with detrimental effects on First Nations or other Indigenous peoples. This was a warning against a triumphant reading of the IMC's activities and its reflections.

The Volume

The present volume is one of the publications that will be the output of the study process. The steering committee will edit a series of volumes collecting the papers written by the authors associated with the various centres. In order to have a first output, the centres have been asked to submit a report on their work up to the midterm conference in the study process. This volume presents the revised and updated versions of these reports. The concept for the reports was that the centres were to provide information on who was joining the process in their centre and which aspect the individual authors chose to engage with in looking at cooperation in mission in their region. The reports presented here follow in principle a common concept but reflect the diversity of the contexts and the multipolar reality in mission in the years around the founding of the IMC and later decades.

A few remarks are in order to explain the content this volume. The centres have been approached in the double perspective of being centres of academic studies in mission and ecumenism and of being located in one of the eight regions of the WCC. As explained, the steering committee appreciated, however, having authors or centres from traditions beyond the membership of the WCC participate in order to have a more comprehensive panorama of unity and cooperation in mission in the last hundred years. This is reflected at various points in the reports and will be expressed more clearly in the future volumes.

Some regions of the WCC are extensive and very diverse, such as the Asian region. A study group formed in New Zealand, which is considered part of the WCC Asian region. Focusing on mission among and of the Māori people, we feel that this study group offers us a glimpse into the history of an Indigenous people in the context of Oceania. In China, the Nanjing Union Theological Seminary joined, and their report reflects the strong input Chinese Christians had in forming the IMC and its history and later in the CWME. In India, a study group in South India brought together scholars from the United Theological College, Bangalore, an institution founded one month after the Edinburgh 1910 conference, as well as from the South Asia Institute of Advanced Christian Studies (SAIACS), Bangalore, including a professor from Dharmaram College, a Major Seminary of the Carmelites of Mary Immaculate congregation in Bangalore. Aizawl Theological College (Aizawl, Mizoram) offered the platform for professors from various churches and states in Northeast India, though mainly from Mizoram. Whereas the South and North of India had an impact on the IMC, the Northeast of India

had mainly been outside its gravity, as Marina Ngursangzeli Behera explained in the first public lecture at the conference.

In the Middle East, a group came together with participants from the various church families in the region and reflected on the entangled history of those church families witnessing there from the earliest days of Christianity and the mission that came with Protestants much later to the region. On the African continent, one centre formed in Kenya around St. Paul's University (Limuru) and in South Africa at the University of Pretoria. There had been hopes to have another centre in francophone Africa, but this did not materialize, mainly because of the saddening fact that the responsible person, Dr Samuel Desiré Johnson, died of the effects of COVID-19 on 24 March 2021.

In Europe, three centres joined the process. One formed around the Centre for Mission and Nomocanonical Studies at the Faculty of Orthodox Theology of the Babes-Bolyai University (Cluj-Napoca, Romania), which joined forces with the Central and Eastern European Association of Mission Studies (CEEAMS) representing Orthodox, Protestant, evangelical, Roman Catholic, and Pentecostal voices. Similarly, in Germany the Academy of Mission at the University of Hamburg and the German Society for Mission studies (DGMW) formed one centre of various colleagues from German Universities but also members from other countries residing and working in Germany. The third centre was the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies (OCMS), UK. It is in two respects an exception. Firstly, it came into being in the 1980s, after the split in the mission movement into the so-called evangelicals and ecumenicals. Secondly, it is located in the UK but is a centre for PhD candidates from all over the globe, with a majority of evangelicals from the global South. Its challenging report will be placed in another volume.

In North America, around the chair of mission studies at Boston University, a platform was developed for a survey on collaboration in mission in North America in the last decades. The report of this survey forms the report of the North American Study centre, which did not dive into the history of the North American scene around the founding years of the IMC. This aspect is studied in Dana L. Robert's lecture, found in the volume "Together in the Mission of God: Jubilee Reflections on the International Missionary Council."

In traveling the globe from East to the West, the journey leads to three centres in Latin America and the Caribbean. The *Universidad Bíblica Latino Americana* (UBL) (St. José, Costa Rica) reflected on its history growing out of the mission movement originating mainly in the US and developing into one of the thriving centres for theological education deeply rooted in the context of region. The *Centro Evangélico Misiología Andinoamazónica* (CEMAA) emerged in the evangelical tradition of mission in the region in 1977. Its

report highlighted the continent as deliberately excluded or abandoned in the founding process of the IMC. A similar emphasis came from the Seminario Evangélico Teológica (SET) (Matanzas, Cuba). All three centres referred to important mission conferences like 1916 in Panama and 1929 in Havana as the “Edinburgh Conference” in their region through which an intensive cooperation in mission in the region was promoted. They, in a way, close the circle when they later joined the IMC.

The centres represent researchers and missiologists from a large part of the WCC regions and beyond the WCC constituency. It is, however, evident that much more is happening in mission and evangelism than they could all represent or study. It is a characteristic of our time that mission and evangelism are globally so present that it has become impossible to be representative.

Preliminary Insights

It is too early to synthesize the findings of the centres’ reports from their regions. A few points, however, can be seen to emerge from their reports. They demonstrate the diverse nature of mission and evangelism that occurred in the field in the first decades of the 20th century. Mission and evangelism happened locally, regionally, and conducted by indigenous organizations, alongside mission endeavours established by mission bodies from the North Atlantic region. What collaboration or cooperation in such settings meant needs to be explored in more detail as well as the deliberate attempts to contain independent mission movements and to keep the control of the proclamation of the Christian faith in the hands of the Western-based societies. In the context of the global mission movement and studies of cooperation in mission, the legacy of the IMC and CWME comes to stand in a different light, and in some cases the reports reveal why more cooperation did not happen.

The studies that look into the more recent decades highlight that the situation has become even more plural and fragmented. Unity and a common witness continue to be a challenge, and the structures to give it an organizational expression are changing as practitioners continue to adopt them in the new landscapes.

New issues and topics that have come up through the decades were identified in the last panel session of the conference, such as diaspora/migration, intergenerational issues, faith and identity, the continuing existence of the tension between centres and margins, vulnerability, power structures, conflict, and reconciliation, the growing awareness of the experience of Indigenous peoples, humility in mission, spirituality and discipleship, and hospitality.

The study process, however, demonstrated the long story of some of the familiar issues and topics. Interfaith issues and secularism, racism and the relation of identity with nationalism, as well as the relation between independence/self-support and cooperation, have accompanied the mission and ecumenical movement from its inception. In some cases, such as the issue of racism, the content has changed; and in other cases, we can see developments—including the confluence and convergence of issues in mission.

The research in the centres and groups brings to light the legacy of the IMC and CWME in the wider context of global mission movement and the cooperation in mission.

Thanks

Published after the closing of the IMC study process, this introduction is the occasion to thank the centres and all the researchers who have been and are committed to the process. In total, around 140 to 150 persons engaged with the process in the study centres or groups. The reports reflect the diversity of their interests and academic contributions to the study of cooperation in mission in the last 100 years.

Thanks is due especially to those in the centres who organized the local or regional process. They can be seen and heard in the video records of the conference; and this volume honours their work. The papers of contributors in the various centres will be published in a series of volumes.

Rev. Dr Michael Biehl is head of the Desk for Mission Studies and Theological Education with the Association of Protestant Churches and Missions in Germany (EMW).

CHAPTER 2

One Hundred Years of Mission Cooperation: The Contribution of the International Missionary Council

Kenneth R. Ross

Marking the centenary of the founding of the International Missionary Council (IMC) in 1921, this volume seeks to be proportionate, modest and realistic in recognizing the significance of this milestone. For the Protestant missionary movement, the formation of the IMC represented a remarkable breakthrough in terms of missionary cooperation. However, its membership included only one strand of Christianity. Neither the Catholic nor the Orthodox communions were involved. The nascent Pentecostal movement, probably the most significant new development for Christian mission in the coming century, was hardly recognized. Even within mainline Protestantism, the main players in the IMC were the Western missionary societies and church mission boards, with the emerging churches of the global South only just beginning to make their presence felt. As later chapters in this volume reveal, in many contexts around the world, the IMC was little known and had little direct impact. Furthermore, from the vantage point of 100 years later, the limitations of its understanding of mission are all too evident. Though there were glimpses of great changes that lay ahead, the prevailing model of mission was one of “the West to the rest,” accommodating many of the presumptions and prejudices of a colonial age.

Nevertheless, granted that it was a child of its time, the IMC’s creation was a significant step in the emergence of the World Christianity that we know today. For the institutions that were directly involved, it represented a landmark moment, one that opened up ever-expanding networks of collaboration. Even for those who were not directly involved in 1921, with hindsight the formation of the IMC can be recognized as the beginning of a process of developing mutual understanding and active cooperation that would eventually include many others. As the historian Dana Robert has recognized, “On the heels of World War I, the founding of the IMC represented a major effort by Protestants to move from national and ecclesial silos to a global conversation concerning common spiritual, ecclesial, social, and political issues . . . As

time-bound and limited as it was, the IMC, through its aspirational transnationalism, recognized publicly that Christianity was becoming a diverse yet interconnected worldwide religion.”¹ The emergence of the IMC also represented a breakthrough in terms of recognizing the need for Christian mission to be guided not only by faith and activism but also by analytical thinking. The value of this will be seen as we examine the contribution of the IMC across 100 years.

The 19th-Century Background

The IMC grew out of the Western Protestant missionary movement that emerged from around 1800, leading Kenneth Scott Latourette to describe the 19th as the “Great Century” in the story of the expansion of Christianity.² The Industrial Revolution in the Western world had opened up possibilities to expand commercial and political influence globally, and the evangelical revival created a spiritual fervour that could exploit new possibilities of travel and communication for missionary purposes. In keeping with the free enterprise of the age, missionary societies sprang up wherever there was sufficient enthusiasm and launched their efforts with little thought of collaboration with others. Indeed, if anything, they approached their task in a competitive spirit, most acutely in their rivalry with the Catholic missions but also at times with one another.

Both missionary organizations and individual missionaries tended to be fiercely independent. Nonetheless, there were certain unifying factors: a shared spirituality arising from the evangelical revival, a post-Enlightenment confidence in Western civilization, and the experience of cross-cultural mission. There was therefore a sense of being part of the same movement even though geographically scattered and organizationally fragmented. This led to a series of international missionary conferences during the later 19th century, which strove to cultivate cooperation among Protestant missionary societies. The late 19th and early 20th centuries also saw missionaries from different churches and societies coming together for conference in the countries where they served. No less significant was the emergence of indigenous churches in the “mission fields.” Commonly, they found that the denominational differences

1 Dana L. Robert, “Cooperation, Christian Fellowship, and Transnational Networking: The Birth of the International Missionary Council,” in *Together in the Mission of God: Jubilee Reflections on the International Missionary Council*, ed. Risto Jukko (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2022), 4.

2 Kenneth Scott Latourette, *History of the Expansion of Christianity, Volume 4, The Great Century* (New York and London: Harper, 1941).

they inherited from their Western parent bodies were of limited importance and they were motivated to think of cooperation and even union among the churches emerging from the different missions. Another key ingredient was the activity in the late 19th century of the Student Volunteer Movement and the World's Student Christian Federation (WSCF), described by the IMC's first Chairman John R. Mott as "practice games in weaving together the nations and communions."³ Both the inspirational missionary vision and the forms of association and collaboration that were developed within the WSCF helped to shape the emergence of the IMC a generation later.

Edinburgh, 1910: A Fountainhead

When leaders of the Western missionary movement convened at Edinburgh in 1910, they were following a tradition of holding such a meeting roughly decennially since Liverpool 1860. They had a sense, however, that this one had heightened significance. It was distinguished by the range of its participants, the breadth and depth of its inquiry, the scale of its ambition, the sense of urgency and opportunity with which it was imbued, and the magnitude of its potential legacy in mission and ecumenism. Its leaders were united in the conviction that they stood at a moment of unprecedented opportunity in terms of fulfilling the church's task of taking the Christian message to the whole world. They were convinced that they had arrived at a moment when political, economic, and religious factors had combined to create opportunities for worldwide missionary advance which, if not now grasped, might never recur. The conference therefore convened with a strong sense that it had a role to play in world evangelization that would prove to be historic. It also had a sense that the time was ripe for structures to be created to strengthen united action and practical cooperation.

In the run-up to the conference at Edinburgh in 1910, two figures quickly established their leadership and would continue their remarkable partnership at the helm of the IMC for decades to come. John Raleigh Mott, an American Methodist layperson, had served as student secretary of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), and general secretary of the WSCF.⁴ He was also one of the co-founders of the Foreign Missions Conference of

3 John R. Mott, cited in W. Richey Hogg, *Ecumenical Foundations: A History of the International Missionary Council and Its Nineteenth Century Background* (New York: Harper, 1952), 81.

4 See C. Howard Hopkins, *John R. Mott 1865–1955: A Biography* (Geneva and Grand Rapids: WCC Publications and Eerdmans, 1979).

North America. His first publication, entitled *The Evangelisation of the World in this Generation* (1900), gave the North American missionary movement its watchword in the early 20th century.⁵ If Mott generated the grand vision and energized the preparatory process for the Edinburgh conference of 1910, it was his Scottish counterpart, Joseph Houldsworth Oldham, who handled the immensely complex details of planning the conference. Still only in his mid-30s, Oldham was born of Scottish missionary parents in India. Following his graduation from Oxford he worked with the YMCA in India before returning to Europe for theological studies in Scotland and Germany. As the United Free Church of Scotland's Secretary for Mission Studies, he attended the inaugural meeting of the International Committee in Oxford, where he was appointed secretary to the committee with full-time responsibility for the preparation of the conference.⁶ Combining administrative efficiency with breadth of vision and philosophical acumen, Oldham was being prepared for his role as the first secretary of the IMC.

Complex ecclesiastical diplomacy lay behind the composition of the conference and the framing of its inquiry. A major objective of the organizing committee was to secure the participation of the Anglo-Catholic or "High Church" Anglican missionary societies—the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel and the Universities Mission to Central Africa.⁷ In order to do so, they had to concede that territories where Eastern Orthodox or Roman Catholic churches predominated should be regarded as already evangelized, not a view usually taken by evangelical Protestant missions at that time. Hence Latin America, much of the Middle East, and eastern Europe were effectively excluded from the consideration of the conference. Its discussion was framed around the "Christian world" of Western Europe and North America and the "non-Christian world" of Africa, Asia, and the Pacific. The question was how to take the gospel of Christ from the former to the latter. Oldham's diplomatic skills were fully tested in formulating an approach that satisfied the low-church missionary movement while enabling the Anglo-Catholics also to participate. Looking back 50 years later, he commented, "This was the turning point of the ecumenical movement."⁸

5 See John R. Mott, *The Evangelization of the World in This Generation* (London: Student Volunteer Missionary Union, 1900).

6 Keith Clements, *Faith on the Frontier: A Life of J.H. Oldham* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark; Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1999), 73–99.

7 See *ibid.*, 81–88.

8 J. H. Oldham, "Reflections on Edinburgh 1910," *Religion in Life* 29 (1959–60), 333.

To further allay apprehensions among the societies and boards invited to participate, it was agreed, “to confine the purview of the Conference to work of the kind in which all were united . . . No expression of opinion should be sought from the Conference on any matter involving any ecclesiastical or doctrinal question on which those taking part in the Conference differed among themselves.”⁹ This meant that the conference was necessarily oriented to practical issues of method, administration, and cooperation in missionary work, though in the event it was not able to exclude the aspiration toward greater church unity that would shape its legacy. Whereas earlier gatherings had concentrated on a demonstration of enthusiasm, the meeting in Edinburgh 1910 aimed to be a working conference, its subtitle being “To Consider Missionary Problems in Relation to the Non-Christian World.” It was distinguished by its attempt to achieve a more unified strategy and greater coordination within the worldwide engagement of Christian mission. The aim of the organizing committee was that it should be “a united effort to subject the plans and methods of the whole missionary enterprise to searching investigation and to coordinate missionary experience from all parts of the world.”¹⁰ This was a novel methodology at the time and proved to be one that would shape the life and activity of the IMC in the years ahead.

The Edinburgh World Missionary Conference was driven by the belief that the missionary movement had arrived at a unique moment of opportunity. “Never before,” stated its flagship text, “has there been such a conjunction of crises and of opening of doors in all parts of the world as that which characterises the present decade.”¹¹ Its significance, however, went further. Though its terms of reference explicitly excluded consideration of divisive doctrinal and ecclesiastical questions, the Edinburgh conference spawned an epoch-making vision of church unity. The Asian delegates, though few in number, were particularly influential in voicing an aspiration for greater church unity, spurred by movements in this direction which were already underway in their contexts. Though the conference was an exclusively Protestant affair there were moments when it looked to a wider church unity. Silas McBee, editor of *The Churchman*, read a letter from Bishop Bonomelli, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Cremona, in which the Bishop wrote that he recognized amongst

9 World Missionary Conference, 1910, *The History and Records of the Conference* (Edinburgh and London: Oliphant, Anderson and Ferrier; New York, Chicago and Toronto: Fleming H. Revell, 1910), 8.

10 Cited in Clements, *Faith on the Frontier*, 77.

11 World Missionary Conference, 1910, *Report of Commission I: Carrying the Gospel to all the Non-Christian World* (Edinburgh and London: Oliphant, Anderson and Ferrier; New York, Chicago and Toronto: Fleming H. Revell, 1910), 1.

the Edinburgh delegates elements of faith “more than sufficient to constitute a common ground of agreement, and to afford a sound basis for further discussion, tending to promote the union of all believers in Christ.”¹² Dr R. Wardlaw Thompson of the London Missionary Society told the conference: “I long for the time when we shall see another Conference, and when men of the Greek Church and the Roman Church shall talk things over with us in the service of Christ.”¹³ Thus the conference marked the beginning of what would become known as the ecumenical movement. “Edinburgh 1910,” wrote Hugh Martin, “was in fact a fountain head of international and inter-Church co-operation on a depth and scale never before known.”¹⁴

In the run-up to the conference the idea of a permanent instrument of collaboration was widely canvassed. Missionary societies in continental Europe suggested, “the formation of a ‘International Committee’ dealing with international missionary questions.”¹⁵ The Foreign Missions Conference of North America responded favourably, and John R. Mott urged British missionary societies to form a similar association to the European and American bodies so that they might together create a permanent international instrument of missionary unity and cooperation.¹⁶ The ground was therefore well prepared for the central recommendation of Commission Eight on Co-operation and the Promotion of Unity: “that a Continuation Committee of the World Missionary Conference be appointed, international and representative in character . . . to maintain in prominence the idea of the World Missionary Conference as a means of co-ordinating missionary work, of laying sound foundations for future development, and of evoking and claiming by corporate action fresh stores of spiritual force for the evangelisation of the world.”¹⁷ The unanimous adoption of this recommendation was the only decision taken by the Edinburgh conference, but it proved to be one with far-reaching significance.

12 World Missionary Conference, 1910, *Cooperation and the Promotion of Unity*, Report of Commission VIII (Edinburgh and London: Oliphant, Anderson and Ferrier; New York, Chicago and Toronto: Fleming H. Revell, 1910), 220-21.

13 *Ibid.*, 216.

14 Hugh Martin, *Beginning at Edinburgh: A Jubilee Assessment of the World Missionary Conference 1910* (London: Edinburgh House Press, 1960), 3.

15 “Memorandum on Appointment of a Standing Committee, Submitted by the Missionary Societies on the Continent of Europe,” 15 September 1909, cited in Hogg, *Ecumenical Foundations*, 117.

16 Hogg, *Ecumenical Foundations*, 118.

17 *History and Records*, 95–96.

The Continuation Committee

The new committee knew that it would take time to design structures and build confidence in the new body it was mandated to create, but there was one step it could take without delay. When it met at Bishop Auckland in May 1911, it decided to launch a journal, the *International Review of Missions*. Edited by Oldham, the journal was dedicated to continuing Edinburgh 1910's emphasis on the disciplined study of mission, attempting to contribute to the "science of mission."¹⁸ When the first issue appeared in January 1912, in Latourette's assessment: "The Review immediately took its place as the outstanding supra-confessional international journal in the field of missions."¹⁹ In due course, the *International Review of Missions* became the house journal of the International Missionary Council. It has continued to appear regularly and is unsurpassed as a barometer of thinking about mission over the past 110 years.²⁰

When the Continuation Committee met at Lake Mohonk, in New York State, in 1912 it remained highly motivated to continue what had been begun at Edinburgh but took the view that it was premature to take any action on the proposed international committee. There was still work to be done to win the confidence of the missionary societies as regards the role of such a body. Meanwhile Mott set out on an extensive tour of Asia—from Colombo to Tokyo—to raise awareness of the work of the Continuation Committee and consult about future plans. He convened 21 conferences on the model of Edinburgh 1910. In China, a large conference determined to drive forward the cause of Christian unity and established its own China Continuation Committee, with a requirement that not less than one-third of its members would be Chinese. Similar developments occurred in other Asian countries, laying the foundations for National Christian Councils that would emerge in the 1920s. Within two years the Continuation Committee helped form the Conference of British Missionary Societies with its 40-strong membership. The two bodies shared single premises in London, suitably named Edinburgh House. This initiative pointed the way that would be followed in many other countries also.

18 *International Review of Missions* 1:1 (1912), 1.

19 Kenneth Scott Latourette, "Ecumenical Bearings of the Missionary Movement and the International Missionary Council," in *A History of the Ecumenical Movement 1517-1948*, 4th ed. Ruth Rouse and Stephen Charles Neill (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1994), 351–402, at 363–64.

20 See *International Review of Mission* 100:393 (2011), "A Century of Ecumenical Missiology"; particularly Brian Stanley, "Edinburgh 1910 and the Genesis of the IRM," 149–59.

When it met in The Hague in 1913, the Continuation Committee, attempting to address concerns that it was going to create structures that would dominate or control the life and work of mission boards and missionary societies, formulated the “Hague Principle”: “the only Bodies entitled to determine missionary policy are the Home Boards, the Missions, and the Churches concerned.”²¹ This aimed to make it clear that the work being developed by the Continuation Committee was aiming not to capture initiative and influence at the expense of the existing boards and societies but rather to give them the opportunity to confer and act together in relation to challenges that they commonly shared.

The happy collaboration that had been developing between British and German missionary leaders suffered an abrupt set-back with the outbreak of the First World War. Indeed, the entire missionary enterprise worldwide suffered much disruption as the war took its toll. German missions were particularly severely affected, with many missionaries being interned or repatriated. Here, however, the international missionary cooperation developed through Edinburgh 1910 showed its value as support was provided to enable the German missions to continue in these difficult circumstances. As the war drew towards a close, the standing committee of the Conference of British Missionary Societies took the initiative to form a new body called the Emergency Committee of Co-operating Missions.

Deep mutual suspicion and misunderstanding had built up between the German missionary leadership on the one hand and the British and American leaders of international missionary cooperation on the other. Bridging this gulf was a major item on the agenda of the emergency committee. Some progress had been made by the time an ad hoc international missionary conference was convened at Crans, Switzerland, in June 1920. This was a meeting neither of the Continuation Committee nor of the emergency committee but included many of the personnel who had become familiar in this sphere since Edinburgh 1910. The conference dealt with political issues of the post-war context, particularly the return of German missionaries to their former fields. It also addressed the question of what form of international missionary organization would be needed to meet the challenges of a new era. It took up the Hague Principle of 1913 and envisaged a body based on the national councils that would concern itself with distinctively international issues. Already Oldham could see that this new body might be the

21 Continuation Committee Minutes, The Hague, 14th–20th November 1913, 55, Minute 153, cited in Hogg, *Ecumenical Foundations*, 161.

stepping-stone to “something that may represent the beginnings of a world league of churches.”²²

Formation of the International Missionary Council at Lake Mohonk, 1921

After having existed in shadow form during the years since Edinburgh 1910, the IMC formally came into being at Lake Mohonk, in New York State, in 1921. By this time national agencies of missionary cooperation had been created in many countries, and it was these that sent their delegates to Lake Mohonk to found the IMC. It was mainly a North American and European affair with a small number of Asian delegates also included. Conspicuously absent were the Germans, who had concluded that they could not participate in international conferences so long as they were placed under restrictions as a result of the war.

The preparatory meeting at Crans had proposed the title “International Missionary Committee” but at Lake Mohonk it was decided to change “Committee” to “Council” so as to clarify that it was not an executive body. The Hague Principle of 1913 remained fundamental and it was spelled out that, “the only bodies entitled to determine missionary policy are the missionary societies and boards, or the churches which they represent, and the churches on the mission field.”²³ Drawing on the protocol established at Edinburgh 1910 the new council also resolved that it would not act or speak, “on any matter involving an ecclesiastical or doctrinal question, on which the members of the Council or bodies constituting the Council may differ among themselves.”²⁴

The responsibilities that it accepted included stimulating thinking and investigation on missionary questions, coordinating the endeavours of the various national missionary agencies, bringing about united action when necessary, lobbying on behalf of religious freedom and issues of justice, publishing the *International Review of Missions*, and calling a world missionary conference as and when required.²⁵ It was agreed that there would be 70

22 J. H. Oldham, “International Missionary Organisation,” cited in Hogg, *Ecumenical Foundations*, 197.

23 Minutes of the International Missionary Council, Lake Mohonk, New York, USA, October 1–6, 1921, 34, cited in Hogg, *Ecumenical Foundations*, 204.

24 IMC Minutes, Lake Mohonk, 1921, 40, cited in Hogg, *Ecumenical Foundations*, 204.

25 *Ibid.*, 36, cited in Latourette, *Ecumenical Bearings*, 367.

members, all delegates of national missionary agencies, with 20 from the North American Foreign Missions Conference, 14 from the Conference of British Missionary Societies, and six from the German Protestant Missions Committee (the *Ausschuss*). The remaining places were allocated among smaller national bodies. Additionally, provision was made for the co-option of up to ten members from areas not otherwise represented—Africa, the Near East, and Latin America. The inclusion of Latin America was particularly significant since its exclusion from Edinburgh 1910 still rankled. The constitution also provided for the appointment of a 12-person committee to guide the affairs of the council between meetings.

The Lake Mohonk meeting also addressed a question that proved seminal for the IMC's early decades: the relations between foreign missions and indigenous churches. Prophetically, it imagined a future in which Western missionary control would gradually be relinquished as authority passed to the leaders of the churches emerging from the missions. The council also took steps to champion the re-admission of German missionaries to territories from which they had been excluded as a result of the war. Mott was elected as chairman; Oldham and A. L. Warnshuis, an American missionary to China, were elected secretaries. The officers were given wide-ranging remits to investigate current international conditions, particularly in regard to missionary freedom, and social issues, as these bore on the work of the missions.

Within a framework of accepting doctrinal differences, missionary agencies had shown that they could cooperate effectively on such matters as Bible translation, production and distribution of Christian literature, the running of schools, colleges and medical facilities, and the training of missionaries.

During the 1920s, German missions remained a major concern of the IMC, and extensive efforts were made to channel support, both in terms of finance and personnel, to missions that had been cut off from their original resource base in Germany. Related to this was responsibility for negotiations with Government, in which securing permission for German missionaries to return to their former fields remained a central concern. Education was another major preoccupation—seeking to coordinate and provide direction to the vast educational enterprise of the missionary movement. A major focus on Africa found expression in an influential conference organized by the IMC at Le Zoute in Belgium in 1926. Social questions were also prominent on the agenda, particularly the opium trade, race, slavery, and industrialization.

Jerusalem, 1928: Mission and the Kingdom of God

The first full meeting of the IMC took place in Jerusalem in 1928. This gathering saw “the younger churches” much more widely represented than they had been at Edinburgh, revealing the direction of travel for the coming century. Of the 250 participants, more than 50 were nationals from “the mission field.” The voices of “national” leaders were influential and made it clear that the time had come for the indigenous churches to take responsibility for mission in their contexts. This would mean a change of role for the “missions,” involving handover of property and mission staff coming under the authority of the churches with which they served. From Jerusalem onwards, it would be the indigenous churches rather than the Western missions that would become central to missionary thinking. Taking advantage of the Jerusalem venue, the IMC also seized the opportunity to establish fraternal relations with Orthodox churches, another initiative that would have far-reaching effects.

It also became clear that the division of the world into “Christian” and “non-Christian” on geographical, territorial terms had already become obsolete. The vitality and maturity of the churches on “the mission field” on the one hand, and the growing secularism of the so-called “Christian world” on the other, made it plain that a Christendom understanding of the world was no longer serviceable. The challenges involved in mission to a secularized Western world were registered for the first time at Jerusalem. There was also a much sharper awareness of the dangers posed to the missionary enterprise by the risk of being complicit in colonialism. Far more than had been the case at Edinburgh, a hermeneutic of suspicion was applied to the relation between the missionary enterprise and the global domination of the West. This led to greater sensitivity to the pitfalls facing Western-based missions and a determination to ground mission on a theological and Christological basis. Rather than thinking of the advance of Christian mission simply in quantitative terms, the council paid new attention to the qualitative aspect.

Whereas the conference in Edinburgh in 1910 worked on an assumption of agreement about the content of the Christian message, by the time of the Jerusalem meeting in 1928 this was an issue that was very much in question. The First World War had badly shaken confidence in Western civilization as the embodiment of the gospel, prompting critical reflection on the substance of the Christian message. Metaphors of warfare and conquest no longer seemed appropriate in relation to other faiths. In fact, delegates such as W. E. Hocking were inclined to think much more in terms of mutual understanding and cooperation between the different faiths, a trend that

would soon find more extensive expression in the Laymen's Foreign Mission Enquiry of 1932–33.²⁶ Others were alarmed by this new direction of thought and feared that the missionary movement was moving towards syncretism. Another major point of tension was the question of how far Christian mission should be concerned with effecting change in the social and economic order as opposed to concentrating exclusively on personal conversion and the growth of the church. The preparatory studies revealed a broadening scope of enquiry, including such topics as religious education, race conflict, industrialization, and rural problems. This widening of the understanding of mission was energizing for some, but others feared this rethinking of Christian mission in terms of its engagement with the political and economic structures of society was moving in the direction of the “social gospel” and losing its evangelistic edge. Theologically, this found expression in intense debate about the meaning of the “kingdom of God.”²⁷

The conference in Jerusalem also provided the opportunity for the IMC to renew its organization to take account of the increased presence and profile of indigenous churches from parts of the world that had once been regarded as the “mission field.” Membership of the committee responsible to guide the affairs of the IMC between conferences was increased to 37 to allow broader representation, particularly from the “younger” churches. The IMC also elected three vice-chairs: Cheng Ching-yi, general secretary of the National Christian Council of China; St Clair Donaldson, Bishop of Salisbury in the UK; and Baroness W. E. van Boetzelaer van Dumbledam from the Netherlands. William Paton succeeded Oldham as editor of the *International Review of Missions*. During the troubled decade of the 1930s, the IMC played a very active role, seeking to support the missionary cause in times of change and playing an historic role in the development of worldwide Christian unity. As Hogg remarked, “For years no other body existed to knit the younger churches, through the National Christian Councils, into the organised fabric of world Christianity. In that particular sense the International Missionary Council for a time *was* the Ecumenical Movement.”²⁸

26 See W. E. Hocking, ed., *Rethinking Missions: A Laymen's Inquiry after One Hundred Years* (New York and London: Harper and Brothers, 1932); *Laymen's Foreign Mission Enquiry, Supplementary Series*, 7 vols. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1933).

27 *The Christian Life and Message*, 481; see further Timothy Yates, *Christian Mission in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 68.

28 Hogg, *Ecumenical Foundations*, 283.

Tambaram, 1938: The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World

The IMC held its second major international conference at Tambaram, near Madras (now Chennai) in south India, in 1938. Representatives of the “younger churches” were now clearly in a majority, with almost half of the 471 delegates coming from Asia and significant delegations from Africa and Latin America. An important backdrop to the conference was the speed at which the relationship between Western missions and indigenous churches was changing. By now it was fully apparent that responsibility for mission was transferring to the indigenous churches, whose leaders set the tone at Tambaram. This dynamic meant that the church was very much at the centre of attention. The Asian delegates in particular brought a passion for church unity, arguing powerfully that the divided state of the church was proving a grave impediment to mission in their contexts.²⁹ At the same time, the conference was marked by a concern for indigenization of the faith—a theme that would preoccupy generations to come. Another significant contribution to the conference was the work led by Merle Davis on the economic basis of the church and the need for the younger churches to become self-supporting. Meanwhile a group convened by Bishop Stephen Neill highlighted the urgency and importance of the development of theological education with a view to the formation of the leaders required by the younger churches.

The question of the Christian understanding of other religions and its implications for missiology remained prominent. An important part of the preparation for Tambaram was a commission to the Dutch missiologist Hendrik Kraemer to write *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World*.³⁰ Christianity, in Kraemer’s view, could not be regarded as the fulfilment of other religions. Rather a dialectical approach was required in which the presence and action of God in other religious traditions could be affirmed but where this would always be seen in the light of the unexpectedness and “discontinuity” of God’s decisive action in Jesus Christ. If missionaries lacked the confidence that Jesus was “the Way, the Truth, and the Life,” how would they be able to call people to costly conversion? Kraemer’s Barthian approach to some degree polarized the conference, which in the end had to acknowledge

²⁹ *The World Mission of the Church: Findings and Recommendations of the International Missionary Council, Tambaram, Madras, India, December 12th to 29th, 1938*, 130–31, cited in Hogg, *Ecumenical Foundations*, 301–02.

³⁰ Hendrik Kraemer, *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World* (London: Edinburgh House Press, 1938).

divergence as regards how to understand non-Christian religions.³¹ The rise of Nazism and the impending Second World War formed an unmistakable backdrop. China and Japan were already at war. In this context, it was moving to see Chinese and Japanese delegates taking communion together. Kraemer's insistence on the centrality of the apostolic witness was driven, in part, by the need to counter the claims of such false absolutes as fascism, National Socialism, and communism.

Whitby, 1947: Partnership in Obedience

The fear of war that had been so evident at Tambaram soon became a reality. The next year saw the outbreak of the Second World War, and the IMC was soon absorbed by practical considerations entailed in sustaining the missionary enterprise in wartime conditions. The war years also saw major changes in the leadership of the IMC. Oldham had resigned at Madras, Mott and Warnshuis both retired in 1942, and Paton died the following year. Other leaders who had been prominent in the life of the IMC also died around this time, including Cheng Ching-yi, Elisabeth van Boetzelaer, William Temple, and V. S. Azariah. It was time for a new generation of leadership: John W. Decker, in New York, and Norman Goodall, in London, were appointed Secretaries and the Whitby meeting appointed John A. Mackay as Chairman and Charles W. Ranson to the newly created post of general secretary.

Having come through the chaotic environment of wartime, delegates to the IMC meeting at Whitby in Canada in 1947 were determined to focus afresh on the centrality and urgency of the proclamation of the gospel. The small size of the gathering—just 112 delegates—perhaps fostered the intimacy between representatives of the older and younger churches, which led to a sense of equality and mutuality such as had never been known before. The result was a new emphasis on “partnership in obedience,” as the keynote of their working together. Foreign missionary and indigenous pastor were called to work together, on an equal basis, in the task of evangelism. By this time, Latin American leaders had become familiar figures in IMC gatherings, their exclusion from Edinburgh 1910 becoming a distant memory.³² Despite its small size, there was a compelling sense that the gathering represented the worldwide unity of the Christian faith, now reassembled after the fragmentation of the war years.

31 *The World Mission of the Church*, 44, cited in Hogg, *Ecumenical Foundations*, 296.

32 See further J. Samuel Escobar, “The Missiological Significance of Latin American Protestantism,” *International Review of Mission*, 100:393 (2011), 232–43.

Willingen, 1952: *Missio Dei*

The global landscape was changing rapidly when the IMC met at Willingen, Germany, in 1952. Two world wars had fatally undermined the moral authority of the “Christian” West. The advent of the United Nations placed a premium on mutual understanding and cooperation among nations and implicitly questioned the role of the Christian missionary enterprise. Colonial rule had come to an end in south Asia and was increasingly under question in Africa. The Communist revolution in China had led to the expulsion of all missionaries from what had been regarded as a premier mission field. Meanwhile, the continuing rise of secularism in the West eroded the strength of what had once been the “home base” of missions. It was a shattering and soul-searching time for missionary leaders. Familiar features were disappearing from the landscape. The outlook was unclear, confusing, and threatening. Mission, it appeared, was in crisis.

The crisis prompted a quest for a deeper theological meaning and justification of mission. The far-reaching result was a new focus on an understanding of mission as the mission of God. Anthropocentric and ecclesiocentric conceptions of mission gave way to theocentric, Christocentric, and Basileio-centric conceptions. Though the term *missio Dei* was not used at Willingen, it was coined soon afterwards by German missionary leader Karl Hartenstein to describe the main theological emphasis of the conference. This was truly a new departure in the understanding of mission, one that rested on the pioneering theological work of Karl Barth. As David Bosch observed,

In the new image mission is not primarily an activity of the church, but an attribute of God. God is a missionary God . . . Mission is thereby seen as a movement from God to the world; the church is viewed as an instrument for that mission. There is church because there is mission, not vice versa. To participate in mission is to participate in the movement of God’s love toward people, since God is a fountain of sending love.³³

This new understanding has subsequently been recognized as a decisive paradigm shift for ecumenical missiology and has ever more widely commended itself as a key to understanding the meaning of mission.

Once again, national Christian leaders from the younger churches spoke eloquently of the urgency and importance of church unity. They were acutely conscious that the integrity of mission depended on the unity of the church.

³³ David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1991), 390.

The gospel of reconciliation would always sound hollow if it did not give rise to reconciled communities. A significant development at Willingen, in terms of participation, was the presence of Pentecostal leaders who stated that, “After nearly half a century of misunderstanding and ostracism, for which they recognize they have not been entirely without blame on their own part, the Pentecostal Churches offer their fellowship in Christ to the whole of the Church in this grave hour of her history.”³⁴ Their contribution was to be an ever-growing one.

Achimota, 1957–58: Church and Mission

When the World Council of Churches (WCC) was formed in 1948, the IMC was formally “in association.” The officers of the IMC had been very significant players in the inception of the WCC, with Mott and Paton serving on the Provisional Committee that laid the groundwork.³⁵ In 1948, a Joint Committee of the WCC and IMC was formed, and soon the question was raised as to whether the two global bodies should be integrated. With the conference at Tambaram having brought a clear understanding that responsibility for mission lies primarily with the church, there was a strong theological argument in favour of integration. A WCC meeting at Rolle in 1951 had adopted an influential statement on “The Calling of the Church to Mission and Unity,” drafted by Lesslie Newbigin, which argued at a theological level for the integral connection of mission and unity.³⁶ Others, however, were concerned that a church-centric view of mission was inhibiting missionary initiative. There were also fears among mission activists that the mission agenda would be swamped by the ecclesial and bureaucratic concerns of a body like the WCC. This debate came to a head when the IMC met at Achimota, Ghana, at the end of 1957.

As well as wrestling with the question of the best institutional framework in which to advance ecumenical commitment to mission, the Achimota conference was concerned with the very definition of mission. The German missiologist Walter Freytag spoke of how missions had lost their way and

34 Norman Goodall ed., *Missions under the Cross: Addresses Delivered at the Enlarged Meeting of the Committee of the International Missionary Council at Willingen, in Germany, 1952; with Statements issued by the Meeting* (London: Edinburgh House Press, 1953), 250.

35 Latourette, *Ecumenical Bearings*, 372.

36 See Lesslie Newbigin, *Unfinished Agenda: An Updated Autobiography* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1993), 133–34; Mark T. B. Laing, *From Crisis to Creation: Lesslie Newbigin and the Reinvention of Christian Mission* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2012), 61–69.

suggested that understanding mission broadly as God's reality in this world was the best basis on which to face the future. While some were ready to embrace this new understanding of mission, others espoused a more traditional evangelistic approach. It was a point of divergence that was to have far-reaching effects.

An influential initiative of the Achimota conference was the establishment of the generously endowed Theological Education Fund, which would play a significant role in enabling the development of theological education in the "younger churches." In the years to come, it would foster and resource the training and formation of many of those who were to provide leadership to the ecumenical movement. Lesslie Newbigin, who had been an increasingly influential figure in the IMC during the post-war years, was elected chairperson of the council at Achimota and soon afterwards was seconded by the Church of South India to serve full-time as general secretary. To him fell the task of guiding the IMC through the process of integration with the WCC.³⁷

New Delhi, 1961: Integration of the International Missionary Council and the World Council of Churches

While there were structural and organizational arguments in favour of the integration of the IMC and the WCC, it was also driven by the theological conviction that church and mission belonged together. For Lesslie Newbigin, IMC General Secretary, the unity of the church was essential to the integrity of mission just as much as its missionary nature was essential to the integrity of the church. There was thus a theological imperative driving the integration process, as well as practical and organisational considerations. The IMC ceased to exist as a separate organisation as it became the Division and Commission for World Mission and Evangelism of the WCC.³⁸ However, the resistance to integration that had found expression at Achimota had by no means abated. Integration was viewed with deep suspicion by a growing evangelical constituency, which was forming its own networks, often defined

³⁷ Geoffrey Wainwright, *Lesslie Newbigin: A Theological Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 9.

³⁸ For an account of the 40 years during which the IMC existed as an independent organization, see Kenneth R. Ross, "The International Missionary Council between 1910 and 1961," in *A History of the Desire for Christian Unity: Ecumenism in the Churches (19th-21st Century) Volume 1: Dawn of Ecumenism*, ed. Alberto Melloni and Luca Ferracci (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 722–43.

by their opposition to the trends evident in the IMC and WCC. As Mark Laing observes, “The loose, broad-based association the IMC had maintained for decades was fractured, and the relationship between evangelicals and ‘ecumenicals’ became increasingly polarized and antagonistic.”³⁹

Though integration, ironically, was to lead to a fragmentation of the missionary movement, its historic significance cannot be underestimated. As Stephen Neill remarked, “This was indeed a revolutionary moment in Church history. More than two hundred Church bodies in all parts of the world, assembled in the persons of their official representatives, had solemnly declared themselves in the presence of God to be responsible as Churches for the evangelization of the whole world. Such an event had never taken place in the history of the Church since Pentecost.”⁴⁰ Another influential development at New Delhi was the admission of several Orthodox churches to full membership of the WCC. From this point onward, their perspectives would exercise growing influence on the ecumenical understanding of mission, through such characteristic themes as the cosmic character of salvation, the eschatological nature of mission, and the duty to incarnate the gospel in every culture.⁴¹ Soon the Second Vatican Council would open the way for greatly increased involvement of the Roman Catholic Church in ecumenical missiology. Though it never became a member church of the WCC, from the 1960s the Roman Catholic Church became an influential collaborator in ecumenical missiological endeavour.

Mexico City, 1963: Witness in Six Continents

The first meeting of the former IMC in its new guise as the WCC’s Commission on World Mission and Evangelism took place in 1963. The conference was marked by a new perception that the time had now passed in which one could think of the “home base” and the “mission field” in distinct geographical terms. Indeed, the conference’s focus on the challenges posed by secularism revealed how far the West itself had become a mission field. The question of how Western churches shaped by the Christendom model

39 Mark Laing, “The Church Is the Mission: Integrating the IMC with the WCC,” *International Review of Mission* 100:2 (2011), 218.

40 Stephen Neill, *The Church and Christian Union* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 108–109, cited in Yates, *Christian Mission*, 157.

41 Anastasios Yannoulatos, “The Purpose and Motive of Mission,” *International Review of Mission* 54 (July 1965), 281–97.

could recover the missionary nature of the church became the focus of a major WCC study on the missionary structure of the congregation.⁴² No longer would mission be understood in terms of “sending” and “receiving” countries. Instead, it was suggested that the missionary frontier runs around the world as the line that separates belief from unbelief, the unseen frontier which cuts across all other frontiers and presents the universal church with its primary missionary challenge. Henceforth it would be a matter of mission “from everywhere to everywhere.” A small but significant indication of the changing understanding of mission in this period would come in 1969 with the removal of the ‘s’ from the title of the *International Review of Missions*, so that from that year it appeared as the *International Review of Mission*.⁴³ This, as Larsson and Castro explain, “reflected the change in attitude from ‘missions,’ meaning organized missionary work from Western Christendom to what were regarded as non-Christian countries, to ‘mission’ as the task of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church through its members wherever they are located.”⁴⁴

Tensions which had been building in ecumenical missiology were clearly apparent at Mexico City. The conference’s most innovative work was done around the question of how to understand the missionary task in the context of what God is doing in the secular events of our time. It struck a note of dialogue: “The pattern of Christian mission in the secular world must therefore be one of constant encounter with the real needs of our age. Its form must be that of dialogue, using contemporary language and modes of thought, learning from the scientific and sociological categories, and meeting people in their own situations.”⁴⁵ However, while some were adventurous in advocating a view of the mission of God that perceived the action of God primarily through secular structures and agencies, others defended the view that the church is the primary sphere where the mission of God finds expression. A parallel tension was evident around the question of how to understand other religions. While some saw the presence and work of God in other religions,

42 *The Church for Others and the Church for the World: A Quest for Structures for Missionary Congregations* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1967).

43 See William H. Crane, “Dropping the S,” *International Review of Mission* 58:2 (1969), 141–44.

44 Birgitta Larsson and Emilio Castro, “From Missions to Mission,” in *A History of the Ecumenical Movement Volume 3 1968-2000*, ed. John Briggs, Mercy Amba Oduyoye and George Tsetsis (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2004), 125.

45 Ronald K. Orchard ed., *Witness in Six Continents: Records of the Meeting of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches held in Mexico City December 8th to 19th, 1963* (London: Edinburgh House Press, 1964), 121.

others maintained that other religions were demonic and stressed the continuing need for evangelism. The conference sought to take a middle line, emphasising that the gospel of Christ is for all.

Bangkok, 1972–73: Salvation Today

The concerns of the Bangkok CWME (WCC Commission on World Mission and Evangelism) conference found expression particularly in the moratorium debate. The “younger churches” were not so young any longer and were determined to assume responsibility for mission in their respective spheres. This would involve the Western “sending” churches re-defining their role. A provocative proposal was that they should accept for a time a moratorium on missionary appointments in order to provide an opportunity for the indigenous churches to truly assume authority in their own context. This would set the scene for a new era of working in partnership. This attempt to re-set the operative relationships in mission was undergirded by a fresh emphasis on contextual theology and a recognition of cultural identities. The conference also sought to balance socio-political concerns with a commitment to evangelism and personal conversion.

To many evangelicals, however, it appeared to be heavily biased towards the social and political realm and to lack a sufficiently clear theology of salvation. They had been alarmed by the prominence of social and political concerns at the WCC assembly at Uppsala in 1968. It had received a report on a study of the missionary structure of the congregation that departed decisively from a church-centric view of mission in favour of an understanding of mission built around the action of God in society at large. The calling of the church, on this view, is to participate in God’s missionary action that is valid for the whole world and embraces both church and society. In an arresting phrase, it was said that the world must be allowed to provide the agenda for the churches.⁴⁶ This opened the way to a major focus on the social and political witness of the church that appeared to many evangelicals to be at the expense of the spiritual dimension. Bangkok marked a fork in the road between “ecumenicals” and “evangelicals”—something that was clearly expressed when evangelicals held the Lausanne Congress the following year and established the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization as an evangelical parallel to the WCC’s CWME. Nonetheless, despite disagreement and distrust, the two sides in this debate continued their dialogue. It

⁴⁶ See further David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1991), 383.

found expression through participation in each other's conferences and in a lively debate in the *International Review of Mission*.⁴⁷

Melbourne, 1980: Good News for the Poor

Emilio Castro opened the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism Conference at Melbourne in 1980 with the words: "The era of world missions is over; the era of world mission is beginning."⁴⁸ It was a captivating vision, yet there was frustration that older patterns of power and control persisted and progress with the ecumenical sharing of resources was slow. The 1970s had seen the London Missionary Society transformed into the Council for World Mission and the Paris Missionary Society transformed into Cevaa (Communauté d'Églises en Mission) both seeking to move from a model of mission "from the West to the rest" to one of mutuality and mission from everywhere to everywhere. Despite such inspiring initiatives, however, the mainstream of church life in many contexts appeared little concerned by the need to share resources in the interests of the one mission of God. In this context, Melbourne sought to highlight the issue of poverty and the question of what it would mean for the churches to represent good news for the poor. This was the era of liberation theology, and the conference proved receptive to its emphases. Emilio Castro suggested that its affirmation of the poor was the "missiological principle par excellence" and the church's relation to the poor "the missionary yardstick."⁴⁹

Whatever the merits of this attempt to retrieve biblical teaching on poverty and to think through the contemporary implications of God's bias to the poor, it created a negative reaction among evangelicals, now organized under the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization. The conference at Melbourne was criticized for having a deep passion for the poor but not for the lost and for having more concern for the renewal of the church than with the evangelistic mobilization of congregations for mission.⁵⁰ Despite the attempts of the conference to balance the proclamation of the gospel with social commitment and action, many evangelicals were unconvinced and continued to feel that Christian witness was being diluted in the ecumenical

47 See, e.g., John Stott, "The Significance of Lausanne," *International Review of Mission* 70:2 (1975), 288–94.

48 Larsson and Castro, "From Missions to Mission," 127.

49 Emilio Castro, *Freedom in Mission: The Perspective of the Kingdom of God* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1985), 151, cited in Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 435.

50 Larsson and Castro, "From Missions to Mission," 138–39.

movement by excessive preoccupation with social and political concerns. The Melbourne conference, however, did see a renewed confidence in the church as instrument of the mission of God after two decades when the action of God in the world had been at the centre of attention in ecumenical thinking about mission.

Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation, 1982

This document, the WCC's only 20th-century attempt to provide a comprehensive account of its understanding of mission, emerged from an attempt to build bridges between the ecumenical movement and evangelicals during the 1970s. It was a conciliatory document designed to encompass the characteristic concerns of each side in what had been a highly divisive debate. During the preparations for Melbourne conference in 1980, CWME, as its director, Emilio Castro, explained, "engaged in a long and fruitful conversation with churches of all confessions and regions, assessing the priorities for our missionary obedience today."⁵¹ The affirmation was approved by the central committee in July 1982, the only official statement on mission and evangelism to be adopted by the WCC until *Together towards Life* in 2012.

With a trinitarian basis and Christological concentration, it sought to break down false dichotomies between the spiritual gospel and the material gospel. A clear commitment to the proclamation of the gospel was complemented by prophetic engagement with questions of social justice. Concern with social and political issues is balanced with an unequivocal affirmation of the centrality of the church in God's divine economy. "To appreciate the value and motive of this affirmation," suggests Lalsangkima Pachuau, "one needs to recognize the pains of the transition, the longing for a deeper theology of mission that would provide ground for doing mission in the new age, and the efforts and difficulties involved in developing a common perception and comprehensive view of mission."⁵² Yet, not all are convinced that it succeeded in its objectives. Pachuau finds it to be "a hodgepodge of differing ideas and emphases . . . While each section appears to be clear in itself, the

51 Emilio Castro, "Foreword," *Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1983), v.

52 Lalsangkima Pachuau, "Ecumenical Missiology: Three Decades of Historical and Theological Development (1951-1982)," in Lalsangkima Pachuau, *Ecumenical Missiology: Contemporary Trends, Issues and Themes* (Bangalore: United Theological College, 2002), 29-50, at 44.

reading of the entire document leaves the reader unclear of its message.”⁵³ Nonetheless, by incorporating the characteristic emphases of both sides, it did play a significant role in bridging the gulf that had opened up between ecumenicals and evangelicals during the 1970s.

San Antonio, 1989: Mission in Christ’s Way

The CWME conference held at San Antonio in Texas, USA, in 1989 attempted to bring together the advocates of differing approaches to mission in an active commitment to follow Christ. “Creative tension” was a key phrase. The conference theme was “Your will be done: Mission in Christ’s way.” Christopher Duraisingh suggested that three “concentration points” can be discerned in the proceedings of the conference. “They are God’s unconditional will to gather up and renew all things in Christ, the present pain and struggle of people at the periphery and the provisional experience of the church as a sign and foretaste of God’s purpose for all creation.”⁵⁴ The conference has also been remembered for its formulation of an understanding of the relation of Christianity to other faiths, a perennial theme in ecumenical mission conferences. In an oft-quoted sentence it stated, “We cannot point to any other way of salvation than Jesus Christ; at the same time, we cannot set limits to the saving power of God.”⁵⁵ It acknowledged that there was a tension built into this understanding but argued that it is a tension to be respected rather than resolved. At the same time that the WCC conference convened in San Antonio, evangelicals gathered in Manila for “Lausanne II.” The division in the Protestant missionary movement was plain to see. However, significant attempts at bridge-building were taking place, and there were voices at San Antonio urging that in future parallel conferences on the same site be arranged.⁵⁶

Salvador de Bahia, 1996: Gospel and Culture

The inter-relationship of gospel and culture was taken up in the new context of the 1990s at Salvador de Bahia, in Brazil, in 1996. The end of the Cold War and the disintegration of the Soviet Union had ushered in a new world

⁵³ Ibid., 45.

⁵⁴ Christopher Duraisingh, “Editorial,” *International Review of Mission* 89:1 (1990), 3.

⁵⁵ Frederick R. Wilson, ed., *The San Antonio Report. Your Will be Done: Mission in Christ’s Way* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1990), 32.

⁵⁶ See Yates, *Christian Mission*, 226.

order in which cultural and ethnic factors underlay many conflicts. It was clear by this time that each culture had to discover its own way of expressing the gospel rather than replicating Western models. Respect for cultural integrity was a strong emphasis at the conference at Salvador de Bahia, but the conference also emphasized the need to critique and challenge cultural expression on the basis of the gospel and to be open to other identities. It explored the creative tension between contextuality and catholicity. In a global context of violence, fragmentation, and the destruction of community, the conference met under the title “Called to One Hope: The Gospel in Diverse Cultures.”

The conference was marked by a conscious effort to hear the voices of those who had been excluded from earlier gatherings, such as Christians from the global South, Indigenous peoples, women, and youth. The inclusion of significant numbers of young people was an innovative feature of the conference. Lesslie Newbigin had suggested that “the only possible hermeneutic of the gospel is a congregation which believes it”⁵⁷ and the Salvador conference gave considerable attention to the life of the local congregation. A particular challenge at this level was posed by large-scale migration that was presenting congregation with the challenge of how to be inclusive of people arriving from other contexts and cultures.

Structural issues that make for oppression and call for liberation were prominent in the discussions and reinforced by a visit to a quay where slaves taken from Africa disembarked for hundreds of years. The conference was aware that Christian mission can also be guilty of abuse of power. Attention was given to proselytism as an unwelcome and invalid form of evangelism that jeopardizes common Christian witness.⁵⁸ A key question, as Christopher Duraisingh suggested, is the following: “If the unity of the church and its witness to the gospel of reconciliation are inseparably related and if the hope to which Christians are called is one, how may the churches promote responsible relationships in mission that witness to God’s purpose to reconcile all things into unity in Christ?”⁵⁹

57 Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (London: SPCK, 1989), 232.

58 A product of the conference, published the following year, is the text, “Towards Common Witness: A Call to Adopt Responsible Relationships in Mission and to Renounce Proselytism,” in *You Are the Light of the World’: Statements on Mission by the World Council of Churches 1980–2005* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2005), 39–58.

59 Christopher Duraisingh ed., *Called to One Hope: The Gospel in Diverse Cultures* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1998), xiii.

Athens, 2005: Come, Holy Spirit, Heal and Reconcile!

In May 2005, a WCC Conference on World Mission and Evangelism was held in a predominantly Orthodox country for the first time. This not only influenced the style of the conference but demonstrated the influence of Orthodox theology on ecumenical missiology in regard to the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, worship, healing, and reconciliation.⁶⁰ It was also marked by a diversity of participation and a deliberate move to include representatives of growing parts of world Christianity that had not always been represented at major ecumenical events. Without sacrificing the depth and range brought to missiology by the *missio Dei* perspective, the Athens conference saw renewed attention on the centrality of the church in the mission of God. As the conference title suggests, fresh attention was given to the Holy Spirit—a move that would prove to be significant for ecumenical missiology. The ecological dimension of mission received serious attention as awareness of the issues posed by climate change was rising. Jacques Matthey also discerned “a more humble approach to what Christians and churches can accomplish in the world today than seemed to have been the approaches in earlier CWME conferences . . . Humanity cannot ‘heal the world’ nor create ‘shalom.’ We have to acknowledge our limitations and thus we call on God: ‘Come, Holy Spirit, heal and reconcile!’”⁶¹ A prominent feature on the changing landscape was the 9/11 attack on the Twin Towers in New York in 2001 and the “war on terror” that followed. A time of globalization with increasing violence, fragmentation, and exclusion brought sharper focus and new energy to the calling of the church to receive, celebrate, proclaim, and work for reconciliation, healing, and fullness of life in Christ.

Edinburgh, 2010

As the centenary of Edinburgh 1910 approached, there was a widespread recognition that the occasion belonged not only to the WCC as the institutional heir of the World Missionary Conference but to a much broader constituency. So, a general council formed in 2007 to prepare for the centenary included representatives from many streams of world Christianity,

⁶⁰ See Jacques Matthey ed., *Come Holy Spirit, Heal and Reconcile! Called in Christ to be Reconciling and Healing Communities—Report of the WCC Conference on World Mission and Evangelism, Athens, Greece, May 9–16, 2005* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2008).

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 328–29.

including Orthodox, Catholics, evangelicals, Pentecostals, and Independents as well as the Protestant descendants of the bodies that participated in the Edinburgh conference in 1910. Jooseop Keum highlights the significance of this: “For the first time in mission history, representatives of all traditions of Christianity and global mission actors gathered together to celebrate the centenary anniversary.”⁶² This new convergence was also apparent in the emergence of the Global Christian Forum, which met for the first time in Nairobi in 2007.⁶³ Like Edinburgh 2010, it minimized formal commitment and maximized width of participation and the building of relationships.

Not only did the delegates to the Edinburgh 2010 conference enjoy their fellowship but they found that they could join in affirming a “Common Call,” with distinctive notes. The missionary mandate was reaffirmed—indeed its urgency was emphasized—but it was recognized that authenticity is paramount and mission must be practised in a way that resonates with people’s experience. Recognizing plurality in regard to religious conviction, the conference struck a fine balance between affirming the uniqueness of Christ and maintaining an open and hospitable attitude toward those who adhere to other faiths and belief-systems. On the basis that God often chooses to work through the young and that many people have their most formative religious experiences in their earliest years, young people were viewed not only as the objects but also as the subjects of mission. The natural environment was recognized as a legitimate focus of concern in the practice of mission. Mission was understood as being critically engaged with the prevailing power structures. God’s identification with those on the receiving end of unjust exercise of power spurs mission practitioners to work for a transformation of power. The spiritual character of mission was emphasized, with the dynamic work of the Holy Spirit finding expression in relation to such areas as mass migration, reconciliation in situations of conflict, and the cry for healing at all levels. Formation of leaders was a major focus, with concern to move away from the exclusively cerebral approach of the European Enlightenment toward approaches that are more holistic, inclusive, and empowering. The biblical call to unity was reaffirmed, with a recognition that while structural unity remains elusive, this is no excuse for failing to develop common witness, to create collaborative models of working, and to be healing and reconciling communities.

62 Jooseop Keum, “Beyond Dichotomy: Towards a Convergence between the Ecumenical and Evangelical Understanding of Mission in Changing Landscapes,” in *The Lausanne Movement: A Range of Perspectives*, ed. Margunn Serigstad Dahle, Lars Dahle, and Knud Jørgensen (Oxford: Regnum, 2014), 395.

63 See Huibert van Beek, *Revisioning Christian Unity: The Global Christian Forum* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2009).

It was a historic moment when representatives of so many different sectors of the world church were able to affirm an incisive statement of the meaning of Christian mission. Jooseop Keum comments, “An analysis of *The Common Call* produced at the Edinburgh conference shows that positions defended over decades by WCC have now become somewhat common ground: *missio Dei*, empowerment and humility, creation as the scope of mission, holistic content of the Gospel, mission from everywhere to everywhere, unity and mission.” In Keum’s view, the “Common Call” also made clear the evangelical emphasis on the uniqueness of Christ and the necessity of conversion.⁶⁴

Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes, 2013

There can be little question that the definitive document for understanding ecumenical mission in the early part of the 21st century is *Together towards Life*.⁶⁵ The fruit of years of reflection by the WCC Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, it gave further expression to the convergence that had been evident at Edinburgh 2010, enriching ecumenical missiology by drawing on the insights of Catholics, evangelicals, Pentecostals, and others. The imagery of its subtitle, *Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes*, signalled its commitment to rethink mission in a world that, in many respects, is very different from any known before. As a comprehensive statement of the meaning of Christian mission, it attempts to draw together all that has been learned in the course of 100 years of ecumenical missiology, while engaging with the realities of the 21st century.

It is guided by the *missio Dei* (mission of God) understanding that has become almost a consensus as regards the basic idea behind mission and evangelism. The action of God is understood in trinitarian terms but with particular attention to the action of the Holy Spirit. This opens up a broad canvas on which to discern the presence of God in the life of the world while expressing the ecclesial dynamism that comes with the power of the Spirit. “Life” is another governing concept, recognizing that the very life of the earth is at stake and using the abundant life promised by Jesus as a criterion to “test the spirits” and discover where the life-giving Spirit of God is at work. Caring for creation is given a central place in the meaning of mission. A recovery

64 Keum, “Beyond Dichotomy,” 396.

65 Jooseop Keum, ed., *Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2013).

of confidence in evangelism comes with respect for other faiths and a critical appraisal of proselytism. Unashamed advocacy of the need for personal conversion comes with sharp critique of social injustice and a vision of transformation. “Mission from the margins” caught the imagination, reversing the traditional idea of mission working from a powerful centre to reach out to the margins to recognize that God’s way of working is a matter of empowering the excluded and the despised. Taken together, these lines of thought created a compelling fresh understanding of mission, which proved to have wide appeal.

Arusha, 2018: Discipleship as Mode of Mission

The themes of *Together towards Life* were still much in evidence at the most recent World Mission Conference, held at Arusha, Tanzania, in March 2018, but these found fresh focus around the concept of discipleship.⁶⁶ Titled “Moving in the Spirit: Called to Transforming Discipleship,” the conference continued the pneumatological turn that began at Athens in 2005 and became the organizing principle of *Together towards Life*. Its original contribution was to take *Together towards Life*’s vision of transformation and think it through in terms of the life of discipleship, which was explored on a broad canvas.⁶⁷ In doing so, it was informed by the Lausanne Movement’s Cape Town Commitment of 2010,⁶⁸ and Pope Francis’s 2013 encyclical *Evangelii gaudium*, with its vision of “missionary discipleship.”⁶⁹ It thus became a remarkable point of convergence for a wide spectrum of World Christianity.⁷⁰

66 See Risto Jukko and Jooseop Keum, eds, *Moving in the Spirit: Report of the World Council of Churches Conference on World Mission and Evangelism, 8–13 March 2018, Arusha, Tanzania* (Geneva, WCC Publications, 2019).

67 See further Kenneth R. Ross, *Mission Rediscovered: Transforming Disciples—A Commentary on the Arusha Call to Discipleship* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2020).

68 See *The Cape Town Commitment: A Confession of Faith and a Call to Action* (Lausanne Movement, 2011); Allen Yeh, “Together towards Life and the Cape Town Commitment,” in *Ecumenical Missiology: Changing Landscapes and New Conceptions of Mission*, ed. Kenneth R. Ross, Jooseop Keum, Kyriaki Avtzi, and Roderick R. Hewitt (Geneva: WCC Publications and Oxford: Regnum, 2016), 452–60.

69 See Pope Francis, *Evangelii gaudium: Apostolic Exhortation to the Bishops, Clergy, Consecrated Persons and the Lay Faithful on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today’s World*, 24 November 2013 (Vatican Press); Stephen Bevans, “*Together towards Life and Evangelii Gaudium*: Life and Joy in Dialogue,” in *Ecumenical Missiology*, ed. Ross et al., 461–72.

70 See John H. Armstrong, “The Church in the Contemporary Ecumenical-Missional Moment: *Together towards Life* in Dialogue with *The Cape Town Commitment* and *Evangelii Gaudium*,” *International Review of Mission* 104:2 (2015), 232–41.

The crisis of authenticity experienced in the 21st century could be addressed by bringing together two seminal strands of the Christian faith: the missionary mandate and the call to become disciples. Without the Christ-like way of life that is discovered on the path of discipleship, any missionary endeavour is going to lack credibility.

The conference issued the “Arusha Call to Discipleship” (Arusha Call), a 12-part statement that can be regarded as a mission manifesto for the 21st century.⁷¹ It begins by noting that baptism is a call to transforming discipleship, defined as a “Christ-connected way of life.”⁷² It sets the worship of the one triune God and the proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ in juxtaposition to “the false god of the market system” and “a violent world where many are sacrificed to the idols of death.”⁷³ Empowerment of people from the margins and care for creation are highlighted as keynotes of mission. It is a call both to “belong together in just and inclusive communities” and to engage in dialogue with people of other faiths “in a world where the politicization of religious identities often causes conflict.”⁷⁴ Another emphasis is the calling to servant leadership “in a world that privileges power, wealth, and the culture of money.”⁷⁵ The Arusha Call does not flinch from “death-dealing forces that are shaking the world order and inflicting suffering on many,” but ends with a summons to “live in the light of the resurrection, which offers hope-filled possibilities for transformation.”⁷⁶ Perhaps the Spirit inspired the conference to speak prophetically to the COVID-19 pandemic that would convulse the world two years later. Certainly, the Arusha Call has shown that the project started by the IMC in 1921 continues to be relevant to the mission of God and the crisis of humanity.

After 100 Years

Though always a small operation in terms of staffing and budget, the IMC and its successor body the CWME have, for 100 years, provided a common platform for thinking and action on the part of a widening circle of agents of mission. In its early decades, it proved to be a key instrument through

71 Jukko and Keum, *Moving in the Spirit*, 2–4.

72 *Ibid.*, 2.

73 *Ibid.*, 3.

74 *Ibid.*

75 *Ibid.*

76 *Ibid.*, 2–3.

which the “younger churches” emerging in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and Oceania were drawn into a worldwide Christian communion. More than 400 issues of *The International Review of Mission(s)* have demonstrated the extent of the contribution made to understanding of the missionary dimension of Christianity—the “science of mission.” On such matters as the theology of mission, the nature of evangelism, theology of other religions, and a wide range of social questions, the IMC and CWME have proved to be an indispensable agency in creating shared understanding and common purpose on a global basis. The IMC did much to prepare the ground for the creation in 1948 of the WCC, of which it became a part in 1961. Since then, it has kept mission high on the agenda of the WCC while at the same time developing deepening relationships with branches of World Christianity that do not formally belong to the WCC. Making no claim to wield any governing authority, nonetheless through the “soft power” of coordination, analytical acumen, consensus building, and recommendation of policy, it has made its mark during the century in which World Christianity has become a reality.

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CHAPTER 3

The Abiding Legacy of the International Missionary Council in Britain

Eleanor M. Jackson

Introduction

The impact of the International Missionary Council (IMC) in Britain should be understood as the result of the friendships and shared experiences of mission leaders and thinkers who frequently were graduates of the Student Christian Movement and the World's Student Christian Fellowship. A flexible organization was created to support the IMC's objectives; and by explaining by practical work such as refugee relief, the pioneers advanced the cause of Christian unity. In consequence, Christians in Britain had a better understanding of belonging to a worldwide church. Between 1948 and 1968, there was a radical change in approach in the IMC and hence its influence in Britain, which went beyond what one might expect from generational change following the deaths and retirements of staff and leaders from 1958 to 1961. A sequence of meetings and conferences undergirded by study groups stimulated a deeper understanding of missionary partnership in obedience, while creating a paradigm shift to seeing mission as the work of the triune God. Mission was no longer viewed as a movement from Western countries to the east, but as embracing "six continents." Practical programmes such as the Theological Education Fund infused ministerial training in Britain with new ideas. However, the biggest change was the integration of the IMC with the World Council of Churches (WCC), signalling the need for mission in unity as well as true partnership without colonial attitudes.

Part 1: The Effects of the Period 1910–47

Seen from the perspective of the events recently held in this small former mining town on the North Somerset coalfield to observe the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, it would be easy to argue that the International Missionary Council's (IMC's) impact was minimal on an area once a hub of Methodist and Baptist lay evangelism, a Benedictine-led revival in the 1920s,

and with Anglican rectors bent on education for working people and social reform. There was once much denominational support for the Methodist and Anglican missionary societies as well as the Baptist Missionary Society. But although there was good attendance a decade ago for a film on the life and work of William Carey of Serampore (1763–1835), a pioneer of the modern ecumenical movement, few would have heard of the IMC. Yet it can be argued that the impact of the IMC at the grassroots level in the British Isles has produced a broader, more compassionate ecumenical outlook than would otherwise have been the case.

As Norman Goodall (IMC secretary 1944–61) said, the IMC was a back-room operation, not a shop with a front window.¹ Much was achieved indirectly or by individual unofficial effort, as in the case of the work of William Paton (1886–1943), IMC secretary from 1927 to 1943, to rescue Jewish Christian pastors from Nazi-dominated Germany and resettle them,² or Kenneth Grubb (1900–80), a former missionary in the Amazon basin who rose to the top of the wartime British Ministry of Information, facilitated the granting of visas for church leaders to travel, and played a major role in the work of the Conference of British Missionary Societies after the war.³ The passage of time has meant that personal and state archives have been opened, and when these are correlated with interviews and letters given to the author, a reasonably sound picture can be built up of the significance of the IMC in Britain.⁴ It is very much a liminal period, when things could have gone either way for the IMC in a rapidly changing world. Thanks are due to those who shared memories and documents so generously and to the archivists at the World Council of Churches (Geneva), the National Library of Scotland (Edinburgh), the Basel Mission (Basel), and the University of Birmingham (UK).

It is very important to understand what the IMC was from a British point of view. It attracted relatively little external criticism compared with the volumes directed at it over particular developments from German and Scandinavian missionary societies, and it managed to work with British-led

1 Norman Goodall, *Second Fiddle. Recollections and Reflections* (London: SPCK, 1979), 80.

2 Cases in IMC Box 144 and Box labelled Paton Papers II, WCC archives, Geneva. Also box labelled WCC General Correspondence Paton/Temple and the Bell papers in Lambeth Palace Library, London.

3 Born with a Quaker heritage, after his conversion Grubb worked for the World Evangelization Crusade and the World Dominion Press. In 1946 he became first chairperson of the IMC/WCC Churches' Commission on International Affairs.

4 A number of biographies and autobiographies have appeared, of which the most important for this study is Keith Clements, *Faith on the Frontier: A Life of J. H. Oldham* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark; and Geneva: WCC, 1999).

faith missions such as the Africa Inland Mission and evangelical leaders such as John Stott (1921–2011) and Max Warren (1904–77), so that there was no British evangelical onslaught comparable to Carl McIntire’s movement.⁵ This may be due to the warp and woof of the fabric of religious life in Britain being different from either the Continent or America⁶ and also to the position of the Church of England as the church established by law and controlled by Parliament, with the Church of Scotland in a looser connection to the state and with the Anglican Church of Ireland and the Church of Wales (both minority churches) being recently dis-established. It might be due to the quality of leadership and diplomacy practised by J. H. Oldham (1874–1969), William Paton (1886–1943) and Lesslie Newbigin (1909–98), with a quieter contribution from Norman Goodall (1896–1985), all from the Reformed tradition. In 1943–44, there was a vacuum in the leadership, but Betty Gibson (IMC), Margaret Sinclair (IRM), and Sigrid Morden (WCC)⁷ competently ran the entire administration. Nevertheless, perhaps because the IMC was so well established in the world of British missions, integration with the World Council of Churches (WCC) was opposed by prominent figures such as Max Warren, General Secretary of the Church Missionary Society (CMS), in no small measure because they felt it would lose its distinctive character and witness to the missionary imperative.⁸

The origins of the IMC in Britain can be traced back to the creation of the Student Volunteer Movement Union (SVMU) in 1892 when Robert Wilder (1863–1938) arrived to sow the Watchword, “The Evangelisation of the World in this Generation,” and to his surprise was met on the gangplank of his ship by three students who had already signed a pledge of overseas service.⁹ Not only were there already 12 mission-orientated Christian Unions

5 Carl McIntire (1906–2002) from Oklahoma, founded the International Christian Council of Churches and other fundamentalist bodies. He is credited with politicizing the religious right in the USA.

6 “The English do not believe in God, but think it advisable to pray to Him from time to time,” as Voltaire is reported to have said. See Grace Davie, *Religion in Britain since 1945: Believing without Belonging* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994); Grace Davie, *Europe: The Exceptional Case* (Maryknoll: Orbis 2002); Grace Davie, “Thinking Broadly and Thinking Deeply. Two Examples of the Study of Religion in the Modern World” in *Secularisation in the Christian World*, ed. Callum G. Brown and Michael Snape (London: Routledge, 2010).

7 Appointed in 1939 and 1942 respectively, they built on the work of Doris Standley, who retired in 1939.

8 For an excellent full discussion of the integration of the IMC and WCC, see Mark T. B. Laing, *From Crisis to Creation: Lesslie Newbigin and the Reinvention of Christian Mission* (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2012).

9 One was Louis Byrde, who became SVMU secretary 1893–95. His handwritten list of the 1893–94 volunteers and other papers are in the Special Collections, the University of Birmingham, UK.

in British Universities and colleges, but also close links through the Keswick Convention with American revival movements and with the YMCA/YWCA. It was soon discovered that support from the university and college Christian Unions was necessary to sustain missionary vocations and that the movement needed a broader base embracing the theological seminaries, colleges of education (mainly training women teachers), and the new science-orientated redbrick universities.¹⁰ Most students would not be able to work abroad but would be effective disciples at home. The answer was the creation in 1893 of the British Colleges' Christian Union, known from 1903 as the Student Christian Movement (SCM), which in 1910 had 10,000 out of a total of British 44,000 students signed up to a personal statement of faith in Christ as Lord and Saviour.¹¹ The SCM leaders played a major role in convincing the Anglo-Catholic missionary society, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, to participate in the World Missionary Conference held in Edinburgh in 1910, and also provided stewards and guides for the 1,200 delegates, only 17 of whom were nationals of evangelized countries such as China and India.¹² The chair of that conference was a youthful American Methodist lay evangelist, John R. Mott (1865–1955), who had founded the World's Student Christian Federation (WSCF) in 1895 to bring together the national movements and was to become the chairman of the IMC at its inception.¹³ The secretary was a former SCM secretary and YMCA worker in Lahore, then in British India, who can be said to have made the IMC happen, J. H. Oldham. Considering who the British leaders of the IMC/CWME were throughout our period, there is a strong argument for saying that the IMC was the graduate SCM/SVMU movement. The ethos of both SCM and IMC was continually reinforced by those who, like Frank Lenwood (1874–1934), Secretary of the London Missionary Society (LMS) 1913–34, had had to return home from the so-called mission field for health reasons. The IMC in Britain was primarily a fellowship of SCM graduates and returned missionaries. Lenwood was both.

10 Researching the SCM papers in the University of Birmingham Special Collections, I calculated that about 40 percent of pledged British student volunteers actually sailed. That was still about 5,000 from 1893 to 1940. See Eleanor M. Jackson, *Red Tape and the Gospel: The Missionary Struggle of Dr William Paton 1886–1943* (Birmingham: Phlogiston Press, 1980), 47, 51.

11 Tissington Tatlow, *The Story of the Student Christian Movement* (London: SCM Press, 1933).

12 Brian Stanley, *The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910* (Grand Rapids and Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2009), 320–21.

13 C. Howard Hopkins, *John R. Mott 1865–1955: A Biography* (Geneva: WCC and Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979).

The World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910 was different in that, as already mentioned, societies sent representatives, except for Scotland, where mission came directly under the General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland (the established church) and the Free Church of Scotland. They were expected to read volumes of study material and a report on missions and Christian unity which inspired them to vote for a permanent organization which evolved post war into the IMC.¹⁴

It was also part of the systematic building of an international framework after 1910 when Oldham set up an office in Edinburgh as secretary of the Edinburgh Conference Continuation Committee, and following the example of the SCM with its *Student Movement*, in 1911 began producing the journal *The International Review of Missions*. With assistants able to translate from German and French, a window was opened on mission theology and practice for British readers even if, officially, Edinburgh left matters of doctrine and faith to a future Faith and Order conference.

Just as the WCC in process of formation, and its embryonic organization with W. A. Visser 't Hooft (ex-WSCF, based in Geneva),¹⁵ William Paton in London and Henry Smith Leiper of the Life and Work movement, New York, took the shape it did because of the pressures of the Second World War, so the IMC was a response to the experience of the First World War. The most conspicuous problems were holding together societies from opposite sides in the conflict, supporting interned missionaries, protecting missions from having their property confiscated, and providing relief for refugees. Linked to this in the 1920s was the question of “war guilt” and alleged German atrocities in Belgium, which English-speaking missionaries laid on German shoulders collectively, requiring a statement of repentance before the German societies could be re-admitted to ecumenical fellowship.¹⁶ For this reason there were no German missionary society representatives at the founding meeting of the IMC at Lake Mohonk, USA, in 1921 but the issue could not be avoided. Additionally, German societies had declined to be represented as long as German missions were excluded from the British colonies and

14 There was a volume for each of the eight commissions, or sections, all published by Oliphant, Edinburgh 1910 as well as *History and Records of the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference*. Volume 9 contains the debate on Christian Unity, Volume 10 the evidence for its value. Mott edited all.

15 Jurjen A. Zeilstra, *Visser 't Hooft, 1900–1985: Living for the Unity of the Church* (Amsterdam University Press, 2020).

16 Ruth Rouse and Stephen Charles Neill, eds, *A History of the Ecumenical Movement: 1517–1948, Volume 1* (London: SPCK, 1956), 365, 531.

German missionaries were castigated as spies.¹⁷ A surprising number of student volunteers chose to volunteer for the armed forces (conscription was not introduced in Britain until May 1916) instead of sailing for India or China, while others, like Paton, were pacifists and joined the Fellowship of Reconciliation. The situation was completely different in 1946 when representatives of the IMC met in Geneva and then held their first conference style meeting in Whitby, Ontario, in 1947 because not only were there few illusions about the German government after German missions were nearly ruined by being unable to obtain foreign exchange in 1935–36, but some German leaders had connections to the Confessing Church.

What caused much bitterness in the Basel Mission and other missionary societies was the British government's decision in 1914 (and in 1939) to intern German citizens in India and Africa (where German colonies were seized and never returned under the terms of the Treaty of Versailles). Overnight, the missionary families became destitute. The Basel Mission was particularly badly affected because their industrials or manufacturing units, created to provide training and rural development, were confiscated, despite Basel being in neutral Switzerland. A massive diplomatic effort by Mott and Oldham was necessary to prevent mission compounds, houses, and churches being seized as war reparations in 1919.¹⁸ In this they were successful, obtaining a clause in the Treaty of Versailles exempting mission possessions. Part of the significance of the Jerusalem meeting of the IMC in 1928 was that it was held in the Kaiserswerth Deaconesses' centre, which the British Mandate in Palestine had only just returned to its rightful German owners.

The problem of "orphaned missions" provided the strongest argument in 1920 for the IMC's existence, and it more than proved its value in 1939–45, firstly because it stood up to the colonial government, for example arguing for more humane treatment of internees,¹⁹ and secondly, because it was a body civil servants could deal with.²⁰ It had not escaped notice that Roman

17 William Richey Hogg, *Ecumenical Foundations: A History of the International Missionary Council and Its Nineteenth-Century Background* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1952), 203. Oldham, Lenwood, and A. L. Warnshuis had visited Berlin in July 1920 and attempted reconciliation.

18 Clements, *Faith on the Frontier*, 126 f.; Jackson, *Red Tape*, 123.

19 The death of a missionary from untreated appendicitis in an internment camp in Dehra Dun, India, was made a major scandal. See Ronald C. D. Jasper, *George Bell: Bishop of Chichester* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), 147–51. On 1 February 2022, the conditions were exposed again in *The Guardian*, the British newspaper, with the publication of "The Island of Extraordinary Captives" by Simon Parkin. www.guardianbookshop.com. Releases were secured by the IMC/CBMS: Jackson, *Red Tape*, 203 f.

20 The civil servants' internal correspondence reveals this. Public Records Office (PRO)

Catholic missions went relatively unscathed because the British government did not want to upset the Vatican, and their missions were not independent of the church hierarchy so were more controllable. Financial support could be more easily managed. Paton was forced to admit in 1940 that internment meant a reduction in mission expenses. In the period 1915–26 German missions were managed by their nearest denominational or geographical neighbour, with income generated by the mission being paid into trusts and disbursed to education and medical projects.²¹ The Bishop of Nagpur, supported by Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, was accused of absorbing the Gossner Mission work in 1917, which was denied, but an examination of contemporary correspondence suggests this was not altogether true.²² British, American, and Scandinavian societies had to continue work where they could but with French, Danish and Norwegian societies being lost to Nazi control, things became extremely difficult for the IMC. The positive effect of the situation was that there was a greater effort to make mission projects self-supporting and integrate them into local church structures, and national leadership greatly increased. Schools and medical facilities could be continued with grants from the colonial government, which Paton pointed out it was in their interests to do, but with the internment and then expulsion of foreign nationals, there was a loss of expertise not easily replaced. The most extraordinarily simple device in the 1935–36 crisis was that the IMC's London office took over the payments to the German missions marooned without money because Hitler stopped foreign exchange payments, and the German missions opened an account in Berlin for the equivalent sums and bought a house for rent to generate income for the IMC. In 1945 it was found to be standing, fully intact in spite of the bombing; it was sold and the IMC in London repaid.²³

These financial crises affected British churches only indirectly in that the IMC did not generally make direct appeals to congregations but was funded by grants from its member bodies, the missionary societies, apart from donations requested from or volunteered by some wealthy donors. Occasionally there was a public appeal for a special need, with a separate fund, such as the

C14658/62 Liaison arrangements with the CBMS, PRO C8813/6759/36. Interview R. R. Williams (Ministry of Information) 6.5.1975.

21 Regarding the impact on the Basel Mission, see Hermann Witschi, *Geschichte der Basler Mission, Band V* (Basel: Basileia Verlag, 1970), 40–60.

22 Correspondence of the Bishop of Nagpur, Eyre Chatterton, in the SPG papers, Rhodes Library, Oxford.

23 Financial details can be found in Jackson, *Red Tape*, 402. IMC papers, Geneva. Box 145. By 1 January 1944, nearly \$3 million dollars had been sent, of which \$79,164 was raised in Britain.

Christian Colleges in India appeal (1932) or the War Emergency Committee's appeal 1942–46.

Oldham (IMC Secretary, 1921–38) and Paton expended an enormous amount of time and energy on the visa system to allow German missionaries back into the British empire from 1926 and legitimize other Continental and Scandinavian missionaries.²⁴ The system also applied to American missionaries, those with German surnames being particular objects of suspicion. A pledge of loyalty to the colonial government was required. Individual missionary societies had their own codes of conduct with regard to political neutrality, but the work of the IMC in Britain would have been stymied without missionaries and nationals supplying information, for example, to Oldham over the use of forced labour in Kenya, a cause he pursued for ten years.²⁵ It is likely that C. F. Andrews' campaign at Gandhi's behest to end the system of Indian indentured labour in Fiji in 1928 would not have been so successful without IMC channels in Britain.²⁶

The significance of the “orphaned missions” for the legacy of the IMC in Britain was that the fact of the work being done supported Paton's argument in innumerable speeches, sermons, and broadcasts that the Christian church was global and it was a universal fellowship, that a new order of society could be created on an international basis, and that British Christians should assist in this with money and service.²⁷ It should be noted that British giving to denominational relief agencies and societies was always greater than to ecumenical ones. Today both are dwarfed by the responses to secular charities. The Lutheran missions in the US were the heavyweight players, supporting the Continental Lutheran and Reformed missions, then using their networks to create the Lutheran World Federation after the war.²⁸ A. L. Warnshuis, a former China missionary now the IMC Secretary in New York, did not always see eye to eye with Paton, but built up a formidable system for supporting orphaned missions in China, only for the work to be largely wrecked

24 Jackson, *Red Tape*, 193–208; Clements, *Faith on the Frontier*, 166–79.

25 Norman Maclean Leys, *By Kenya Possessed: The Correspondence between Norman Leys and J. H. Oldham, 1918–1926* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976).

26 It was said of J. H. Oldham that he believed that the road to the kingdom of God lay through the portals of the Athenaeum Club, that is, influencing politicians over dinner. William Paton, who could never have afforded membership, used the columns he wrote for *The Times* newspaper as effectively.

27 Jackson, *Red Tape*, 193 f.; William Paton, *The Church and the New Order* (MacMillan, 1941), and William Paton, *The Church Calling: Six Talks on the Church and World Order Broadcast in June and July 1942* (London: Edinburgh House Press, 1942).

28 Jonas Jonson, “Lutheran Missions in a Time of Revolution: The China Experience 1944–1951” (PhD diss., University of Uppsala, 1972).

by the Japanese invasion. In London and New York, the IMC had the infrastructure to support reconstruction.

Anti-semitism in Britain was not the exclusive prerogative of black-shirted thugs in the East End of London. Despite the Balfour Declaration in 1917 that there would be a national state for the Jewish people in Palestine, anti-semitism was rampant in the Foreign Office, with even the Prince of Wales/Duke of Windsor supporting Hitler, not to mention the Beaverbrook Press. Paton accused missionary society leaders and their supporters of it because they were effectively not considering Jews worthy of hearing the gospel. He constantly asked how IMC supporters could deny salvation to Jesus' kinsfolk. The final page of the conference volumes of the IMC meeting in Jerusalem, on the protection of missionaries, stated that the IMC was not political but "spiritual."²⁹ Opposing anti-semitism in Britain and assisting Jewish refugees, often in the face of government obstruction, could hardly be more political. From an umbrella organization designed to bring together very conservative small pietistic societies and research institutes, and to make every congregation aware of its responsibilities to witness to Jews, the International Christian Council on the Approach to the Jews (ICCAJ) became a major operator for refugee relief, with a campaigning voice.³⁰

The ICCAJ established the need for solid academic research to undergird missionary efforts. The IMC was aware of this, with solid work done by Kenyon Butterfield for the IMC meeting in Jerusalem in 1928, on rural communities' problems, especially in Korea, China, and Japan. The Department of Social and Industrial Research (DSIR) was set up following the Williamstown, USA, IMC committee meeting (1929), and J. Merle Davis, a former American Board missionary in Japan, was appointed its first director. He served until his retirement in 1946, though he continued after that to work on specific projects. The analysis of the economic basis of the so-called younger churches for the IMC Tambaram meeting in 1938 was also valuable. It was discovered that only 15 percent were self-supporting, and therefore many were too vulnerable to an economic collapse in Britain and other donor countries.³¹ Davis was succeeded by Charles Ranson (1903–88), an Irish former Methodist missionary in the Madras area.³² The value of the DSIR was its ability to produce

29 William Paton, ed., *Addresses and Other Records: Report of the Jerusalem Meeting of the International Missionary Council March 24th–April 8th, 1928, Volume 8* (Oxford, 1928), 202. This volume also contains the first call for the setting up of the ICCAJ.

30 Four rabbis attended Paton's memorial service in September 1943 (Jackson, *Red Tape*, 288 f.).

31 J. Merle Davis, ed., *The Economic Basis of the Church, The Madras Series, Volume 5* (New York–London: International Missionary Council, 1939).

32 Charles W. Ranson, *Missionary Pilgrimage* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988).

high quality research on topics of common interest. One of the first was on the effect of migration in Africa and conditions in the copper mines in then Belgian Congo and mining communities in South Africa. A young Bengt Sundkler (1908–95) had worked on marriage customs in Africa. He went on to study Bantu prophets in South Africa, pioneering work even though the understanding of African Independent Churches has advanced since 1948.³³ Ranson himself, on the basis of a mandate from Tambaram, focused on the question of Christian ministers and their training, picking up research done by Stephen Neill.³⁴ It is impossible to say what the impact was of this study in Britain before the creation of the Theological Education Fund at the IMC meeting in Ghana, 1957.³⁵ It seems to have only been in the 1970s that serious attention was given in Britain to the models of theological education and ministry emerging from the two-thirds world.

As a result of the development of SCM study books and material for young Christians, the collaboration between the missionary societies and the SCM (which set up its own press in 1920) and the work of gifted apologists such as Charles Raven and William Temple, the IMC was able to sponsor the production of a considerable amount of Christian literature, particularly effective in Africa. The World Christian Books series appeared in the 1950s. However, it would be difficult to establish how influential they were in Britain.³⁶ Charles Raven did give a keynote lecture on Religious Education at Jerusalem, the second volume of the conference series being on Religious Education in schools and outside. His basic line of argument was to examine how Jesus taught his disciples, and whether his methods and materials could be applied in the 1930s. He certainly fuelled a debate in England that culminated in the provision within the 1944 Education Act for compulsory religious education in both state and private schools. Since the basic provision (and the conscience clause) has been enshrined in every successful Education Act going through

33 Bengt Sundkler was only employed by the IMC from 1947 to 1949. See his *Bantu Prophets in South Africa* (Oxford University Press, 1961), and *The Christian Ministry in Africa* (Uppsala, 1960). These were not published until 1960, when he was vice chairman of the IMC.

34 Charles W. Ranson, *The Christian Minister in India, His Vocation and Training; A Study Based on a Survey of Theological Education by the National Christian Council* (London, Redhill: United Society for Christian Literature, 1946); Hogg, *Ecumenical Foundations*, 300.

35 Harold A. Fey, ed., *History of the Ecumenical Movement 1948–1968* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1993), 184–85; Ronald K. Orchard, ed., *The Ghana Assembly of the International Missionary Council 28th December to 8th January, 1958* (London: Edinburgh House Press, 1958), 236.

36 Discussed by Dyron B. Daugherty, *A Worldly Christian: The Life and Times of Stephen Neill* (London: Lutterworth Press, 2021), 246–51.

the British Parliament, it could well be that this is the IMC's most enduring legacy in Britain.³⁷

The IMC meeting in Jerusalem in 1928 is notorious for the debate on secularization, based on the paper by Rufus Jones.³⁸ Both the conference report and the creation of the DSIR (which would measure the phenomenon) alienated Continental support and the faith missions. The suggestion that world faiths should work together to oppose secularism and communism was never IMC policy and was taken out of context and out of proportion to everything else debated. There was not even an agreed definition of secularization, only agreement on the need for research. It was only with the 4th Assembly of the WCC at Uppsala in 1968 that the subject got the attention it deserved, though there were rumblings at the WSCF conference in Strasbourg in 1960,³⁹ and a nod to it at the Life and Work conference held in Oxford in 1937. This might be due as much to the popularity in the 1960s of the theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer as to anything said or done under the auspices of the IMC.

Meetings and conferences are extremely expensive. For this reason, the IMC conference in Jerusalem in 1928 was scaled down to a meeting. Karl Hartenstein was newly appointed India Secretary when he represented the Basel Mission at Jerusalem, having no overseas experience. He said it changed his outlook altogether. An even greater change was in Cyril Garbett, Bishop of Stepney, London, reluctantly having to substitute for William Temple, then Archbishop of York, whom he was to succeed. He was very high church and very suspicious of missions, but he was revolutionized by those he met at Tambaram in 1938.⁴⁰ William Paton hoped for a similar effect on ordinary

37 Charles Raven (1885–1964), a New Testament scholar as well as a scientist, arranged Jesus' life and teaching into a schema of three elements: personality development, freedom to accept or reject ideas, and fellowship, learning together. See F. W. Dillistone, *Charles Raven: Naturalist, Historian, Theologian* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 154–56. Raven developed his ideas into a book, *Christ and Modern Education* (Hodder and Stoughton, 1928). The connecting link is the Life and Work movement's conference on Church, Community and State, held in Oxford in 1937. Joseph H. Oldham, ed., *The Churches Survey Their Task: The Report of the Conference at Oxford, July 1937, on Church, Community and State*, Volume 8, Report on Church Community and State in relation to Education (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1937), 130–37.

38 Rufus M. Jones, "Secular Civilization and the Christian Faith," in *The Christian Life and Message in relation to non-Christian System: Report of the Jerusalem Meeting of the International Missionary Council* (London: Oxford University Press, 1928), 235, 341.

39 Philip Potter and Thomas Wieser, *Seeking and Serving the Truth: The First Hundred Years of the World Student Christian Federation* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1996), 196.

40 Charles Hugh Egerton Smyth, *Cyril Foster Garbett, Archbishop of York* (Hodder and Stoughton, 1959).

church members when he arranged a reverse evangelism tour in Britain for African and Asian delegates in 1932. This had to be done with financial support from British missionary societies but it horrified Paton how often they wanted speakers whom congregations would find exotic, dark-skinned and “fruity.”

For the same reasons, the first post-war gathering in 1947 at a ladies’ college in Whitby, Ontario, not far from Toronto, only had 61 delegates. Norman Goodall writes of the IMC meeting in Whitby, “It is never possible to measure the results of such a meeting as Whitby. If some of its hopes and expectations were never fulfilled, this is another reminder both of the agelong mystery of iniquity and the need for a university Church equipped for a world-wide task and with wisdom and spiritual resources equal to it.”⁴¹

A theme was “Christian witness in a revolutionary world,” and there was much talk of a “world in ferment”—both notes sounded at the 1910 Edinburgh World Missionary Conference; but with half the delegates from the national churches, the subject was more pressing and addressed with more realism.⁴² Delegates asserted that it was still possible for the gospel to be preached to all in their generation, and echoed the WSCF Watchword with which the forebears of the IMC began. However, a far more important theme was “partnership in obedience,” the only means of achieving God’s will, in what they called “expectant evangelism.”

One important decision was to devolve organization still further and create what was to become the East Asia Christian Council (1957) and the All Africa Christian Council (1961), as well as supporting existing national councils. It should be noted that a number of IMC leaders were involved in the creation of the British Council of Churches in 1942 (now Churches Together in Britain and Ireland) fuelled by the highly successful ecumenical evangelistic campaigns known as Religion and Life weeks.⁴³ This raised the question in acute form of relationships with the Conference of British Missionary Societies

41 Goodall, *Second Fiddle*, 93.

42 Paton strove hard to achieve this before the war. He had immense difficulties getting Albert Luthuli and Minnie Soga from South Africa at Tambaram (Jackson, *Red Tape*, 156–57).

43 The British Council of Churches (BCC) archives, originally deposited in Birmingham, are now in the new Lambeth Palace Library, London. There is a whole box of newspaper cuttings about the Religion and Life weeks going back to early efforts that formed part of William Temple’s Parish and People movement of the 1920s. The idea was a cross-fertilization from the German *Missionswoche*, which did not have a central organization, and the SCM university missions. (Jackson, *Red Tape*, 270, 273–74; Paton to N. Micklem, 7.12.42, Paton Papers, Box IV, WCC archives, explaining the Glasgow/Edinburgh version, Week of Witness). Because the Church of Scotland home mission board did not have much enthusiasm for the ecumenical movement, it did not catch on.

(CBMS), which was created in 1912 from informal meetings between missionary society secretaries, and colleagues, who had been working together since 1894, sharing common problems and resources for training. The CBMS shared offices with the IMC and the British Council of Churches in central London, where there were Monday morning prayers together, a custom adopted in the WCC offices in Geneva. Eventually in 1977, in the wake of the integration of the IMC/WCC, the CBMS and the BCC were united. The push to create a British Council of Churches in 1942 came from four other ecumenical voluntary associations tracking the Life and Work movement, the Faith and Order movement, and the World Alliance for Friendship through the Churches created in 1907, which “died” in 1947, and owed much to the highly successful Life and Work issues conference at Malvern (Worcestershire, UK) in 1941.⁴⁴ So it would be difficult to attribute it to the legacy of the IMC. Malvern is notable for having a substantial number of women participants, something the IMC aspired to but could not achieve.

Stephen Neill liked the Whitby IMC meeting very much, especially the uncrowded schedule, with no meetings on the two Sundays, only worship and prayer, and the change to renew friendships. He wrote in his autobiography,

I was not the only contributor to feel that the whole atmosphere of the World Council of Churches changed abruptly the very day after the end of the first Assembly. Up to that time we had been a company of gay adventurers, setting our sights on a distant and possibly unattainable goal, and deeply committed to one another in the fellowship of the faith . . . There was a pleasant informality in the proceedings, such as prevailed throughout its entire history in the International Missionary Council.⁴⁵

Neill is right to emphasize the excitement, the experimental nature of the IMC, the base of cross-cultural friendship and the driving sense of common purpose. That fellowship had survived war and misunderstandings, personal hardship, and the occasional power struggle. Mott stayed as chair for far too long, and Oldham found something more exciting to do, editing, with Kathleen Bliss, first *The Christian Newsletter* and then *Frontier*, both “opinion formers.” William Temple, William Paton, and Karl Hartenstein

⁴⁴ William Temple, ed., *Malvern, 1941: The Life of the Church and the Order of Society: Being the Proceedings of the Archbishop of York's Conference* (Longman's Green and Co, 1941; 3rd imprint 1943).

⁴⁵ Stephen Neill, *God's Apprentice: The Autobiography of Bishop Stephen Neill* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1991), 239; Daugherty, *A Worldly Christian*, 212.

died prematurely,⁴⁶ and Theodore Hume, who was to organize refugee relief, was killed by enemy fire.⁴⁷ Bishop V. S. Azariah of Dornakal had died unexpectedly in January 1945, so ending his personal testimony against cultural colonialism and racism in missions, though not his vision of a united Christian church evangelizing India.⁴⁸ But a new generation was inspired to take up the cross. The IMC became very different at the IMC meeting in Willingen in Germany in 1952, ideologically, theologically, and in terms of practical action, while the eschatological expectations of Whitby seem to have been deflected into Faith and Order and the study programme for the second WCC assembly in Evanston, USA, in 1954.

Part 2: Partnership in Mission and Unity, 1948–68

The years of post-war recovery, when “the winds of change”⁴⁹ blew through missions as well as nations, were a time of “rapid social change”—a phrase invented in the 1930s IMC studies programme before it was taken up by the WCC in process of formation and further developed at the WCC Church and Society conference in 1966. In this period, the IMC executed a paradigm shift in its understanding of mission,⁵⁰ which had a huge influence on thinking about mission in Britain. Having initially eschewed formal discussion of theological questions at the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910, IMC leaders not only endorsed the ecumenical re-discovery of the church and accorded more theological importance to the witness of churches in the two-thirds world, but also moved the debate forward into the 1960s

46 The three were close friends. Hartenstein died in 1952 as a result of wartime privation, and, a Confessing Church member, interrogation by the Gestapo.

47 Newly appointed to the WCC as director of Inter-Church Aid, he was on his way to Sweden to talk to missionary societies and aid agencies, on a flight which William Paton was also booked on, but died the previous week of pneumonia after surgery for a perforated stomach ulcer. Hume was an American from the YMCA with much experience of refugee work (Jackson, *Red Tape*, 312, 315).

48 Susan Billington Harper, *In the Shadow of the Mahatma: Bishop V. S. Azariah and the Travails of Christianity in British India* (Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2000), 237.

49 This is British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan’s well-known phrase in an address to the Conservative Party conference to explain why British colonies in Africa and Southeast Asia must become independent nations in 1957. Its immediate context was independence for Ghana, formerly the Gold Coast, just before the prescient IMC meeting held in Accra, the new capital, in 1957.

50 The shift was from what William Paton once called “Jesusolatry” to a trinitarian approach to mission. Newbigin derives the phrase from Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolution*, who was describing the shift from Newtonian physics to Einstein’s theories.

as its successor body, the Department and Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (DWME and CWME, respectively) promoted studies on the missionary structure of the congregation.⁵¹

The IMC had always been concerned with issues of religious freedom, not as a desideratum of liberal democracy but as a question of defending converts and congregations from government interference and persecution. The imprisonment, torture, deaths, and expulsions of Christians in China in the 1950s caused a profound psychological shock compounded by the self-imposed isolation resulting from the Korean war and breakdown of communications.⁵² “Missions under the cross,” the theme of the IMC meeting in Willingen in 1952, became much more than a legacy statement of missions based in Nazi-occupied Europe. It became an acknowledgement of the reality of life under oppressive regimes, or states like Madhya Pradesh in central India that banned conversion, or covert discrimination against practising Christians in secularized countries.⁵³ The cross was also seen as a sign of God’s judgement.⁵⁴ A radical re-appraisal of missionary societies consequently took place in Britain, undoubtedly stimulated by discussions at the CWME meeting in Mexico in 1963, where most mainstream British societies were represented.⁵⁵ It marked the end of a triumphalist colonialist approach to missionary expansion and greater humility toward those of other faiths and ideologies.⁵⁶ At the same time, the Commission of the Churches

51 Harold E. Fey, ed., *A History of the Ecumenical Movement Part II: 1948–1968* (London: SPCK, 1970), 194, on the origins of *The Missionary Structure of the Congregation*, and on its effect, pp. 424–26. See *The Church for Others and the Church for the World: A Quest for Structures for Missionary Congregations* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1968). The seeds were sown in the sectional discussions at Willingen, 1952. IMC Box 264.006, WCC archives, Geneva.

52 T. C. Chao, Professor of Philosophy of Religion at Yenching University, and a WCC President, resigned in 1952. Regarding his appeal to students, see J. Davis McCaughey, *Christian Obedience in the University: Studies in the Life of the Student Christian Movement of Great Britain and Ireland, 1930–1950* (London: SCM Press, 1958), 41.

53 Re Madhya Pradesh, see M. K. Kuriakose, *History of Christianity in India: Source Materials* (Chennai: CLS, 1982), 390–95, 426.

54 David Paton (son of William Paton, 1913–92), missionary in China 1939–45 and 1947–50, produced *Christian Missions and the Judgement of God* (London: SCM Press, 1953; reprinted 1996 by Eerdmans) calling for a radical re-think.

55 Ronald K. Orchard, ed., *Witness in Six Continents: Records of the Meeting of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches Held in Mexico City December to 19th, 1963* (London: Edinburgh House Press, 1964), 179 f. Dr Kathleen Bliss, General Secretary of the Church of England Board of Education gave a significant paper on witness to the intelligentsia (“Meeting the Intelligentsia,” 125–32).

56 Heinrich Meyer, “Meeting Men of Other Faiths,” in Orchard, *Witness in Six Continents*, 99–105, at 102–105.

on International Affairs, which the IMC had set up jointly with the WCC in 1946, had not only investigated the issues involved but also worked closely with the United Nations to produce standards accepted by member nations guaranteeing religious freedom and the right of conversion.⁵⁷

Structures in Britain had to change, especially with the integration of the IMC and the WCC, and the slow decline in giving. But the failure of the Anglican-Methodist church union negotiations in England and Wales in 1968, as well as of discussions on episcopacy on the Church of South India model in the Church of Scotland, demonstrates the limits of the response to the IMC vision of mission in unity.⁵⁸ All this time, the membership base of the British churches was shrinking, as students found other channels for their idealism and confirmation in the Church of England ceased to be the norm for English middle-class adolescents. Ironically one of these, the Teachers for Africa programme, was started in Britain by Lesslie Newbigin as a consequence of his travels in West Africa for the IMC in 1960. It demonstrated how effective WCC/CBMS collaboration with secular agencies could be, but the scheme was dissolved, according to plan, after a few years when there were nationals trained to take over.⁵⁹

Inter-Church Aid in Britain, a channel for the WCC Department of Inter-Church Aid, effectively collapsed under the demands following the floods in East Anglia in 1952 when hundreds died. Robert Mackie, then WCC Associate General Secretary, and Bishop Leslie Hunter of Sheffield rescued it, re-branding it as Christian Aid, an independent charity, and appointing Janet Lacey as director.⁶⁰ The British IMC staff were heavily involved in WCC-led negotiations on the question of mission and aid, appeals being complicated

57 "Commission of the Churches on International Affairs," in *Evanston to New Delhi: 1954-1961: Report of the Central Committee to the Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1961), 124-44, at 134. See also John Nurser, *For All Peoples and All Nations: Christian Churches and Human Rights* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2005).

58 E. Templeton, *God's February: A Life of Archie Craig 1888-1985* (London: BCC/CCBI, 1991), 90-98, explains the sad factors that made union between the Church of Scotland and the Episcopal Church of Scotland impossible. The hostile British popular press soured relationships also.

59 Teachers for Africa was a forerunner of the popular UK Voluntary Service Overseas organization. Newbigin Papers, Special Collections, University of Birmingham UK DA29/1/8/78-84. Africa Travel Diary. Box labelled "Teachers for Africa and related IMC matters" in WCC archives Geneva, no reference number in 1998. It is Newbigin's IMC correspondence 1960-61 regarding the programme for countries like Zambia where there were six fully trained Zambian doctors and very few teachers at independence in 1964. For Newbigin's dealings with the Commonwealth Office, see his Journal, Special Collections, University of Birmingham DA29/14/3/6, entries dated 30.6.60, 28.2.61 etc.

60 Interviews with Mackie and Lacey, Autumn 1978.

by the emergence of new charities in the mid-1950s like Oxfam and the Samaritans, both founded by clergymen.⁶¹ The developments were straining relations with evangelical movements. White, male, and middle class, they allegedly failed to appreciate the importance of the WCC's Programme to Combat Racism, or even the significance of the Black-led Pentecostal churches joining the WCC/CBMS/BCC.⁶²

Finally, we need to consider the way Britain became the beneficiary not only of IMC study programmes and surveys but also of the work of IMC staff and collaborators settling in Britain. One such, Lesslie Newbigin, editor of the *International Review of Missions* from 1959 to 1965, strongly objected to the change from "missions" to "mission,"⁶³ although developments in his theology (1942–68) had done much to bring this change about. His work leading to the famous WCC New Delhi Assembly statement, "All in Each Place," had a lasting impact on Christian unity in England and Scotland. The change is part of the "Mission to Six Continents" perception that involved awareness not just that the mission of the universal church extended to the whole world, but that Christians outside Britain had a responsibility for witness to the gospel in Britain. We need to consider the flow of ideas and people in order to gauge the impact on Britain.⁶⁴

The origins of the phrase *missio Dei* seem to lie with Karl Hartenstein,⁶⁵ former director of the Basel Mission, who expressed the idea at the IMC

61 Harold E. Fey, ed., *A History of the Ecumenical Movement Part II: 1948–1968* (London: SPCK, 1970), 190, 213, 217–18. The Oxford Famine Relief Committee originated as an agency for aid in times of natural disaster, while Christian Aid had more long-term goals, with one church helping another directly. The Samaritans is a mental health charity founded at a time when suicide was still a crime. It campaigned for de-criminalization.

62 Neville Richardson, *The World Council of Churches and Race Relations: 1960 to 1969* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1978). This criticism was levelled at the British churches as a whole at the Church Leaders' Conference in Birmingham in 1972. See David L. Edwards, *The British Churches Turn to the Future* (London: SCM Press, 1973), 13.

63 Lesslie Newbigin, "Context and Conversion," *International Review of Mission* 68 (July 1979), 300–12. Newbigin thought a distinction should be made between the concept of mission and actual missions (310). In this, he was following J. Russell Chandran, who spelled out the difference in his address at the Willingen IMC meeting in 1952. See J. Russell Chandran, "The Christian Mission and the Judgment of History," in *Missions under the Cross: Addresses Delivered at the Enlarged Meeting of the Committee of the International Missionary Council at Willingen, in Germany, 1952; with Statements issued by the Meeting*, ed. Norman Goodall (London: Edinburgh House Press, 1953), 93–106, at 95.

64 W. A. Visser 't Hooft, ed., *The New Delhi Report* (London: SCM Press, 1962), 116. Reports of the Sections: Unity.

65 For how Hartenstein arrived at the concept in 1934, and his contribution at Whitby and Willingen, see Gerold Schwarz, *Mission, Gemeinde und Ökumene in der Theologie Karl Hartensteins* (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1980), 130. He was a member of the committee preparing the group reports for adoption by the plenary council meeting. Unpublished

meeting in Whitby, Ontario, in 1947, and contributed to the preparation for the IMC Willingen meeting where it was more fully developed. One biblical verse, John 3:16, sums up the concept: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.” God initiates redemption, which Christian mission imitates. It is a movement of overflowing love, which fitted very well with the ecumenical emphasis on Jesus’ prayer, “that they may all be one” (John 17:21), where the unity between Christians is described as being as intimate as the interpersonal relations of the Trinity. This resonates differently from the traditional basis for Protestant missions, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations,” which could be expounded in a very imperialistic way according to Indian theologians. Lesslie Newbigin, to whom the phrase *missio Dei* is also attributed,⁶⁶ chose rather to direct the debate to the Christian hope, when Christ comes in judgement, and what that meant for those living “between the times,” when millions face war and starvation, and so on.⁶⁷

The meeting had been called, according to Newbigin, because of the need for a radical re-think of “the missionary obligation of the Church,” the structures being employed to fulfil that obligation (such as the role of missionary societies, the experiments with Christian ashrams in India, and so-called indigenous expressions of faith), and, most urgently, a theology of missions, something which he himself spent much of the rest of his life developing. Interestingly, the title, “Missions under the cross,” the theme of the meeting in Willingen in 1952, was applied retrospectively to the volume of conference findings as summing up the sense of intercession and worship at the meetings. Although there was some measure of agreement that past thinking had been too church-centric and that there should be greater awareness of God’s working in the secular world, there was no consensus for a theological message beyond acceptance of *missio Dei*, and that the mission of God is about more than church extension. The conference was rather more successful in proposing new forms of ministry, engaging expatriate lay people

Minutes, Box 264.001 IMC Willingen. The record shows that practically all worship sessions were led by Two-Thirds World church people, in itself a big change.

66 Laing, *From Crisis to Creation*, 60, 62, 69. Laing disputes the attribution to Hartenstein. Goheen upholds it in his discussion of Willingen and the change in theology: Michael W. Goheen, “As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you”: J. E. Lesslie Newbigin’s *Missionary Ecclesiology* (Zoetermeer, Netherlands: Uitgeverij Boekencentrum, 2000), 49.

67 J. E. L. Newbigin, “The Christian Hope,” in Goodall, *Missions under the Cross*, 107–22. He was himself engaged in directing the WCC preparations for the WCC assembly in Evanston in an attempt to find a consensus on the eschatological implications of the theme, “Christ the hope of the world.” See Lesslie Newbigin, *Unfinished Agenda: An Autobiography*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: St Andrew Press, 1993), 129–31.

in evangelism, and creating regional study centres. Co-operation with the WCC in both Faith and Order programmes and Inter-Church Aid moved a step forward. However, there are on file a number of letters to Norman Goodall, the principal IMC conference organizer, commending the emerging theology of missions but severely criticizing communications and conference organization. Goodall considered the meeting a failure; but 30 years later, Newbigin thought it one of the most creative and describes how useful the informal late night discussions were.⁶⁸ New friendships were cemented with new ideas.⁶⁹ Given who the British delegates were in terms of a very broad spread of denominations, including two of the fiercest critics of the Church of South India, it would have been impossible for the IMC not to have had an influence in Britain. Delegates at Willingen were challenged to consider what could be done about the static nature of Christian mission, where large institutions such as the Christian institutions of higher education in India absorbed resources that should be focussed where the frontline is, as industrialization progressed.⁷⁰ No clear strategy emerged at this point in time, except that it must be driven in partnership with all stakeholders.

It took nearly a decade for problems identified at Willingen to be addressed with regard to mission in England, though Ted Wickham (1911–94), who founded the Sheffield Industrial Mission in 1944 and published a seminal work in 1957,⁷¹ was at Willingen, along with Harry Daniel, who was pioneering industrial mission in Karnataka and Tamilnadu (to use those terms anachronistically). Kathleen Bliss was not present, but consciously or unconsciously applied Willingen principles to the re-structuring of the Church of England teacher training college system in 1960–65, while she and a number of British delegates who were present went on to have careers in Christian

68 Newbigin, *Unfinished Agenda*, 130. We have noted already the importance of personal friendships for undergirding the ecumenical movement. Many delegates and staff members were SCM/WSCF graduates.

69 Highly influential was Max Warren. See his *Crowded Canvas, Some Experiences of a Lifetime* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1975), 154.

70 Newbigin describes this challenge in his “Mission to Six Continents” in Fey, *A History of the Ecumenical Movement*, 173–97, 180.

71 Edward R. Wickham, *Church and People in an Industrial City* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1957). Another ground-breaking work, the synod report by Leslie Paul, *The Deployment and Payment of the Clergy of the Church of England* (Westminster: Church Information Office for the Central Advisory Council for the Ministry, 1964) is full of Willingen ideas, principally the need to switch resources from rural parishes to the great industrial cities where the parish system was anachronistic, and the need to invest in industrial mission. See Fey, *A History of the Ecumenical Movement*, 388–89.

religious broadcasting.⁷² In 1954 the Methodist Conference of England and Wales adopted a slogan, “Every Methodist a missionary,” which reflected IMC thinking at this time. But unfortunately it was not until 1960 that an IMC officer, Paul Löffler, based in London, could be assigned to study lay-people working as evangelists in secular contexts.⁷³

The IMC meeting held in Accra, Ghana, in 1957, is usually seen as a stepping stone to integration with the WCC at the WCC assembly in New Delhi in 1961. It was distinguished by its validation of the arrangements for regional member councils, with devolution of decision-making and development, and practical measures such as the establishment of the Theological Education Fund.⁷⁴ Although Lesslie Newbigin, Church of South India Bishop in Madurai-Ramnad and a Church of Scotland missionary (1936–59 and 1965–74), then chair of the IMC but not at the meeting, was nominated IMC General Secretary, the balance of European and American delegates and staff was further tilted toward the two-thirds world.⁷⁵ Similarly, the majority of the papers delivered to the conference are reports of churches and ecumenical bodies at work in the two-thirds world. The ground was being prepared for the next step in missionary thought and practice, the removal of the distinction between “overseas mission” and “home missions,” and the responsibility of all to become “partners in obedience” to the call of Christ.

What should partnership look like? There could be no “us” and “them,” or so-called younger churches, when there were, for example, self-supporting Tamil Church of South India congregations in New York or autonomous Chinese Baptist churches in London, Liverpool, and Cardiff. Integration of native congregations and parallel mission structures still had some way to go, but Newbigin answered the question by insisting the partners focus on

72 The IMC went on to develop a project on Christian broadcasting in Africa in partnership with the Lutheran World Federation (Newbigin, “Mission to Six Continents,” 192). WCC Box 421,14.04, Christian Broadcasting in Africa, Geneva. Joachim Schmidt, *Rundfunkmission – ein Massenmedium wird Instrument* (Erlangen: Verlag der Ev.-Luth. Mission, 1980).

73 Löffler, formerly a missionary in India, was a DWME staff member from 1961 to 1968. He was secretary to the WCC Advisory Group set up in 1965 to strengthen work in industry and of the Second Asian Conference on Industrial Evangelism held in Manila in 1965, on training the laity. See his *The Layman Abroad in the Mission of the Church: A Decade of Discussion and Experiment* (London: Edinburgh House Press, 1962).

74 Newbigin, “Mission to Six Continents,” 186. Most notable was the East Asia Christian Conference, launched in May 1959 with R. B. Manickam (later bishop) as its general secretary and an office in Singapore.

75 When Visser ‘t Hooft alleged Western dominance, an analysis showed that the WCC’s proportion of two-thirds-world staffers and participants was significantly lower than the IMC’s in October 1961.

Jesus, as in the WCC New Delhi theme of “Christ, the light of the world.” Responding to the need for a substantive positive theological statement of mission to validate IMC/WCC decision-making, he rolled out discussion papers, culminating in the highly influential IMC publication, *One Body, One Gospel, One World*.⁷⁶ It was designed to justify the integration of the IMC/WCC and changing relationships in a postcolonial world, but Newbigin was dismayed at the persistence of colonial attitudes within the churches. He also lamented that for all the talk of changing structures, there is not one body, nor is one gospel preached. He calls for repentance all round and a re-examination of the unchanging basis of mission. One must start with Christ himself, and his words, “As the Father has sent me, so I send you” (John 20:20), which he interprets in the light of Jesus’ declaration in the synagogue in Nazareth (Luke 4:16). Jesus came to seek and save the lost, and to give his life as a ransom for many. This is Christ’s mission, and so theirs also.⁷⁷

One gets the feeling that after the high point in New Delhi when integration was approved, first by an IMC committee meeting and then by the WCC assembly, the staff felt a bit deflated as a successor study, known as *Second Body*, went through numerous drafts, with Norman Goodall, who had been asked to delay his retirement for a year, doing much of the spadework. As the drafts became more trinitarian, it became *The Mission of the Triune God*, and it was eventually published as *The Relevance of Trinitarian Doctrine for Today’s Mission*. Its significance lies in the way Newbigin addresses more fundamental theological issues than those arising from an attempt to overcome the dependency relationship between missions and younger churches. He asks whether one can take for granted commitment to the substance of the missionary task any longer. He is adamant that the desire to help those in need should not be confused with this obligation. “The issue, in fact, is one of truth. Are the churches acting as though they were persuaded that Jesus Christ is the final and determinative truth for every man and for all mankind, so that for every human being and for every nation the most important question of all is: ‘What is your relation to Jesus Christ?’”⁷⁸ The real problem, as he sees it, is loss of faith in Christ, and from now on until his death in 1998 he would seek to establish the authority for this faith. He protests now about

76 Lesslie Newbigin, *One Body, One Gospel, One World: The Christian Mission Today* (London and New York: IMC, 1958; reprint 1996). Known as *One Body*, it was translated into several languages. See Laing, *From Crisis to Creation*, 175.

77 Goheen considers this the key to understanding Newbigin’s theology of mission. See Michael W. Goheen, “*As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you*” (2000).

78 First tentative draft of a paper to follow IMC paper, “One Body, One Gospel, One World,” p. 9. Typescript originally in IMC Box 102B.

the tendency to create two worlds, an inward world of faith and an evil outer world where Christianity has little hope of survival. He insists that all authority in heaven and on earth is given to the risen Christ and that all history, not just church history, will be summed up in him (Eph. 1:10).

The second draft (May 1962) emphasizes the challenge of religious pluralism and of what we now call globalization. It also acknowledges the loss of certainty about the Christian faith and the need ordinary church people have to be assured that what they are doing fits into “the whole of what God is doing in the secular history of the world.” This led to the affirmation in the message of the WCC-CWME conference held in Mexico in December 1963 that “God is Lord not only of creation but also of history. What is happening in the world of our time is under the hand of God, even when men do not acknowledge him. We are called to a sustained effort to understand the secular world and to discern the will of God in it . . . We affirm that the God whose world this is has revealed himself in Jesus Christ.”⁷⁹

The IMC veterans were convinced that mission should not only be understood as God’s will as an integral part of Christian discipleship, but that it was part of the process from creation to the redemption of the world in the cross of Christ and the final consummation of all things in the hoped-for world to come. Profoundly religious themselves, they could not understand the “God is dead” school or what religionless Christianity might be, or even agree on a definition of secularity.⁸⁰ They did agree that there had to be a dialogue with scientists and with those of other faiths, and the right language had to be found to speak to those who never set foot in a church.⁸¹ There was also a growing appreciation of the role of the Holy Spirit in mission, reinforced by the entry of Pentecostal churches into the WCC.⁸² Newbigin argues that the churches have to answer the challenge, “‘What have you got that we haven’t got?’ and the answer is, the Holy Spirit. We need to recover fullness of life in the Spirit. We can’t just leave it to the Pentecostals.”⁸³ Holding the CWME

79 Orchard, *Witness in Six Continents*, 174. The message is a snapshot of the debate.

80 It stems from a misreading or misunderstanding of Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s work. See Keith Clements, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s Ecumenical Quest* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2015), 271 f. See Lesslie Newbigin, *Honest Religion for Secular Men* (London: SCM Press, 1966).

81 Newbigin summed the debate up in his *Trinitarian Faith and Today’s Mission* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1964).

82 Walter Hollenweger, DWME study secretary for evangelism, facilitated this. See Walter J. Hollenweger, *The Pentecostals: The Charismatic Movement in the Churches* (London: SCM Press, 1972).

83 Sermon preached at the Church of South India Synod, 12 January 1956. In P. D. Devanandan, ed., *Presenting Christ to India Today: Three Addresses and a Sermon Delivered to the Synod of the Church of South India, Tiruchirappalli, January 1956* (Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1956).

meeting in Mexico City (1963) was seen as an opportunity to learn from the Pentecostal churches.⁸⁴ Consequently, the WCC assembly held in Uppsala in 1968 took as its first section, “The Holy Spirit and the Catholicity of the Church.”⁸⁵

Possibly more significant is a memorandum Newbigin produced in 1959 on training for the ministry. He asks whether Britain should be included, reminds us that mission was found in six continents, and declares that education for the ministry is just as deficient in Britain as elsewhere. He pleads for training more appropriate to where the candidate will minister and for a thorough study of what is actually the practice in Britain (and elsewhere) so that it can be reformed. I can only speak about the University of Birmingham. In 1971, Walter Hollenweger arrived from Geneva to Birmingham to be the first Professor of Mission, followed by Newbigin himself in 1975. It is a very good example of Joint Action for Mission, as advocated by the IMC because Newbigin and his colleagues were convinced there needed to be collaboration between churches and missions on an international basis to achieve practical objectives. One college would not be able to fund full-time training, one state university benefited by partnership with the church colleges. The reports advocated surveys of existing resources and stakeholders and joint action on a very local basis. It was clearly different from a relatively large Western-funded programme like the Theological Education Fund. The Mexico City conference is also characterized by detailed work on regional initiatives in evangelism. IMC/DWME-CWME staff and participants coming to Britain had a significant influence on the development of mission theology.

After the WCC assembly held in Nairobi in 1975, Lesslie Newbigin wrote a sharp letter to David Edwards criticizing his coverage and that of the British press for their insularity and false expectations. “An Assembly cannot do really fresh theological work. That is business for individuals and very small groups. It does provide a place where—in a rather rough and tough way—our varying insights and emphases can be corrected by mutual criticism. That experience has then to be followed up by reflection and scholarly study.”⁸⁶ Since the reports are voted on by the plenary assembly, one can usually infer a degree of

84 Eugene Smith, General Secretary of the Division of World Mission of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Church (USA) to Newbigin 26 March 1962, suggesting the advantages of choosing Mexico City to get authentic Pentecostal and Latin American representation. WCC Box 271.003. WCC Archives, Geneva.

85 Norman Goodall, ed., *The Uppsala Report 1968* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1968) Section 1, 7–20.

86 Newbigin to Edwards, 1.3.1976, DA29/2/2/94, Special Collections, University of Birmingham (UoB).

consensus is achieved also. This is as true for the IMC meetings in Willingen (1952) and Accra, Ghana (1957–58), the CWME conference in Mexico City (1963), and the WCC assemblies in Amsterdam (1948), New Delhi (1961), and Uppsala (1968). However, there are also “stand out” themes that catch the imagination, perhaps also the spirit of the times, even if they may not carry over to the next theme in a logical progression.⁸⁷

This should have been the case for Section 2 on “Renewal in Mission” at the WCC assembly in Uppsala in 1968.⁸⁸ The conference was, by all accounts, poorly organized, and the attempt to engage with student revolt, with a contrived “demonstration” in the closing service, was not appreciated by British representatives of missionary societies. There had only been a partial success in completing regional studies for the missionary structure of the congregation, and the slogan “Let the world write the agenda” was widely misunderstood as secular concerns being allowed to dominate rather than the church responding to the needs of the world. It did spell the final parting of the ways with evangelicals. Those who were members of the Church of England became more vocal and organized their own events.⁸⁹

In part it was inevitable, given the process of integration of the IMC and the WCC. Mission in England stemmed from voluntary societies starting with the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge in 1698 and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in 1701. Members were volunteers and the societies tended to be at arm’s length from their mother denominations or, like the Bible Society, were non-denominational. The WCC was made up of official institutional churches, whether established by law like the Church of England, or “free churches.” There was an imbalance because churches founded by missionary activity were members of the IMC only through their national councils of churches. They could join the WCC directly if they accepted its Basis.⁹⁰ John Stott and Max Warren, to

87 Good examples are Goodall to Newbiggin, 3.12.52, DA29/2/1/24, University of Birmingham, on planning for Evanston, and Committee Paper 99, dated 30.11.61, DWME Assembly Committee Papers, WCC Box 270.111, WCC Archives, Geneva.

88 Goodall, *The Uppsala Report 1968*, 21–38. Jörg Müller, *Uppsala II. Erneuerung in der Mission: Eine redaktionsgeschichtliche Studie und Dokumentation zu Sektion II der 4. Vollversammlung des Ökumenischen Rates der Kirchen, Uppsala 1968* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1978).

89 Timothy Dudley-Smith, *John Stott: A Global Ministry: A Biography of the Later Years* (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 2001), 126 f., 266. John Stott, “Twenty Years after Lausanne: Some Personal Reflections,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 19:2 (April 1995), 50–55. Laing, *From Crisis to Creation*, 126 f. David J. Bosch, “‘Ecumenicals’ and ‘Evangelicals’: A Growing Relationship?” *The Ecumenical Review* 40:3-4 (July-August/September/October 1988), 458–72.

90 An anomaly was that the founders of the British Council of Churches decreed that bodies like the Society of Friends and the Salvation Army could be members although they had

name the best known British critics, were afraid that enthusiasm for mission would be lost and with it the distinctive character of the IMC.⁹¹ They did not believe that Newbigin could persuade every WCC department to relate its work to mission. On the other hand, the other WCC departments did not have the heavyweight theology undergirding their work that the IMC/DWME-CWME had.⁹² Finally, the IMC had regional offices, including the newly created one in Singapore (1958), whereas the WCC seemed top heavy and overcentralized. Newbigin's answer was to travel widely, though he much regretted being forced to move from London to Geneva. Like Hollenweger, he thought it better to go to where people were than to spend large sums holding conferences in Geneva.⁹³

In 1972 the British Council of Churches organized a conference of church leaders in Birmingham. One of the principal speakers was Archbishop Janani Luwum of Uganda, who spoke about wider effect of racism in South Africa and the insularity of Britain, the "mother country" to so many in the third world.⁹⁴ Nevertheless, when the General Synod of the Church of England voted, first to cease to support the WCC and then, forced by public outcry, to amend that to not allowing any of its contribution to fund the Programme to Combat Racism, ordinary Anglicans sent money to the fund directly, which more than made up for the shortfall.⁹⁵ Possibly the Notting Hill riots a decade earlier had sensitized Christians to the evils of racism,⁹⁶ but awareness of the need for the churches to act could be an IMC legacy, just as Charles Raven's work on religious education in consequence of his involvement in the IMC meeting in Jerusalem may well have seeded the provisions of the 1944 Education Act in Britain and subsequent legislation.

no creedal statement if they had joined a predecessor body before 1942. The Conference of British Missionary Societies did not integrate until 1977.

91 Goodall, *Second Fiddle*, 103–107; Laing, *From Crisis to Creation*, 39, 46, 49, 94–96.

92 Laing, *From Crisis to Creation*, 132, 167 f.

93 Both said this to me at various times.

94 Edwards, *The British Churches Turn to the Future*, 14. Archbishop Luwum was murdered shortly after his return to Kampala by agents of Idi Amin's regime. Ernest A. Payne, *Thirty Years of the British Council of Churches, 1942-1972* (British Council of Churches, 1972). "The Third World" was the phrase then used.

95 Interview Frank Northam, WCC Financial Director, Autumn 1974.

96 Barbara Rogers, *Race: No Peace without Justice: Churches Confront the Mounting Racism of the 1980s* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1980); John Downing, *Now You Do Know (An Independent Report on Racial Oppression in Britain for submission to a World Council of Churches Consultation)* (London, March 1980); John J. Vincent, *The Race* (London: SCM Press, 1970).

In 1948–68, neither theology nor response have followed a straight, uncomplicated path of the missiological development of biblical concepts of mission. Conflict between so-called evangelicals and ecumenicals has led the journey taken by churches and missionary societies through hostile territory at times; but given the challenges for Christian life in postcolonial Britain, the influence of the IMC/DWME-CWME can be considered beneficial. The “swinging sixties” saw societal ethics change, but it was unfortunate that greater inclusivity and affluence was not matched by greater church union for mission among the British churches despite the positive impact of Vatican II and much improved relations in Britain between Roman Catholic and Protestant churches. Even then there were regular riots, with Catholics and Protestants fighting in the streets of Liverpool until Archbishop Warlock of Liverpool and David Shepherd, the Anglican bishop, managed, through demonstrating their personal friendship, to bring the violence to an end. This again demonstrates the importance of friendships for creating ecumenical advances.

What the IMC did in Britain was to open a window on other worlds, and the “winds of change” blew through. The efforts, especially around the CWME conference in Mexico, to de-colonialize missions and churches were significant, enabling true partnership in obedience. However, it could be argued that long term, the most important legacy was the IMC influence to make unity local, “all in each place.”⁹⁷ As already noted, actual church union in Britain was very limited, though, scouring Newbigin’s diaries of 1948 to 1968, when he was on furlough or visits, it seems that he was far more often asked to speak or preach on the Church of South India and its ideals than on the most recent IMC meetings.

The British Council of Churches was created in 1942 partly because of the need to amalgamate the different ecumenical bodies such as the Christian Social Council (Life and Work), the British Commission on Faith and Order, the British Section of the World Alliance for Friendship between the Churches, partly to respond to the Beveridge Report and plans by government for a welfare state and partly as a force for evangelism in the Religion and Life Weeks. One has the impression that by 1952 it had run out of steam, but working with the American evangelist, Billy Graham, re-energized it.⁹⁸ The message of the WCC/IMC/DWME-CWME crystallized at New Delhi in 1961 may well have been the spur for the creation of local councils of churches. Indeed, the structure of the British Council of Churches and local

97 See the full statement of what this meant in Visser ’t Hooft, *The New Delhi Report*.

98 See “Unity in Evangelism. Report of a Notable Consultation,” Bossey, July 1960. For the extent of the dialogue: WCC Box 270.112, Geneva.

councils is far more reminiscent of the IMC and the national councils in each country, with their common mission of witness and service, than the WCC. The IMC was organized on a regional basis with the minimum of professional staff and made bold experiments in study and project-funding. This included working with those experimenting in industrial mission in England, the Iona Community in Scotland, and Corrymeela in Northern Ireland.⁹⁹ Tasked with “encouraging evangelism,” it also drew on deeper wells of spirituality when major Orthodox churches joined the World Council; but it is very difficult to see that in Britain, it (now the CWME) had much influence in stemming the tide of secularity and postmodernism.¹⁰⁰

Eleanor M. Jackson, formerly a theological tutor in colleges in India originally supported by the IMC, is completing a biography of Bishop Lesslie Newbiggin (1909–98), missiologist and last general secretary of the IMC (1959–61), having previously published her PhD on the life of William Paton (1886–1943), submitted to the University of Birmingham, UK, in 1976.

99 Fey, *A History of the Ecumenical Movement*, 381. Ronald Ferguson, *George MacLeod: Founder of the Iona Community* (London: Collins, 1990). The Corrymeela Community, founded 1965, works to bring peace between communities in Northern Ireland.

100 However, those like Newbiggin, who refused to swim with the tide propounded an alternative in the 1980s and 1990s leading to the Gospel and our Culture movement, while the Church of England produced the influential *Faith in the City* report. See Keith Clements, (1988) *Lovers of Discord: Twentieth-Century Theological Controversies in England* (London: SPCK, 1988), 178 f.

CHAPTER 4

Mission in Northeast India in the Early 20th Century: A Perspective from the Global South on the Founding of the IMC in the Global North

Marina Ngursangzeli Behera

Introduction

In this contribution, I will be looking at cooperation in “mission on the margins,” using two lenses or a double perspective. First, I will look at the cooperation between missionaries and Indigenous evangelists in the early years of an emerging church in Northeast India. The foreign missionaries were able to reach only a few people. It was the Indigenous evangelists and itinerant preachers who appropriated the gospel from within their own traditions, then shared and spread the gospel within and outside the region and thus played a major and significant role in establishing the church in the region. This marks the region as a centre of local cooperation in missionary activity and not as the margins of international cooperation. Second, I will look at the cooperation between the missionaries who were active in Northeast India. Through personal contacts, they were able to collaborate and work together in many ways on the ground. Collaboration, however, was overshadowed by the division between the missionary societies involved in the International Missionary Council (IMC) and therefore did not find any mention even though, ironically, collaborations between missionaries belonging to different missionary societies and traditions in different parts of India had an impact on international cooperation, for instance, at the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910.

It is against this background that the distinctiveness of mission in Northeast India will be presented. The missionaries working in these regions did not feel the need for the emerging churches to join the uniting movements that were taking place in mainland India which had led to the formation of the Church of South India and the Church of North India. In fact, they were of the opinion that it would be more detrimental for the emerging church in the region. One of the results of this attitude is that most churches in Northeast India are both

the churches of tribal communities and missionary churches. Many have not become members of the World Council of Churches (WCC), not seeing—because of their history—any advantage in joining an international organization that, from their perspective, does not promote missionary activities.

The presentation will problematize, on the occasion of the founding of the IMC, who is at the margins and who is at the centre. It attempts to shed light on the objectives of the IMC from the perspective of mission in the region in Northeast India.

The First Missionaries from the West

In such a meeting beauty is a real asset, for lovely scenes have a more universal appeal than music itself, and it is no small advantage to keep the saints in a receptive temper. At Crans last year [1920] we all felt the beauty as a soothing influence after the cruel lacerations of the war. The charm of Crans was that of the chateaux and granges of the old world, and the *massif* of Mont Blanc rose on the horizon over the lake, faint and blue with distance, but undeniably real. The fairness of Lake Mohonk was that of the new world. The situation of the “Mountain House” was deliberately chosen. The lake is carved deep into the last rock-step before the mountain’s summit and has grim crags overhanging it on either side. On the slopes away from the peak the landscape smiles with fields and orchards where the Indians used to range. Here and there in the great building long expanses of plate glass allow panoramas of the changing shadows on the hills. In the Conference Hall a similar window was behind the chairman, and the sight of the cliffs by the lake, with their clinging autumnal shrubbery lit by the afternoon sun, gave me ever and again the suggestion of the presence of God. The big veranda on three sides of this hall allowed us for five minutes at 11.30 a.m. to go out and refresh ourselves in loveliness. America may “go dry,” but the air of its uplands is still the wine of the gods.¹

Frank Lenwood, one of the secretaries of the IMC, wrote these words looking back at the founding meeting of the IMC at Lake Mohonk in October 1921. I will take you to another mountainous area, the region where my people, the Mizo, live. Today, Mizoram is officially a dry state because of the lingering influence of Christian mission similar to the United States during the 1920s, which prompted Lenwood to comment on the wine. The Mizo ancestors always appreciated a good rice beer.

1 Frank Lenwood, “The International Missionary Council at Lake Mohonk, October 1921,” *International Review of Missions* 11 (January 1922), 30-42, 30-31.

In the 1890s, on the slopes of those mountains and on their roads, you could hear children singing:

*I see two fools, I see two fools,
Two real big fools I see;
I see them coming along the hills,
Aia, ie e, u au, aia etc.²*

The two fools were the missionaries Lorrain and Savidge, who began wandering the mountains of present day Mizoram in 1893. The Mizo ancestors needed to make sense of these foreigners who appeared in their mountains after the British raided the region. One military column had come from the Chittagong side, that is from the west, a second came from the Burma side, in the east.³ This military intervention eventually resulted in subduing the Sailo chiefs and other tribes in the mountains to stop them from raiding and pillaging the villages in the plains where British had established tea gardens.⁴ Shortly after, these two missionaries entered the region and came to Aizawl. Aizawl became the central place for both the newly introduced governing force and for mission, and today it is the capital of the state of Mizoram.

The song the children were singing demonstrates one of the possibilities to make sense of the presence of the two white men. The missionaries probably did not mind being fools for Christ, but the question for the Mizo tribes was the following: What were these fools good for? It is a fascinating story, to see how quickly the Mizo made sense of them and their purpose and what they were good for. They even started making up songs about the white men. Part of their attempt to make sense of them is seen in the names they gave them in the Mizo language. Lorrain and Savidge were called *Pu Buanga* (Mr Light Brown, as he had blond hair) and *Sap Upa* (Old Man), respectively. Shakespear, the British superintendent at Aizawl in these years was called *Pu Tarmita* (Mr Spectacles) because of the glasses he wore. He was probably the

2 Quoted in Joy L. K. Pachuau and Willem van Schendel, *The Camera as Witness: A Social History of Mizoram, Northeast India* (Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 67.

3 See Thomas H. Lewin, *A Fly on the Wheel or How I Helped to Govern India* (Aizawl: Tribal Research Institute. Art & Culture Department. Government of Mizoram, 2005 reprint [1912]), 255f. He was part of the Western column,

4 Frederick S. Downs, *Christianity in North East India: Historical Perspectives* (Delhi, Gauhati: ISPCK, CLC, 1983), 35.

first person the Mizo had seen wearing something so strange.⁵ The story in the Mizoram mountains continues with reports of the first convert Taibunga,⁶ who appeared to have accepted Jesus in the late 1890s on his death bed in the small hospital that the missionaries had set up. The first baptism took place in 1899 with the baptism of two men, Khuma and Khara.⁷

Mizo Missionaries

The point is not how long it took for the first Mizo to join the ranks of the “wandering fools,” at least in the eyes of the Mizo tribes, but how quickly the first Mizo converts to the new faith started travelling to spread the gospel. There are reports from 1900 that the first evangelists and Bible women went from village to village, where these young Christians were ridiculed like in the children’s song or even expelled from their villages.⁸ One of the questions to be considered is why the white Christians were called missionaries and Indigenous Christians called evangelists. Brian Stanley’s approach in his latest book on World Christianity identifies movements that happened at different places but at the same time and contrasts them.⁹ Using Stanley’s approach is apt given that he has written the most influential study on the Edinburgh conference 1910.¹⁰ In looking at what was happening in the Mizoram mountains and elsewhere in India and in Edinburgh between 1900 and the 1920s, we can chart the dynamic developments of the spreading of the Gospel in Northeast India compare events in the Mizo region with events in the wider mission movement. Thus, we can demonstrate how far away the Mizo missionary activities were from the IMC while the events in this region were interconnected with developments in the wider missionary movement in which the IMC was operational.

5 J. Meirion Lloyd, *History of the Church in Mizoram* (Harvest in the Hills), Gospel Centenary Series, No. 1, (Aizawl: Synod Publication Board, 1991), 43.

6 Grace R. Lewis, *The Lushai Hills: The Story of the Lushai Pioneer Mission* (London: The Baptist Missionary Society, 1907), 37–39. She quotes from Lorrain’s notes and gives the name.

7 Pachuau and van Schendel, *The Camera as Witness*, 67. The authors quote Lorrain who reported 1896 two persons in hospital who seems to have accepted Christ but died before being baptized.

8 *Ibid.*, 70.

9 Brian Stanley, *Christianity in the Twentieth Century: A World History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018).

10 Brian Stanley, *The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910* (Studies in the History of Christian Missions), (Grand Rapids, MI, Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 2009).

The region was not part of the movement toward the founding of the IMC. However, what happened there was connected to the larger movements in mission in various ways. When the World Missionary Conference convened in Edinburgh in 1910, the societies who had sent the first missionaries to Aizawl were present. At that time, the two missionaries, the first ever that the Arthington Society had sent to Aizawl and to the region, had already left. It was the policy of the society to send missionaries only to new fields and to let them stay there no longer than three years. One of the reasons for the two leaving the place where they had started their mission was the decision of the Welsh Presbyterian Mission to send a missionary. When Savidge and Lorrain learned about these plans, they sent a telegram and also wrote to the Presbyterian Church of Wales expressing their fear that the Mizo might be confused by the denominational differences.¹¹ In 1897, D. E. Jones arrived in Aizawl, and with him Rai Bhajur, a Khasi, both sent by the Presbyterian Welsh mission. Savidge and Lorrain left the territory and later returned with the Baptist mission and started work in the southern part of Mizoram.¹²

While in 1910 the representatives of the Western Missionary societies strategized on mission and were in Edinburgh discussing the self-supporting church in the mission field, four young men labelled as Lushai—Tuaha, Vaikhawla, Sena, and Taiawra—went to Burma/Myanmar to preach the gospel. “Tuaha had to leave his wife and young child in order to obey the call. His wife thought he was mad to go so far from home and wept bitterly many times before he left.”¹³ Actually, these four were not the first. As early as 1900, evangelists such as Khuma, Khara, and Phaisama and other volunteers had been appointed to preach the gospel in the region. Khuma and Khara, the first two baptized Mizo, and Phaisama went to south and southeast Mizoram, and other volunteers spread the gospel elsewhere. It appears they received a better response than the white missionaries, who had to beg for permission to preach and for food and shelter while travelling.¹⁴

By 1910, not even 20 years after the first contact, there may have been around one thousand Christians among the Mizo tribes, and the majority of them had been reached by Mizo evangelists and volunteers. Mission work had started earlier in the Khasi and Garo hills, in the north of Mizoram, and until 1923, the Christians in Mizoram were part of the Khasi assembly.¹⁵

11 Lloyd, *History of the Church in Mizoram*, 32.

12 Downs, *Christianity in North East India*, 118–19.

13 Pachau and van Schendel, *The Camera as Witness*, 82.

14 Lloyd, *History of the Church in Mizoram*, 57, 60.

15 *Ibid.*, 56.

The first two Mizo converts had gone there in 1899 with Jones and Edwin Rowlands, who had joined the missionary ranks to attend the assembly. Lloyd opines in his history of the Mizo church: “No new personnel was provided by the Khasi church and Edwin Rowlands is reported to have said that it should be taken as a sign that God wanted the Mizo to do their own evangelism. Edwin Rowlands’s confident interpretation proved true.”¹⁶

Those doing mission in the Mizo hills were inspired not only by the very few missionaries who were working among them but also by revivals. The revivals in Northeast India linked directly back to the Welsh revivals. The Northeast Indian Christians prayed day and night for the same blessings of the Spirit in their place. When in 1905 the first revival took place in the Khasi hills,¹⁷ several Mizo Christians attended, and they brought the revival spirit back to Mizoram.

The important point is that the revivals in the Northeast were mainly in the agency of the locals who came together to experience Christian fellowship and the Holy Spirit. These revivals had their own dynamics; they were mass evangelistic events and contributed to the spread the gospel and they could not be controlled. Thanga, one of the earliest of the converts, was in his mid-20s in 1905 and a kind of a leader in the Christian community in Aizawl because of his experience and education. In the rainy season of that year, he was seconded along with Dala to work in Lunglei, in southern Mizoram, with F. W. Savidge, because they were short-handed at the time. “I happened to mention to Pu Buanga (J. H. Lorraine) the fact that we were holding prayer-meetings in Aizawl to ask for the Holy Spirit to revive us and he thought it a splendid idea. So, in Serkawn too, we had prayer meetings (from July on) asking for revival.”¹⁸ This corroborates that the revivals were to a large extent in the hand of the locals.

The annual assembly of the Presbyterian Churches was to be held in March at Mairang, an important village in the Khasi hills. Jones resolved that some Mizo should go, and he selected four persons to attend the assembly. Three of these were women—Siniboni, Pawngi and Thankhumui, and Khuma. In the end, Chawnga, Khuma, Thanga, Pawngi, Thankungi, Vanchhunga, and Siniboni from the north and Thankunga, Parima, and Zathanga from the south attended the revival.¹⁹

16 Ibid.

17 Ibid., 88–89.

18 Zathanga, a Christian worker in the South, corroborates this and affirms that these special meetings continued into 1906. Lloyd, 89.

19 Lloyd, *History of the Church in Mizoram*, 90.

Revivals happened around that time on mission fields all over the world. They were connected by the experience of the Spirit that caused them to flourish and that connected this part of the world with other parts.²⁰ The revival in the Khasi hills and shortly after in Mizoram happened almost at the same time as the events in Azusa Street. Those experiencing the revivals around the world were in communication with each other.²¹ These revivals connected the Mizo Christians to a global phenomenon of which they may not have been aware, with the exception of the revivals in Wales. In the north-eastern hills, the revivals were the context in which Mizo Christianity was forged as an indigenous faith and spirituality.

There is a direct connection between the region and the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910. Among the eight participants from India was Rev. Thang Khan Sangma from Tura in the Garo hills, in present-day Meghalaya but at that time in Assam. He must have been one of the very first Northeast Indian Christians to have followed a course of higher education outside India at Andover in Massachusetts, USA.²² At the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh, Thang Khan Sangma made a bold speech. He protested against the reports characterizing “the stands of the British government in India as being one of religious neutrality.” The prohibition of the teaching of the Bible in government schools, in his view, was to be taken not as neutrality but as hostility. By its exclusion of Bible teaching from schools, the government was depriving itself of the only force capable of shaping good character and hands of turning into good subjects, all the people of British India.²³ It was at the discretion of the missionary societies whether they sent Western missionaries or indigenous Christians to the Edinburgh conference.²⁴ Thang Khan Sangma’s education was most probably a reason why he had been sent as one of the 21 indigenous Christians to the world missionary conference.

The government agent McCall looked with some suspicion in 1949 back on these early days in Mizoram. He reports several incidents which prove to him that among the first to accept the new faith were some who interpreted it in their own erroneous way and thus made it necessary for him to step in to keep order.²⁵

20 Ibid., 86–88.

21 It is well known that Pandita Ramabai in South India had contact with Pentecostals in Latin America.

22 Stanley, *Edinburgh 1910*, 94.

23 Report of commission seven, 176. Quoted from Stanley, *Edinburgh 1910*, 95.

24 Stanley, *Edinburgh 1910*, 93, 102–107.

25 Anthony Gilchrist McCall, *Lushai Chrysalis* (London: Luzac & Co, 1949), 215–25.

For McCall, the Lushai temperament was of “a very intense and emotional potential.” This led them in his eyes to misinterpret the new faith, which he considered to be too complicated for the “simple Lushais,” that is, the Mizo. The following story that McCall reports is an instructive example of how he construed the encounter of the Lushai with the Christian message and betrays his own preconceived understanding of what this message was about. He reports of an incident in which a young Lushai was carrying a Bible under his arm.

When asked if he did not consider that Christianity, as represented by the complicated theological and doctrinal approach, was too complicated for simple Lushais, his answer was that the reason he carried about a Bible was, not that he knew anything about it, but that he had heard that Christ had some disciples, whose duty was to spread His sayings, but that he did not know much about what these sayings were.

Not only does McCall establish that the young Lushai did not understand anything, but he is convinced that the young man could only be going wrong. McCall continues:

Further interrogation disclosed that he had forsaken an elderly mother and father, in dire need of their strong son’s customary and traditional assistance. It was in order to imitate his picture of Christ’s disciples, by moving from one Lushai village to another, incidentally cadging hospitality as it came, that he went about carrying his Bible under his arm. The picture form [*sic*] a distance may have seemed beautiful, but, when seen a little nearer, the cracks and illusions disclosed the love of variety, the masquerade of the poseur. Nevertheless, to avoid resentment and despair a friendly understanding is vital, even if difficult.²⁶

McCall continues that what is needed instead of such erroneous ways “is a practical Christianity of the simples [*sic*] kind, prepared to bide its time standing for easy compromise, in the faith that in the long and distant future the people themselves would develop along lines of natural expression.”²⁷

Now it was a white Christian who thought that the Mizo Christians were the fools in the story. McCall was convinced that the early Mizo Christians had neither the intellectual capacity to understand the complexities of the Christian doctrines, nor the ability to find their way into the new faith without the guidance of the whites. He relates several incidents where he felt

²⁶ Ibid., 215.

²⁷ Ibid., 227.

compelled in his function as a government officer to intervene against detrimental effects of the spread of the gospel. He held missionaries responsible for some erroneous ways how the Indigenous people appropriated the gospel.

Part of the cause for this defiance of mission sanction may lie in the fact that this Mission [The Welsh Mission] had practiced what was almost equality in status in various Educational and Religious Committees. To admit at that stage that a Lushai is qualified to pass final and authoritative opinions on matters not indigenous to the country and her traditions is to incur inevitable risks. Moreover, it sanctions a line of dealing in Lushai, which is denied by the wisdom of the Government.²⁸

He continued, “When we recall that some missionaries openly claim that it is their privilege and their prerogative to blaze a trail, and for others to meet the resulting situation, the need for some form of limitation on missionary activity among a backward people becomes a real matter.”²⁹ For McCall, the Lushais were not only “savages”; the risk was that they if were not guided correctly, the gospel would go wild.

McCall identified the same risk in revivalism. He claimed that the missionaries were attempting

faithfully to keep it within the bounds of decency. But what they have never bargained for was that, not having outlawed at the very outset an unindigenous and clearly unhealthy manifestation of wild Lushai within a Christian framework, the day would surely come when their own Lushai Church leaders and colleagues would deny to their European preceptors their right to give final ruling on what the Bible did or did not sanction. The implications of any surrender of directional authority to mere novices in the intricacies of those doctrinal confusions, which make up institutional Christianity, can readily be understood.³⁰

On the one hand, the Mizo were developing their own indigenous version of Christian faith by figuring out what made sense to them. In this process, they became fools to their fellow Mizo tribals by discovering the relevance of this new message for them. This motivated them to become missionaries, and so they walked from the centre Aizawl to other villages and then to Burma. Going there, they certainly were not thinking to cross an international border but to visit cognate tribes. On the other hand, the white missionaries were

28 *Ibid.*, 225.

29 *Ibid.*, 214.

30 *Ibid.*, 223.

discussing how much what happened in the revivals among Mizo should be monitored and controlled. We need to take into account that the various and few missionaries in the region were distinct individuals and that they had different ways of spreading the gospel and controlling its interpretation. Pachuau and van Schendel write about phenomena in these days like back-sliding, forward sliding, and new cults being started!³¹

For instance, because Mizo, like many non-western peoples, did not have any equivalent in their indigenous system of the Christian concept of sin, they struggled to understand this message of Jesus Christ as one who atoned for sin. They were instead better able to understand the concept of a Saviour conquering the powers of darkness and death and liberating them of these. In this regard the missionaries reported that the Mizo were fond of hearing that Jesus Christ has conquered the Devil and Death . . . And often people come to us to tell them about Jesus.³²

The revivals were one of the fires in which the Mizo indigenous Christianity was forged. Some independent movements and churches branched off, obviously not willing to be under the missionaries. The Church of God in Meghalaya³³ and other movements in the hill region make us aware that mission history is never only the implementation of one idea by missionaries and the people accepting it. The variety of engagements that we can see on the ground is also proof of other expressions and interpretations of the Holy Spirit or of Jesus Christ among the Mizo, who were searching for the meaning of the message that the fools had brought.

In the South of Mizoram

During the time in question, the space of the Mizo of today started to emerge as a buffer between India and Burma. The division of the large tribal families and the annexation of their territories into today's India and Burma was a late after-effect of the British occupation of the kingdoms during the East India Company's time. One part was under the province of Assam, even though the British had named certain hilly regions according to the dominant tribal communities that lived there. We read about the Garo, Khasi, the Nagas

31 Pachuau and van Schendel, *The Camera as Witness*, 73-74.

32 F. Hrangkhuma, *Christianity in India; Search for Liberation and Identity* (Delhi: CMS/ISPCK, 1998), 4.

33 M. Thongkhosei Haokip, *A History of the Ecumenical Movement in North East India. With special Reference to the North East India Christian Council* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2015), 64.

or Lushai hills and the respective mission societies working there. In 1873 the British introduced an inner line cutting off the hill region to the south and toward Myanmar. Anyone wishing to enter the region beyond needed a permit from the administration. One of the effects was that the area was secluded from the rest, and some officials promoted this concept of a closed area in order to leave the tribals alone.³⁴ The seclusion also affected mission because the only missionary societies given permission to work in Mizoram were Presbyterians and Baptists. As mentioned, the Arthington missionaries had protested against plans of the Welsh Presbyterian mission to send missionaries into the hills.³⁵ Later, as a result of the cooperation in mission, a remarkable comity developed between the Presbyterians in the north and the Baptists in the south of the Mizo hills.³⁶ The different form of Christian life and church order was, however, not replicated in the tribal fellowships. Presbyterian and Baptist in the region were first of all Mizo Christian and very much alike, and the feared doctrinal confusion never occurred among them. If we follow the tracks back to how the missionaries found their way into the region, we are led to Calcutta. This capital was a centre for government and mission. All the missionaries mentioned, in addition to those who had been going to the Khasi or Garo hills and other areas in the northeast region, came through Calcutta. Here, William Pearce, the director of the Baptist mission, had already initiated in 1830 a prayer breakfast where missionaries who belonged to different societies and traditions met.³⁷ Andrew May has meticulously traced the tracks of Thomas Jones, who came from the hills of Wales and went to Cherrapunji, in today's Meghalaya's hills. On his way, he spent some time in Calcutta in 1841 and met other missionaries with whom he conversed and whom he asked for advice. The existing networks and the established relationships between the foreign missionaries and the British officials formed a social space in which newly arrived missionaries would be received. Here, they found assistance and could gather information about their new workplaces. They could prepare themselves for their onward travel. Calcutta thus became the entrance gate

34 Haokip, *A History of the Ecumenical Movement in North East India*, 7–8.

35 Lloyd, *History of the Church in Mizoram*, 32.

36 *Ibid.*, 78. “The nature of Church organization in both north and south might best be described as Presbyterians. In many ways, however, it was more of a part of native Mizo heritage than an ecclesiastical innovation from the West. Being largely government by consultation and representation it was not difficult to adopt or maintain. Traditionally, however, the elders in a Mizo village were appointed by invitation of the chief whereas church elders were appointed from below as elsewhere, by members of the congregation.”

37 William Richey Hogg, *Ecumenical Foundations: A History of the International Missionary Council and its Nineteenth Century Background* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1952), 18.

to their final mission fields in Northeast India.³⁸ Once they had left Calcutta, they entered the more or less pacified plains of Assam or the wild hill regions named after the dominant tribals.

In North and South India and in Bengal, missionary networks had a longer tradition than in the northeast, and out of it grew a series of conferences that brought the various mission bodies together.³⁹ In 1900, while evangelists and Bible women in Mizoram had started sharing the gospel travelling to neighbouring hills, a conference was convened in Madras with 160 missionaries, among them some Indians. This conference proved to be influential in developing a model of a more formal working methodology. This model was applied again for the fourth decennial conference in 1902, also in Madras. The committees for these two conferences developed the concept of representation by inviting societies to send delegates.⁴⁰ A mission society was recognized when it was working under a committee in the West and had an organized body in India and a definite mission field. A rule was set for a quota such that societies could send one delegate for each 15 missionaries who were working for the society in the field. Further, commissions were installed to be working before the conference convened when the commission reports would be discussed and conclusions drawn. The delegates would bring back the conclusions to their societies. There was no obligation to follow the resolutions. To ease the acceptance of the conclusions, no discussion on doctrinal or ecclesiastical questions in which the different societies would differ was allowed.⁴¹ It is evident that the working procedure for the Edinburgh 1910 conference has been developed in the Indian mission conferences.⁴² One could even argue that the developments in India foreshadowed the later famous Hague Principle that the IMC adopted. At the 1902 conference in Madras, no representatives were present from the northeast, where the missionary networks were much weaker than in the South. Representatives from the northeast appeared, however, in two of the seven conferences that the Continuation Committee of Edinburgh organized in 1912–13 in India under the leadership of John R. Mott. J. C. Evans and Raj Bhijun from the Welsh Calvinistic

38 Andrew May, *Welsh Missionaries and British Imperialism: The Empire of the Clouds in North-East India*. Studies in Imperialism (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), 48–60.

39 Hogg, *Ecumenical Foundations*, 17–25.

40 *Ibid.*, 21–22.

41 See *ibid.*, 24, who mentions that no doctrinal questions should be discussed. For the description of the committee working and their results and how they are brought to the societies, see *Report of Fourth Decennial Indian Missionary Conference, Held in Madras, December 11th–18th, 1902* (London, Madras: CLS, no year), xxiii–xxiv.

42 Hogg, *Ecumenical Foundations*, 24.

Methodist's Foreign Mission, Shillong, and J. P. Jones from the same society from Sylhet, Assam, attended the conference at Calcutta, as did F. W. Harding from the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society, Tura.⁴³ It was resolved to form a representative council of Christian mission for Northeast India, comprising Bengal, Assam, Independent Sikkim, Orissa, and Chota Nagpur. The objective was to promote the spirit of unity and cooperation among missions and to be in communication with the Continuation Committee of the World Missionary Conference.⁴⁴ This idea was not implemented and, unlike in the South and North of India, it took a long time before a council and more formal organizations for cooperation among churches and missions were established in Northeast India.⁴⁵

The reasons for this delay are, according to some authors, the amalgam of ethnic and tribal identity with the church as well as the strict assignment of one area to one mission society.⁴⁶ Some of the missionaries promoted cooperation and the union of churches, but others and some tribal churches were not willing to go along with these plans for a larger community. In the Mizo case, Christian unity proved to later be the core for a larger Mizo identity. This was confined however, to the Mizo, and did not spread beyond them.⁴⁷ The ultimate goal of having one national church in India was not popular among the churches in the northeast. Many of these churches did not feel at ease with union attempts, which, in mainland India in the first half of the 20th century, were part of a movement toward a national church in India. The northeast people in general did not feel they were part of an Indian nation that marginalized them and continues to do so.

These attitudes and the seclusion of the region made the participation of missionaries from Shillong and Tura in the conferences of the Continuation Committee the closest link the region ever had with the IMC. The churches in the northeast and especially the church in Mizoram were, however, very active in mission. They may have been at the margins of the movements

43 The Continuation Committee Conference in Asia 1912–1913, *A Brief Account of the Conferences together with their Findings and Lists of Members* (New York: Chairman of the Continuation committee 1913), 115–16.

44 Ibid., 111–12. J. C. Evans, Shillong, and F. W. Harding, Tura, were members of the committee that should found the council, 113.

45 Haokip, *A History of the Ecumenical Movement in North East India*, 161.

46 O. L. Snaitang, *A History of Ecumenical Movement: An Introduction* (Bangalore: BTESSC/SATHRI, 2004), 61.

47 See my paper, "Heavenly Citizenship: A Concept for Union and an Identity Marker for Mizo Christians," presented at an international conference at Cluji Orthodox University, published in *Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai, Theologia Orthodoxa* 63:2 (December 2018), 75–90.

toward formal cooperation between missionary societies and churches—but they were centres of missionary activities in their regions.

The fellowship and churches were starting to emerge in the region of present day Mizoram, and the mission societies were slow in becoming aware of the indigenous tribal Christians in Northeast India. Whereas very early the young Christians started to do mission among their tribal communities, we have in the South, such as in Madras, and in North India, in the Punjab and in Bengal, debates between the missionaries and Indian Christian intellectuals. Madras—today's Chennai—must be mentioned because of *The Christian Patriot: A Journal of Social and Religious Progress*, a journal that was founded in 1890 and was run exclusively by native Christians, as they called themselves.⁴⁸ The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910 was not looked upon without criticism, but was still celebrated by them as a major ecumenical event of a World Christianity. The core challenge to the Indian Christians was, according to this editorial in the *Christian Patriot*, the awakening of the national spirit among the Asian colonized peoples.⁴⁹ When the Mizo in the hills in the northeast were attempting to make sense of the fools prowling their roads, these Christian intellectuals in the South were attempting to make sense of their role in the emerging Indian nation by contributing to progress and the development of the nation. When in 1910 the four evangelists left for Burma on a mission trip, the Christian elite was discussing in the *Christian Patriot* the events and reports of the Edinburgh conference.

The four indigenous Mizo missionaries never would have been recognized as participants of one of the mentioned conferences. They were not well educated and did not meet the established rules to be recognized by a mission society and invited for cooperation and common reflection, especially because they were not working under a comity in the West.

By Way of a Conclusion: The Mizo and International Missionary Commission

I have correlated the events in the Mizo hills with the developments in the South within the same British colony and with developments that led

48 Klaus Koschorke, “Absolute Independence For Indian Christians’ —The World Missionary Conference Edinburgh 1910 in the Debates of the Protestant Christian Elite in Southern India,” in *Annales Missiologici Posnanienses* 21 (2016), 37–52. John R. Mott was one subscriber of the journal.

49 Koschorke, “Absolute Independence For Indian Christians,” 40–41. Koschorke lists the names of the Indian delegates to Edinburgh but does not give the name of Thang, 45.

to Edinburgh 1910, and from there to the foundation of the IMC in 1921. There was a widespread opinion among the missionaries and the government in the northeast of the need for the tribal communities to develop into modernity but slowly. The Christian faith and the introduction of education through mission were seen to support this process. Both mentioned groups agreed that this slow process should be monitored by them, the foreigners. One of the results of these attempts on the missionaries' side is that most churches in Northeast India are both churches of tribal communities with different denominational and cultural backgrounds and missionary churches. In Northeast India of today, there are many Baptist tribal churches, some Lutheran and some Presbyterian. In Mizoram we have the Presbyterian Church in the north, and on the basis of the comity principle, the Baptist Church, which started from its centre in the south of Mizoram.

The emerging churches were focusing on consolidating and on mission and not on participating in efforts toward unity. The attitude calling for the slow development of the tribal communities was also seen in the benevolent but paternalistic wish to protect tribal communities. These communities had dealt with their demons and spirits and had found a new attitude to the world around them in Christ. In the wake of these concepts, the tribal communities were identified as backward, as dwelling in remote areas and shying away from contact with others, while, in the case of the Mizo, the inner permit line promoted a seclusion from the rest of North India and even more from mainland India.⁵⁰ The Mizo Christians on their side invited others to Christ, but did not see their Christianity as a part of a larger project toward an independent Indian nation. They were much more interested in their independence from mainland India and the central government.

One element supporting this conclusion is the experience of the First World War. It is a little known fact that around 2,100 young men from the Mizo hills had been brought to the trenches of Europe where they fought for the British.⁵¹ One of their songs went as follows:

*I cannot allow my young man to go
Don't send my love to fight the enemy Germans
Can't you imagine how I will long for him?*⁵²

50 See M. M. Thomas and Richard Taylor, eds, *Tribal Awakening* (Bangalore: CISRS, 1965).

51 Pachuau and van Schendel, *The Camera as Witness*, 189–94, 196.

52 *Ibid.*, 190.

The experience of the trenches and the carnage between so-called Christian nations damaged the image of the connection among Christian faith, Christianity, democracy, and progress. It had a detrimental effect of the self-consciousness of the Christian community in India by delegitimizing the connection between Christian faith and progress and democracy. This connection was less developed in the northeast, but the memories of the horrible war remained.

The links between the developments in northeast and mainland India and in the west demonstrate well that at the time of the founding years of the IMC, there were interconnected developments but not direct interaction. Societies that had missionaries in Mizoram were involved in the IMC, and mission churches were members of the National Missionary Council that was a founding member of the IMC. The widespread outside opinion seemed, however, to be that the Mizo Christians were not yet ready to join the union movements that were going on in India, let alone the search for cooperation through the IMC as an indigenous mission.

The young emerging Mizo congregations and later their churches were from the beginning very missionary minded. From very early on, they sent out Bible women, evangelists, and teachers to preach the gospel in the region within present-day Mizoram and the neighbouring states. This means that while there was no involvement in an international organizing and mainstreaming mission activities, the result of the Mizo's attempts of making sense of the fools was a very missionary-minded church. They were successful in that sense since within 20 years the majority of the Mizo had become Christians.

All that happened in the hills and below the level of the missionaries' networks. The Mizo Christians had a comity agreement between the Baptists and the Presbyterians. The character of both churches was much more influenced by the shared indigenous spirituality and appropriation of the Christian faith through the Mizo culture and tradition rather than by a different confessional identity.⁵³ On the level of the missionaries, we can identify networks and movements toward unity, but they were weak in the northeast. There were hampering factors, such as the ethnic identity and independence of the various churches. There was cooperation, but much lesser unity efforts than in South India, where these developments even had an influence on Edinburgh 1910 and even on what later was called the Hague Principle. The same missionaries for various reasons were not able to bring that to the ground in the northeast even though there was a plan to establish a Mission Council in Northeast India.

53 Lloyd, *History of the Church in Mizoram*, 56, 78.

The inner plurality and diversity of the context of India effected very different results in the various regions. The final point is that the IMC and its Indian members tried to bring together churches in mission and to promote the transformation of mission-induced communities and congregations into a national church. In the south and in the north of India, this was directly connected to the attempt of the Indian Christians to work for a national Christian fellowship, to embrace nationality, and to prove that Christians were not Christians in India but truly Indian Christians. In Mizoram, Christians were truly Mizo, and that led to an indigenous form of the Christian faith with a very missionary spirit.

In the beginning, children were singing about the fools; at the end of the story, the majority had become fools for Christ. Who then was at the margins and who at the centre? It is fair to conclude that the Mizo became a centre of mission and evangelism even though from the perspective of the IMC they were at the margins of mission and evangelism.

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PART II

Regional Reports

CHAPTER 5

An Assessment of the Influence of the International Missionary Council on the Mission of God among the Indigenous People of Aotearoa New Zealand

Aotearoa New Zealand Study Group/Jay Matenga

Preface

While this report is written by Dr Jay Matenga, it represents the work of three primary members of the International Missionary Council (IMC) Centenary Study Group in Aotearoa New Zealand, supported by additional advisors, informants, and participants. These include Rev. Dr Hirini Kaa (Ngāti Porou, Ngāti Kahungunu, and Rongowhakaata) and Rev. Tamsyn Kereopa (Te Arawa and Tuwharetoa), among others whose contributions are cited at various places throughout the report.

Rev. Dr Jekheli Kibami-Singh is the catalyst of this contribution from Aotearoa New Zealand and served as convenor and facilitator of the Study Centre. She is from the Sumi tribe of Nagaland in the northeast of India and currently serves as a Parish Priest in the Anglican Diocese of Waikato and Taranaki, Aotearoa New Zealand and Polynesia. Dr Kibami-Singh acknowledges the hospitality and welcome of the *tangata whenua* (people of the land) on whose land she has the joy of participating in God's mission. When approached to consider facilitating our Study Centre, she accepted the task after much prayer and contemplation, for two primary reasons:

Firstly, mission is of God and is at the very heart of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I am a product of the work of God's missionaries who travelled to the northeast of India and inspired my people to become God's missionaries themselves. Thereby, challenging many like myself, and settling us on a missionary journey. Secondly, my passion and commitment to participate in God's mission, is interwoven with my tribal identity. I believe, it is God's intention for mission to honour the stories, the

experiences, and the context of the people of the land, and in my current context it is the Maori people.¹

It was Dr Kibami-Singh's initiative to focus our Study Group's investigation for this report on the relationship between the IMC and the Indigenous people of Aotearoa New Zealand, hereafter, collectively identified as iwi Māori (the Māori tribes/people). Dr Kibami-Singh was insistent that the study be researched by Māori Christians, with Māori (insofar as it was feasible), for the benefit of a Māori understanding of the mission of God unfolding in our midst, as it was influenced (directly and indirectly) through cooperative collaboration with the personalities and perspectives of the IMC. She continues,

As a *tauiwi* (a person from another tribe), facilitating a Study Centre for Aotearoa New Zealand, I communicated with the IMC Centenary Steering Committee from the start that our centre would have an indigenous focus and, to do that, the conversation needed to be guided and led by the indigenous people themselves. We were also clear that our centre's scope was limited to Aotearoa New Zealand; therefore, reaching out to other Pacific nations was beyond our purview.

While, in the geographical regions of the World Council of Churches' member churches, Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand are part of the Asian ecumenical network, we recognise that various churches, mission organisations, and ministries in Aotearoa New Zealand work closely with our neighbours in the South Pacific.

The opportunity to join in with IMC 100 years celebration gave us the impetus to be intentional in framing our Centre's focus.²

Rev. Cruz Karauti-Fox (Ngāti Kauwhata, Te Arawa, Ngāti Tūwharetoa, Ngāti Raukawa, Ngāti Porou, Ngāti Manu, Kai Tahu, Kāti Mamoe) is the Missioner of Waikato, based at Hemi Tapu Marae in Hamilton. Rev. Cruz and his Amorangi/Diocese Te Manawa o Te Wheke hosted the Study Centre's online *hui* (gathering), on 2 October 2021. Around 40 participants, primarily from Aotearoa New Zealand, joined the conversation led by presenters Rev. Dr Hirini Kaa and Dr Jay Matenga. Representing the IMC Centenary Steering Committee were Dr Marina Ngursangzeli Behera and Dr Michael Biehl, who joined for the first half of the hui and whose participation and support we very much appreciated. This hui had to be virtual due to COVID-19 restrictions. This led to constraints in being able to fully understand indigenous epistemologies. *Kanohi ki te kanohi*, literally meaning face-to-face

1 Personal correspondence with Rev. Dr Jekheli Kibami-Singh.

2 Ibid.

or in-person gathering, is fundamental in the holistic approach to narrative conversation and historical analysis of a Maori context. It is not merely the information that is shared that is vital to interpretation, but also the context by which information is shared within that makes it valuable to those that have gathered. Rev. Cruz also opened the IMC Centenary Online Conference (16–18 November 2021) with a prayerful biblical reflection from his indigenous Christian perspective. On sharing at this conference, Rev. Cruz noted the very Eurocentric academic approach by which the Steering Committee expected their Study Centre to provide information. He observed that while it has been a wonderful experience and opportunity, international missional bodies like the WCC-CWME need to be more inclined to acknowledging indigenous methodologies, which are not always fully expressed through the written word and Western academic approaches.

Dr Jay Matenga (Ngāti Rakaiwhakairi, Ngāti Kahungunu ki Wairarapa, Ngāti Porou, Kai Tahu ki Rāpaki), a theologian of missions³ practice, is the author of this report. He was recruited to participate in the Study Centre on the recommendation of Dr Rosemary Dewerse, one of his doctoral supervisors. He brings 30 years of experience serving in evangelical missions from Aotearoa New Zealand to our project, which provided him an opportunity to reflect on that experience as a Māori in a predominantly non-Māori Christian network. Jay currently serves as director of the Global Witness Department for the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA), the executive director of the WEA's Mission Commission (a subset of the department alongside the Global Evangelism Network), and the director of Missions Interlink in Aotearoa New Zealand (the national missionary alliance).

3 The use of missions (plural) in this paper follows missiological conventions developed by David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, American Society of Missiology Series (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991); Christopher Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2006); and others who distinguish between mission (singular) as God's loving self-revelation and engagement with the world, and missions (plural) as the missionary ventures of the church (and those sent by her), which is privileged to participate in the mission of God. The use of mission (singular), then, is rooted in the Latin term *missio Dei*, "mission of God," from Karl Hartenstein who applied it to summarize Karl Barth's intratrinitarian missiology, to distinguish it from *missio Ecclesiae*, "mission of the Church." See Bosch, *Transforming Mission*; and Libertus Arend Hoedemaker and Marc Spindler, *Missiology: An Ecumenical Introduction; Texts and Contexts of Global Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995). *Missio Dei* was introduced at the 1952 IMC conference in Willingen Germany, largely by Hartenstein but also with Wilhelm Andersen and Lesslie Newbigin (see Stephen B. Bevans and Roger Schroeder, *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2004), then developed more widely thereafter, particularly by Georg Vicedom, *The Mission of God: An Introduction to a Theology of Mission*, ed. Gilbert A. Thiele and Dennis Hilgendorf (St Louis: Concordia Press, 1965).

As author, Jay anchors this report by first locating himself as Indigenous to Aotearoa New Zealand in narrative fashion. This approximates the custom common in Māori oratory to help the audience understand the context from which one communicates. He also positions himself within the past, present, and potential future narrative of missions to, from, and within Aotearoa New Zealand. Unlike traditional academic works that attempt to obscure author subjectivity, this report acknowledges that the Study Centre participants, and in particular Jay as its representative, share a view limited by their experience and research. Therefore, this report does not assume to represent the perspective of iwi Māori in general or even the convictions of all Māori followers of Christ Jesus.

Introduction

There is a *whakatauki* (proverb/saying) among iwi Māori that expresses the following belief, “*He taura whiri kōtahi mai anō. Te kōpūnga tai nō i te pū au* (All things are woven/joined/flow together as one, as from the source of the river to the mouth at the sea).” The journey of a river from its starting point to its amalgamation with something much larger than itself is a potent metaphor in *te ao Māori* (the Māori world). It is also a compelling metaphor for my life and my involvement in global missions.

The starting point of my genetic river in Aotearoa⁴ New Zealand, on my father’s side at least, stretches back through 22 identifiable generations to the landing of our *waka* (canoe) *Takitimu* in Aotearoa New Zealand from the Eastern Pacific almost 700 years ago under the guidance of high chief Tamatea.⁵ That *waka* (already ancient at the time⁶) carried nobles and priests, and is considered the most *tapu* (sacred) of the *waka* that sailed to Aotearoa as

4 Aotearoa literally means long (*roa*) white cloud (*aotea*). It is now the most commonly accepted *kupu* Māori (Māori word) for the islands of “New Zealand,” the Anglified version of the name given by Abel Tasman, the Dutch explorer credited with making Europe aware of the islands in 1642, some three and a half centuries after Māori had settled. It took another 127 years before Captain Cook conducted a more detailed exploration in 1769 as agent of the British Empire. Prior to European arrival, the islands of “New Zealand” had no collective Māori name and the adoption of Aotearoa is not without contention concerning its origins.

5 See Tiaki Hikawera Mitira (J. H. Mitchell), *Takitimu: A History of Ngati Kabungunu* (Auckland, NZ: Libro International, 2014). A four-minute presentation of Māori history from the migrations to the establishment in 1939 of the Māori declaration of independence (*He Whakaputanga*) preceding the Treaty of Waitangi (1840), can be watched online here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8w0zjqA3hUI> (accessed 10 February 2022).

6 A history of the *waka*, recalled from a Rarotongan perspective, can be found here: <https://www.ranginui.co.nz/t257kitimu-te-waka.html> (accessed 10 February 2022).

part of the great migration. As I understand our *whakapapa* (family lineage), a priestly spiritual mantle has always existed upon our line.

I was already serving as an international leader in global missions when I first met my biological father, by then a bishop/church planter with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. I had not grown up knowing my Māori heritage nor the spiritual responsibilities that my ancestors carried. I grew up with my agnostic mother, stepfather, and mother's extended family, all of English descent. Yet, I was drawn to pursue a spiritual calling and interpreted the world around me in intuitively Indigenous ways. I lived with a great deal of dissonance for 40 years until I connected with my father and (ceremoniously) received his blessing and our Māori heritage. During more than a decade since, it has become clearer to me why I always seemed at odds with the *Pākehā*⁷ world around me as well as the evangelical Christianity I was introduced to as a 16-year-old when I chose to dedicate my life to following Christ.

During my 30 years of service to missions, the Spirit of God has led me to where I serve today—a place of relative influence in global missions as the director of the World Evangelical Alliance's (WEA) Global Witness Department, and the leader of Missions Interlink, the New Zealand missionary alliance. I do not expect many of my Western colleagues to understand this, and it is not something I make widely known, but I believe my service is the fulfilment of a family destiny. In keeping with the metaphor that guides this paper, I am the mouth of my genetic river, the culmination of a complex weave of influences. My wife and I have no children, so the discernible river of ancestral spiritual responsibility ends with me and it flows into an ocean deep and wide, the ocean of God's mission made possible through the first advent, ministry, death, resurrection and ultimate physical return of God's only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, whose eternal river flows through me and rolls on like a never-ending stream of righteousness, justice, and mercy (Amos 5:24).

I serve in global missions from the perspective of a people who first encountered the gospel in 1814 but for whom a relationship with *Io Matua Kore* (the Supreme Uncreated One)⁸ was already known, albeit in part. As

7 Literally, those who draw life/breath (*hā*) from another (*kē*) residence (*pā*). This designation refers predominantly to descendants of colonial settlers and, usually white, later migrants privileged by the colonial systems established as New Zealand society.

8 *Io Matua Kore* was first introduced to the Western world through the scholarly work of my *whanaunga* (relative) Hoani Te Whatahoro Jury and his book *The Lore of the Whare-wānanga*, which was (questionably) translated by Percy Smith in 1913. Whatahoro collected and wrote the text in *te reo* Māori from the teachings of Te Matorohanga and Nepia Pohuhu, *tohunga* (priests/educationalists) of the *whare-wānanga* (teaching houses) of the East Coast. Percy Smith's contested English interpretation of the work can be found online here, <https://www.sacred-texts.com/pac/lww/index.htm> (accessed 10 February 2022).

Anglican Rev. Māori Marsden is recalled to have said, “Before the missionaries came, we saw a good part of the mountain. But when they arrived with the Scriptures, the cloud lifted and we can now see the whole mountain.”⁹ After 25 years of missionary labour and Bible translation, the gospel spark ignited into a contagious flame carried by indigenous missionaries into new tribal regions. Within 30 years later, a conservative estimate suggests around 60 percent of iwi Māori¹⁰ were attending church, and many more besides were believers. Sadly, this movement to Christ was interrupted as quickly as it had begun. Colonial settler populations swelled and iwi Māori suffered great injustices in the battlefields and courtrooms of so-called “Christian” Englishmen. Among the reasons why the Latter Day Saint missionaries found a welcome reception among my father’s *whānau* (family) and *hapu* (sub-tribe) at the turn of the 19th and into the 20th centuries was the fact that they did not represent any of the existing missionary and settler denominations.¹¹

This report is but a small snapshot of our narrative as Māori followers of Christ who seek emancipation from the hegemony of the Euro-centric theological consensus.¹² The narrative continues its course (like a river), but as we *ka mua ka muri* (walk backwards into the future)¹³ we can look back and detect IMC influence at significant points in the emancipation process that

9 Oral history, quoted at a training event led by Karuwha Mission Trust, 10 December 2011, Pukekohe, New Zealand.

10 See Allan Davidson, *Christianity in Aotearoa: A History of Church and Society in New Zealand* (Wellington: Education for Ministry, 1991). This statistic is further explained below.

11 See Robert Joseph, “Intercultural Exchange, Matakite Māori and the Mormon Church,” in *Mana Māori and Christianity*, ed. Hugh Morrison, Lachy Peterson, Brett Knowles, and Murray Rae, 43–72 (Wellington: Huia Publishers, 2012).

12 “Theological consensus” finds its origins in Jaroslav Pelikan’s “orthodox consensus,” a phrase developed in the first of his five-part series, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine, Vol. 1: The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975). The adapted phrase is used in this paper to highlight that there are contextual limits to the relevance of European (and its sibling North American) theological hermeneutics and methodologies, as well as to add validity to alternative perspectives such as those that emerge from biblically authentic indigenous biblical exegesis and theological reflection. It is in no way meant to validate views heretical to traditionally accepted orthodox Christian doctrine. More recently, Thomas John Hastings touches on a similar theme in his editorial of the January 2021 *International Bulletin of Mission Research*. See Thomas John Hastings, “Scripture, Infinitely Translatable; Theology, Not So Much,” *International Bulletin of Mission Research* 45:1 (2021), 4–6.

13 With due respect to the late Professor Andrew Walls, he is incorrect when he appropriates *ka mua ka muri* by saying, “The Maori (*sic*) people of New Zealand speak of the future as being behind us” (see Andrew F. Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission and Appropriation of Faith* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2002), 112). The future is not behind us; it is before us, but we are walking backwards into it, while remaining respectful of and drawing wisdom and meaning from the past.

continues to impact the development of our contemporary Māori Christian identity. Identifying these points of influence is another small step in enabling us to build toward a more empowered and collaborative future for the glory and mission of God.

While acknowledging that the main stem of the narrative river is indigenous, out of respect for the *kaupapa* (principles) of the IMC centenary, this paper will centre the IMC rather than iwi Māori. At times whirlpools will draw in other actors like early missionaries and settler churches, influential visitors and Pākehā associations. By way of a navigational guide, the report that follows is more or less structured chronologically, starting with the point of initial gospel witness and acceptance of *te rongopai* (the good news) by iwi Māori in its raw form and touching on its indigenous development (“Receiving”). After providing what can only be a thumbnail sketch of relevant Māori historic reality for a paper of this size, we divert to a rapid tour of the development of the settler Church’s missions from this newly formed nation on the edge of the British Empire (“Sending”). It is important to establish something of the two historic tributaries of Christian witness in the nation because only then can we make sense of how the IMC’s influence on the settler Church’s sending agencies intersects with the emancipation aspirations of Māori followers of Christ Jesus (“Challenging”). I highlight those connections before imagining, with an optimistic eye, future possibilities for the development of a Māori Christian identity that will aid the multiplication of Māori followers of Christ, whose experience of God is rooted in a biblically authentic indigenous theology that has potential to be a blessing to the nations for the glory of God (“Emerging”).

Receiving

Aotearoa New Zealand traces its history as a colony of the British Empire back to the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi (*te Tiriti o Waitangi*) in 1940. The history behind the need for and establishment of the treaty has been dealt with thoroughly elsewhere,¹⁴ but it continues to be a subject of much debate. Suffice it to say, the process was guided admirably by English missionaries who advocated for iwi Māori interests. For different reasons, revisionist historians and commentators among both nationalistic Pākehā

14 See, for example, Claudia Orange, *The Treaty of Waitangi: An Illustrated History* (Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 2020); and Michael King, *The Penguin History of New Zealand* (Auckland: Penguin Books, 2003). Furthermore, for a more sympathetic Christian perspective, see Keith Newman, *Bible and Treaty: Missionaries among the Māori—A New Perspective* (Auckland: Penguin Books, 2014).

and decolonizing Māori work hard to diminish the role played by the missionaries, but the historic evidence of missionary care and concern for iwi Māori is compelling, especially when read by those with an understanding of evangelical missionary history, language, and theology. As a student of the history of Christian missions and a theologian of contemporary Christian missions practice, I find it remarkable how many of the situations revealed in the journals and letters of the first missionaries to Aotearoa New Zealand are repeated in today's cross-cultural missionary communities: such as intra-team relationship conflicts, inter-agency competitions, field versus sending office disagreements, impractical sending office decrees, doctrinal differences, policy challenges, language learning difficulties, Bible translation tensions, contextualization contentions, moral failure, inappropriate financial gain; as well as inter-missions project collaboration, mutual support among missionaries from different sending bodies, sharing of resources for gospel spread, and encouragement of (and resistance to) indigenous theological reflection.¹⁵

The real champions of the spread of Christianity among the Indigenous tribes of Aotearoa New Zealand, however, are the (usually younger) people who heard the gospel, received it, learned (to read) scripture, and spread *te rongopai* throughout the islands in rapid fashion. By contemporary missiological standards, this was an Indigenous people movement to Christ. In Keith Newman's prose, "the Christian message spread like wildfire in dry bush."¹⁶ By 1845, church attendance records across established denominations reveal 63,800 Māori in attendance out of an estimated total population of 110,000 iwi Māori. If one were to include believers without access to a local church, believing Māori would be over two-thirds of their total population. As he examined these statistics, Harrison Wright wondered, "Only ten years before, in 1835, there had been but a handful of Maoris [*sic*] interested

15 For further research, see: A. G. Bagnall, and George Conrad Petersen, *William Colenso: His Life and Journeys*, ed. Ian St. George (Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2012); Hugh Carleton, *The Life of Henry Williams* (Volumes I and II) (Auckland: Upton & Co. 1874, 1877) (copies can be located online at <http://www.enzb.auckland.ac.nz/browse.php>) (accessed 10 February 2022); Allan Davidson, *Christianity in Aotearoa: A History of Church and Society in New Zealand* (Wellington: Education For Ministry, 1991); Allan K. Davidson and Peter J. Lineham, *Transplanted Christianity: Documents Illustrating Aspects of New Zealand Church History* (Palmerston North: Massey University, 1995); and Newman, *Bible and Treaty*.

16 Newman, *Bible and Treaty*, 115. From the Anglican perspective, Kaa is careful to point out that "native agents" tutored by the Anglican church, and more tied to it than other evangelists, were majorly involved in the movement. These Indigenous agents grew from none in 1834 to "as many as 558 evangelists" by 1854. He agrees, "Whatever the count, it can be seen that the infant Māori Church was the product of Māori agency far more than missionary endeavour and control." (Hirini Kaa, *Te Hāhi Mihinare: The Māori Anglican Church* (Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 2020), 31. Kindle Version.

in Christianity. A few years before that there had been none. How did these remarkable changes come about?”¹⁷ Various sociological explanations have been posited,¹⁸ but the simplest answer is that our people responded to the eternal hope of shalom that was offered, much as Indigenous people are doing today the world over in movements estimated to number around 1 percent of the world’s population.¹⁹ Regardless of the complex socio-political factors involved, this was a supernatural move of God. As Andrew Walls concluded in his investigation of historical missionary accounts,

It may be easier to recognize what happened in New Zealand as a genuine response to the gospel, a genuine hearing of it, a genuine demonstration of the victory of the cross over the power of evil. In the Christian movement the self-destructive forces in Maori [sic] society were bound as nothing else could have bound them. But the Maori [sic] responded to the gospel, not to the missionaries’ experience of the gospel.²⁰

The successful spread of the gospel was largely because it was quickly untethered from missionary control, thanks to the education of local evangelists who then taught others and, eventually, assisted by the translation of scripture into a written form of *te reo* Māori (Māori language), followed up with literacy education, something that was zealously sought by iwi Māori. Keith Newman affirms, “there are many examples of Māori literacy exceeding that of their European peers, who could only scrawl their signatures on documents, whereas Māori had made an art of shaping and flowing their signatures and words onto the page.”²¹

Sadly, growth in iwi Māori interest in Christianity waned rapidly as the immature movement was confronted with the hypocrisy of an increasing number of settlers who were nominally Christian but did not live according to the biblical ideals espoused by the evangelical missionaries. Dr Alistair Reese has called this an “interrupted mission,”²² that has yet to come to fruition. Bronwyn Elsmore quotes Rev. Thomas Grace writing in 1877,

17 H. M. Wright, *New Zealand, 1769–1840: Early Years of Western Contact* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959), 141.

18 See Davidson, *Christianity in Aotearoa*, 15–16.

19 From data collected by missiologist Justin Long for the Global Movement Dashboard, a microanalysis of 1,350 movements to Christ. Personally discussed in a movements forum.

20 Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History*, 22–23.

21 Newman, *Bible and Treaty*, 312.

22 From notes taken at a live presentation by Dr Reese at the Envision Conference, Bethlehem College, Tauranga, New Zealand, August 2011.

In early years they received Christianity—and I may say Colonisation—at our hands without doubting, and, to a great extent, on credit. Colonisation, war, confiscation and English vices have followed each other in quick succession, while the expectations anticipated from representations made when they signed the “Treaty of Waitangi” have not been realised. Now they turn round and question their first advisors, and look at the whole of our connection with them as a scheme by which to get their lands, and, as they can point to the large blocks of land acquired by the early Missionaries—whom they say began the business—they appear to think they have good reason for coming to this conclusion. These things, together with the course some of our brethren took in the war, have completely changed our position with these people. But now a change has come to the Maoris. Formerly they consulted us in all matters connected with their teaching and worship, and invariably abided by our directions. Now they assume the entire management of their own affairs and seem to consider they have a perfect right to do so.²³

As the influence of the missionaries diminished and the population and power of the settlers increased rapidly from 1840, so Māori theology veered off on a contextualization tangent that was too quickly considered by the incoming Christian establishment as syncretistic (at best) or outright heretical, and largely ostracized rather than engaged with.²⁴ Newcomers to the islands were quick to make moral judgements about the knowledge, customs, and lifestyles of their Indigenous hosts. From as early as the 1830s, and especially as the colony and its government became more established and entrenched from the late 1840s, injustices against iwi Māori dignity, health and property were met initially with a theological response, and then with a physical one, by prophetic Māori leaders and their followers.²⁵

Māori prophets turned to the Old Testament for inspiration, for there they found a tribal people and nation much like themselves. In the words of the biblical prophets railing against their oppressors, Māori leaders found a way to express their frustration with a biblical language common to both the settlers and Māori (or so they thought). But their appeals for the justice that God promised oppressed Israel fell on deaf ears. Settler church authorities summarily dismissed Māori theological expression and invalidated the

23 Bronwyn Elsmore, *Like Them That Dream: The Maori and the Old Testament* (Auckland: Reed Books, 2000), Kindle loc. 1217.

24 There were notable exceptions to this dismissal of Māori theologizing. In particular, Christchurch Anglican Diocesan Māori Mission Superintendent James Stack wrote a sympathetic reflection, *Notes on Māori Christianity* in 1874 (see also Davidson and Lineham, *Transplanted Christianity*, 151).

25 See Elsmore, *Like Them That Dream*, for more on this subject matter.

claims. One of the most notable, successful, and biblically authentic Māori prophets finally emerged in 1918: Tahupotiki Wiremu Ratana (Ngati Apa, Ngati Raukawa, and Ngati Hine). Popularly known by his surname Ratana, he was in many ways heir apparent (after a 25-year delay) to the prophet Te Kooti Arikirangi Te Tūruki (Ngāti Maru, Rongowhakaata, Ngati Porou), one of Thomas Grace's most promising theological students, who was to become founder of the Ringatu faith, which continues to this day.

In the narrative of global Christianity, the Māori independent faith movements are not dissimilar to what emerged in Africa during a similar period. Many of these have sustained their independence and grown massively in influence even as they have become more acceptably “Christian” as tolerance for contextual theologies increases thanks to late 20th century globalization.²⁶ The African example has been given far more missiological exposure than similar movements in Aotearoa New Zealand. But, thankfully, local interest continues. For example, journalist Keith Newman was led to investigate the Ratana faith and, in particular, its founder in his 2009 biography approved by Ratana Church authorities, *Ratana: the Prophet*. Ratana's impact on Christ-centred Māori spirituality, political justice, and Māori identity deserves much more space than this project can allow. Suffice it to say, Newman's telling of Ratana's story reveals a biblically authentic minister of the gospel, blessed by the Spirit of God with a powerful range of supernatural gifts, prophetic insight, and oratory talent that would not be considered at all unusual within what is today the fastest growing expression of Christianity in the world:²⁷ Pentecostalism.²⁸

Ratana, a humble farmer, formally began his ministry after a dramatic encounter with the Holy Spirit of God speaking to him out of a cloud approaching from the Tasman sea on 8 November 1918. He was commissioned as the *Mangai* (mouthpiece) of God for Māori, with a mission to “unite the Māori people, turning them to Jehovah of the Thousands, for this is His compassion to all of you.”²⁹ A revitalisation movement began via Ratana

26 The vitality of African indigenous Christ-following has been and continues to be well researched elsewhere and is beyond the scope of this report to explore further. For an introductory overview, see Part Two of Andrew Walls' *The Cross Cultural Process in Christian History*.

27 This is being tracked and verified with reasonable validity by the Atlas of Pentecostalism, <http://www.atlasofpentecostalism.net> (accessed 10 February 2022).

28 For more on the connection between Māori spirituality and Pentecostalism, see Pentecostal theologian Simon Moetara's contribution in Chapter 6 of Hugh Morrison, Lachy Peterson, Brett Knowles, and Murray Rae, eds, *Mana Māori and Christianity* (Wellington: Huia Publishers, 2012).

29 J. M. Henderson, *Ratana: The Man, the Church, the Political Movement* (Wellington: Reed, 1972), 24–25.

that reverberated throughout the nation, returning to iwi Māori confidence in our language, customs, spiritual sensitivity, and honour as *tangatawhenua* (people of the land), paramount³⁰ partners to the Treaty of Waitangi. He stood uncompromisingly against the sorcery of the old ways, lifting, by the power of the Holy Spirit long-standing curses and healing wounds that were physical, psychological, and spiritual in nature (not that they can, in reality, be separated).

Like the Indigenous prophets before him, however, Ratana was also subject to the high standard of so-called doctrinal orthodoxy by authorities using the Euro-centric theological consensus as the measuring rod. Theological critique was warranted for some aspects of Ratana's belief and the faith started to stray from biblical authenticity and traditional orthodoxies in some areas, but that was not helped by the established churches' officially separating themselves from involvement with Ratana as early as 1925, beginning with the Anglicans, just seven years after he started his ministry.³¹ Let the reader judge. The Ratana Creed, published that same year, read,

Jehovah sent His Son in the human form of Jesus Christ to redeem man and to conquer the power of sin, of darkness and of death . . . I believe that in Jehovah is the light and the great joy for my spirit and for my body. This fact is experienced through union with Christ in the Infinite Love of the Father and the power of the Holy Ghost and the Faithful Angels, and active fellowship with the true Christian believers.³²

Largely as a result of the established (and contentious) presence of a settler church, the Anglican Church Missionary Society began withdrawing support for its mission to Aotearoa New Zealand in 1854, and the work was eventually passed over to the local diocese in 1903. A Māori Mission Board was established in 1904, but that lasted merely an under-resourced nine years. It was not until the sudden growth of Ratana's movement that the Anglicans were jolted to attention. This resulted in a new Māori diocese of Aotearoa being created simultaneous with a distancing from the Ratana faith as a "schismatic sect."³³

30 This wording is deliberately borrowed from IMC Secretary J. H. Oldham's use of paramount in his African political involvements.

31 Davidson and Lineham, *Transplanted Christianity*; Elsmore, *Like Them That Dream*; Keith Newman, *Ratana: The Prophet* (Auckland: Penguin Books, 2009).

32 Henderson *Ratana*, 76.

33 *Ibid.*, 48.

Here we must leave the stream of a faith-receiving Indigenous people and turn attention to that of the settler faith, before returning again to the Māori narrative flow as it intersected with settler denominations around social issues. Here, I must acknowledge the omission of other missionary efforts, particularly those of the Methodists and Roman Catholics. The Anglican narrative has the most historic and contemporary significance for the main stem of this project. The settler story is far more ecumenical, however. Churches aligned with externally established Protestant denominations began to appear in Aotearoa New Zealand to serve the rapidly growing colonial settler community. In addition to Roman Catholic, Anglican, and Methodist, others included Adventist, Baptist, Congregational, Open (and eventually Exclusive) Brethren, Pentecostal (particularly Assemblies of God, Elim, and Apostolic movements), Presbyterian, and (Dutch) Reformed.

Sending

As early as 1859,³⁴ the settler community's churches started to formally send long-term missionaries from our fledging colonial nation to places as diverse as East Bengal (Bangladesh), Melanesia, the South Pacific, and South America. By the beginning of the 20th century, and in no small way influenced by international Christian student movements and the likes of John R. Mott (who first visited New Zealand in 1896),³⁵ an overseas missions vision was flourishing in the settler churches, catalyzing a wave of missionary recruitment and encouraging the multiplication of new missionary societies. For example, in the 1890s alone, New Zealand representation was established for the "China Inland Mission (1894) and the Zenana and Bible Medical Mission (1899)."³⁶ Furthermore, new missions were initiated by colonial settlers, like "New Zealand Church Missionary Association (1892),³⁷ the Poona and Indian Village Mission (1896),³⁸ and the South American Evangelical

34 "Story: Missions and Missionaries," TEARA, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/missions-and-missionaries/page-7> (accessed 10 February 2022).

35 Hugh Morrison, "It Is Our Bounden Duty: The Emergence of the New Zealand Protestant Missionary Movement, 1868-1926" (PhD Thesis, Massey University, 2004), 52.

36 Morrison, "It is Our Bounden Duty," 52. These are now OMF NZ and Interserve NZ, respectively.

37 The New Zealand Church Missionary Association is now NZ Church Missionary Society.

38 The Poona and Indian Village Mission merged with the Ceylon and India General Mission in 1968 to become the International Christian Fellowship, which was then amalgamated into SIM (originally Sudan Interior Mission, 1893) in 1989.

Mission (1899).”³⁹ Hugh Morrison’s thorough research of this period presents a good understanding of the international missionary fervour in this young colony. He found that no less than 17 sending agencies were established in the last decade of the 19th century. Furthermore, “Women became more prominent both in their participation as missionaries and in their profile as organised supporters of missions,”⁴⁰ which has continued throughout the missionary sending history of Aotearoa New Zealand to this day.

Overseas missions speakers, among them John R. Mott, frequented our shores. These speakers, stories of missionary adventurers like David Livingstone, and books such as Mott’s influential *The Decisive Hour of Christian Missions*, ignited a (romanticized) missions imagination and passion that rode on the coat tails of high colonial optimism.⁴¹ From 1886 until at least the First World War, the Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions grew in reputation among evangelistic activists, particularly among the Presbyterians who had formed a united national denomination by 1901.

Charles Mackie of the New Zealand Baptist Missionary Society, Revs John McKenzie and A. T. Thomson of the Presbyterian Church, and Mrs Kaye, Mrs MacKenzie, and Miss Morris as representatives of the Presbyterian Women’s Missionary Union were the only residents of Aotearoa New Zealand to attend the 1910 Edinburgh World Missionary Conference.⁴² Mrs Kaye published the most thorough report on the conference, and the event seemed to have the most direct influence on Presbyterian women. Beyond that, Morrison notes, “The 1910 Edinburgh Missionary Conference . . . had a downstream impact on New Zealand missionary thinking and support.”⁴³ He discerned this from tracking a noticeable increase missionary donations from 1900 through to 1915. He goes on to say that by 1918, the New Zealand Missionary movement “was inextricably linked with the wider international missionary movement. Much of the theology, and many of the issues and structures . . . simply mirrored international patterns.”⁴⁴

Two world wars and a rapidly changing global situation further sharpened the missionary vision in Aotearoa New Zealand. In the mid-20th century, some denominational missions bodies grew and interdenominational

39 SEAM went through various amalgamations until it too amalgamated into SIM.

40 Morrison, “It Is Our Bounden Duty.”

41 Davidson, *Christianity in Aotearoa*, 62.

42 Morrison, “It Is Our Bounden Duty,” 127.

43 *Ibid.*, 96.

44 *Ibid.*, 126.

missionary societies proliferated. But the focus of missions began to shift from prioritizing gospel proclamation and theological education to a developmental orientation, especially among the missions associated with New Zealand's National Missionary Council (NMC, 1926–57). In general, New Zealand missionaries have always had a developmental aspect to their work, because the pioneering contexts they came from equipped them for it and the situations they went to serve in required it of them. This was amplified, however, after World War II as the zeitgeist of the age was to rebuild a war-ravaged world. Motivation to serve in this way was especially so for the burgeoning missions activity in underdeveloped Melanesian nations, such as the Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, and Irian Jaya (now West Papua), in which New Zealand armed forces had served to hold back Japanese invaders.

Any formal impact of the IMC on the imagination of New Zealand churches and missions organizations moved with the tide of the NMC, which diminished when it amalgamated into the aid and development arm of the National Council of Churches (NCC), becoming a commission.⁴⁵ In 1969 the commission folded into Christian World Service (which was established by the NCC in 1945), signalling a significant shift away from a focus on charity to issues of justice.⁴⁶

While its ecumenical ideals were never fulfilled, the NMC established a pattern for missions cooperation, and this should not be underestimated. With the shift of the NMC toward a more political agenda and unyielding control of the NCC by denominational agencies,⁴⁷ interdenominational missionary agencies eventually began to gather separately. The Auckland Missionary Association formed in the late 1960s as the first of these.⁴⁸ As collegiality and trust grew and the benefits of association became more widely attractive, a society was formalized in 1972 as the New Zealand Evangelical Missionary Alliance (NZEMA).⁴⁹ Embracing both global and local missions-oriented groups, the NZEMA and its growing membership identified strongly with what is now known as the World Evangelical Alliance (and its Mission Commission), which traces its heritage back to the Evangelical Alliance founded in London in 1846.

⁴⁵ Davidson, *Christianity in Aotearoa*, 121–22.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Seth Anyomi, Wolfgang Busing, and Met Castillo, *Starting and Strengthening National Missions Movements* (World Evangelical Fellowship Missions Commission, 2001), 47.

⁴⁹ Internal Missions Interlink documents.

By 1985, the NZEMA had developed its infrastructure and appointed its first full-time director in Dr Ray Windsor,⁵⁰ an experienced global missions leader and educator who was influential in the founding of the WEA Mission Commission, further strengthening NZEMA ties with the WEA. In 1999, under Director David Jenkins (1993–2000),⁵¹ the NZEMA name changed to Missions Interlink (NZ) and, following Directors Gordon Stanley (2001–2007)⁵² and David Hall (2008–2015),⁵³ I was appointed to lead the alliance in 2015.⁵⁴ At the time of writing, Missions Interlink has 73 subscribed member organizations, mostly cross-cultural missionary deployment agencies (including the Brethren, Anglican and Baptist overseas sending arms), but members also include Bible societies, aid agencies, training institutions, local outreach and student ministries, and missions-supporting churches.

Toward the end of the 20th century, New Zealand was known for being the largest sender of missionaries in the world.⁵⁵ However, that claim was eclipsed as missionaries from new sending nations with smaller Christian populations began flooding into missions service from the late 1980s, especially when compared as per capita of church members.⁵⁶ Our best estimate is that the number of New Zealand citizens involved in some form of Protestant cross-cultural mission in 2022 is around 1,200. For almost a century, our settler churches were somewhat enamoured by exotic stories, supported by increasingly advanced presentation technologies that were shared by furloughing missionaries on deputation around the nation. For a complex variety of reasons, churches' interest in classical missionary pursuits has diminished over

50 Dr Windsor was previously a leader with what is now known as Interserve and had just returned to New Zealand from a three-year appointment as Principal of All Nations Christian College in Hertfordshire, UK.

51 David Jenkins was formerly a missionary leader with Asia Pacific Christian Mission, which became Pioneers NZ in 1998 as a result of an amalgamation with South Seas Evangelical Mission (and, later, Sudan United Mission/Action Partners in 2000).

52 Gordon (and Helen) Stanley were international leaders with SIM.

53 Americans David (and Lydia) Hall were and remain elder-leaders in YWAM.

54 I served on the Missions Interlink Council between 1995 and 2015, first as representative for WEC International and then (from 2000) as Director of Pioneers NZ.

55 "Close to 1 missionary per 2,000 people" (David Jenkins in Anyomi et al., *Starting and Strengthening*, 47). This claim was supported by the early editions of *Operation World*; beyond that, it cannot be thoroughly substantiated.

56 "The number of missionaries being sent from countries in the Global South is on the rise, with 203,000 (47 percent of the total) in 2021, up from 31,000 (12 percent of the total) in 1970." Gina A. Zurlo, Todd M. Johnson, and Peter Crossing, "World Christianity and Mission 2021: Questions about the Future," *International Bulletin of Mission Research* 45:1 (2021), 15–25, at 17.

the past three decades. In our hyper-exposed globalized world, very little is exotic anymore. One fair interpretation of the historic narrative would see that the settler Christian interest in foreign missions in the past was something of a convenient distraction from local intercultural responsibilities. As Allan Davidson notes, “Some times . . . preoccupation with supporting overseas mission resulted in people giving less attention to the needs for mission and ministry at home.”⁵⁷

Challenging

It is to home that I now turn and we find ourselves at the confluence of our dual streams (indigenous and settler missions) and the influence on Christianity in Aotearoa New Zealand of the personalities and perspectives related to the IMC. For that, we jump back into the main stem of our narrative flow.

In 2020, Rev. Dr Hirini Kaa (Ngāti Porou, Ngāti Kahungunu and Rongowhakaata), Anglican Archdeacon for Mātauranga (Aotearoa), published *Te Hāhi Mihinare: The Māori Anglican Church*, a historical survey of the development of Anglican Church’s Tikanga Māori (Māori cultural stream) diocese, which sits alongside the Pākehā (European) and Pasefika (Polynesian) diocese in the tripartite arrangement adopted at a general synod in 1992.⁵⁸ Kaa’s perspective is that of an insider in a long line of Māori priests and scholars, Kaa’s relatives among them, who have wrestled against the assimilationist agenda of what he terms, “the Anglican Empire.”⁵⁹ At the heart of Kaa’s appeal is freedom to explore and experience Christian faith within Anglicanism on Māori terms, through the experience of *mātauranga* Māori (traditional Māori knowledge and ways of knowing, including its values and attitudes).⁶⁰ Kaa’s research examines the imposition of English ways of knowing in the Anglican church onto iwi Māori religious, social and political experience, suppressing cherished Māori values and customs, most of which are not at all biblically prohibited.

The personal and political struggle that Kaa highlights is not uncommon to global missiology. After a century of colonial missiology dominating the global missions agenda, it is becoming well established that Indigenous

57 Davidson, *Christianity in Aotearoa*, 62.

58 See this website for a brief overview of Anglican church history in Aotearoa New Zealand: <https://www.anglican.org.nz/About/History>.

59 Kaa, *Te Hāhi Mihinare*, 13.

60 *Ibid.*, 6.

recipients of the faith have the freedom to renegotiate aspects of the faith from their own archaeology of knowledge and cultural histories.⁶¹ What Kaa is engaged in is a local project toward the emancipation of Indigenous followers of Christ in Aotearoa New Zealand from the hegemony of a Eurocentric theological consensus. Kaa is not alone, and his campaign within Te Hahi Mihinare is not an isolated case, as we will see. As was apparent with the emergence of Māori prophets and their interpretation of scripture, the difference between then and our contemporary era is the increasingly recognized authority available to Indigenous believers to express their indigeneity within the scope of global Christianity. To deny this authority should be considered unacceptably oppressive, but, frustratingly, theological emancipation is not fully won yet.

The struggle by iwi Māori theologians for acceptance of mātauranga perspectives is part of a wider process of decolonization. In other parts of the world, and in a previous era here, it is known by another name—racism. They are interrelated processes. Both wrestle with changing oppressive systems through critical analysis, protest, and calls for renewal. Both involve the deconstruction of status quo to reveal the unconscious biases and expose the relative ease of those privileged by existing systems. In Aotearoa New Zealand it is the Pākehā system, built on colonial injustices. We are a tight community, only 182 years old. Only recently have we passed the 5 million population marker, due to liberal immigration policies, and we are still developing our identity as a nation. We have a long and tumultuous journey ahead of us before we realize the full potential of the Treaty of Waitangi for iwi Māori, but we are moving in the right direction.

When it was founded in 1921, the IMC provided for New Zealand missionary representation as part of so-called Australasia, which was awarded two representatives. Mott seemed particularly eager to include New Zealand, as the original draft of the IMC provisions shows “N.Z.” pencilled “in Mott’s handwriting.”⁶² New Zealand, however, had no means to allow a representative to attend until the NMC was established in 1926, charged with “the task of promoting ‘counsel and co-operation in the matters of common concern

61 See, for a very limited example, Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History*; Lamin Sanneh, *Whose Religion Is Christianity: The Gospel Beyond the West*, Oxford Studies in World Christianity (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003); Lamin Sanneh, *Disciples of All Nations: Pillars of World Christianity*, Oxford Studies in World Christianity (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); and Willie James Jennings, *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).

62 Morrison, “It Is Our Bounden Duty,” 155.

to the Missionary Agencies of New Zealand.”⁶³ As already noted, the NMC eventually deviated from “common concern” enough that the alliance that I now lead was established.⁶⁴ Nevertheless, New Zealand was finally able to be represented at IMC conferences and information from the international body found a conduit for dissemination to Aotearoa New Zealand churches and missions. Two New Zealand missions representatives attended the IMC’s 1928 Jerusalem Conference, and it was from here that the issues of race probably first emerged with some conviction in the consciousness of settler Christianity.

Exposed to the issues by the international discussions happening at the IMC (and continued in the World Council of Churches [WCC]), the NMC and, from 1941, the NCC, had some influence very early on in raising crucial questions that today would be considered something like critical race theory, a methodology oddly contested in some contemporary Evangelical circles. These questions found their genesis on the mission fields of the day, particularly in southern Africa and east Asia, and were most coherently argued in IMC Secretary, J. H. Oldham’s 1924 *Christianity and the Race Problem*. Oldham’s biographer, Kathleen Bliss notes, “A whole generation of Christian students—not to mention many of their elders—had their eyes opened to the challenge of racism by this book.”⁶⁵

Highlighting local racial injustices is arguably the most enduring legacy of the NMC as it translated international tensions discussed at IMC and connected conferences into our local context. The NCC presented a *Christian Order and the Maori People* report at the Conference on Christian Order in 1945 and established a Māori section as early as 1947.⁶⁶ By 1969, the NCC’s Church and Society Commission, in collaboration with a newly formed Māori Section, turned its focus on local racial issues, particularly advocating for te reo Māori (Māori language), recognition of the Treaty of Waitangi, and racial disparities negatively affecting iwi Māori, as part of its human rights agenda.⁶⁷

NMC’s and NCC’s wider social concerns were not shared equally across the spectrum of settler Christianity. Political activism and an increasingly

63 Ibid., 158.

64 What should be noted at this point is that the deviation was influenced in no small part by the IMC’s increasing conviction, particularly fuelled by the Universal Christian Council for Life and Work Conference in Oxford 1937, chaired by the IMC’s J. H. Oldham, that missions should be deeply socially engaged (Flett 2003, 19).

65 Kathleen Bliss, “The Legacy of J. H. Oldham,” *International Bulletin of Mission Research* 8:1 (1984), 18–24, at 22.

66 Davidson and Lineham, *Transplanted Christianity*, 167–68.

67 Davidson, *Christianity in Aotearoa*, 123.

liberal theology⁶⁸ eventually proved a wedge that separated the denominations that remained in the NCC from those who increasingly identified as Evangelicals and insisted on retaining a biblically authentic theology and separation of church from state affairs.⁶⁹ Settler denominations that remained in the NCC, however, realized over time that their assimilationist attitudes toward iwi Māori members was untenable, and in the latter half of the 20th century attempts at amalgamating Māori ministries were reversed. While the 1928 General Synod of the Anglican Church resulted in the appointment of a Māori Bishop, it was not until 1964 that the (Māori) Bishop of Aotearoa was granted rights to join the General Synod and 1972 when a full Bishopric was constituted.⁷⁰ The Māori division of the Methodist Church was established in 1973. Presbyterian authority was granted to the Māori Synod of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand in 1953, but it was not until 1964 that its first Māori moderator was appointed. The Roman Catholics followed later, establishing their Te Runanga Hahi Katorika Aotearoa in 1983.⁷¹

The issue of race relations continued to build in both the politically engaged churches and wider society. It reached a climax in 1981 with the NCC establishing its Programme on Racism and the flashpoint occasion of the South African Springbok Rugby tour that same year. Politically attuned Aotearoa New Zealand church leaders had joined global Christian leaders in vocal opposition to South Africa's apartheid system, and they joined local activists in a failed attempt to get the tour cancelled. Liberation-theology-influenced social activist Anglican Rev. George Armstrong led protestors (with some St John's Theological College students) onto Rugby Park in Hamilton with a large cross in an attempt to disrupt a Springbok game. Such was the polarization in the nation at that time that St John's College was firebombed in retaliation.⁷²

While appreciative of the settler churches' advocacy around issues of race, iwi Māori could be forgiven for feeling it was somewhat superficial and politically expedient. Very little power was relinquished by Pākehā authorities in church or society for mātauranga Māori to emerge in deeply authentic ways. Nevertheless, Māori theologians were encouraged to pursue *mana motuhake* (self-determination) as they were exposed to the postcolonial identity issues in

68 Professor Lloyd Geering is our most renowned example of this.

69 Thankfully, that polarization has contracted but, heightened by morally liberal government legislation and COVID-19 health mandate restrictions, possibly flipped with conservative concerns replacing liberal ones.

70 Hirini Kaa deals with the politics around this in great detail (Kaa, *Te Hāhi Mihinare*, 158ff).

71 Davidson and Lineham, *Transplanted Christianity*, 167.

72 Kaa, *Te Hāhi Mihinare*, 204.

non-Western churches abroad. These parallel movements provided iwi Māori with *whanaunga* (kin) in their struggle for theological emancipation. Hirini Kaa pays special attention to the first Bishop of India, Bishop Vedanayagam Samuel Azariah, as a catalyst in this regard,⁷³ as he was a catalyst in the shift of focus within the IMC from international missions to indigenous church concerns.⁷⁴ Azariah visited Aotearoa New Zealand in May 1923 as a guest speaker at the inaugural New Zealand Church Congress. After this, he toured the country seeking to raise funds for his indigenous work in Dornakal.

On one occasion, near Hastings on the East Coast, where Kaa and I share common ancestral links, Bishop Azariah was received with full ceremonial honours by our forebears, and his greeting in return to the gathered Māori suitably honoured and encouraged Māori believers in the use of their customs. The fact that the Pākehā church seemed enamoured with this dark-skinned man was not lost on Māori church leaders. Neither was the opportunity squandered by Azariah. On 25 June 1923 in Auckland, Azariah addressed a group of clergy and lay leaders, representatives of the Māori Church north of Auckland. Wiremu Panapa, one of the leaders whose ordination Azariah had attended the previous day, captured some of Azariah's oratory,

When Bishop Azariah stood to respond to his welcome, he spoke for longer than an hour on the nature of the faith among the many peoples of India. *He spoke most strongly about Māori holding onto their identity, saying it is the work of all nations of the world to bring their own authentic identities before God's presence to glorify His Name.* Therefore, he said, that this is what Māori should offer to God—their “original” identity. The members of Synod thanked Bishop Azariah greatly for the truth of his words, and the many lessons in his speech to the Māori Church.⁷⁵

Kaa notes, “Azariah's interaction with the northern Mihinare leaders was to be a driver for enhanced Māori leadership in the Auckland Diocese.”⁷⁶ Reverberations from this encounter are still felt by Māori today. The italicized part of the quote represents the heart of a missiological perspective that has struggled to be fully appreciated, especially in the international missions community dominated by transboundary missions models and colonial expansionist interpretations of scripture. But the perspective this quote

73 Ibid., 87–98.

74 Carol Graham, “The Legacy of V. S. Azariah,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 27:1 (1985), 16–19.

75 Kaa, *Te Hāhi Mihinare*, 96. Italics mine.

76 Ibid., 96.

represents must be at the heart of future ecumenical aspirations in the global church and its missions, because unity understood in any other way is not biblically authentic. Our telos is not homogeneity, it is a glorious diversity of people from identifiable tribes, tongues, and territories.⁷⁷

Emerging

Azariah may be the IMC-related personality that had the most significant direct impact on iwi Māori struggle for theological (and ecclesial) emancipation. But the entire elevation of concerns from the so-called younger churches in the IMC has had a significant indirect influence as iwi Māori look to the experience of indigenous churches around the world to make sense of our own postcolonial realities. Culturally sensitive theological perspectives that are generally accepted today were forged in the fires of debate sparked by forums convened by the IMC and WCC. Idealistic aspirations toward a deep ecumenical unity may have faded, replaced largely with functional cooperation on common issues. But the call of leaders like Bishop Azariah and Chinese Theologian Cheng Jingyi⁷⁸ for unified national churches without any denominational distinctions still echoes through the decades. In his 1910 presentation to the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh regarding that aspiration, Cheng was careful to add, “This may seem somewhat peculiar to you, but, friends, do not forget to view us from our standpoint, and if you fail to do that, the Chinese will remain always as a mysterious people to you.”⁷⁹

While we cannot speak for the Chinese, Indian, African, or any other Majority World people, there is an undercurrent desire for unity in the psyche of iwi Māori that helps us comprehend what national leaders such as Azariah and Jingyi were yearning for and working toward. The Euro-American denominational experience of Protestantism is fragmented by industrialized institutionalism. While this has been exported to the Majority World, it is not a preferred Indigenous experience. In *te ao Māori* (the Māori world),

77 This is of course a reference to John’s eschatological vision in Revelation, but the order of the list changes whenever they are mentioned. Compare Revelation 5:9, 7:9, 13:7, and (for a different reason) 17:15.

78 In my initial presentation to the New Zealand IMC Centenary Study Centre, I highlighted Cheng Jingyi’s presentation on the periphery of the Edinburgh 1910 Conference. For a brief biography, refer to Peter Tze Ming Ng, “Cheng Jingyi: Prophet of His Time,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 36:1 (2012), 14–16.

79 Ng, “Cheng Jingyi: Prophet of His Time,” 14.

our preference would be better captured by the concept of *kotahitanga*.⁸⁰ Kotahitanga is a form of supra-tribal unity that is careful to honour the dignity of each participant in a collaborative relationship. The most tangible expression since colonial settlement has been the *Kingitanga* (Māori King) movement founded in 1858, which continues to this day. It was established to provide a single united iwi Māori representative, equal to the British sovereign, to negotiate with the Crown in service of iwi Māori. The objective of *kotahitanga* is best described in English as harmony or balance⁸¹ because unity carries so many unhelpful Western connotations. For example, unity too easily implies contractual obligations between autonomous bodies with transactional objectives, whereas kotahitanga/harmony is more interested in covenantal commitments creating an interdependent identity strengthened by relationship-enhancing experiences. The two are obviously not mutually exclusive or so neatly defined, but the contrast is made to establish a point; like other collectivist people, Māori view the possibilities for interrelated harmony very differently from the West.

A distinctively Māori Christian identity is still emerging in Aotearoa New Zealand in an unbroken flow from point of first contact with the gospel in 1814, and a new generation of Christ-following Māori leaders is picking up the challenge. Te Hahi Mihinare, the Māori Anglican Church, is pursuing their understanding within the struggle of which Kaa has written. Presbyterians and, to some degree, Methodists are experiencing their own revitalization moments. Baptists have been wrestling seriously with their Treaty responsibilities for about a decade, and their commitments to bicultural partnership with Māori are now apparent in their theological training and influential churches in their fellowship, as well as their missionary deployment agency. Brethren churches, known for their fervent Māori evangelists a generation ago, seem to have lost momentum, but that may pick up again. Some charismatic movements, like the LinkNZ Churches, are engaging iwi Māori and respectfully incorporating Indigenous expressions of worship and function. Other Pentecostal churches vary in their engagement, with the “mega” churches more committed to their structure and ethos and less likely to engage deeply with iwi Māori. The exceptions are Pentecostal churches with either Māori leadership or a high proportion of Māori congregants. One

80 See Jay Matenga, “Kotahitanga and Koinonia in Shalom as the Objective of the Mission of God,” *International Review of Mission* 110:1 (2021), 115–30, for what I have previously written on the relationship between *kotahitanga* and *koinonia*.

81 Māori scholar, Mason Durie translates *kotahitanga* as “alliance”: “Alliances can foster a spirit of cooperation rather than isolation and fragmentation of effort.” (Mason Durie, *Ngā Kāhui Pou: Launching Māori Futures* (Wellington: Huia Publishers, 2003), 250.

of the larger Māori-led groups, Destiny Church appropriates a good deal of Māoritanga (Māori way of doing things), but this is easily criticized as being little more than a veneer over US American prosperity doctrine rather than an authentic matauranga Māori.⁸²

Indigenous theologies are emerging here too as more Māori scholars are graduating with PhDs researched using *kaupapa* Māori (Māori principles) methodology similar to that pioneered by Linda Tuhiwai Smith, an internationally renowned Māori academic. At heart, the methodology is based on *nihil de nobis, sine nobis* (nothing about us without us). These academic investigations provide robust material from which we are expanding our understanding of God, this world, Christ's church, and our missions as Māori. Otago University is leading the way in Māori theological research at a doctoral level, overtaking Auckland University and St John's Theological College. Carey Baptist Theological College is producing quality master's theses in Māori issues, as is Laidlaw College. As we increase our concern for research by Māori, with Māori, for Māori in a context of greater decolonial freedom, we are also looking beyond traditional academic constraints so that we can more fully explore Māori epistemologies and express mātauranga Māori in culturally appropriate or customary ways. A relationship with NAIITS (formerly, North American Institute for Indigenous Studies) is formalizing, with the Ngā Wai Hōhonu Trust representing NAIITS in Aotearoa New Zealand. The NAIITS relationship goes back to the first World Christian Gathering on Indigenous People convened in Rotorua, 1996,⁸³ which was the birthplace of a concept that became NAIITS. All of this is interconnecting via social media as supra-denominational Facebook groups⁸⁴ and *hui* (gatherings) continue the collaborative conversation.

What will eventually emerge from the emancipation of matauranga Māori in denominations, theological institutes, and churches, ministries and missions organizations committed to honouring the Treaty of Waitangi covenant, only God knows. A Māori Christian identity needs room and resources to fully flourish. When it does, it will be a supra-denominational identity, celebrating the many expressions of faith in Christ enjoyed by Māori as we

82 Morrison et al., *Mana Māori and Christianity*.

83 For one attendee's perspective, see "World Christian Gathering on Indigenous People," *The Voice of Reason New Zealand*, 30 August 2006, <https://jameship.wordpress.com/2006/08/30/world-christian-gathering-on-indigenous-people/>.

84 Keith Newman initiated and moderates the most popular Facebook group, Bible & Treaty (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/257548607654207>). However, Māori & Christian, a private and more focused group has more direct relevance to the issues in this paper (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1392667584231783>).

embrace our God-given heritage and express it more freely in ways aligned with our *iwi tikanga* (tribal customs)—a harmony tuned in tension, where each contributes to the resonance of the whole. When that time comes, we will point to Bishop Azariah’s words as prophesy fulfilled and say, we Māori are holding onto our identity and we are bringing our own authentic identities before God’s presence to glorify his name among the nations.

Conclusion

The river has carried us a long way. We have navigated a complex interaction of tributaries beginning with the missionaries to our islands, the development of the settler church, settler missions connecting with the IMC, and that connection catalyzing a fresh confidence in what it means to be a Māori follower of Christ. It all converges in our contemporary situation with a new generation of Māori theologians and reflective practitioners who carry the potential to see something gloriously unique emerge in this nation for the benefit of all nations. I am honoured to be participating in some small way.

I close by honouring my stem, my *tūpuna* (ancestors), as I stand at the mouth of the river ready to help our people’s story and experience of faith in Christ be a blessing to all the families of the earth. My *tūpuna* are with me and remain part of me as I continue to represent them among God’s people in the world. Most of all, however, “May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing to you, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.” (Psalm 19:14 NLT)

Whakapaingia te Atua, to tatou Kaiunga ki te ao whānui. Ma te Atua tātou e tiaki, e ārahi, e manaaki. (Praise be to God, who sends us into the world. May God guard us, guide us, and honour us with every good thing.)

Kia ora koutou (wellbeing and life to you all).

CHAPTER 6

Report of Nanjing Union Theological Seminary's Asian Area–International Missionary Council Centenary Study

I. Nanjing Union Theological Seminary and the IMC study seminar

Dr Wang Jiawei

About our centre

Nanjing Union Theological Seminary (NJUTS), founded in 1952, is the national institution of theological education under the leadership of the National Committee of Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM) of Protestant churches in China and China Christian Council (CCC). Currently, the seminary has about 500 full-time students and over 2,000 correspondence students.

NJUTS is a significant accomplishment of the TSPM and serves as the base for theological teaching, research, and training in China. The seminary commits itself to the further contextualization of Chinese Christianity (i.e., to make Chinese Christianity Chinese) and training Christian leaders for the Chinese church and Chinese society.

NJUTS is China's only national seminary that recruits students from across the country. The degree programmes offered at the seminary include a four-year Doctor of Theology (ThD), a three-year Doctor of Ministry (DMin), a three-year Master of Theology (MTh), and a four-year Bachelor of Theology (BTh). Additionally, the seminary offers two certificate programmes: a Graduate Diploma in Ministry and a Bible Correspondence Programme.

Through the seminary education, students are to grow in “Spirit, Virtue, Knowledge, Health, and Community” for their future ministries as church ministers, seminary teachers, or theological researchers who love both the country and the church and adhere to the Three-Self principles.

International Missionary Council study seminar

A preparatory meeting for the study seminar was held in NJUTS on 9 April 2021. In this meeting, NJUTS was invited to hold the study seminar on the International Missionary Council (IMC) and the church in China under the supervision of Academic Dean Prof. Dr Lin Manhong, who was assisted by Dr Wen Ge and Dr Wang Jiawei. Dr Wang Jiawei was also appointed as the contact person on behalf of NJUTS. At this preparatory meeting, a number of key issues were discussed and tasks were assigned. It was decided that domestic church leaders, representatives of the academia, and representatives from Hong Kong (China), Singapore and the Foundation of Theological Education in Southeast Asia (FTESEA) would be invited to attend the seminar either offline on NJUTS campus or online via Zoom.

The main topic of the study seminar was to be “Towards the Independence of the Chinese church in the First Half of the 20th Century: From the Perspective of Mission and Evangelism.” Under the main topic were four subtopics:

- (1) “The Independence Movement/Ecclesiastical Movement in China in the First Half of the 20th Century”
- (2) “The Anti-Christianity Movement in the 1920s”
- (3) “The Church Ministry in the First Half of the 20th Century”
(e.g., education, medicine, publishing, etc.)
- (4) “Studies on the Life and Thoughts of Chinese Christians in the First Half of the 20th Century”

Thanks to the several months of efficient work of the China Christian Council/TSPM, the one-day IMC study seminar was successfully held on 27 October in 2021, with the participation of church leaders, seminary principals, faculty members, and all postgraduate students. The key participants from China Christian Council, the Three-Self Patriotic Movement of the Protestant churches, and Nanjing Union Theological Seminary were as follows:

- Rev. Wu Wei, President of CCC
- Rev. Kan Baoping, Residential Vice Chairman, National Committee of TSPM in China
- Rev. Gao Feng, Chairman, Board of Supervisors, CCC and TSPM; President, NJUTS

- Rev. Chen Yilu, Vice President, CCC;
Executive Vice President/Professor, NJUTS
- Rev. Chen Bin, Vice President, NJUTS
- Rev. Dr Lin Manhong, Residential Associate General Secretary,
CCC and Academic Dean/Professor, NJUTS
- Rev. Dr Wen Ge, Associate General Secretary of CCC and
Interim Director of the Academic Affairs Office/Associate
Professor, NJUTS
- Ms Gu Jingqin, Interim Director of the Overseas Relations
Department, CCC and TSPM
- Ms Zhao Meiqing, Secretary, Research Department,
CCC and TSPM
- Mr Wu Xinwang, Secretary, Media Department,
CCC and TSPM
- Ms Gong Zhoujin, Secretary, Overseas Relations Department,
CCC and TSPM
- Rev. Yan Xiyu, Associate Director of the Research and Editorial
Office and Professor, NJUTS
- Rev. Huang Jinbin, Associate Director of the Student Affairs
Office and Associate Professor, NJUTS
- Dr Wang Jiawei, Associate Professor, NJUTS
- Mr Zhao Hongjun, Associate Professor, NJUTS
- Mr Zhou Xuebin, Lecturer, NJUTS
- Ms Zhang Lixia, Faculty Member, NJUTS

The scholars from Chinese academia attending the seminar were as follows:

- Dr Tang Xiaofeng, Deputy Director, Institute of World
Religions, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, and Executive
Vice Chairman/Secretary General, China Religious Society
- Prof. Tao Feiya, Faculty of Department of History, School of
Liberal Arts, Shanghai University

The overseas church representatives were as follows:

- Rev. Canon Peter Koon, Provincial Secretary General, Hong Kong (China) Sheng Kung Hui (Anglican Church)
- Rev. Lim Teck Peng, Academic Dean of Trinity Theological College, Singapore
- Dr. H. S. Wilson, Executive Director, Foundation for Theological Education in South East Asia

Rev. Kan Baoping, member of the central committee of WCC, presided over the opening ceremony. Rev. Wu Wei, on behalf of CCC and TSPM, delivered a speech and extended warm welcome and cordial greetings to all the old and new friends of the Chinese church. Rev. Wu said that the Chinese church was delighted for the opportunity to hold this conference because Chinese Christians had been active in the work of WCC since the early period of the founding of the IMC and had made outstanding contributions to the ecumenical movement. There were many Chinese stories and the voices of the Chinese church in the evangelical ministries and ecumenical movement. Rev. Wu pointed out that the Chinese church had been actively carrying out the construction of theological thought and striving to promote the further contextualization of Chinese Christianity. Therefore, this conference had not only profound historical significance but also very meaningful implications for the church practices in China today.

Rev. Gao Feng, President of NJUTS, delivered a welcome speech. Rev. Gao recalled the relations of the Chinese church and the ecumenical movement and pointed out that in the early days of the IMC, the active participation of Chinese Christians and churches, including Rev. Cheng Ching-yi, reflected on the fruitful achievements of the spirit of ecumenical movement in China in the 20th century. The combination of Nanjing Theological Seminary and other seminaries and Bible schools in 1952 was one of the prominent outcomes of TSPM in China. The motto of NJUTS, “Love, Truth, Justice, Humility,” embodied the seminary tradition of exchanges, cooperation, and friendly contacts with brothers and sisters from the universal church in the process of development of seminary. Rev. Gao hoped that the seminar would add new impetus and thoughts to the ecumenical movement of the universal church.

In the one-day seminar, ten speakers presented their research papers in three sessions, discussing and reviewing the history of modern Chinese and Asian churches and looking into the future of both the Chinese church and the universal church in terms of mission.

The four speakers in the first session were Prof. Tao Feiya, Dr H. S. Wilson, Rev. Peter Koon, and Ms Zhao Meiqing. The topics they delivered respectively were “World War One and the Indigenization of the Church in China”; “1956 East Asia Theological Conference”; “Lasting Aroma: Anglican Church and the Indigenization of the Church in China in the First Half of the 20th Century”; and “In the End the Church Must Become Chinese—Chinese Christians and the 1910 World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh.”

The topics of the second session were “IMC-CWME’s Development in the Understanding of Evangelism and Chinese Protestants’ Early Attempts and Efforts in Self-propagating the Gospel” by Rev. Dr Lin Manhong; “Development of Chinese Churches outside of the Chinese-speaking Circle: Singapore Chinese Churches in Change” by Rev. Lim Teck; and “IMC and Chinese Churches’ Participation” by Ms Gu Jingqin.

The speakers of the third session included Rev. Wen Ge and Dr Tang Xiaofeng, and Rev. Yan Xiyu. Their topics were “A Theology of Love and a Wider Mission: Y. C. James Yen’s Spirit of Christian Humanism and His Civilian Education Movement”; “The Necessity of Further Contextualization of Chinese Christianity from the Perspective of Comparison of Christianity and Buddhism: Review of T. C. Chao’s *Chinese Nation and Christianity*”; and “The International Mission Movement and the Chinese Christian Church.” Through rich and vivid display of pictures and texts, each speaker deeply analyzed the great influence of the establishment of the IMC on the church in China and even the church in Asia and discussed its future development trend.

During the response and discussion sessions of the seminar, participants also made comments and raised questions on the theological education of the church in China, how to evangelize well, the relationship between the Chinese church in Singapore and other churches, and the translation of “mission” and “evangelism” in Chinese terms, to which the speakers gave satisfactory responses.

The closing ceremony was presided over by Rev. Wu Wei. In the closing remarks, Rev. Kan Baoping pointed out that the Chinese church was in the process of transforming from “Christianity in China” to “Christianity of China.” This transformation started from the TSPM in the 1950s, which signified the awakening of self-consciousness of the church in China. As the mission movement is being reconsidered today, as a member of the universal church, the Chinese church should reflect on theology, the meaning of the gospel as well as the role of Christianity in Chinese social contexts, re-examine its evangelical approaches by taking into consideration the rich Chinese cultural and historical resources so that the church in China may grow continuously through the efforts in the direction of the further contextualization.

At the end of the closing ceremony, Rev. Wu once again thanked both the seminary and the academia for their dedication and enthusiasm toward the successful seminar. This, according to him, not only provided rich ideological contribution to the reflection on the ecclesiastical nature of China, but also bore significant implications for the further contextualization of the Chinese Christianity.

Dr Wang Jiawei is an associate professor of History of Christian Thought in Nanjing Union Theological Seminary, P. R. China.

II. Report: The International Mission Movement and Chinese Christian Church

Prof. Yan Xiyu

The mission movement and unity of church

The international mission movement arose in the context of the global expansion of Western countries. In order to adapt to the situation of large-scale missionary work, the majority of Western denominations, either independently or jointly, established organizations for missionary work abroad (mainly in Asian and African countries): missionary societies. The first English missionary society sent missionaries abroad was the Baptist Missionary Society, founded in 1792 by William Carey (1761–1834). In 1795, the Congregational Church formed an interdenominational missionary society called the London Missionary Society, which became the most influential overseas missionary organization in the 19th century, sending Robert Morrison (1782–1834), who was the first missionary to China. In 1796, the Scotland Mission Society was founded, and in 1799, the Church of England established the Church Missionary Society for Africa and the East. The British Wesleyan denomination was not far behind, and in 1817 and 1818, the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society of England and the Methodist Missionary Society were founded. In the 19th century, the United States was second only to Britain as a country of sending missionaries. In 1810, the First Overseas Mission was established, named the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. The Presbyterian Mission Society was founded in 1817. In the late 19th century, college students launched the overseas volunteer missionary movement, with the slogan “Preaching the gospel throughout the world in our generation” and went abroad to

do missionary work. In addition to Britain and America, overseas missionary societies were also established in Continental Europe, such as the Basel Evangelical Mission Society in 1815 and the Danish Missionary Society in 1821. The Berlin Missionary Society and Paris Missionary Society were founded in 1824, and the Rhenish Missionary Society was founded in 1828. The Leipzig Evangelical Lutheran Mission and the North German Missionary Society were founded in 1836. All the above-mentioned mission societies sent missionaries to China and they made a great achievement.

Since the beginning of the missionary movement, there was an intention of unity. Before the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference in 1910, Western missionaries had made several attempts at unity, among which the most effective one happened in 1888. In order to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the birth of the Protestant missionary society, a worldwide missionary conference was held in London on 9–19 September 1888. One-hundred-and-ninety-three missionary societies around the world sent 1,579 representatives to attend the conference. Of these, 1,316 were from the United Kingdom, representing 53 missionary societies, and 263 were from North America, representing 85 missionary societies. The aim of this conference was to further promote the mission movement, spreading the gospel around the world and strengthening cooperation among the missionary societies. According to the context of this conference, by the end of the 19th century, there were no less than 500 Protestant missionary societies in England, Europe, and North America, and they sent a total of 13,600 missionaries to do the evangelizing work worldwide, including 5,900 British missionaries and 4,100 American missionaries.¹

Regarding mission fields in China, the Protestant Church was first established in Taiwan in the 17th century and achieved certain achievements in missionary work and educational enterprise. In 1807, British missionary Robert Morrison arrived in Guangzhou, becoming the pioneer of large-scale missionary work to mainland China. In 1840, Britain was hampered by the opium trade and imposed war on China and coerced the Qing government on behalf of China to sign the first unequal treaty, the Treaty of Nanjing. After that, until 1860, through war and foreign investment, Western powers signed a series of unequal treaties with the Qing government, thus forming a treaty system to protect Western interests. Of course, missionaries from the West also benefited from it, and the missionary work carried forward gradually with the infiltration of Western forces. Before 1840, there were no more than five missionary societies in China. In 1858, there were 20 missionary

1 See Long Xiuqing, "On the Protestant Missionary Movement in the 19th Century," *Journal of Northeast Normal University* (Philosophy and Social Sciences edition) 3 (1998), 87-88.

societies. In 1876, there were 29 missionary societies, and in 1889, there were 41 missionary societies. In 40 years, the number of missionary societies doubled and missionary societies represented different countries and different denominations. In principle, they were not subordinate to each other and ran their own affairs. However, when they entered China and undertook missionary work, while the missionaries demarcated their respective missionary areas and adhered to the principle of independent missionary work, they also tried to seek cooperation among missionary societies for coordinated development and reasonable distribution of missionary resources. For this reason, foreign missionaries in China held many meetings to discuss cooperation, among which the most influential meetings were held in Shanghai in 1877, 1890, and 1907.

The most prominent ministry that fully embodies the spirit of cooperation between missionaries in the Chinese Church is the translation of Chinese Union Version Bible (和合本). As early as 1843, Chinese missionaries convened a meeting in Hong Kong to discuss the work of cooperating in the translation of the Bible. At that time, Morrison, with the assistance of fellow missionary William Milne (1785–1822), had completed the entire translation of the Bible, but all parties were not satisfied with the quality of the translation and wanted to re-translate it. However, because of the limitation of conditions, only Morrison's translation could be revised. At the first missionary meeting in 1877, a missionary proposed a cooperative Bible translation ministry and received a positive response. The second missionary conference was held in 1890, setting up the Bible translation committee for working on Chinese Bible translation. On the one hand, the target language of translation was based on the Mandarin used in the northern China; therefore, the translation from the beginning was named the Mandarin version. On the other hand, missionaries who participated in translation were from different missionary societies and worked together to translate a Chinese Bible accepted by most denominations; thus it was called the Union Version and the full name was the Chinese Mandarin Union Version.

After 27 years of hard work, the Chinese version was finally published in 1919. This version remains the first choice of Bible version for churches in the Chinese-speaking regions today. The spirit of cooperation was not only reflected in the missionary societies of different denominations, with more than ten missionaries from different denominations and countries, but also displayed between the foreign missionaries and Chinese scholars. Many Chinese scholars contributed their wisdom and strength to the translation of the Chinese Mandarin Union Version Bible, but most of them did not have their names recorded.

The Chinese voice from Edinburgh conference

At the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, there was a general awakening of national consciousness in Asian and African countries, rising nationalism, and a growing desire for the independence and indigenization of church. In China, India, and Africa, where Western missionary work was widely carried out, various national independence movements broke out, hoping to get rid of the control of Western colonial forces, some of which were directed opposing the church. In this situation, the church also soberly realized this harsh reality and decided to take measures to meet the challenge. Since the second half of the 19th century, quite a number of Chinese missionaries had promoted the independence and autonomy of churches. For example, in 1873, Chen Mengnan (陈梦南, 1841–82), a native of Guangdong, founded the Guangzhou and Zhaoqing Chinese Missionary Society, which advocated Chinese Christians to establish their churches by their own and Chinese ministers to preach autonomously. Another example is Yu Kuo-zhen (俞国桢, 1852–1932), who founded the China Christian Independent Church in Shanghai in 1906. He emphasized that the church “has the idea of patriotism and loving church, and the spirit of independence and self-government” and “does anything without the help of outsiders . . . for the sake of national honor. Chinese Christians in all regions, no matter who they are, should unite as one.”²

The Western Christendom recognized the value of non-Western culture and wanted to change the missionary pattern that prevailed in the 19th century. As the document of the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference points out, “we have come to appreciate that the customs, beliefs and productivity of people of colour are valuable in the future.”³

In order to adapt to the new century and new environment, more than 1,200 representatives from 159 Christian mission groups gathered in Edinburgh, Scotland 14–23 June 1910 for the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference. The conference established the mission idea based on the spirit of unity, believing that the age when missionary work can be accomplished by a single missionary society was over, and the age had come for universal cooperation and full mobilization of local churches. The conference therefore encouraged local churches to practise self-reliance, self-propagation, and self-support.

2 See Duan Qi, *The Course of Endeavour* (Beijing: The Commercial Press, 2004), 115–16.

3 See Yin Mingliang, *Edinburgh Conference and the Church in China* (Masters diss., Jinan: Shandong University, 2010), 22.

Since this was a conference of missionary work, there is no doubt that China, as the biggest mission field, could not be ignored. Five Chinese Christians attended the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference, including assistant pastor Cheng Ching-yi (诚静怡, 1881–1939) of the London Missionary Society, Dong Jing'an (董景安, 1875–1944), acting principal of the University of Shanghai and professor of Baptist Theological Seminary, and Zhang Tingrong (张廷荣), a believer of Shanghai Presbyterian Church as official representatives; Kang Cheng (康成), a female Christian doctor studying in Britain, and Dr C.C. Wang also attended. In addition, a large number of Western missionaries in China attended the conference and took the Chinese church as an example in the discussion, and they even spoke on the position of the Chinese church.

Among three official representatives attending the meeting, Cheng Ching-yi was undoubtedly the most prominent figure. He was Manchu nationality and was born in Beijing in 1881. His father was a minister of the London Missionary Society. In 1901, he was invited to participate in the translation and revision of the Chinese Mandarin Union Version Bible, for which he had the opportunity to study in Britain. In view of his outstanding performance at the Edinburgh conference, he was officially ordained as a pastor by London Missionary Society on 13 October that year. In his seven-minute speech to the conference, he criticized the denominationalism brought to China by Western churches, stating, "We Chinese Christians have no interest in your denominationalism."⁴ Therefore, he expected the Chinese church to be a united church without denominations: "Frankly speaking, we hope to see, in the near future, a united Christian Church without any denominational distinctions . . . denominationalism has never interested the Chinese mind."⁵ Cheng Ching-yi also pointed out that Chinese Christians, though poor and weak, were ready to make the Chinese Church self-reliant. Chinese Christians have the open mind of Christ, willing to contribute their wisdom and efforts to the ministry of the gospel. He thanked the missionaries for bringing the gospel to the Chinese, but suggested it was time for them to leave.

In the fourth session of the conference, "Relationship with Non-Christian Religion," Dong Jing'an appeared in Chinese costume, attracting the attention of many attendees. He called for putting emphasis on traditional

4 See Liu Jiafeng, "From Missionary Society to Church: Analysis of Cheng Ching-yi's Thoughts on the Indigenization of Christianity," *Studies in World Religions* 2 (2006), 114.

5 Bao Huade, ed., *The Collection of Historical Data of the Republic of China, Biographical Dictionary of Celebrities of the Republic of China, Volume 3*, translated by Shen Zimin (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1981), 39.

Chinese culture, encouraging Chinese Christians to learn traditional culture and promoting the indigenization of Christianity in China. He claimed that the tradition of Confucianism had profound and deep impact on the Chinese society, which Chinese Christians could not abandon, “these teachings have influenced Chinese people for thousands of years, so there will be a huge barrier to stop them to listen to our Gospel if Christianity does not emphasize on our daily life, or cannot show our love for the people, or we don’t obey our parents and don’t respect officials.”⁶

Zhang Tingrong, as a layperson who was familiar with the situation of China, had keenly realized that the country was on the eve of a great change. In his speech to the committee of “Evangelization to the Non-Christian World,” he introduced the situation of China and pointed out that in the next few years it would undergo fundamental changes. China was in an era of transitioning from the old to the new. Christianity should seize this opportunity to promote its missionary work in China.

In his speech to the committee on “Relations between Missionary Organizations and Government,” Dr Wang expressed a distinct national standpoint from the perspective of a Chinese Christian. He criticized the unequal treaties imposed by the Western powers on the Chinese people and the missionary work being used by colonial aggression, and he advised foreign missionaries not to interfere with China’s internal affairs and destroy China’s sovereignty. He proclaimed that “the Chinese government should have the right to decide its own affairs and not based on foreign powers . . . The more foreign missionaries resorted to unequal treaties against the Chinese government, the less convincing are their motivation of preaching.”⁷ He reminded foreign missionaries not to act as a protective umbrella for Chinese Christians under any circumstances, especially in church cases.

Missionaries who were from China also made their voices heard at the conference about the church in China. Nelson Bitton (1870–1955), from London Missionary Society, indicated in his introduction to the Chinese Church that there was a nationalism among Chinese Christians, which foreign missionaries could not oppose. They should help local church leaders to seek self-support, otherwise they could not have the full support of most Chinese Christians. Bitton hoped that the conference would take some measures to promote the development of independent churches in China. He pointed out that the ability to manage the church was not inherent to Westerners, and the knowledge of Christianity was not comprehensible only

6 See Yin Mingliang, *Edinburgh Conference and The Church in China*, 27.

7 *Ibid.*, 28.

to Westerners. The Chinese and Japanese, like Westerners, could acquire the ability of church management and discernment of Christian doctrines.

Courtenay Hughes Fenn (1866–1953), an American Presbyterian missionary from Beijing, argued that foreign missionaries could not stay in China permanently and would leave sooner or later. The church would eventually be in Chinese hands. Therefore, the focus of missionary work was to strengthen the training and education of local church staff. They should receive adequate education and training, gradually improving their ability and status and increasing their confidence, so that they could become missionaries in their own churches.

John Campbell Gibson (1849–1919), a British Presbyterian missionary from Shantou (Swatow), Guangdong province, introduced the situation of the church in China when talking about the unity of the church. He believed that the efforts of the Chinese churches for unity showed that they had a firm determination and a clear attitude and were actively working to achieve the unity. However, the present Christianity in China was in a state of fragmentation, and this schism was obviously attributable to the Western church. Gibson suggested that the conference set up a “Continuation Committee” to carry out the spirit of the conference and make the goals of the Conference into reality.

Obviously, the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference adopted the suggestion of John Campbell Gibson, and established the Continuation Committee of 35 members, among them Cheng Ching-yi was elected as one of members.

The effort of Chinese Christianity toward unity

As a representative of the Chinese church, Cheng Ching-yi was elected as a member of the Continuation Committee at the Edinburgh Conference and was thus duty-bound to promote unity and mission in the Chinese churches. With his efforts, in 1913, Dr John R. Mott (1865–1955), an American missionary who was one of the initiators of the Edinburgh Conference, came to China, hoping to make substantial progress in the unity movement of the Chinese churches. He first convened regional meetings in Guangzhou, Shanghai, Beijing, Jinan, Hankou, Shenyang, and other places. On the premise that these regional meetings were successful, he held a national conference in Shanghai, with 115 delegates, one-third of whom were Chinese. During the conference, the China Continuation Committee was established. When the conference was in recess, the executive meeting of the Continuation Committee put forward the resolution of advancing the church work. After years of hard work, in December 1919, the China Continuation Committee

held a small-scale conference in Shanghai. Attending the conference were 117 delegates from 15 provinces, with almost half Chinese and half Western. Most of the participants were church leaders. The conference had only one goal, which was to initiate the “Christian occupation of China movement” and to set up a committee to concretely promote the movement. The conference also proposed to amend the order of the China Continuation Committee and set up a formal national organization to supervise the development of the Christian Occupation of China Movement.

The conference proposed renaming the China Continuation Committee and making it the official “central organ” of the Chinese churches to lead the Christian Occupation of China Movement. In May 1920, the Executive Department of the China Continuation Committee responded to the suggestions made by the conference in Shanghai. In the reply, it was pointed out that all the proposals would be pushed forward except that the renaming of the committee was beyond the authority of the committee. It was also mentioned in the reply that a national conference would be held in 1921 where the issues covered in the proposal could be discussed.

As a result of the proposal of the Christian Occupation of China movement, the regular national conference of the China Continuation Committee, which was originally scheduled to be held in 1921, was postponed to 1922. A 41-member preparatory committee was specially set up to take charge of the preparatory work for the national conference. The preparatory committee drew up the themes of the conference and called on church people from all over the country to participate in the discussion and make proposals for the conference. Therefore, one year before the conference, leaders, ministers, and theologians of Chinese churches made full preparations for the various themes of the conference. They wrote articles and offered suggestions on the unity and indigenization of the churches.

After a year of preparation, the National Christian Conference was finally convened in Shanghai on 2–11 May 1922. At that time, there were 345,853 believers in Chinese churches, more than 6,000 western missionaries in China, and 24,732 co-workers in Chinese churches, over four times as many as missionaries. Churches had spread all over 1,587 of the 1,713 counties in China, and only 126 counties had no churches.

The meeting opened at 3 p.m. on 2 May 1922. On the evening of the same day, in order to help delegates better participate in the discussions of the conference, the conference group presented slides about the background of the Chinese churches, including a brief history of Christianity’s entry into China.

The formal discussions on the themes began from the next day. There were two main forms of meetings, one was general assembly and the other was

group discussion. The five units assigned in advance addressed the conference. The five units were as follows:

The first unit, headed Logan Herbert Roots (1870–1945), Bishop of the Anglican Church, introduced the present situation of the church. The report covered information in three aspects: first, the development of the Chinese churches in the past 20 years; second, the environment of today's church; and third, the influence of Christianity on Chinese society. In addition to the above report, Mott and T. C. Chao (赵紫宸, 1888-1979) spoke, discussing the advantages and disadvantages of the Chinese churches from the perspective of global church situation.

The second unit mainly discussed the future of the Chinese churches, and its leader was Charles E. Patton. The report was also divided into three parts: how to shape the religious life of Christian fellowships, consolidate the church ministries in the mission-covered areas, and spread the gospel to the areas yet to be evangelized. The highlight of the report was its emphasis on the indigenization of the Chinese churches.

The task of the third unit, headed by Cheng Ching-yi, was to draft a church manifesto that stated the mission of the churches. It was undertaken by Chinese co-workers independently, and the church manifesto drafted by them became the official document of the conference. The core content of the manifesto concerned the indigenization of the Chinese churches. The manifesto proclaimed: "On the one hand, the indigenous Christian churches as we refer to still possess a continuous historical relationship with all Christian churches in the world, and on the other hand, they must substantially integrate the cultural and spiritual experience of the Chinese nation."

The fourth unit discussed the training of Chinese church leaders, with Yu Rizhang (余日章, 1882-1936) as the chief. In the report of the unit, church leaders were divided into two categories: paid and unpaid. The report first discussed the present situation of Chinese church leaders, and then envisioned the needs and training of Chinese church leaders in the future. The report elaborated on the cultivation of church leaders from many aspects, including preaching, social service, education, medicine, and literature.

The fifth unit, headed by C. G. Sparham, a pastor of the London Missionary Society, discussed the cooperation of churches, specifically the establishment of the China Christian Council. Their report was divided into three parts: the cooperation of churches in China; the cooperation between denominations; and proposals regarding the responsibilities, nature, and institution of the newly established council.

This conference took a significant step in promoting the ministry cooperation of Chinese churches and establishing the National Christian Council of

China, which was one of the main purposes of the conference. “The main purpose of this conference is to create a cooperative enterprise. However, its essential and implied purport is that in China, western missionaries and ministers will gradually reduce their managerial responsibilities and the Chinese churches are set to carry out their self-government, self-propagation and self-support.”⁸

As for the structure of the National Christian Council of China, Cheng Ching-yi, the executive secretary, published an article entitled “Contribution of the Council to the Church” in the *True Light* magazine (真光杂志 *zhen-guang zazhi*) in 1927 (Volume 26, No. 6). He pointed out that there were 100 members of the council, which were divided equally between China and the West. Among them, 75 were selected by various denominations or groups and 25 were invited by the council. Among the 100 members, 21 people were elected as “executive committee members,” “with one president, two vice-presidents, and one honorary accountant.” The Executive Committee employed several secretaries and appointed one general secretary to be responsible for the concrete conference affairs. In addition, some special commissions were set up to take charge of various important issues. “The Council is organized by all churches in China, to help with the responsibilities shared by all churches.” Specifically, the work of the council covered six main areas:

First, the Council is to help establish churches for the needs of the people rather than geographical concerns, paying special attention to the rural churches. Second, the Council is to help churches lay a new foundation for families. Third, the Council should help churches implement the principle of fraternity in industry. Fourthly, the Council should help the churches fight against the evil of opium with all their might. Fifth, the Council should help churches express their views on international issues. Sixth, to sum up the above sections, the most important task that the Council cannot overlook is to help the churches to enhance their spiritual life.⁹

After its establishment, the Council devoted itself to the promotion of church coordination and missionary work. On the one hand, it discussed the nature of the church; on the other hand, it actively carried out organized missionary activities. In 1930, the Five-Year Evangelical Campaign was the most representative one. This campaign emphasized the spiritual life of believers, to guide Chinese compatriots to convert to be Christians and to

8 Chen Hongjun, “The National Christian Conference in 1922,” *Chinese Christian Church Record* 7, (1924).

9 Quan Shaowu, “What Is the China Christian Council,” *Chinese Christian Church Record* 7, 1924.

double the number of Chinese Christians within five years. To achieve this goal, Chinese Christians set up the committee of the Five-Year Evangelical Campaign, which set goals, arranged the five-year plan, went into the factory and the countryside, promoted literacy movement, and advocated for the Christian family with the slogan, “Oh Lord, revive your church, revive me first.” Although the fellow workers who participated in the movement made great efforts to preach, they failed to achieve the desired effect because at that time China was in the midst of war and foreign aggression.

Discussion of the indigenous churches

The Edinburgh World Missionary Conference advocated the contextualization of churches, which made a big step forward for the indigenization process that had already been launched by the Chinese Christian churches. The National Christian Conference promulgated the church manifesto, which advocated that to build indigenous churches in China, in the final analysis, was to build local and Chinese churches. After the conference, Chinese Christian churches responded in succession, holding heated discussions and making proposals.

Cheng Ching-yi was elected as the first general secretary at the national conference. He preferred to interpret the indigenous church from the perspective of the church’s authority. He said,

We advocate the indigenous church, which involves at least the following two implications: (1) How to make Christianity fit for the needs of the people in the East? How to integrate the Christian cause with the customs and historical thoughts of the East and its unbreakable cultural crystallization for thousands of years? (2) All ministries of the church should be undertaken by Chinese believers. In the past 100 years, Christian work in China in finance, governance and teaching has all been guided and regulated by westerners, which has resulted in a paralyzed Chinese church . . . In the future, the Chinese people should take the whole duty of the Chinese Church.¹⁰

Cheng Ching-yi’s proposition had a very urgent realistic significance. In his view, indigenization was not only an ideological issue, but also an institutional one. In fact, without the pillar of indigenized institutions, the indigenized church and theology are nothing but castles in the air.

¹⁰ Cheng Ching-yi, “Discussions on Indigenous Churches,” in Zhang Xiping and Zhuo Xiping, eds., *Exploration of Indigenization: Academic Essays on Chinese Christian Culture in the 20th Century* (Beijing: China Radio and Television Press, 1999), 261.

T. C. Chao, Dean of the School of Religions at Yanjing (Yen-Ching) University (燕京大学), discussed various aspects of the church, such as culture, economy, institution, and theology.

The indigenous church should integrate all the truths embodied in Christianity with those of ancient Chinese culture, so that the religious life and experience of Chinese Christians can conform to the national style . . . After a number of periods . . . The indigenous church should be financially supported completely by Chinese people; In terms of governance, it should be completely run by the Chinese; In terms of institution, it should be fully adaptive to the endowment of Chinese people; In theology, it should absolutely be freely nourished by Chinese thoughts. Without these being achieved, the indigenous church will be unfulfilled.¹¹

Wang Zhixin (王治心, 1881–1968), a famous Chinese church historian, emphasized the integration of cultures. To indigenize is to remove the image of Christianity as a foreign religion in the eyes of the Chinese people.

An indigenous church is a Chinese church that fits the characteristics of the Chinese nation after successfully being transformed from a westernized church. This transformation is not meant to shake the truth of Christianity, but to integrate the ancient Chinese culture with the truth of Christianity, so that the religious life of Chinese Christians is suitable for the people's feelings in China without any estrangement.¹²

Liu Tingfang (刘廷芳, 1891–1947), a professor at Yanjing (Yen-Ching) University, was one of the advocates of Christian indigenization in China. He believed that indigenization was a way to organize Christian beliefs and doctrines fundamentally.

Chinese believers have accepted these imported gifts, and they must extract the essentials from the mixed combinations by themselves. With the help of God's guidance, these essentials should be rearranged in accordance with the history and experience of their own nation and country, and thus constitute the Chinese indigenized Christian doctrines, which then can be regarded as their own doctrines. The church ordinances, ceremonies, rituals and institutions of the church are all the same.¹³

11 Zhao Zichen, "Discussions on Indigenous Churches," *Progressive Youth* 76 (October 1924), 9.

12 Wang Zhixin, "Discussions on Chinese Indigenous Church", in Zhang Xiping and Zhuo Xinping, eds., *Exploration of Indigenization: Academic Essays on Chinese Christian Culture in the 20th Century* (Beijing: China Radio and Television Press, 1999), 238.

13 Liu Tingfang, "A Draft of Study of the Religious Experience of the Chinese Nation for the Indigenous Church", in Zhang Xiping and Zhuo Xinping, eds., *Exploration of*

According to discussion of the above Chinese church leaders and theologians, we can sum up their views on the characteristics of the indigenous church in the following points:

1. China's indigenous churches have a continuous relationship with churches all over the world. In essence, Christianity is both indigenous and ecumenical.
2. China's indigenous churches should be organized and maintained by Chinese people, based on the experience of Chinese Christians.
3. China's indigenous churches must understand the Christian tradition.
4. After removing its Western flavour, China's indigenous church should integrate with Chinese culture, and reflect Chinese character, traditional spirit, and culture.
5. The religious life and experience in China's indigenous church should conform to Chinese customs and Chinese people's feelings and mentality.

Chinese Christians faced three major problems in the construction of the indigenous churches. One was denominationalism. Denominations were the characteristics of Western churches. After the Protestant Reformation, many denominations emerged and did not belong to each other, and sometimes even attacked one another. In the history of Western churches, it had its own historical and cultural background. However, the early foreign missionaries did not realize this. They brought with the gospel to China their denominational mentality. According to statistics, in the 1920s, there were more than 130 mission organizations established by Western churches in China, among whom competition was normal and even in a vicious direction. The phenomenon of "pulling sheep (believers) to each sheepfold" in Chinese church history was the manifestation of this vicious competition. This kind of competition aimed at increasing the number of believers by slandering others and uplifting oneself, with a considerably negative impact on the Chinese churches. Today, many people who claim to be spiritual continue to use this method.

Chinese people uphold harmony and advocate "harmony but not uniformity," and thus it is difficult for Chinese churches to accept denominationalism. In the 1920s and 1930s, many leaders and theologians of Chinese churches

criticized denominationalism to varying degrees and made efforts to seek the unity of churches. For example, Fan Zimei (范子美, 1866–1939), who facilitated the convergence of various denominations into the Chinese Christian church, argued, “Christianity is a whole, China is a whole, and only a whole Christianity can cover the whole of China. There are no two Confucianism in China, so Confucianism covers China. There are no two Buddhism in China, so Buddhism covers China.” The other problem is the flavour of foreign religion. Christianity entered China with a sheer foreign flavour, which discouraged many people, especially the intellectual officials. Wang Zhixin claimed,

Unfortunately, this all-embracing Christianity has been in China for 117 years and has not been planted in Chinese culture and thought. The inheritance of western customs, culture and thoughts is employed in cultivating Chinese Christianity, and thereby impeding Christianity from being nourished by Chinese culture and thoughts as well as making Christianity and Chinese culture and thoughts incompatible. Therefore, Christianity still wears a foreign dress and remains as a guest in China’s territory. Some treated Christianity perfunctorily as they do with an overwhelmingly honorable guest; for those who oppose it, it is hatefully referred to as foreign religion. Has Buddhism ever been called a foreign religion? This proves that Christianity has not been planted in Chinese cultural thoughts yet.¹⁴

After the May Fourth Movement, Chinese people’s national consciousness was enhanced, and the church was also affected. Many people of insight began to reflect on the foreign nature of Christianity. The way to get alleviate this foreignness is to express Christian faith with Chinese culture, customs, institutions, and art.

The last problem is the flavour of imperialism. It cannot be denied that the rapid and large-scale entry of Christianity into China, to a considerable extent, took advantage of the gunboat policy of the West. Therefore, since the First Opium War, Christianity was stigmatized as an instrument of imperialist aggression against China, while Chinese Christians were imperialist lackeys. In the words of Jiang Menglin (蒋梦麟, 1886–1964), then president of Beijing (Peking) University, “The Buddha came to China on a white elephant, but Jesus Christ flew in on a shell.” The anti-Christian movement that broke out in 1922 aimed specifically at imperialism and regarded Christianity as the daring vanguard of imperialist aggression against China. The following is an example of anti-Christian remark,

14 Wang Zhixin, “Discussions on Chinese Indigenous Churches,” *Progressive Youth* 79 (January 1925), 12, in Zhang Xiping and Zhuo Xiping, eds., *Exploration of Indigenization: Academic Essays on Chinese Christian Culture in the 20th Century* (Beijing: China Radio and Television Press, 1999), 237.

All Christians collude with each other and with foreigners, which obviously constitutes a power. They occupy educational and diplomatic areas. They rely on foreigners to get promoted and become rich, and foreigners rely on them to obtain rights in China . . . Christianity obviously excludes dissidents. Through the influence of outsiders, Christians set up schools and are not under the jurisdiction of the Chinese Ministry of Education. They run their so-called “Christian Occupation” everywhere without scruple.¹⁵

The church advocated abolishing unequal treaties first, so that Chinese Christians and Chinese people were equal. Cheng Ching-yi claimed, “If we don’t try to change from inequality to equality, then the disadvantages of these inequalities will surely grow.”¹⁶ T. C. Chao also argued, “Therefore, Christians must first fight against unequal treaties and try to abolish them. If not, Christians cannot be called Christians, but foreign slaves and lackeys.”

The transformation of missionary work in China

In 1937, when the Japanese started a full-scale aggression into China, the Christian church in China devoted its main energy to resisting Japan and saving the nation, and the missionary work was compressed into the narrow space in the West. In 1945, Japan surrendered, and China’s War of Resistance against Japan won a complete victory. However, the civil war between the Nationalist Party and the Communist Party of China (CPC) started again, and the domestic political and economic situation went from bad to worse. In 1949, the people’s army led by the CPC completely defeated the Nationalist Party army and founded the People’s Republic of China on 1 October. The founding of the New China completely ended the missionary activities with international Christianity as the background. In the autumn of 1949, 19 Chinese Christian church leaders and renowned figures jointly wrote an open letter to foreign mission boards, describing the situation of China and Chinese churches, and making a preliminary reflection on the Chinese missionary movement. The open letter clearly pointed out that “Chinese history has turned a new page,” and “in this great historical change, we Chinese Christians feel it necessary to re-examine our work and our relationship with older churches abroad.” According to the open letter, Chinese churches had

15 Yun Daiying, “Why Are We Opposed against Christianity?” *Progressive Youth* 8 (8 December, 1923). See Zhong Limeng and Yang Fenglin, eds, *Materials of the History of Chinese Modern Philosophy (Collection 1, volume 10)—Battle between Atheism and Religion*,” Book 1 (Shengyang: 1981), 25.

16 Cheng Ching-yi, “The Nature and Status of Chinese Christianity,” in Zhang Xiping and Zhuo Xinping, eds., *Exploration of Indigenization: Academic Essays on Chinese Christian Culture in the 20th Century* (Beijing: China Radio and Television Press, 1999), 271.

long been subject to the Western missions. “In the past, under the guise of unequal treaties, Chinese churches did enjoy certain privileges. As a matter of fact, Chinese churches had close ties with Anglo-American churches in terms of personnel and economy . . . Most of the church administrative power is still in the hands of western missionaries. On many occasions, the church policy is still determined by foreign missions.”¹⁷

On 23 September 1950, Chinese Christian leaders headed by Y. T. Wu (吴耀宗, 1893–1979) jointly published the *Direction of Endeavor of Chinese Christianity in the Construction of New China* (i.e., the Christian manifesto), which clearly put forward the Three-Self policies of self-government, self-support, and self-propagation of Chinese churches.

Some people argue that the TSPM is the end of the missionary movement in China. In fact, it ended the deformed missionary work under the protection of unequal treaties. Since the establishment of the IMC in 1921, all missionary conferences advocated the localization of churches, and representatives of Chinese churches had participated in all the conferences before 1947. However, it has been proved that self-government, self-support and self-propagation cannot be realized without national independence.

In 1949, China became a truly independent country. Although the Chinese Church faced some unprecedented difficulties, it ushered in a golden age of independence and self-government of the church. Against this background, the indigenous church promoted by most kind-hearted missionaries and pursued by Chinese Christians finally ushered in the opportunity to take shape. As for the mission in the backdrop of the TSPM in New China, the truth tells us about its remarkable effectiveness. As early as 1985, Bishop K. H. Ting (丁光训, 1915–2012) compared the missionary achievements before and after 1949: “After more than a century of hard missionary work, there were only less than 700,000 Protestants in China until 1949. In the past 36 years, people have enjoyed more peace and self-esteem. The number of Christians has not decreased but has increased four to five times.”¹⁸

The following is a re-examination of the three major problems of the indigenization of Chinese churches in the early 20th century and of how Chinese churches are trying to solve these problems today.

The first of these problems is denominationalism. Although today’s Christianity in China has not completely solved the denominational problem, we have entered the post-denominational era. Denomination is no longer the

17 “Message from Chinese Christians Mission Boards Abroad” (translation), *Tianfeng* 15, Volume 8 (5 November 1949).

18 K. H. Ting, *A Collection of Essays of K. H. Ting* (Nanjing: Yilin Press, 1998), 49.

key to our theological thinking. In the process of missionary work, Chinese preachers have the concept only of Chinese churches rather than denominations. The divisive influence of denominationalism is gradually disappearing in Chinese churches. Chinese Christians respect the Confucian teaching of “harmony but difference” and combine this thought with Jesus’ teaching of “unity.” This has deepened their understanding of the teaching of “one Lord, one faith and one baptism.”

The second problem is the flavour of foreign religion. The TSPM started in 1950 helped Chinese churches to eliminate the external flavor of foreign religion. The reconstruction of theological thinking advocated by Bishop K. H. Ting in 1998 and the current further contextualization of Chinese Christianity require us to eliminate the flavor of foreign religion in terms of doctrine, thought, and theology. We advocate that Chinese Christians should read the Bible and think about theology in their own lives. The faith should ultimately solve the problems of Chinese Christians. In a word, we should take root in the Chinese churches and tell the story of the Chinese churches.

The third problem, and one that was commonly faced by the whole world from the 19th century to the mid-20th century, is imperialism. Together with the promotion of the global spirit of freedom and equality, Chinese churches eliminated the control of Western powers and, like their own nation, embarked on the road of independence and autonomy.

Hans Küng, a German theologian, summed up six different models after a thorough study of Christian missionary models: the apocalyptic model of the early church, the Greek model of the period of apostolic fathers, the Roman Catholic model of the Middle Ages, the Protestant Reformation model, the Enlightenment model, and the ecumenical model of the modern and contemporary era. If what Hans Küng said is true, today we are in the era of an ecumenical church model. It is not a unified church model, but a model of diversity that respects local culture and local churches. I hope that missionary model of Chinese Christianity can become a meaningful attempt that enriches the ecumenical mission model.¹⁹

Chinese Christians’ understanding of mission

On 21–27 July 1996, the Global Mission Conference was held in Montreat, USA. Professor Chen Zemin from the Nanjing Union Theological Seminary was invited to attend it. At the conference, he had the opportunity to expound on the understanding of mission of the Chinese church that

19 Chen Zemin, “One Stone Arouses Three Waves: Four Decades of Hans Küng’s Theological Journey”, in *Seeking and Witness: The Selected Works of Chen Zemin* (Shanghai: TSPM/CCC, 2007), 113-128.

had experienced invasion and semi-colonization by Western powers. In his address to the conference, entitled “The Gospel of Reconciliation,” he said, “Based on my past limited knowledge, the word ‘mission’ is often associated with missionaries and missionary groups.”²⁰ In other words, Chinese Christians are independent of Western missionaries and missionary groups. Professor Chen has clarified his understanding of the word mission by looking at its etymology.

I’m going to try to look up the meaning of mission. According to the dictionary, it comes from the Latin *mittere* or *miso* (to send out) which has several meanings in English, such as: (1) a mission to a foreign country (in diplomatic and military terms); (2) a special task given to an individual or groups of people; (3) more generally, a mission, a career, the purpose or pursuit of the fulfillment of one’s wishes; (4) In the perspective of religion, mission means someone who is sent to convert others with a particular doctrine or a set of moral norms. In this sense, missionaries are sometimes called evangelists (those who preach the Gospel or good news), or simply proselytizers (Matt. 23:15 “to seduce people into religious groups” in Chinese translation). It is this expression of slight difference that makes the word missionary unpopular in China.²¹

Professor Chen believed that the missionaries’ actions misled the Chinese people to believe that the “evangelization” required Chinese Christians to separate themselves from their traditional culture, which could easily be interpreted as separating Chinese Christians from their fellow compatriots. He reinterpreted the meaning of mission through studying the letter to the Ephesians and the letter to the Colossians, which means missionary work is to bring all creation under one head until we are all unified in the true faith; “recapitulation” reminds us of the Chinese saying, “the unity of the world.” Thus, Chinese people are more likely to understand and accept that the ultimate goal of the mission is to make everything under heaven and all humankind come together in unity.²²

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20 Chen Zemin, “The Gospel of Reconciliation: A Speech at the Global Mission Conference in Montreat, USA, 1996,” in *Seeking and Witness: The Selected Works of Chen Zemin* (Shanghai: TSPM/CCC, 2007), 146.

21 *Ibid.*, 147.

22 *Ibid.*, 148.

CHAPTER 7

Report of Northeast India, Bangladesh, Nepal and Myanmar

Rev. Dr H. Lalrinthanga

About the Aizawl Theological College

The Aizawl Theological College (ATC), one of the premier theological institutions in Northeast India, is affiliated with the Senate of Serampore College (University). It is located in Aizawl, the capital of the state of Mizoram, one of the states of Indian Union. Mizoram lies between Myanmar in the east and Bangladesh in the south and west. Because of its strategic location, the ATC has been drawing students from the various states of Northeast India as well as neighbouring countries like Myanmar and Bangladesh. This provides an opportunity for interaction between various ethnic Christian communities and cultures in South Asian and Southeast Asian countries. It further offers prospects for a panoramic view of Christianity in the region.

The ATC was started as theological school in 1907 by the Welsh Calvinistic Mission to cater to the needs of the nascent Christian community. Particularly aimed at training native evangelists and ministers of the church, it was held in abeyance during 1937–51, mainly because of financial constraints induced by the Second World War. It was upgraded to a licentiate in theology level college with affiliation to the Serampore College (University) in 1964, and subsequently to the bachelor of theology level in 1972. A bachelor of divinity programme was started in 1995, but was phased out in 2003.

Fully sponsored by the Mizoram Presbyterian Church, bachelor studies constitute the core programme of the college. The master's course is offered in six disciplines, namely Christian Theology, Old Testament, New Testament, History of Christianity, Pastoral Counselling, Religions and Missiology. The doctor of theology programme is offered in Christian Theology, New Testament and Missiology, with programmes in Old Testament and Pastoral Counselling planned to be started in 2022. Besides these courses, the college also runs diploma courses and a Lay Theological Education programme.

Study Group of the IMC Centenary Study Process

The faculty meeting of the ATC constituted a study group comprising Rev. Prof. H. Lalrinthanga, Dean of Post Graduate Studies, as the convener, with Prof. Lalrindiki Ralte, Rev. Lalduhawma Ralte, and Rev. Rosiamliana Tochhawng as members to work with the IMC Centenary Steering Group.

The initial plan was to hold a seminar in two phases: the first focusing on the influence of IMC on the mission theology and practice in the region, and the second exploring how best to foster collaboration in mission in the 21st century in the region in particular and World Christianity at large. However, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, many of the plans and expectations could not be realized. With the pandemic limiting our movements and crippling many of our activities, we had to opt for an online seminar.

The first phase of seminar was held on 30 September and 1 October 2021. Following the IMC Centenary Steering Group proposal, we focussed on the historical dimension for this phase. A concept paper was prepared and sent to different states in Northeast India and Myanmar under the Regional Centre. Five papers were received, which were all very challenging and thought provoking.

Establishing the Context

Most of the areas that come under the ambit of the regional study centre, specifically the “hill areas” of Northeast India and Myanmar, along with that of Bangladesh, share a common history of subjugation by the British colonial enterprise. After an initial period of intense resistance and hostilities on the part of the local populace, the colonial rule that came to be established in these parts was rather tenuous. The areas themselves were of little interest to the colonizers; they hardly possessed the resources coveted by the colonialists. Neither did the people matter that much. In most cases, the colonial machination entered the areas because the “warlike” tribes/communities posed a hindrance to the colonial enterprise because of their constant raids on colonial commercial establishments. And so, the colonial policy in these areas, as it was in Nepal, was largely of non-interference in local affairs once peace was brokered and as long as the tribes/communities did not engage in confrontation with the colonialists.

It was the responsibility of political officers, also known as superintendents or by some similar designation in some areas, to ensure that peace was maintained. In various cases, steps were taken to curb activities from outside that could cause disruption. Christian missionary work was also often seen as a

disruptive influence, and the entry of Christian missions to these areas largely restricted. Thus, one finds that only particular mission societies were given permission to work and evangelize in certain areas: for instance, the American Baptist mission in the Naga Hills, Garo Hills, and the hill areas of Manipur, and the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist mission in the Khasi Hills and Lushai Hills.

This “one field, one mission” policy led to the establishment of strong ties between denominational Christianity and ethnicity, with members of various disparate villages who had hitherto constantly waged war with each other coming together under the idea of a common ethnic identity and forming one community. Christianity and Christian missions fomented what F. S. Downs calls “Tribal Ecumenism.” By this, Downs refers to the coming together of various related village communities under a common ethnic identity. This crystallizing of a shared ethnic identity is achieved through the “gift” of a common language, basically through scripture and hymn translations as well as other, mostly Christian, literature in a standard dialect. These dialects were usually one dialect among many, but they were the ones the missionaries were first exposed to and then learned.

Ecumenism was not limited to the bringing together of one “tribal” community. Various tribal communities, who otherwise had little in common, were brought together under shared denominational and/or confessional identities. This type of ecumenical relationship extended across tribal lines and beyond. It brought together people of the hills and people of the plains and valleys. Thus, missionaries and mission societies and local church bodies contributed to the forging of ecumenical relations and partnerships.

With minimal governmental intervention, it was often up to the mission societies to not only Christianize local populations but also “civilize” and “educate” them. This can be quite problematic, because the understanding of what exactly constitutes “uncivilized” and “uneducated” was often undergirded by Western modernist notions. Hence, there is a need to decolonize much of the knowledge that is handed down.

Initial Findings

1. “The Working Principles and Objectives of the International Missionary Council and the Lairam Isua Krista Baptist Kohhran: A Study in Ecumenical Continuity of Mizoram,” by Rev. Zadingluaia Chinzah

Rev. Zadingluaia Chinzah looks at the formation of the Lairam Isua Krista Baptist Kohhran (LIKBBK, Lairam Baptist Church of Jesus Christ) in

southern Mizoram. He focuses on the realization of organic unity between the two churches, namely Isua Krista Kohhran (IKK, Church of Jesus Christ) and Lairam Baptist Kohhran (LBK, Lairam Baptist Church) in 1999. The Lai people inhabit the Lawngtlai district of Mizoram, in Northeast India, with a substantial percentage of the population dispersed in various parts of Mizoram and in the Chin state of Myanmar. Culturally distinct from the other ethnic communities of Mizoram, this people aspired to a distinctive administrative setup, which was realized with the formation of the Lai Autonomous District Council in 1972. The working and execution of the Autonomous District Council resulted in the resurgence of ethnic consciousness leading to the formation of two indigenous churches, the IKK in 1970 and the LBK in 1982.

Zadingluaia Chinzah notes the following factors that led to the formation of these indigenous churches, and ultimately the LIKBK in 1999:

- the self-assertive missionary zeal to preach the gospel to their own ethnic group outside Mizoram, especially those living in Myanmar
- the recognition of the discrimination of their parent Baptist Church of Mizoram (BCM) in terms employment and appointment, opportunities in technical education, and pastoral care
- the desire to advance and preserve of the Lai cultural identity

The two indigenous Lai churches operated and functioned separately for nearly two decades. The realization and understanding that both were formed with similar motives and objectives ignited the desire among the theological graduates (pastors and probationary pastors), lay leaders (elders and deacons), and the general public to merge into a unified ecclesial body. This, together with the realization of ethnic consciousness and belongingness, evolved into an ecumenical endeavour that began a negotiation for organic unity between the two indigenous churches.

By 1995, the two groups made a unanimous decision to have a formal dialogue toward an organic unity, which was approved by both respective assemblies. Both churches collaborated to form a body known as the Churches Unity Commission (CUC) as a mediating body, comprising delegates from both church assemblies. After several attempts at negotiations, the assemblies of IKK and LBK voted in favour of the unification consecutively in 1997 and 1998. CUC also made further suggestions to the assemblies in order

to impart mutual cooperation and understanding, thereby speeding up the unification through conducting a seminar and joint fellowship/conference.

In the year 1970 the uniting church called Isua Krista Kohhran Lairam (the Church of Jesus Christ of Lairam) came into being. At the annual assembly held on 28 March 1999, the name of the church was changed from Isua Krista Kohhran Lairam to Lairam Isua Krista Baptist Kohhran (LIKBK), as the name of the newly conceived ecumenically achieved ecclesial institution. The new church made its best effort to become a member of the Baptist World Alliance, the Asian Baptist Federation, the Council of Baptist Churches in Northeast India, the Mizoram Baptist Federation, the Global Council of Chin Fellowship, the Global Alliance of Chin Churches, and the Chin Baptist Churches-USA, as well as to engage in a dialogical relationship with Mizoram Presbyterian Synod, the Baptist Church of Mizoram, and the Evangelical Church of Maraland. In its spirit of evangelization, the LIKBK cooperates with mission societies such as Serving In Mission–Northeast India, Youth with a Mission, the Church's Auxiliary for Social Action, and World Vision in propagating the social aspect of the gospel.

The LIKBK, after its experience of an organic union, underwent much administrative structuring, since both the IKK and LBK surrendered their distinct form of a singular ecclesial body. Within its constitutional framework, the new church carries out its mission works.

In his paper, Zadingluaia Chinzah also examines the mission theology of LIKBK. The mission theology and methods are very much related to the mission theology of the IMC. In his conclusion, Zadingluaia Chinzah points out the common principles and objectives of the IMC and LIKBK. These principles include the spirit of ecumenism; the cooperation and unity of church and mission; efforts to tackle the evil effects of non-Christian worlds; the production of Christian literature; the establishment of schools and medical institutions; social aspects of the gospel; church planting; and the fight for victims of injustice.

2. "History of Ecumenical Movement in Tripura," by Rev. Lalmuansanga Ralte, Academic Dean, Tripura Theological College, Agartala

Rev. Lalmuansanga Ralte (Tripura Baptist Church Union) discusses the history of ecumenism in Tripura, a state in Northeast India, which is a former princely state and the third smallest state of India. Tripura, besides being ruled by Maharaja, claims to be a prehistoric land, since it is mentioned in the ancient epics of the Mahabharata and the Puranas. Tripura merged with India

on 15 October 1949 through an agreement signed at Delhi in September 1949. Tripura became a Part-C State of India, and on 1 November 1956 converted to a Union Territory. On 21 January 1972, under the provision of the North-Eastern Areas (Reorganisation) Act of 30 December 1971, it became a full-fledged state.

Though Christianity entered Tripura in the later part of the 16th century during the rule of King Amar Manikya, Christianity was not rooted in Tripura. The turning point for the history of Christianity in Tripura began when its Chief, Hrangvunga Sailo, converted to Christianity in 1906 with some of his villagers. The main focus of Lalmuansanga Ralte's paper is on the formation of the Tripura Baptist Church Union (TBCU). TBCU was affiliated with the Asia Pacific Baptist Federation (APBF) and the Baptist World Alliance (BWA). It is also a member church in the North East India Christian Council (NEICC), a regional church body of the National Council of Churches in India (NCCI). TBCU is the largest Christian denomination in Tripura, with 17 associations affiliated to it. The author contends that the union is a modern ecumenical body because different ethnic groups from different geographical locations in Tripura come together to form the TBCU.

One significant event mentioned was the establishment of United Christian Forum (UCF) for human rights. In the global scenario, human rights issues played an important role everywhere. Recognizing the importance of human rights issues, the Roman Catholic and the Protestant churches in Tripura joined and formed this forum. The UCF took the formal shape in the meeting on 5 October 1999. The church groups that came together to form the UCF were the Catholic Church, the Tripura Baptist Christian Union, the Gospel for Asia, Vishwa Vani, the National Fellowship, the Christ Mission Ashram, and the Evangelical Christian Fellowship.

The main aim of the UCF is to foster mutual respect, good will, and cooperation among its members and to work for peace and human advancement. Its aims and objectives include the following:

1. To foster and promote goodwill, mutual understanding and unity among all the denominations and Christian NGOs working in Tripura
2. To uphold the human and constitutional rights of the Christians in particular and others in general in Tripura
3. To promote peace and harmony, in Christian love, among the people of Tripura irrespective of caste, creed, race, or ethnic origin etc.

4. To promote and protect social and cultural heritage of the people of Tripura in the light of the gospel
5. To bring relief to the economically and socially marginalized and suffering in Christian compassion from its own and or from other resources
6. To stand by the people in time of calamities
7. To render moral support to all such bodies that solely or in groups fulfil any of the aims and objectives of the UCF
8. To act as a non-political religious minority organization
9. To take up projects that enhance the fulfilment of all or any of the aims and objectives of the UCF
10. To open its branches all over Tripura as and when required

3. "Decolonial Reading of the Context of Missions in Northeast India," by Dr. Taimaya Ragui, Academic Research Coordinator at the Shepherd's Academy of Oxford Centre for Religion and Public Life, Oxford, UK

Dr Taimaya Ragui (Tangkhul Baptist Church) brings out the understanding of indigenization in the context of Tangkhul Naga, one of the biggest Naga communities in Manipur. He says that the colonial idea shaped mission policies and strategies while the voice of the Indigenous experience was unheard, ignored, and rejected. In the tribal context, the colonizers were the subject and the Indigenous people were the object. So, he proposes a decolonial reading of the context of mission in Northeast India, especially among the Tangkhul community.

He tries to achieve this through decolonial thinking while attempting to understand the context of mission in Northeast India, particularly within the community of the Tangkhul Naga. The people of the Tangkhul Naga geographically located in the district of Ukhrul, in different districts of Manipur, in the Northwestern part of Myanmar, and in the cities of India. While discussing the question of the context of mission in Northeast India, Ragui raises concerns about the tendency to emulate the thinking and practice of Western missionaries and British ethnographers and their failure to understand the cultural context of the Tangkhul Naga. This does not mean a dismissal of the advancement brought by them. However, it is to argue that we need to consider the epistemic input—the Indigenous experience—of the Tangkhul Naga from multiple vantage points (i.e., from multiple contexts).

This effort, then, can be seen as moving away from conventional understanding and doing of mission in/from Northeast India, as it is a corrective to the Tangkhul Baptist approach to mission.

This paper looks at pre-colonial and colonial, postcolonial, and the contemporary period in the context of the Tangkhul Naga community. The question of the context of mission ought to begin with the interface of the pre-colonial and colonial period, or between colonialists and Indigenous groups.

The colonial influence was also seen during the postcolonial period and carried forward by the locals with much dedication. What was built by the Western missionaries and colonials was uncritically carried into later periods (and, largely, into the present period). While some changes have begun to take place in academia, the Indigenous churches remain situated in the colonial framework. Such captivity is prevalent not just in the church, but across different fields of study.

Christian workers or church-based writers still struggle to move past their admiration of the Western missionaries and what they claimed to have achieved for and within the Tangkhul community. While privileging their admiration of the Western missionaries and colonials, they carried forward the derogatory reference of their people and culture. At the socio-cultural level, one can argue that there is a systemic neglect of the concerns of Indigenous communities or minorities in India.

Their admiration of what is colonial still overwhelms their thinking, including their approach to mission in/from Northeast India. Such a tendency reveals the need to rethink of how they understand that which is contextual-cultural and biblical in their missional framework. Taimaya Ragui suggests that the key is to consider the Indigenous experience, that is, the multiple contexts of the Tangkhul Naga, which means considering the multiple contexts of the Indigenous community where the Tangkhul Nagas are dominated, neglected, and held captive.

4. "Relationship of Churches in the Mission Field in Northeast India: Prospects and Challenge," by Rev. Lalfakawma Ralte, Research Scholar at United Theological College, Bangalore

Rev. Lalfakawma Ralte (Mizoram Presbyterian Church) deals with the prospects and challenges of churches' relation in mission field, with a special focus on Arunachal Pradesh at the China border. In this mission field, the Mizoram Presbyterian Church (MPC) and the Baptist Church of Mizoram operate their own fields. The Upper Siang Baptist Christian Association (USBCA) asked the MPC to take the former as the latter's mission field.

Following that, the two parties made an agreement that made the USBCA the mission field of the MPC, effective 1 June 1984.

One of the functions of the first meeting of the IMC in October 1921 at Lake Mohonk was “to help unite Christian public opinion in support of freedom of conscience and religion and of missionary liberty.” In the large towns of Arunachal Pradesh and other parts of (Northeast) India, Christians belonging to different denominations come together and form Christian forums. Most of the activities focus on defending the Christian faith from external threats, such as Hindutva. Pastors and missionaries working under the MPC and BCM inspire indigenous church workers and leaders to initiate this kind of forum.

Lalfakawma Ralte also examines some of the socio-cultural changes after the coming of missionaries: changes such as the abolition of slavery and inter-tribal warfare and the introduction of white-collar jobs.

Abolition of slavery

The society in Arunachal is divided into free people, freed slaves, and actual slaves. Almost all the tribes of Arunachal used to raid the plains of Brahmaputra valley and carry away a number of people as slaves to their hills. Trade in slaves existed between the Adi and Mishing tribes throughout the British period (1826–1947). As a result of concerted efforts made by missionaries in Northeast India—particularly Dr Peter Fraser, who worked in Mizoram, and missionaries under the American Baptists, such as Nathan Brown, who worked in Assam—the British government prohibited the system of slavery in Northeast India. This included the state Arunachal Pradesh, despite its reluctance.

Intertribal warfare

In early days, intertribal as well as inter-village wars were seen in Arunachal Pradesh. However, after the arrival of British Government and Christian missionaries, those feuds were barely seen, especially in Christian-dominated areas. The conflicts between various tribes of Arunachal Pradesh have been more or less resolved in places where Christianity and Christian missions have had a profound impact. However, the number of Christians in the state is not high and the religion’s impact is minimal in certain areas. And so, despite the cessation of intertribal warfare, the different tribes continue to have difficulty dealing harmoniously with one another because of communal animosity developed from the pre-Christian era.

Introduction of white-collar jobs

Missionaries created new job positions relating to the church and the extension of the kingdom of God, such as pastors, missionaries, evangelists, and cross-sepoys, who were young Mizos about 10-20 in number who travelled from one village to another for preaching the Gospel. These positions are intended mainly for Christian leaders. The white-collar jobs divided the people into two strata: those with wages and those without. Mission agencies are responsible for dividing society based on this assumption.

This socio-cultural change created problems among the inhabitants of Arunachal Pradesh. The paper also highlights the practical problem faced by both the churches, as in other mission fields, such as denominationalism and competition over new converts. These became stumbling blocks for the growth of mission work in the state.

5. "Cooperation and Unity among the Mission Churches in Mizoram," by Rev. Prof. H. Lalrinthanga, Dean, Post-Graduate Studies at the Aizawl Theological College, Mizoram

Rev. Prof. H. Lalrinthanga (Mizoram Presbyterian Church) discusses the movement of cooperation and unity among the European missions in Mizoram. Mizoram is one of the states that Protestant mission entered in the later part of 19th century and the first decade of the 20th century. In his paper, Lalrinthanga examines the relationship among the Protestant mission-planted churches, such as the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Mission (Presbyterian Church), the Baptist Missionary Society (Baptist Church), and the Lakher Pioneer Mission (Evangelical Church).

Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Mission

Before the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Mission started work in Mizoram, Savidge and Lorrain had been there for a few years under the Arthington Mission. But they had to leave as it was the policy of the mission for missionaries not to stay for more than two to three years in one field, after which they should go to a new field. The first missionary of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Mission (later known as Welsh Presbyterian Mission), David Evan Jones, was a native of a farmhouse called Bryn Melyn, in Llandderfel, Merionethshire (now Gwynedd). His father was a Presbyterian and his mother was an Anglican. He started his journey from Liverpool on 26 June 1897. When he reached Silchar, he was accompanied by T. J. Jones and a Khasi Christian teacher, Rai Bhajur, and his wife from Khasi Hills, whom the mission board appointed to help him.

In the next year, Edwin Rowlands joined them. D. E. Jones met Edwin Rowlands and they arrived in Aizawl on 31 December 1898. The first converts on the Lushai Hills were baptised on 25 June 1899, when two young men, Khuma and Khara, made formal confession of their Christian faith. The Report of the Lushai Hills 1901–02 clearly mentioned that the Welsh missionary work was divided into four branches: education, preaching, medicine, and literature. The Mizoram Presbyterian Church is the largest denomination among the churches in Mizoram. Mizoram statistics of 2020 show that there are 1141 local churches, with 620,311 total members in the church.

Baptist Missionary Society

J. H. Lorrain and S. W. Savidge, who had worked earlier in Mizoram under the Arthington Mission, came back in March 1903 to south Mizoram, which had been transferred by the Welsh Presbyterian Mission to the Baptist Missionary Society. Savidge and Lorrain then became Baptist Missionary Society missionaries. There were 125 Christians with 30 families when they arrived. They made Serkawn their mission station. They spent most of their first two years supervising the building work. Lorrain and Savidge distributed works among themselves. Savidge was in charge of education and Lorrain was responsible for church matters. The contribution of the Baptist Missionary Society in the South is equally significant to the Welsh Presbyterian Mission in the North. At present, The Baptist Missionary Society has 663 local churches with a total membership of 169,748.

Lakher Pioneer Mission

Mr R. A. Lorrain and his newly wedded wife left the cosmopolitan city of London on 18 January 1907 and arrived at Lunglei (Serkawn) on 5 March 1907 where his elder brother, James Herbert Lorrain, was doing pioneering work in the south Lushai Hills. They stayed with him for six months before leaving for Maraland.

The first local church in Maraland was founded at Lorrain Ville, Saikao, in 1914 by the missionaries and a few Mara converts. The number increased, requiring the need to establish more congregations outside Lorrain Ville. This first local church, with only Indigenous Mara believers, was established at Siaha in 1933. At present, the mission has 90 local churches with a total membership of 45,665.

The main focus of this paper is to examine cooperation and unity among these three churches. Lalrinthanga points out the cooperation among the mission societies, such as acceptance of ministry and membership, exchange of fraternal delegates in the assembly/synod, cooperation in Bible translation,

production of a Christian hymn book for the Mizo, and production in the field of other literatures.

As discussed earlier, North Mizoram is under the Presbyterian Church and South Mizoram is under the Baptist Church. However, there was no question about membership in the church. People can move from north to south and vice versa with no problems in terms of accepting membership. A Baptist or a Presbyterian migrating to another area automatically becomes a member of the church in that area, with no question arising concerning a change of denomination. The Baptist Missionary Report of 1914 clearly mentioned the cordial relationship of the two mission churches.

Many of the Mizo did not know what denomination they belonged to. They knew, however, that they were Christians and that their duty was to spread the good news. The assembly meeting of the Presbyterian Church held in 1932 discussed the nature to accept membership of migrating people. The church accepted full communicant members as full communicant members. Other non-full communicant members were also accepted according to the rules of a particular church. When a Christian in one area moved to another area, they were given a letter of transfer and assured of a welcome in their new home.

Besides the spiritual unity, both the Presbyterian and the Baptist missionaries worked together in promoting Christian literature. In mission history, literature plays a very important role in reaching the people with the gospel. In 1897, Presbyterian missionaries D. E. Jones and Edwin Rowlands translated the gospels of Matthew and Luke and the Acts into Mizo. In 1903, when Lorrain and Savidge came back to Mizoram as Baptist missionaries, they helped the Welsh missionaries to revise them. In 1916, the translation of the whole New Testament into Mizo was completed. Although the Baptist and Presbyterian mission centres at Serkawn (Lunglei) and Aizawl were an eight-day journey apart from each other, the two missions always worked well together. Despite minor problems and disagreements, there was constant co-operation between north and south. In time, they worked out a complete programme for the translation work, and Lorrain acted as general editor in liaison with the Bible Society.

After the publication of the New Testament, they continued the translation of the Old Testament, and at the time Lorrain left Mizoram in 1932, they had almost completed the translation. They divided the portion for the north and south, and they exchanged whatever they finished for editing. The translation of the Old Testament was completed in 1956, and whatever finished from north and south were sent to Calcutta for printing. In 1959 the

completed Mizo Bible was finally published. It was a joint venture of the Presbyterian Church and the Baptist Church.

With the passage of years and as a result of modern development, the desire arose to change some of the language in the Bible translation. In 1964, Presbyterians and Baptist nominated members to form a committee to look into revising the Bible, which was approved by the Bible Society of India. The Revised New Testament was completed in 1984, and the complete Bible in 1995.

The Mizo people are great lovers of singing. Before the coming of Christianity, their social life was full of singing. When they became Christians, singing continued to play a large role in the church. D. E. Jones compiled a small collection of hymns, which the Mizo eagerly bought. This small hymn book was added after the arrival of Edwin Rowlands in 1898. He translated and composed more than a hundred hymns, of which 90 hymns still in the Mizo hymn book. He is remembered for his gift of singing and composing hymns. The second hymn book, containing 83 hymns, was published in 1903 at the Allahabad Mission Press and published by the North India Christian Tract and Book Society. Within a year or two, it was republished with 42 additional hymns. In 1909, an enlarged edition of the Lushai Hymn book was jointly published by the Presbyterian and the Baptist missions. In all these editions of the Mizo hymn book, the Presbyterian Church and the Baptist Church made successful efforts together.

Revivals also led to the growth of the Christian hymn book. After the revival of 1913, there was significant increase of both translated hymns and hymns composed by the Mizo themselves. In 1914, the third edition of the Lushai Hymn Book, with an additional 450 hymns, was published. Later, Lorrain, Savidge, Jones, and Rowland added more hymns. By 1927, the hymn book contained about 500 hymns. In 1944, a centenary edition of the hymn book was published with 537 songs.

As the church grew, the Christian hymn book was revised and enlarged many times. From the beginning, the music committee of both Presbyterian and Baptist churches jointly prepared this hymn book, and the Synod Literature and Publication Board published it for use in both the Presbyterian and the Baptist churches in Mizoram.

In early Mizo society, every village had its *Tlangau* or crier. The *Tlangau* was one of the most important village officials. He was the person who proclaimed the chief's orders to the village. When the chief wanted to make announcement to his people, he sent out the *Tlangau* to the village to proclaim it. The mission made use of the tradition of *Tlangau* to preach the

gospel among the Mizo. In this context, the missionaries printed a new Magazine called *Krista Tlangau* (Herald of Christ).

The first issue of the magazine was published in October 1911 by the North Mizo Church, and it was renamed as *Kristian Tlangau* (Christian Herald). Though it was published by the north, all the important resolutions of the Presbytery of South were published in *Kristian Tlangau* before the Baptist Church had its own official organ *Kohbran Beng* in 1947.

The *Kristian Tlangau* has been fully accepted as the Christian monthly magazine. It has a very wide circulation and is read by many outside the confines of the Mizo Hills. It is regularly published, with a circulation of 43,000 in 2021.

Summary of Main Findings

The papers presented reflect cooperation and collaboration in mission in the Northeast India. The churches in Northeast India did not have much of a relationship with the IMC, but the theology of mission greatly influenced the life and work of the churches. Ecumenism is always the main theme of the churches in Northeast India. The papers have revealed the following main findings:

1) The Western missionaries initiated the work of the gospel in the region, and so they may be called the torch bearers of the gospel. Yet, the real forerunners in the transition that came about in the lives of the Indigenous people were the missionaries from the same region who strained every nerve to usher in a new era in the land.

2) In formulating mission policies and strategies, the voice from the margin, especially the Indigenous experience, is ignored or neglected. It also means that the epistemic input of the Indigenous communities is not perceived as significant to the discussions of truth claims and the enterprise of Christian mission in/from Northeast India. However, there is a need to validate the everyday experience of the Indigenous communities, taking into consideration their context.

3) Realization of ethnic consciousness coupled with belongingness evolved into an ecumenical endeavour that began a negotiation for organic unity between the two indigenous churches in southern Mizoram.

4) The formation of the UCF for Human Rights in Tripura is an example of Christians' involvement in social life of this region. It is an association of various Christian denominations and Christian organizations active in Tripura. It aims to foster mutual respect, good will, and cooperation among its members and to work for peace and human advancement.

5) A cordial and close relationship existed among the missionary churches of the European missionary societies in the initial period of the history of Christianity in Mizoram. The missionaries developed the Mizo alphabet in the *Duhlian* dialect and taught the Mizo how to read and write using it. Gradually, it became the common language for all the inhabitants of Mizoram. Having one common language to communicate with one another is one of the unique characteristics of the region.

6) People in the region who responded well to the Christian message were mainly different ethnic tribal communities. Modern education was introduced by the missionaries in the region comparatively late. For example, the first high school in Mizoram was established only in 1944. At the same time, communication was difficult in those days. These inconveniences kept those in the region from participating in national and international discussions, and thus they had no say on how churches and mission in the region participated in the founding of IMC. Moreover, most Protestant churches in the region are evangelical in their theological orientation and thus not very interested in ecumenical endeavours. Unfortunately, many people have been misguided by ultra-evangelicals who see ecumenical movements such as the WCC as being dominated by theological liberals. Some even see the WCC as the beast of Revelation. Thus, participation of the churches and mission organizations in the WCC or CWME is minimal. However, the churches in the region have participated in the movement through regional and national councils of churches (NEICC, NCCI).

7) The mission theology and practice emanating from the WCC and IMC discussions influenced the region in a significant way. The understanding of mission and practice of mission in the region had exclusively been verbal proclamation of the gospel, especially across one's culture. However, this understanding has broadened to include humanization through education, medical, and other services.

8) Movements for unity and cooperation of churches in the region are galvanized by people's social and political commitment rather than their confessional affirmations. For example, in Mizoram and Tripura, armed struggles or ethnic war pull together the churches of various denominations for unity. This suggests that our search for unity and cooperation among the churches must focus not only on confessional unity but also on unity in social and political issues.

Points of Interest for Other Regions

The region under study comprises Northeast India, Nepal, Myanmar, and Bangladesh. The following points may be interesting for other regions.

1) The region is unique in its religious demography. Nepal is the only Hindu kingdom of the world with a constitutional monarchy and multiparty democracy. Bangladesh is a Muslim country, as it was formerly East Pakistan created by the partition of India at the time of independence on the basis of religion. Myanmar is Buddhist dominated. In Northeast India, most of the plain people follow Hinduism and the hill people are mainly Christians. Mizoram and Nagaland can be said to be Christian states, with almost 90 percent being Christian, Meghalaya with around 75 percent, and Manipur around 41 percent. The churches felt a sense of being in a strategic Christian mission location, as they are surrounded by the three great religions of the world.

2) Passion for mission is ingrained in the very lifeblood of the Christianity in Northeast India. In particular, in comparison to other populations, the Mizo are estimated to have sent the highest proportion of missionaries. Some of the churches spend almost half of their financial and human resources for mission. This zeal for mission would be of great interest for other regions. Mission is still a magic word for the members of the churches. The understanding of mission is still largely evangelization. Concomitant with the understanding of mission as evangelization is the matter of conversion. This has become an increasingly significant issue in the past few years. It poses a large hurdle in countries such as Nepal and Bangladesh, where one religion—Hinduism and Islam in these two cases, respectively—enjoys official status. Even in “secular” Northeast India, a state like Arunachal Pradesh has a freedom of religion act that is effectively meant to curb conversion/proselytization activities of churches and mission societies.

3) With the ongoing trend of re-assertiveness of cultural and religious heritage and identity, Christian community in India, Myanmar, Bangladesh, and Nepal are still unwanted and suspected minorities, targets of suspicion for social and political upheavals. At the same time, majority of the Christian population can be found in ethnic tribal groups that had been dehumanized by the dominant groups. They are now struggling for self-hood in various ways that are often considered by the dominant group as stoked by Christianity. The interplay between these branding by the dominant groups, their self-understanding and their dual sense of mission—to tell the good news and to free themselves from their dominating clutches—makes Christian mission complicated in the region.

4) The division of the churches and the Christian community in the region is not necessarily due to theological factors. Division is historically conditioned, as Christian community in India, Myanmar, Bangladesh, and Nepal were Christianized by the various Western missions of diverse denominations and as their loyalty to their parent churches still remained in their historical heritage. Tribalism is a big problem—the search for smaller identities, such as clan identity and ethnic identity is becoming a divisive agent, not only in politics but also in religion. This fosters the emergence of ethnic-based churches exclusive of others.

5) Movements for cooperation of churches and Christian unity in the region have been enhanced by common problems or enemies. Ethnic tensions, persecutions of Christians, and other social and political problems have galvanized Christian unity and cooperation to create a unanimous voice and action against these common problems and to seek peace and understanding between the conflicting communities.

6) The “one region, one mission policy” in the initial period of Christian mission work in the region led to the formation of a predominantly Christian ethnonational identity among the various tribes and communities. This, in turn, infused a certain territoriality, defined in terms of either ethnicity or land mass. Thus, the sense of cooperation and the search for unity often become lopsided—vibrant and promising at the leadership level but not necessarily passed down or embraced by members of the laity.

7) The movement and search for unity and cooperation must address multidimensional societal problems. Christian social and political commitment can be a basis for unity and cooperation in the region rather than confessional affirmations.

CHAPTER 8

Christian Mission and Cooperation in a Multireligious Context: Mapping the Impact of the IMC/CWME Movement in Rethinking Mission Theology and Practice in India

Chongpongmeren Jamir

The centenary celebration of the formation of the International Missionary Council (IMC) is an opportune time to pause and reflect on the development of mission theology and practice since the early 20th century, in which the IMC as a movement has played a key role. Our experience of the movement in India is long, varied, and rich. Indian churches are privileged to be part of the movement from its very inception at the World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh 1910. At Edinburgh, of the 17 delegates from Asia, eight were from India: V. S. Azariah, K. C. Chatterji, J. R. Chitambar, S. Ghose, Shivram Masoji, John Rangiah, R. K. Sorabji, and Thang Khan.¹ The Indian churches were part of the “younger churches” that received intense attention during and after the conference, and which began to play a prominent role in shaping mission thinking in the ecumenical movement. This report shares some of the insights gained during the regional consultation of the Bangalore centre (United Theological College [UTC] and the South Asia Institute of Advance Christian Studies [SAIACS]) of the International Missionary Council /Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (IMC/CWME) centenary process, as we reflect on the experiences, both past and present, of the movement in India, and also some challenges as we look to the future of Christian mission and cooperation in India.

1 William R. Hogg, *Ecumenical Foundations: A History of the International Missionary Council and Its Nineteenth-Century Background* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 1952), 396.

The Bangalore centre is represented by academics and research scholars mostly associated with the UTC² and the SAIACS,³ two premier theological seminaries in India with strong ecumenical and evangelical roots respectively. There were also participants from other theological seminaries in India, such as the Dharmaram College, Christ University, Bangalore; the Caleb Institute, Farukhnagar-NCR Delhi; and the Satchitanand Darmasashtra Vidyapith, Raipur. The participants also represent various Protestant denominations as well as one that represents the Catholic tradition. They come with varied experiences of teaching in theological colleges (the demographic of academic discipline includes History, Theology, Mission, and Religious Studies), as well as in churches and mission organizations.

Emerging Themes

Speaking at one of the evening sessions at Edinburgh 1910, V. S. Azariah spoke of India as a land that has a “religious atmosphere.” Thus, he opined that the way to an Indian heart is by cultivating the “mystical” element in Christianity.⁴ Here, Azariah was being prophetic of the “[multi-]religious atmosphere” in which any reflection on mission and cooperation were to take place in India. This resonates with our findings in the regional consultation of the IMC/CWME centenary study process, where the issues of witnessing to and relation with people of other faiths appeared prominently in the papers. John V. Matthew⁵ in his “Mapping IMC/WCC’s Impact on Inter-Faith Relation in India: Few Contours for the Future” shows how both the theology and praxis of ecumenism in India has closely followed the global

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- 2 UTC was established in 1910 through the cooperation of the London Missionary Society, the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, the United Free Church of Scotland, and the Arcot Mission of the Reformed Church in America. “History,” <http://www.utc.edu.in/> (accessed 13 January 2022). It has been at the forefront of ecumenical movement in India, both as an ecumenical entity, being run by a cooperative involvement of churches and missionary societies from India and abroad, and as an ecumenical institution, facilitating ecumenical research and engagement in India.
 - 3 SAIACS was established in 1982 with the aim to provide postgraduate theological education in evangelical tradition. “About SAIACS,” <https://www.saiacs.org/about-us/> (accessed on 13 January 2022). It has been a representation of evangelical ecumenicity in India with trustees, faculty, and students drawn from various Christian denominations across India and abroad.
 - 4 V. S. Azariah, “The Problem of Cooperation between Foreign and Native Workers,” in *World Missionary Conference, 1910: The History and Records of the Conference* (Edinburgh/London: Oliphant, Anderson and Ferrier, n.d.), 314. Address delivered in the Assembly Hall on Monday, 20 June 1910.
 - 5 John V. Matthew is a professor in the Department of Religion, Culture and Society at UTC, Bangalore.

discussion spearheaded by IMC-World Council of Churches (WCC). He charts the impact of the statements and recommendations made by the various missionary conferences of the IMC and the WCC assemblies on interfaith relation in India.

India and other erstwhile Western colonies in Asia and Africa saw an intense movement of nationalism in the first half of the 20th century. This cultural environment influenced the theology and mission of the churches in the region. In India, churches developed a strong desire for indigenization and autonomy. This spirit was felt at the international missionary conference held in India at Tambaram in 1938, whereby the delegates from the younger churches expressed the need for devolution of mission and ecclesiastical control into the hands of native Christians. The discussions at Tambaram not only encouraged ecclesiastical autonomy in India, but also influenced the way Indian Christians looked at and participated in the nationalist movement. Ajay Chakraborty⁶ in his “The Influence of Tambaram Conference, 1938, on the Journey towards Indian Independence” explores the impact of the Tambaram conference on Christian involvement in the Indian nationalist movement. He argues that the Tambaram conference transformed the mission-oriented leaders in India into pro-nationalist leaders.

In spite of the effort made toward indigenization of churches and the participation in the nationalist movement, Indian Christians continue to face accusations of being disloyal to the nation and its culture. Kaholi Zhimomi⁷ in her “The Indian Christian Predicament: Mapping the Move towards Autonomy of Churches in the Context of Mission Policy of IMC” addresses the challenges faced by Indian Christians in a context where even the effort toward Christian unity has been interpreted by some as an international conspiracy. In the light of this, she argues for an ecumenical vision that includes a Christian political mission, a life-centric mission, and a reflective, transformative, and experiential ecumenism.

A key aspect of developing an ecumenical vision in a multireligious context is the question of how to relate with people of other faith. Indian churches already have a strong tradition of dialogical theology represented by theologians like P. D. Devanandan, M. M. Thomas, Stanley Samartha, and Raimundo Panikkar. However, their theologies have been critiqued in India by both Christians and non-Christians alike. Among Christians, the critical

6 Ajay Chakraborty is a research scholar in the Department of History of Christianity, UTC. He is also an associate professor at the Satchitanand Darmaśāstra Vidyāpīth, Raipur, Chhattisgarh.

7 Kaholi Zhimomi is an associate professor in the Department of History of Christianity, UTC, Bangalore.

question has been that of relativism and religious pluralism. Chongpongmeren Jamir⁸ in his “Whither Ecumenical-Evangelical Discussion in India” discusses how it has resulted in a heated debate between ecumenical and evangelical theologians in India. He calls for the need to develop an attitude of critical acceptance and a commitment to unity in the mission of God.

Among Catholics, the Second Vatican Council (1962–65) was a landmark event in terms of the Catholic Church’s attitude toward people of other faith. Francis Tonippara⁹ in his “From *Ad Gentes* to New Evangelization: Catholic Missionary Trajectories” analyzes the papal teaching on Christian mission, tracing the contours of mission thinking in the Catholic Church since the Second Vatican Council. He is critical of the notion of the possibility of salvation in other religious faiths and the concept of anonymous Christians, which, he posits, weakens the traditional understanding of mission and missionary commitment. Instead, he argues, with support from recent papal documents, for an appreciation of other religions that do not prevent people from their basic obligation to preach the good news.

Interaction with people of other faiths is a daily reality in India. John Arun Kumar¹⁰ in his “Mission in the Context of Hindu-Majority India” explores the prospect of Hindu-Christian dialogue in India and argues for an informal format of dialogue in the Indian context in addition to the formal format that is already in practice. He suggests that in the Indian context, informal interaction between people of different religious traditions occurs on a daily basis, and therefore provides a safe environment for interfaith dialogue to take place.

While interfaith relation has received much attention in ecumenical discussions in India, intra-faith relation among the various Christian groups also brings its own challenges. Arvind Prabha Singh¹¹ in his “The Paradigm Shifts in Mission Cooperation in India, Past and Present: A Historical Survey” surveys the shifts in mission cooperation in Indian over the years and argues that unresolved problems and challenges in the mission field inspired missionaries and native Christians in India to become involved in discussion for Christian unity and cooperation.

8 Chongpongmeren Jamir is a faculty and Specialization Advisor History of Christianity at SAIACS, Bangalore.

9 Francis Tonippara is a professor and head of the Department of Church History at Dharmaram College, Bangalore.

10 John Arun Kumar is a professor of Religious Studies. Formerly, he was the head of the Department of Religion, SAIACS, Bangalore.

11 Arvind Prabha Singh is a research scholar in the Department of History of Christianity, UTC, Bangalore.

Rethinking of Christian mission and cooperation continues in India. It is important that every stakeholder in Indian Christianity should be included and given a space to participate. A dynamic segment in Indian Christianity that has not been involved much in ecumenical discussions until recently is the Pentecostal church. V. V. Thomas¹² in his “Understanding of Mission among the Pentecostal Churches and the Influences of IMC” analyzes the resurgence of religiosity with the growth of Pentecostalism in India. He argues that classical Pentecostalism has given in to the trap of institutions and structures, and that therefore there is now a post-Pentecostal movement that is outside the “official” Pentecostal churches. This discontinuity trend adopted by the independent and charismatic churches and missionaries offers a new dimension to the discussion on Christian cooperation in mission.

Rethinking of Christianity and mission theology in India during and immediately after the Tambaram conference 1938 took place in terms of the predominantly Hindu ideology. However, since the 1980s, doing Christian theology in India has shifted with the introduction of the agency of the Adivasis, Tribals, and Dalits. Rohan Gideon¹³ in his “Shifting Notions of Agency as a Theological Signpost to Rethinking Christianity in India” analyzes the notion of agency as a theological signpost in the intersections of identity politics of Indian Christian thought since the Tambaram conference. He argues that with the introduction of the new agency, issues of internal colonization and marginalisation have emerged as key issues in the rethinking of Christianity in India.

Mission concepts and approaches practised in India have to come out of the Indian context, in which the adaptation of cultural values can play a key role. E. D. Solomon¹⁴ in his “Church and Social Justice: An Indian Perspective” explores how the concept of consensus in ancient Gram Panchayat in India can be adapted in developing a theology of mission in India to address issues of social justice. While such an approach is a praxis model that helps negotiate rough waters for unity and integrity, he asks how it can align with the work of the Holy Spirit in the church.

In the following section, we will give a brief overview of the way churches and mission organizations in India have been involved in the IMC/CWME movement. This will be followed by discussions on some of the key findings

12 V. V. Thomas is a professor and chairperson of History of Christianity, UTC, Bangalore.

13 Rohan P. Gideon is a professor and the head of the Department of Theology at UTC, Bangalore.

14 E. D. Solomon is a professor and the head of the Department of Missiology, Caleb Institute, Farukhnagar-NCR Delhi. Formerly, he was the head of the Department of Missiology, SAIACS, Bangalore.

and insights on Christian cooperation and collaboration in mission in India that have emerged from the study.

Unity in Mission: IMC/CWME and Christianity in India

“You have given your bodies to be burned. We ask for love, give us FRIENDS.”¹⁵ This passionate appeal by Azariah to a predominantly Western audience at the World Missionary Conference in 1910 at Edinburgh has often been cited as a turning point in the history of the ecumenical movement.¹⁶ It came out of a lived experience of ecumenicity, or rather a lack of it, in India, as indicated by a review of both the good and bad experiences of missionary-native relations given in his speech. Azariah’s speech, and the Edinburgh conference as a whole, represents an increasing desire for Christian unity and cooperation that had developed in mission fields in Asia and Africa by the turn of the 20th century.

In India, we can talk of two movements of Christian unity in the 19th and early 20th centuries, which ultimately came together under the guidance of the IMC.

The first is the missionary conferences, several of which took place over the course of the 19th century. The denominational diversities in Indian Christian history emerged after the arrival of Western colonizers and missionaries from the 16th century on. Churches and mission centres took form according to the missionaries’ and mission societies’ own traditions, leading to the denominational divisions among the Indian Christians. The lack of unity among missionaries and various mission agencies working in non-Christian lands proved to be a big hindrance to the effectiveness of Christian mission. Natives of these lands, both non-Christians and Christians, were left puzzled by the fact that while Christianity claimed to be one, there were differences and enmity among Christians. However, the missionary zeal in the 19th century opened new possibilities for dedicated common goals in the mission fields, leading to calls for conferences to discuss joint efforts in mission propagation and cooperation. Several regional and national conferences took place over the course of the 19th century, where missionaries from various mission organizations met to promote Christian fellowship and to exchange ideas. The first of such conferences was held in 1825 in Bombay (present Mumbai),

15 Azariah, “The Problem of Cooperation between Foreign and Native Workers,” 315.

16 Jesudas M. Athyal, ed., *A Light to the Nations* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2016), xiii.

India.¹⁷ Other conferences followed both in the mission field and in the missionary sending lands, culminating in the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910.

The second movement of Christian unity was the church union movement, which began in the first decade of the 20th century. The initial impulse came with the merger of Presbyterian and Congregationalist churches in South India, resulting in the formation of the South India United Church (SIUC) in 1908.¹⁸ The growing spirit of Christian unity in the aftermath of Edinburgh 1910 further provided the impetus toward a negotiation for church union between SIUC and other Christian denominations, including Anglican and Wesleyan Methodist churches,¹⁹ which ultimately resulted in the formation of the Church of South India (CSI) in 1947. Thus, in the build-up to the Edinburgh conference, in which Azariah made the appeal, India was already experiencing movements for Christian unity. At the conference, Azariah spoke of how in India the “cooperation between the foreign and native church workers . . . too often is not what it ought to be.” Thus, “things must change,” he posited, “and change speedily if there is to be a large measure of hearty cooperation between the foreign missionaries and the Indian workers.”²⁰ Azariah’s statement captured the ecumenical aspiration of the younger churches expressed in the conference. For them cooperation starts in the mission field—in the foreign and native missionary relationship and in the mission-church relationship.

A continuation of this thinking was the initiative to form national missionary councils. In India, the National Missionary Council of India (NMCI; the forerunner of the National Christian Council of India, NCCI²¹) was formed in 1914, giving a new impetus to Christian mission and cooperation. Of particular importance is the Evangelistic Forward Movement (EFM)²² initiated

17 Paul E. Pierson, “Ecumenical Movement,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of World Mission*, ed. A. Scott Moreau et al. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 301.

18 C. B. Firth, *An Introduction to Indian Church History* (Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1961), 238.

19 Clifford Manshardt, “Movement toward Church Union in South India,” *The Journal of Religion* 6:6 (November 1926), 109. SIUC was a key constituent in the negotiation for the formation of CSI.

20 Azariah, “The Problem of Cooperation between Foreign and Native Workers,” 306.

21 NMCI was reorganized as the National Christian Council of India, Burma, and Ceylon in 1921. It became the National Council of Churches in India in 1979.

22 The Evangelistic Forward Movement (EFM) was first initiative by the National Missionary Council of China to facilitate unity and cooperation among mission societies working in China. The Indian chapter was inspired by their Chinese counterpart. Sheerwood Eddy, who visited China in 1915, brought news about the Evangelistic Forward Movement (EFM) in China.

by the Madras chapter of the NMCI to affect united evangelistic effort in South India. The success of the EFM led people to ask, "If we can unite in preaching the gospel, what hinders us from uniting in one Church?"²³ In light of this, in 1919, the NMCI organized a Church Union Conference of Indian Ministers at Tranquebar under the leadership of Azariah. The Tranquebar conference set in motion the discussion for the aforementioned CSI. The formation of CSI, according to Jesudas Athyal, "sought to break through Western pattern of denominationalism, seeing itself not as just one more church body, but as a means toward bringing together other churches."²⁴ Another successful story of church union movement in India is that of the formation of the Church of North India (CNI) in 1970.

Ecumenical movement in India gained further momentum with ecumenical agencies such as the Christian Literature Society, the Christian Endeavour Union, the Young Men's Christian Association, the Student Christian Movement, the Indian Missionary Society, and the National Missionary Society under the leadership of Sherwood Eddy, V. S. Azariah, K. T. Paul, C. J. Lukas, G. V. Job, A. J. Appasamy, and V. Santiago. These missionary agencies took over the whole movement of the Indian indigenous church toward the ecumenism, oriented more to mission challenges, modification of mission policies, and inter-mission relations. Further, ecumenical institutions such as the Madras Christian College in Tambaram, the Women's Christian College in Madras; and the United Theological College in Bangalore functioned as the unifying force.

While the union movements and conferences brought together the missionaries and mission agencies, the Indian Christians were also moving toward the search for an Indian Church, which developed in the context of an Indian Renaissance, nationalism, the freedom struggle, and the Indian Christians' search for autonomy. The deep sense of nationalism evoked in the minds of the Indian Christians the vision of an indigenous Indian Christian community free from Western denominationalism and mission allegiance. Azariah, for instance, saw the unification of churches in India as part of the vision for church indigenization. Azariah's distinctive contribution, observed Athyal, was his "focus on the necessity of an Indian Christian identity, of 'church unification as part of a larger program of church indigenisation.'"²⁵ Ecumenism

23 Eber Priestly, *The Church of South India: Adventure in Union* (London: Church of South India Council in Great Britain, 1970), 7.

24 Athyal, *A Light to the Nations*, 2.

25 *Ibid.*, xvii.

in India, therefore, can be seen as a protest initiated against the imported pattern of denominational fragmentation and missionary paternalism.

The missionary conference at Tambaram in 1938 made India the focus of ecumenical discussion. The discussions at Tambaram, especially pertinent to understanding Christian mission in a non-Christian world, were to dominate ecumenical discussion worldwide for decades. The critical response of the Indian contingent to Hendrik Kraemer's mission theology was a key point of discussion during and after the conference. While Kraemer emphasized the discontinuity between God's self-revelation in Christ and human religious endeavours, Indian Christians represented by the "Rethinking Group" (Pandebeddi Chenchiah, V. S. Chakkarai and others) asserted a strong connection between Christian faith and Indian culture.²⁶ After Tambaram, the Indian contribution to ecumenical discussion on interfaith relations continued, with Indian theologians like P. D. Devanandan, M. M. Thomas, and Stanley Samartha providing key leadership in the WCC initiatives and programmes on the subject. These Indian Christian contributions are rooted in a lived experience of a multireligious context, where relations with people of other faiths is part of everyday experience. Thus, their contribution to global discussion on interfaith relations is an overflow of local discussions on mission theology and practices.

In collaboration with the WCC's efforts to initiate dialogue between Christianity and other faiths, India has seen a number of efforts to organize consultation and projects on interfaith dialogue. Noteworthy is the initiatives taken by the Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society (CISRS), which was established by NCCI in 1957. CISRS has organized a number of consultations, seminars, and conferences where leaders and thinkers from different religions gathered for dialogue.²⁷ Another effort is the Henry Martyn Institute of Islamic Studies, established in 1929, which is committed to research and interfaith dialogue within an ecumenical framework.²⁸ Besides these, various churches, non-governmental organizations, Ashrams, and research centres in India have been engaged in promoting interfaith dialogue with people of other faith: Saccidananda Ashram in Tannirpalli, the Dialogue Centre at UTC in Bangalore, and others.

26 G. V. Job, P. Chenchiah, V. Chakkarai, et al. *Rethinking Christianity in India* (Madras: A.N. Sudarisanam), 1939.

27 Muthuraj Swamy, *The Problem with Interreligious Dialogue* (London/New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), 24–25.

28 Athyal, *A Light to the Nations*, 10.

Thus, Indian ecumenical discussion is moored on active participation in the 20th century ecumenical movement from its very inception. It has a strong praxis element that comes out of actual experiences of the union of churches of different Christian traditions and of lived experience of cooperation and dialogue in mission.

Dialogical Loci of Ecumenical Theology in India

One of the findings in the regional consultation was the location of mission and ecumenical discussion within the specific context of early 20th-century India, which was experiencing a rise in nationalism. This had put Indian Christians in a dilemma. While some missionaries (T. E. Slater, C. F. Andrews, and E. Greaves) and native Christians (Titusji, K. C. Banerjee, K. M. Banerjee and others) advocated Christian participation in the movement, many others were apprehensive of Christian involvement in a movement dominated by Hindus. Some were also fearful of being labelled as disloyal to the Christian missions and the British administration and anxious over the future prospects of life after the independence ruled by the Hindu majority. Thus, as G. A. Oddie puts it, they remained aloof from the movement so as to attract “the fat fishes and loaves of the Government.”²⁹ The uneasy dilemma of Indian Christians of the time is well captured by the failure of the NCCI to take a definite stand in the political struggle for national freedom. The leadership of the NCCI in the early decades of the 20th century, dominated by overseas agencies, took an ambivalent attitude to the nationalist movement, as captured in the words of Kaj Baago: “The council issued two statements on the political situation in 1917 and 1920, using a good number of words, but saying actually nothing. These statements were so vague, woolly and cautious in their choice of words, that they could be interpreted both ways.”³⁰ Had the NCCI taken a positive stand for political independence, lamented Baago, “it might have encouraged many more Indian Christians to active participation in the struggle for freedom.”³¹

In spite of the failure of the missionary-led NCCI, many Indian Christians responded to the call of the nationalist movement. In response to Mahatma Gandhi’s call for *swadeshi* (self-sufficiency), in 1921 the All India Conference

29 G. A. Oddie, “Indian Christians and the National Congress, 1885–1910,” *Indian Church History Review* 2:1 (June 1968), 46–51.

30 K. Baago, *A History of the National Christian Council of India 1914-1964* (Nagpur: NCCI Christian Council Lodge, n.d.), 28.

31 Baago, *A History of the National Christian Council of India*, 28-29.

of Indian Christians (AICIC) passed a “resolution urging that the swadeshi spirit dominate all aspects of Indian Christian life, that Christians wear clothes of Indian manufacturers.”³² Indian theologian V. Chakkarai famously stated, “If my nationalism and Christianity conflicted I would rather give up my Christianity than my nationalism.”³³ This cultural environment provided the context for rethinking Christianity in India in the 1930s, which was to have a key influence at the Tambaram Conference in 1938. The religious tone Indian nationalism took, especially in line with the dominant Hindu view, put Christians in a further state of predicament, whereby their loyalty toward Indian nationalism was questioned. It was in this context that ecumenical discussion in India had its beginning. Thus, T. V. Philip aptly stated that the “ecumenical movement in India was born under the influence of Indian nationalism at the initiative of Indian Christians.”³⁴ The cultural context of India at the time explains the spirit of ecumenicity and nationalization shown by the Indian contingent and other members of the younger churches at Tambaram. K. M. Panikkar, in his book *Asia and Western Dominance*, describes how at the time Asians of every section, religious or political, were desperate to get rid of imperial rule. In such an environment, national sentiment could not fail to look upon missionary activity as inimical to the country’s interests.³⁵ Baago reported a change of attitude or approach toward Indian nationalism in the NCCI itself as Indians took over its administrative leadership. Consequently, the council “came out unequivocally in support of the Congress”—that is, the Indian National Congress (INC)—“and its demand for Independence.”³⁶

In independent India, Indian Christians continued to find themselves being labelled as anti-nationals in identity mapping within Indian society. Along with other minority communities, Christians were considered “outsiders” in the communal construction of independent India.³⁷ Many Hindus accused Indian

32 John C. B. Webster, “Gandhi and the Christians: Dialogue in the Nationalist Era,” in *Hindu-Christian Dialogue: Perspective and Encounters*, ed. Harold Coward (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1989), 83.

33 Along with Chakkarai, the likes of Susil Rudra, S. K. Dutta, C. F. Andrews, K. T. Paulm and V. S. Azariah had a vision for an Indian national awakening and actively supported the national movement. M. M. Thomas, *Acknowledged Christ of the Indian Renaissance* (Madras: Diocesan Press, 1970), 247–49.

34 T. V. Philip, *Ecumenism in Asia* (India: ISPCK & CSS, 1994), 144.

35 K. M. Panikkar, *Asia and Western Dominance* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1959).

36 Baago, *A History of the National Christian Council of India*, 61.

37 K. M. Panikkar, “Outsiders as Enemy: Politics of Rewriting History in India,” *Indian Church History Review* 36:2 (2002), 73–9.

churches of using the Christian mission models of monopolizing, eradicating Indian cultural values, propagating Christian theologies and philosophies through theological seminaries and colleges, and using medical mission, charity and social welfare works to proselytize. Christian ecumenical effort was also observed with suspicion as a tool to create a Western Christian empire altogether. Sapre argued that missionary activities in India have “their roots spread on an international level and behind these there is a global scheme at work.” He speculated that the ecumenical movement was an agenda of Western imperialism, which, in the face of challenges from revolutionary activities in Asian lands, stirred the minds of the Christian missionary organizations to seek a “modus operandi.”³⁸ Thus, Christian conversation on unity and cooperation in mission was marked with suspicion by their Hindu neighbours, who saw it as the propagation of an international conspiracy to Christianize India. It was within this context that contemporary Indian Christian thought and practices were developed. The dialogical approach of ecumenical theologians in India needs to be understood in this cultural context.

Relations with people of other faiths constitutes a core element in ecumenical theological thinking in India. It can be noted that India provided the background for discussion on interfaith dialogue in the missionary conferences both at Jerusalem in 1928 and at Tambaram in 1938. Nicol Macnicol, a Scottish missionary to India who had close contact with the *Bhakti* tradition of Hinduism, provided the framework for discussion in the Jerusalem conference.³⁹ In line with the early 20th-century missionary theories that Christianity in India was the “fulfilment” or “crown of Hinduism,”⁴⁰ Macnicol argued that Hinduism was not wrong or to be rejected; rather, Christianity could bring to Hinduism an “enrichment” of its concepts so that some of the ideals of Hinduism could be fulfilled.⁴¹ According to Wesley Ariarajah, even though Macnicol avoided the term “fulfillment” and used the word “enrichment,” the Asian participants interpreted Macnicol in such a way and “freely used” the word “fulfillment” as the basis for the relationship between Christianity and other religious traditions.⁴²

38 Sapre, “The Background of Global Movement for Christian Unity,” in *Vivekananda Kendra Patrika: Distinctive Cultural Magazine of India* 8:2 (August 1979), 54–55.

39 Dana L. Robert, “Scottish Fulfilment Theory and Friendship: Lived Religion at Edinburgh 1910,” *Scottish Church History* 4:9 (2020), 71–72.

40 J. N. Farquhar, *The Crown of Hinduism* (London: Oxford University Press, 1913); Nicol Macnicol, *Indian Theism: From the Vedic to the Muhammadan Period* (London: Oxford University Press, 1915).

41 Seevaratam Wesley Ariarajah, “The Implications of Recent ecumenical Thought for the Christian-Hindu Relationship” (PhD diss., University of London, 1987), 52.

42 *Ibid.*, 64.

In the final statement of the Jerusalem Conference, entitled, “The Christian Message,” the word “sharing” was used for the act of Christian witness to those of other faiths. According to Ariarajah, this had a dialogical connotation.⁴³

At Tambaram the reaction of the Indian contingent to Kraemer’s theology provided the framework for discussion on interfaith relation. In the build-up to the conference, Kraemer’s exclusivist and strongly Christo-centric theology had dampened the spirit of an engaging Christology that was emerging in Asia, especially in India. Hinduism, Kraemer wrote, is a naturalist monistic religion that is “as wide, a polymorphous, as full of fierce contrasts and fine shades, as capricious, as Nature is.”⁴⁴ Such monism, Kraemer argued, is irreconcilable with the Christian faith. The Rethinking Group was critical of Kraemer’s standpoint and proposed that Christians in India should have a reverential attitude toward their Hindu heritage. They highlighted how Kraemer’s theological proposals were irrelevant to the Indian context of many religions, with Hinduism as a major one, and argued that in India, “Christ should be related to the great Indian religious heritage and that Christianity should assume an Indian expression in life, thought and activity.”⁴⁵ At the end, the Tambaram report called for a positive relation with people of other faiths. It recommended a fuller and more adequate understanding of other religions. It also challenged the churches to cooperate with members of other religious traditions “in all good social and community movements.”⁴⁶

In the post-Tambaram development of ecumenical theology on interfaith relation, Indian theologians played a pivotal role. Devanandan argued for a Christian concern in society and desired the creation of a theology that regards a positive approach to other religions and cultural contexts.⁴⁷ He believed that Christian concern in society was not just political or economic but primarily theological, rooted in and governed by the insight that “our faith stands for the redemption of the whole man” here and now.⁴⁸ Another Indian theologian, Stanley Samartha, saw Christian and Hindu thought compatible in many aspects. Locating within the Indian multireligious context, Samartha sought

43 Ibid., 59.

44 H. Kraemer, *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World* (London: The Edinburgh House Press, 1938), 160.

45 Job et al., *Rethinking Christianity in India*, v.

46 Ariarajah, “The Implications of Recent Ecumenical Thought,” 106.

47 Siga Arles, “Mission in the Indian Cultural Context: The Significance of Paul David Devanandan,” *Indian Journal of Theology*, https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/ijt/35-2_055.pdf, 56.

48 Quoted in Siga Arles, *Missiologial Education: An Indian Exploration* (Bangalore: CFCC, 2006), 77.

for a dialogue between Christ and India. He spoke of the “Unbound Christ,” who can be encountered beyond the boundaries of Christianity. Christianity, he posited, “belongs to Christ,” but “Christ does not belong to Christianity.” He was attracted to the idea of an “unbaptised koinonia” outside the church, brought together through an enduring attraction of Jesus in India.⁴⁹ As the first director of the WCC’s unit on interfaith dialogue, Samartha was the architect of WCC’s programme on interfaith dialogue.

The IMC movement, starting from the Edinburgh conference in 1910, had a liberating influence, whereby the younger churches found a voice to express themselves and contribute significantly to theological discourses. The east-west binary and the related theological themes were addressed rigorously at Tambaram and in the works of the Rethinking Group in India. Consequently, an affirmative sense of agency and “selfhood” had already dawned on Asian Christianity. In India, participation of native agencies in Christian theological discussion goes back to the 19th century: Kesub Chandra Sen (1838–84) argued that Christ brought about fulfilment of all that was best in Hinduism; Brahmabandhav Upadhyaya (1861–1907) attempted to formulate an Indian Christian theology based on the theology of Thomas Aquinas and Sankara’s *Advaita Vedanta*; A. J. Appasamy (1891–1975) interpreted Christ in terms of the *Bhakti* tradition of Hinduism, and so on. Influenced by the new proposals that were made at Edinburgh 1910 and Jerusalem 1928—which had suggested “the enrichment of Christianity by sharing the spiritual treasures in non-Christian religions”—concerted efforts were made to indigenize Christianity in India.⁵⁰ The tendency is to construct Indian Christian theologies based on Indian philosophical categories. Raimundo Panikkar’s *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism* and Samartha’s *The Hindu Response to the Unbound Christ* are examples of such attempts. These theologies have brought Christianity closer to the dominant Hindu philosophies.

In his critical analysis of contextual theologies in India, which were reflections from the dominant Hindu ideology, Sathianathan Clarke wrote, “Indian-Christian theology occupied itself with the challenging process of recollecting, reinterpreting and reappropriating its religious and cultural legacy mainly in terms of the Hindu tradition . . . Doing contextual Indian-Christian theology was, thus, overwhelmingly conceived of as baptizing the gospel of

49 Stanley J. Samartha, *The Hindu Response to the Unbound Christ* (Bangalore: CISRS, 1974).

50 Ch. Sreenivasa Rao, “The Inter-faith Dialogue and World Community—An Introduction,” in *Inter-faith Dialogue and World Community*, ed. Ch. Sreenivasa Rao (Madras: CLS, 1991), xxiii.

Christ into the holy waters of Hindu philosophy and culture.”⁵¹ However, in recent years, the issue of internal colonization and the introduction of agency of the Adivasi, Dalit, and Tribals have led to questioning of the location of Christian theology in the predominantly Hindu ideology. The agency of Dalits in particular has raised “questions about the partners in Hindu-Christian dialogue in India.”⁵² The introduction of these agencies points to new directions in Christian theologies and mission in India. This also calls for a rethinking of ecumenical theology and mission understanding in India.

Rethinking Christian Mission in India

Our regional consultation observed how mission in India closely followed the contours of the paradigm shifts in the 20th-century understanding of mission. In the 1920s and 1930s, following the lead of the EFM, churches in India engaged enthusiastically in evangelistic endeavour. However, Christian mission in India faced the accusation of proselytization using the leverage of social, medical and economic upliftment of the people.⁵³ Gandhi made a searing accusation against Christian foreign missionaries, stating that they engaged in “proselytizing by means of medical aid, education, etc.” and therefore they need to be withdrawn from the country.⁵⁴ In light of this, some foreign missionaries and native Christians engaged in rethinking Christian mission in India. Stanley Jones made a distinction between proselytism, which involved change of religious affiliation without inner moral and spiritual change, and conversion, which involved both. While he condemned proselytization, he maintained that the aim of Christian activities was the proclamation of Jesus Christ.⁵⁵ Following a similar line of thought, Cyril Modak argued for the need for a cultural and national conversion of the Christian community.⁵⁶ Despite the painful effort in the past to distinguish between proselytization and conversion, the latter has gained notoriety in India as a controversial practice involving a coercive and manipulative act.

51 Sathianathan Clarke, *Dalits and Christianity: Subaltern Religion and Liberation Theology in India* (New Delhi: Oxford UP; 1999), 18.

52 Athyal, *A Light to the Nations*, 10.

53 Baago, *A History of the National Christian Council of India*, 54–60.

54 Quoted in Webster, “Gandhi and the Christians,” 87–88.

55 *Ibid.*, 89.

56 *Ibid.*

Such a negative attitude toward the practice of conversion has resulted in the enactment of a number of anti-conversion bills in India.

Another impulse in mission theology in India is the desire for self-determination and autonomy. This desire was evident since the latter part of the 19th century. The formation of the “Hindu Church of the Lord Jesus” by Nadar Christians in 1858,⁵⁷ the formation of the Bengal Christian Association in 1968,⁵⁸ and the formation of Christo Samaj in 1887⁵⁹ were expressions of the aspiration of Indian churches for autonomy. The devolution of mission control of churches in the erstwhile Western colonies gained much support over the first few decades of the twentieth century. In India, Azariah called for “transfer of responsibilities, responsible self-government, opportunities for self-expression” from mission to the churches.⁶⁰ This calls for the independence of the Indian churches from the hands of the Western missionary societies: the curtailment of missionary power; the training of Indian leadership in the government of their own church; and the preparation of the whole Christian community for indigenous leadership and self-support.

The discussions at the missionary conference at Tambaram in 1938 emphasized the importance of indigenous ministry of the church. The official findings of the conference affirm that “the Gospel should be expressed and interpreted in indigenous forms, and that in methods of worship, institutions, literature, architecture, etc., the spiritual heritage of the nation and country should be taken into use.” It further appeals “to give Christ His rightful place in the heart of the people who have not previously known him so that He will neither be a foreigner, nor be distorted by pre-Christian patterns of thought.”⁶¹ This encouraged Asian churches to dream of liberation of the churches in the region from ecclesiastical, cultural, and theological colonialism of the

57 It resulted with Nadar Christians breaking away from the Church Missionary Society and forming a separate church. They tried to indigenize the church and to be a completely self-supporting church without the foreign funding.

58 It was formed by a group of Christians in Kolkata to aspire for an independent Indian Church under the presidentship of Krishna Mohan Banerjee and Kali Charan Banerjee. Kaj Baago, “The First Independence Movement among the Indian Christians,” *Indian Church History Review* 1:1 (June 1967), 65.

59 It was formed in Bengal under the leadership of Kali Charan Bannerji with an aim to forming a United Indian Church, thus eliminating western denominationalism. Bannerji was an active member of the Indian National Congress that spearheaded the Indian nationalist mass movement.

60 See “Proceedings of the Fourth Meeting of the National Missionary Council, Coonoor 9-13 Nov. 1917,” 19.

61 IMC, *The Life of the Church, The Tambaram Madras Series, volume 4* (New York: IMC, 1939), 185–86.

West, and aimed at the manifestation of a truly Asian (Indian or Chinese or Japanese) Christianity. This contributed to the development of a church-centred approach to Christian mission adopted at Tambaram.

Another issue in rethinking Christian mission in India is that of interfaith dialogue. The Tambaram conference opened the floodgate to free theological exploration of interfaith relations among Christian theologians. In the Indian context, Panikkar has declared himself both a Hindu and a Christian, and asked, “Does not the Gospel tell me to respect my *dharma*?”⁶² Samartha has written that “Hindu and Christian have their own particularly distinctive contributions to make to the common quest for truth.” Therefore, he argues, no particular “religion is justified in claiming that it is decisive for all.”⁶³ In line with this relativistic approach to religion, Samartha spoke of a dialogue approach to mission, as opposed to the “missiological approach” that treats people of other religions as objects of mission.⁶⁴ Christian mission, he posits, should seek to bring equality of all religions, to break down all religious barriers, and work toward a realization of truth. Affirming that “there is an amazingly persistent response of Hindus to Jesus Christ in spite of the avowed self-sufficiency of modern Hinduism,” Samartha argues that it is possible in the future that an attitude of commitment to Christ without conversion might become more significant in India’s religiously pluralistic context.⁶⁵ Thus, he calls “those inside the hedges of the traditional church” to affirm the presence of Christ in Hindu response to Christ, even when that response is not in a familiar pattern.⁶⁶

The dialogue model of relation with other religious faiths, particularly of the relativistic kind, alarmed many Christians in India, especially the evangelicals. It stirred apprehension that it would soft-pedal commitment to Christian witness.⁶⁷ The key concern, as Sunand Sumithra pointed out, is the fear that religious relativism/pluralism would “dilute the uniqueness (one can

62 Raimundo Panikkar, “The Ongoing Dialogue,” in *Hindu-Christian Dialogue: Perspective and Encounters*, ed. Harold Coward (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1993), xi.

63 S. J. Samartha, *Courage for Dialogue* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1981), 153.

64 S. J. Samartha, “Dialogue in Religiously Plural Society,” in *The Multi-Faith Context of India—Resources and Challenges*, ed. Israel Selvanayagam (Bangalore: Board for Theological Text Books Programme of South Asia, 1992), 5.

65 Samartha, *The Hindu Response to the Unbound Christ*, 7.

66 *Ibid.*, 4.

67 Pradip Das, “The Evangelical Movement in India,” in *Pilgrimage 2100*, eds. Siga Arles and I. Ben Wati (Bangalore: Centre for Contemporary Christianity, 1995), 23.

say even exclusiveness) of Christ as portrayed in the Bible.”⁶⁸ The dialogue approach to mission theology in India was an attempt to foster peaceful co-existence among people of different faiths. K. Thanzauva, however, feels that this objective of the attainment of religious harmony can itself be the problem. He argues that the mission of the Christian church must not simply be reduced to the attainment of harmony in the society; rather, its objective must be to work toward the “realization of the Kingdom of God.”⁶⁹ In his critique of the “dialogical model,” Thanzauva cautioned, “Unless dialogue is shifted from ‘commonalities’ to ‘critical evaluation of one’s own faith’, it will not bring about radical transformation.”⁷⁰

The discussion on the desirability and possible formats of interfaith dialogue continues to divide opinion in India. The WCC pamphlet, “Guidelines on Dialogue with the People of Living Faiths and Ideologies,” while urging Christians to be open to other faiths, also insisted that Christians witness fully to their deepest conviction.⁷¹ The middle path provided by the WCC provides an alternative to the extremes of fundamentalism and liberalism. How do Indian Christians engage in dialogue and witness to their non-Christian neighbours? One of the ways discussed in the regional consultation was that of an informal interaction in the everyday lives of the people. Bob Robinson pointed out how “there are many situations in India where informal dialogue has long been an established reality made possible and often inevitable by the proximity of neighbours of different faiths.”⁷² Atul Aghamkar also wrote of how “a large segment of the Christian community in India probably is more inclined to live harmoniously with the people of other faiths, often entering into what we call ‘informal dialogue’ over many central issues of faith and practices.”⁷³ Interaction with people of other faiths is an everyday experience in India. Informal dialogue proposed that Christians work within their natu-

68 Sunand Sumithra, *Christian Theologies from an Indian Perspective* (Bangalore: Theological Book Trust, 1990), 196. See also Ken Gnanakan, *The Pluralist Predicament* (Bangalore: Theological Book Trust, 1992), 68.

69 K. Thanzauva, *Theology of Community: Tribal Theology in the Making* (Aizawl, Mizoram: ATC, 2004), 72.

70 *Ibid.*, 72.

71 “Guidelines on Dialogue with the People of Living Faiths and Ideologies,” World Council of Churches, 1 February 2010, <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/guidelines-on-dialogue-with-people-of-living-faiths-and-ideologies> (accessed 5 November 2021).

72 Bob Robinson, “Christian-Hindu Dialogue – Are There Persuasive Biblical and Theological Reasons for It? A Critical Assessment,” *Dharma Deepika* 24:10 (January–June 2006), 10.

73 Atul Aghamkar, “Hindu-Christian Dialogue in India,” <https://fullerstudio.fuller.edu/featured-article-hindu-christian-dialogue-in-india/> (accessed 8 October 2021).

ral environment and engage in conversation and witness. Such innovations challenge the way one thinks of Christian life and witness.

A fourth issue in rethinking Christian mission in India is that of Christian involvement in nation building. One of the driving forces behind the global ecumenical movement has been a concern to contribute to the rebuilding of a world devastated by years of war. Here, Indian theologian M. M. Thomas's contribution is significant. Thomas, along with David McCaughey, produced the study *The Christian in the World Struggle* (1952), which brought an ecumenical response to the worldwide political disorder following the Second World War.⁷⁴

Independent India followed the development model of the Nehruvian Path (represented by the first Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru), which was based on the values of self-reliance, industrial growth, and economic planning for the establishment of a welfare state. This thinking also influenced the churches, as seen in the establishment of development departments in the churches to mobilize Christian contribution to nation building.⁷⁵ M. M. Thomas captured this spirit well when he "interpreted salvation as human finding his/her true humanness so that it is no longer suppressed by social injustice, war and poverty."⁷⁶ However, the consultation recognized the predicament of Indian Christians, as a minority community in an increasingly intolerant political discourse advocated by the right-wing Hindu political groups. This predicament hinders Indian Christian contribution to nation building. Intolerance and widespread suspicion against Christian mission is highlighted by the recent initiative of the government of the state of Karnataka, in South India, to conduct a survey of churches in the state with the stated aim to check "forced religious conversion."⁷⁷ Over the last few years, many Christian NGOs have had their FCRA licence (Foreign Contribution Regulation Act 1976) suspended, leaving them in a state of predicament.⁷⁸ A report indicates that more than 450 revocations of FCRA

74 M. M. Thomas and J. D. McCaughey, *The Christian in the World Struggle* (Geneva: World's Christian Student Federation, 1952).

75 Athyal, *A Light to the Nations*, 11.

76 B. R. Ro, "Asian Theology," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Water A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 107.

77 "Karnataka Orders Survey of Churches to 'Check Forced Conversions,'" *Times of India* (October 2021) <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/bengaluru/karnataka-orders-survey-of-churches-to-check-forced-conversions/articleshow/87053650.cms> (accessed 4 November 2021).

78 For instance, the FCRA of the following Christian organizations were cancelled by the government: Compassion International India; Ecreosoculis North Western Gossner Evangelical in Jharkhand; the Evangelical Churches Association (ECA) in Manipur;

licence in India from 2011 to 2019 of groups with the word “church” in their name alone.⁷⁹ Vijayesh Lal, the general secretary of the Evangelical Fellowship of India, called it a deliberate “assault against the nonprofit sector,” including the church.⁸⁰ In such a context, Christian contribution to developmental work in the society is often hindered.

John Dayal, a journalist and ardent advocate of human rights in India, observed that Christians are not in a good position, numerically or demographically, to play a decisive role in the political/electoral process in India. The states where Christians are a majority (Goa, Nagaland, Mizoram, Meghalaya, and Kerala) do not add up even up to 5 percent of the electoral seats in the national parliament. And in the larger states—especially in North India, where national elections in India are often won or lost—the Christian population is so low that they do not matter politically.⁸¹ Given that Christians are clearly a minority community, their participation in politics in India has to be reflected upon with that reality in mind.

The challenge for Indian Christian political involvement is compounded in recent years with the *Hindutva* agenda dominating the discussion. Dayal spoke of how the “emergence of Caste politics, the dominance of regional satraps with their own political parties, and the sheer realities of demographic distribution have . . . ensured a political marginalisation, and rapid disenfranchisement, of religious minorities, especially Muslims and Christians in India.”⁸² With its agenda of a unified homogenous India, the *Hindutva* politics privileges the majority, leaving the minority communities at a disadvantage. In a narrative where the majority is privileged, how a minority community like Christians can contribute effectively toward nation building is increasingly challenging.

the Northern Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jharkhand; and the New Life Fellowship Association (NLFA) in Mumbai. Vijaita Singh, “Government Suspends FCRA Clearance of Four Christian Groups,” *The Hindu* (September 2020), <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/government-suspends-fcra-clearance-of-4-christian-groups/article32535766.ece> (accessed 4 November 2021).

79 Luke Scorziell, “Indian Government Regulation Squeezes Christian Charities” *Christianity Today* (February 2021) <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2021/march/india-christian-charity-fcra-nationalist-modi-license.html> (Accessed on 04 November 2021).

80 Scorziell, “Indian Government Regulation Squeezes Christian Charities.”

81 John Dayal, “Church and the Political Reality of India,” in *Exclusion and Inclusion in Changing India: Papers from the 3rd SAIACS Consultation*, ed. Steven W. Guest, Varughese John, and Nigel Ajay Kumar (Bangalore: SAIACS Press, 2015), 124.

82 Dayal, “Church and the Political Reality of India,” 120.

The “Other” in Ecumenical Discussion

A key element in the IMC/CWME centenary process is to reflect on cooperation in mission, with particular attention to movements and actors outside the WCC constituencies. One such constituent is the Catholic Church. Though the initial reaction of the Catholic Church to ecumenical movement was negative, a change of attitude has been seen since the Second Vatican Council, as reflected in the participation official observers in the WCC. Vatican II was an attempt on the part of the Catholic Church to enter into dialogue with the “other” and the modern world. Dialogue was the key word of the council—dialogue with the world, with the churches, and with other religions.⁸³ *Nostra Aetate* (“In our Times”), Declaration on the Relation of the Church to non-Christian Religions, of the Second Vatican Council, published 28 October 1965, calls Catholics to recognize the value of non-Christian religions and the fellowship among followers of different faiths. It states that “other religions found everywhere try to counter the restlessness of the human heart, each in its own manner, by proposing ‘ways’, comprising teachings, rules of life, and sacred rites.” Thus, it continued, the “Catholic Church rejects nothing which is true and holy in these religions” (# 2).⁸⁴ With the renewed vision brought in by the Second Vatican Council, Suhas Perreira states that “[t]he Catholic Church in India understand the other religions as collaborators in its mission of establishing the kingdom of God.” As such, it is no more concerned with “comparing and contrasting various religions vis-a-vis Christians; instead, it focuses attention on the specific contribution which Christianity can make today to India and to humankind at large.”⁸⁵ Interfaith dialogue of the Catholic Church in India is spearheaded by the “Office for Dialogue and Ecumenism” of the Catholic Bishop’s Conference of India (CBCI), which is proactively involved in dialogue, particularly with Hindu organizations. Along with this, the Christian Ashram movement, led by Catholic priests and monks such as Monchanin,

83 John W. O’Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 158.

84 “Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, *Nostra Aetate*, October 28, 1965,” (Vatican Press, 1965), https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html (accessed 14 January 2022).

85 Suhas Pereira, *The Challenge of Vatican II for an Authentic Indian Catholic Church* (Zurich: LIT, 2020), 256.

Le Saux, and Bede Griffiths, has been instrumental in engaging in “spiritual dialogue with Hinduism.”⁸⁶

While the Catholic Church in India has done much toward interfaith engagements, Pereira laments that Vatican II’s vision of ecumenical relations with churches of other Christian traditions is far from being realized.⁸⁷ Kuncheria Pathil feels that the Catholic Church in India has consistently “ignored the presence of others,” which he said is “worse than condemning them as heretics and schismatics.”⁸⁸ The CBCI is not a member of the NCCI, with the two existing as parallel apex Christian organizations without engaging in any “serious joint-consultation at the national level.”⁸⁹ Thus, the need to go beyond participation in ecumenical discussions at “conferences, meetings, seminars and at ecumenical celebrations” and engage in “stronger and greater ecumenical collaboration on the part of the Indian Catholic Church” has been expressed.⁹⁰ This will require desire and effort from both sides.

A movement that runs parallel to the 20th-century ecumenical movement is the Pentecostal movement, which has revitalized Christian churches worldwide. In India, Pentecostal churches constitute an ever-growing segment. The regional consultation recognized the prospect of what this constituent can provide to discussions on Christian cooperation and collaboration in mission in India. Globally, the Pentecostal churches, though not in full participation in ecumenism, are gradually finding their place in fuller cooperation with other traditional churches with bilateral relationships.⁹¹ A similar trend can be observed in Indian Pentecostal engagement with ecumenism. Although the churches are not officially involved with the mainline ecumenical organizations in India, practices of ecumenicity are to be found. Michael Bergunder, for instance, spoke of a “practice of a basic ecumenism” in South India, whereby “Pentecostal evangelists” like D. G. D. Dhinakaran, John Solomon, and John Joseph are well accepted and afforded platforms to preach in the “established churches” (that is, mainline Protestant churches). In some cases,

86 Benedict Kanakappally, “The Catholic Church’s Encounter and Engagement with Hinduism: Evolving Attitudes and Perceptions” in *Handbook of Hinduism in Europe*, ed. Knut A. Jacobsen and Ferdinando Sardella (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill, 2020), 73.

87 Pereira, *The Challenge of Vatican II for an Authentic Indian Catholic Church*, 290–91.

88 Kuncheria Pathil, “Ecumenical Reality of the Indian Church” in *The Church in India in Search of a New identity*, ed. Kurian Kunnumpuram et al. (Bangalore: NBCLC, 1997), 288.

89 Pathil, “Ecumenical Reality of the Indian Church,” 288.

90 Pereira, *The Challenge of Vatican II for an Authentic Indian Catholic Church*, 291.

91 Marta Palma, “A Pentecostal Church in the Ecumenical Movement,” *The Ecumenical Review* 37:2 (April 1985), 223.

they even maintain “formal membership.”⁹² Alan Varghese also spoke of how “Pentecostal oriented institutions” or theological colleges in India like the Faith Theological Seminary, Menakala, and the New Theological College, Dehradun, have shown “ecumenical vision.”⁹³

The Pentecostal attitude toward ecumenism in India mirrors the larger evangelical attitude, which is often negative. The root of such attitude is the perception that ecumenical theology is liberal and given to religious pluralism. Of Indian Pentecostals, Geomen K. George states that the tendency is to “withdraw into a theological ghetto that recognizes no positive values in other religions.”⁹⁴ George, however, argued that the Pentecostals have much to offer to Indian theological discussions, in particular to the theology of dialogue. He suggested a theology of “pneumatological inclusivism” that “recognises the Spirit and the logos outside the Church creating, renewing, and sustaining the activity of God in the world.” Thus, George continued, “the question is not whether the Spirit is present among people of other faiths, but how one discerns the Spirit of God in the religious traditions of other people.”⁹⁵ George’s pneumatological inclusivism represents the growing openness among Pentecostal Christians in India to engage with the dialogical framework of ecumenical theology.

Many evangelicals in India see themselves as the “other” in the ecumenical movement, largely due to their disassociation with the mainline ecumenical movement represented by NCCI, YMCA, and others. In fact, ecumenical-evangelical relations in India started on the wrong footing. Its beginnings can be traced back to the 1950’s mobilization of evangelicals worldwide, which had an anti-ecumenical agenda. The Tambaram conference’s advocacy of a dialogical approach to other religions alarmed many evangelicals around the world. It was in this context that the mid-20th century saw the global mobilization of evangelical Christianity, which included the establishment of national evangelical associations in various parts of the world. One such national evangelical organization was the Evangelical Fellowship of India (EFI), formed in 1951. The formation of the EFI created awareness of evangelical identity in India. This means that Indian evangelical understanding

92 Michael Bergunder, *South Indian Pentecostal Movement in the Twentieth Century* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2015), 240.

93 Alan Varghese, *Pentecostal Churches and Ecumenism in India* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2015), 42–43.

94 Geomen K. George, *Religious Pluralism: Challenges for Pentecostalism in India* (Bangalore: Centre for Contemporary Christianity, 2006), 171–72.

95 *Ibid.*, 233.

of ecumenism was from the very beginning clouded by a negative sentiment toward ecumenism.⁹⁶

The tension between the two in India was further aggravated by local theological debate on religious pluralism. A number of Indian evangelical theologians took exception to the pluralism in the ecumenical theology of Samartha and others. Sumithra and Gnanakan, for instance, argued that Samartha failed to project Christ's distinctness in a pluralistic context of India.⁹⁷ In light of this debate, a dichotomy of liberal-ecumenicals and exclusivist-evangelicals has developed in India. However, recent years have seen changes, the most notable of which is the improved relationship between the NCCI and the EFI. Concerted efforts have been made by both toward mission cooperation to strengthen the churches over and against Hindu fanaticism and increasing persecution.

Ecumenical Vision in the *Missio Dei*

The ecumenical movement over the years has been characterized by a significant widening of its scope and agenda, which include issues such as interfaith dialogue; racism and ethnicity; science, technology and ecology; the Bible; spirituality; and women. On the one hand, in many respects, the movement has produced satisfying results in bringing about convergence and consensus among Christians. On the other hand, there is also much apprehension. For many, ecumenism is a negative term, equivalent to relativism and syncretism. Reflection on the Indian experience shows that there is still an ambivalence of ecumenical experiences in the churches. What is the vision for ecumenism in the *missio Dei*? How does it negotiate the apprehensions and complexities in interfaith and intra-faith relations? These are questions that continue to call for deeper reflection on Christian cooperation and collaboration in mission.

The concept of plurality in majority-minority discourse in India

Roger Gaikwad identifies an evolution in IMC/WCC's view on the nature of religion and the phenomenon of religious plurality—from conservative exclusivism to qualified exclusivism to Christo-centric inclusivism.⁹⁸ While

96 Das, "The Evangelical Movement in India," 24–25.

97 See Sumithra, *Christian Theologies from an Indian Perspective*; and Gnanakan, *The Pluralist Predicament*.

98 Roger Gaikwad, "Major Issues in a Dialogical-Pluralistic Paradigm for Inter-Religious Relationships" (DTh diss., Senate of Serampore College, 1995), 26.

ecumenical discussion elsewhere has been struggling to evolve a theological response to religious plurality, the church in India has been grappling with issues of religious freedom, communal harmony, poverty, and social and political exploitation in the context of the plurality of faiths practised by the people in India. The current trend of politics and faith in India is dominated by the majoritarian-minority discourse advocated by radical Hindu political organizations (like RSS, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, VHP, Vishva Hindu Parishad, and others). Their agenda on the unified homogeneous India leaves no space for tolerance of minority communities, which are labelled anti-nationals. With the separatist worldview comes the negative “othering”: demonizing the “other,” assimilating the “other,” and ostracizing the “other.” These metanarratives do not endorse plurality. The question in India now is how Christians can engage and dialogue with a majoritarian-exclusivist society. Furthermore, the interplay of politics and faith in India today is a threat to the rights of the minorities, since faith has been politicized. From this vantage point, Christian cooperation among themselves, and with other minority communities, for societal engagement is very important.

Caricatures in ecumenical identity in India

In India, the ecumenical movement is often seen as synonymous with certain churches or institutions. If Indian churches (so also the worldwide churches) look for a possibility for ecumenical identity, they first have to dismantle the ingrained hierarchies and create space for the “other” in the church and the society. How can we engage with the “other” in mission and ecumenical discussions? What is next for Catholic-Protestant relations, which in India have been cordial and yet with underlying tension? How does one negotiate the discontinuity trend adopted by the independent and charismatic churches in ecumenical discussion? What are the points of convergence between evangelicals and ecumenicals? Theological reflections in ecumenical theology in India also tend to focus on the dominant advaitic Hindu thoughts. This has failed to address the voices from the grassroots—Adivasis, Dalits, Tribals, women, the poor, and the undersides—which constitute the majority of Indian Christians. Where is the point of convergence for a common voice of Indian Christianity?

Mission as living together toward life

The narrative of Christian mission in India has been constructed in the language of conquest and colonization. The association of Christian mission with colonial power in the past—both real and perceived—has not been forgotten. As a result, many Hindus have interpreted Christian mission and

ecumenical discussions as an international conspiracy for Christian dominance. The challenge for Christian mission in India is to show what authentic Christian faith is about and how it can be practised in India. Inspiration can be drawn from the life of Mother Theresa, who became a living saint for the whole humanity, a mother to all, including her own Hindu and Muslim brothers and sisters. The value of the kingdom of God is to permeate society, like salt, and not through imposition, as is perceived when Christian missionaries are accused of forced conversion. Changing the negative perception of Christianity in India will take time, and will involve Christians speaking about and living out authentic Christian faith and engaging in dialogical relations with their neighbours of other faith, both formally and informally.

In recent years we have witnessed a surge in religious fundamentalism in many parts of the world. In places like India, the interplay of politics and faith and the notion of a homogenous culture, including religion, have challenged the paradigm of tolerance and plurality. This calls for a fresh reflection on Christian mission and cooperation, relation with other faiths, and engagement with society. It requires a critical reflection on, as in the words of Samuel Kobia, former general secretary of WCC, “the context [we] encounter, the witness and mission to which Christ is calling [us] here and now, and the shape [our] fellowship will take.”⁹⁹

99 “Ecumenism in the 21st century,” World Council of Churches, 17 November 2006, <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/ecumenism-in-the-21st-century> (accessed 05 November 2021).

CHAPTER 9

A Century of Ecumenical Partnerships in Mission: Perspectives from Kenya

Mary Kihuha

Introduction

This report stems from the study process of the Kenyan study center (St Paul's Study Centre) in response to the International Missionary Council (IMC) centenary celebrations. Recognizing the need to reflect on the ecumenical journey in mission and to commemorate the founding of the IMC in 1921, the centre's study process focused on the significance and impact of IMC and its successor, the WCC Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME), within the Kenyan context. Drawing on the experiences of the organizations that came together at Lake Mohonk in the United States, the report looks at the lessons learned by seeking to answer some pertinent questions. Key of these questions is why some regions (such as Africa), some ecclesiastical organizations (such as the African Instituted Churches [AICs]), and women were not represented, despite their presence in what were then the mission fields. The report seeks to develop fresh perspectives through reflection on cooperation in mission in the 21st century, with particular attention to movements and actors outside of the constituencies of the World Council of Churches (WCC), including the AICs, Pentecostalism, and women, as actors in the ecumenical endeavours.

The report also reflects on the impact of global geo-political issues, especially the First World War, on mission, cooperation in mission, and African responses to mission. Noting that different mission organizations responded differently to the Edinburgh 1910 World Missionary Conference, we seek to understand the impact of the same within the Kenyan context. The main result of the Edinburgh 1910 conference was the establishment of ecumenical organizations; however, despite the active role of Pentecostals in global mission, they did not participate in the development of ecumenical organizations. The report thus reflects on the continued impact of this for the Kenyan context. Other reflections seek to determine whether re-readings of the history from new perspectives provoke the need to re-write the narratives we

read and teach in history of mission within theological colleges and faculties of theology, especially mission theologies, methodologies and praxis.

The study centre

The St Paul's Study Centre was initially supposed to be the East Africa study centre, involving partners from the East African region. However, the COVID-19 pandemic made it impossible to cooperate with regional partners because of physical barriers and challenges with internet connection. The study became a Kenyan one, with its centre at St Paul's University. St Paul's University is a well deserving of this for a number of reasons. First, the university was born out of a long tradition of union schemes between mission agencies. Second, it has a long history of ecumenical cooperation and collaboration; a foundational stone can be seen at the university laid by the Rev. H. K. Binns at Frere Town on 28 July 1903, transferred to Limuru in January 1930. Third, St Paul's has maintained its ecumenical spirit, with five church traditions as partners governing the university. The university, through the faculty of theology, has an open ecumenical approach to learning. The motto is twofold: academic excellence and spiritual formation. The students in the Faculty of Theology come from different Christian traditions, including Orthodox and various Protestant groups, such as the African Instituted Churches.

People involved in the IMC centenary study

Esther Mombo is a professor in the Faculty of Theology at St Paul's University, where she was previously the deputy vice-chancellor (academics). She teaches church history and theologies from women's perspectives. Her research interests include the story of the church in East Africa, women's culture and religion, missiological issues, gender and patriarchy, and the Programme for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa (PROCMURA).

The Rev. Dr Okelloh Ogera is an ordained priest in the Anglican Church of Kenya. He holds a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Religious Studies from the Catholic University of Eastern Africa. He is currently the principal of Bishop Okullu College, a constituent college of the Great Lakes University of Kisumu (GLUK). He is also currently a visiting lecturer in the Faculty of Theology at St Paul's University.

Dr Paul Mwangi is a lecturer in the Department of Geography, History and Religious Studies at South Eastern Kenya University. His research interests are interdisciplinary: development as well as political, religious, ethical, anthropological, sociological, and gender approaches to contemporary challenges.

He holds a PhD, MA, and BA (hons) from the University of Nairobi and an MA in Theological Education from the London School of Theology.

Dr Mary Kihuha is a researcher and scholar within Pentecostal and evangelistic churches in Africa. Her research interests include the growth and expansion of Pentecostalism and gender relations within ecumenical relations. She is an adjunct faculty at St Paul's University and the Pan-African University. She holds a BBA, ThM, and PhD from St Paul's University, the Presbyterian University and Theological Seminary, and Yonsei University, respectively. She is a member of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians.

The Rev. Kenneth Buluku is a pastor in the Holy Spirit Church of East Africa (HSCEA) in Kibera informal settlements. As well as his pastoral work, he is a local partner with Church Mission Society Africa (CMSA) and the Organization of African Instituted Churches (AIC) in the Theology Department. He is currently a PhD student at St Paul's University.

The Revd Capt Lilian W. Karinga has served in the Anglican Church of Kenya as an ordained clergy since September 2007. She has a Higher Diploma in Theology, a BA in Theology with an emphasis in Missiology, and an MA in Church History. She has interest in history and missiology as she serves in the church.

Topics of the IMC Centenary study

The IMC was formed to perpetuate ecumenical efforts and activities toward Christian mission through a series of collaborative meetings. This report is an attempt to trace these efforts and activities in Africa and specifically in Kenya.

When the gospel was introduced to Africans, some of them began to notice the value of Christianity in Africa's changing terrain. To domesticate this value, Christianity was increasingly accepted and soon took root in the African soil. The topics we discuss demonstrate the efforts to give Christianity an African face and character. At the heart of Christian mission is the shared responsibility to further the gospel that transforms lives. This sharing underscores working together, albeit on different fronts, to ensure the growth and consolidation of Christianity in Africa. These activities are not directly related to IMC initiatives, but, as Christ responded to the disciples who were concerned about others who were driving out demons in Christ's name, "Whoever is not against you is for you" (Luke 9:50). The Kenyan activities presented in this paper demonstrate the robustness of Christian mission in Kenya and our desire to be part of the global Christian mission narrative as we celebrate the formation of IMC in 1921.

The Kenyan activities included in this study process are informed by the fact that while East Africa and Kenya were not part of the IMC in 1921, mission activities and collaboration were taking place. As stated above, we borrow the experience of the disciples of Jesus Christ when they were sent out for mission but found others on mission whom they did not know. The response from Jesus Christ is, in my view, very ecumenical, and it enjoins us on the global missionary stage to remember that “whoever is not against you is for you.” The topics demonstrate that though limitations and to some extent exclusion existed in the IMC in 1921, the mission field was inclusive, and we can celebrate mission cooperation and collaboration given the results on the ground and discussed in this report.

Our topics include (1) the exclusion of Pentecostal churches from ecumenical formations; (2) African Instituted Churches (AICs) and the development of ecumenism; (3) the exclusion of women in partnerships in mission; (4) lessons on partnerships in mission and ecumenicity from the East African Revival Movement; and (5) the First World War, African responses, and ecumenical partnerships in mission.

Our reflections propose re-reading mission history and collaboration activities from new perspectives. They provoke a need to re-write the narratives and present them as pointers to the achievements of the gospel of love when it is accepted by a people who engage in mission and collaboration from their local perspective. The topics highlight the key movements, actors, and networks that are outside the WCC constituencies but that are very relevant and prove to be pivotal points for developing fresh narratives from fresh perspectives. The topics covered demonstrate that it is possible to develop creative and constructive theologies that provide a foundation for new expressions of unity and cooperation in mission in the future.

Exclusion of Pentecostal Churches from Ecumenical Formations

Historically, classical Pentecostal churches have not been included in the growth and development of ecumenical organizations globally, nationally, and even locally. The classical Pentecostal churches in Kenya are those with links to early American Pentecostal churches, which stress faith, healing, prophesy, exorcism, *glossolalia* or speaking in tongues as evidence of baptism by the Holy Spirit, spontaneous prayers, exuberant liturgical expressions and emphasis on dreams and vision. Examples include the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM), Full Gospel Churches, Kenya Assemblies of God, (KAG),

Pentecostal Assemblies of God (PAG), the Pentecostal Evangelistic Fellowship of Africa (PEFA), and Christ is the Answer Ministries (CITAM).

Classical Pentecostals in Kenya, however, have been involved in a subtle ecumenism—one that is revivalist and spiritualist. This type of subtle ecumenism is not an ecumenical movement organized by denominational hierarchies or by way of formal theological conversations. Rather, the Spirit brings people together in worship. The Spiritualist and revivalist approach has led to what might be seen as an exclusion from mainstream ecumenism, which has had a strong social agenda and concerns. This subtle ecumenism is seen in events such as interdenominational *keshas* (overnight prayers/prayer vigils), joint prayers, pastors' alliances, crusades, and revival meetings. In the said events spiritual leaders from different Pentecostal churches come together in what is referred to as pastors' alliances. Pastors' alliances usually have a formal structure, consisting of a chairperson, secretary, and treasurer. These alliances operate in specific geographic locations, for example, the Limuru pastors' alliance.

In this alliance, pastors from different Pentecostal churches meet monthly for prayers, fellowship, and sharing of the word. During these meetings, the pastors organize how to congregate their members together in joint activities such as crusades or *keshas* (overnight prayers). They discuss the venue, which in most cases will be one of the churches represented in the alliance. The preachers are also selected amongst the pastor members of the alliance. In the actual event, members from the representative churches participate in worship together. To acknowledge the presence of the diverse churches, the moderator calls out a particular church, and members from that church are asked to stand to be appreciated by the others. The chairman of the pastors' alliance of Limuru confirmed that in this alliance they do not engage in the running of other churches.¹ In addition, there are no theological conversations or doctrinal engagements, but only a call to worship and fellowship together in Spirit.

The unity that has been accomplished is precisely that which was envisioned by the earlier generations of Pentecostals: setting aside denominational distinctions, creeds, and religious traditions and building relationship between people, while enabling them to remain within their own tradition. It will probably come as no surprise to discover that, notwithstanding their ecumenical vision, Pentecostals have not been substantial contributors to the formal ecumenical movement. Very few Pentecostal churches are members of the WCC and, although individual Pentecostals have participated in the

1 Conversation with the chairman of Limuru pastors' alliance, John Waichere, in November 2021.

work of its commissions (such as the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism and the Commission on Faith and Order), the movement as a whole has not joined in with such activities. Amos Yong, a Pentecostal theologian at the Fuller Theological Seminary, explains the spiritual ecumenism as understood by Pentecostals. He argues that the unity of the church is found not in outward forms of organization and agreement, but in the spiritual togetherness that genuine Christians experience through the Spirit in the name of Jesus.²

The tension between evangelistic sentiment and social concern has a long history even within the larger global ecumenism that saw the divide between the WCC and the Lausanne Movement. The evangelicals represented by Lausanne Conference in 1974 insisted that mission is not a social movement. This was a sharp critique of what they perceived as humanization and secularization of the ecumenical orientation, especially expressed in social participation and social gospel. This was expressed in three conferences that produced their theological and missiological themes: Lausanne Covenant (1974), Manila Manifesto (1989), Cape Town Commitment (2010). Billy Graham, who became the face of the Lausanne Movement, carried his evangelistic endeavours globally. In 1960, he visited Kenya for crusades. His crusades were ecumenical in nature, organized by various church leaders from Pentecostal churches. They did not pay attention to development agendas, such as building hospital or schools, but rather focused on salvation, healing, prophetic messages, and other miracles. In 1976, Billy Graham returned to Kenya and preached in a crusade in Nairobi with the title, “Be of good cheer.”³

This tension between the WCC and the Lausanne Movement trickled down to the Kenyan ecumenical landscape because of an inherited theology. The mainstream churches, on the one hand, responded to the WCC’s social concern, leading to various developmental efforts coming from these churches. However, even within this theological framework of mission and ecumenism, tensions arose. Bishop Gitari from the Anglican Church, for instance, attended both the Lausanne Movement and the WCC, highlighting the tension that existed in both divides. The Pentecostals and Evangelical movements, on the other hand, responded to the evangelical sentiment of the Lausanne, as confirmed by series of ecumenical crusades and revivals that

2 Amos Yong, “Pentecostalism Past, Present and Future,” *Pneuma Review* (Spring 2001) <http://pneumareview.com/pentecostalism-and-ecumenism-past-present-and-future-part-2-of-5/>.

3 Cicely Corry, “Bringing Real Peace to Kenya,” <https://billygraham.org/story/bringing-real-peace-to-kenya/> (accessed 16 December 2021).

hosted international evangelical figures such as Morris Cerullo, Reinhard Bonnke, and Benny Hinn. Interestingly, even in this evangelical divide, tensions continued to rise.

The relationship between the WCC and Pentecostals has been difficult, but the recent WCC leadership has emphasized the valuable contribution of Pentecostals' "subtle ecumenism" to the ecumenical movement. This recognition may be instructive in how the Pentecostals engage with the mainstream ecumenism in the future. In the Kenyan context, the deputy chairperson of the National Council of Churches in Kenya is from Pentecostal Evangelistic Fellowship of Africa (PEFA), a classical Pentecostal church, which highlights interesting possibilities for more elaborate Ecumenical engagements with Pentecostal churches in the future. Dr John Okinda has also been seen commenting on political events, which Pentecostals have previously avoided in favour of focusing on the gospel only.⁴

The expansion and growth of charismatic and neo-Pentecostal churches, especially in the global South, has created new challenges. These churches are generally referred to as historically younger Pentecostal independent and para-church movements, some of which are found within non-Pentecostal denominations. They have shown little or no interest in becoming part of ecumenical formations. Therefore, they have not been assimilated into the mainstream ecumenical movement, but rather remain within their spiritualist ecumenism.

African Instituted Churches (AICs) and the Development of Ecumenism

Cooperation, collaboration, and partnership in life are critical among the Africans. The coming of Western missionaries brought disharmony among Africans, with their culture disguised in religion. The African peoples who had been living communal lives found themselves in unfamiliar territory on converting to Christianity. The new converts were expected to leave behind their African way of life and become Christians and adapt a new way of life the new religion prescribed.⁵ To the missionaries who introduced Christianity to the Africans, to be Christian meant to be non-African in culture and outlook. A change of name, baptism, and membership in a new community

4 "Respect the Pulpit," <https://www.kenyanews.go.ke/tag/dr-john-okinda-the-bishop-of-pentecostal-evangelistic-fellowship-of-africa-pefa/> (accessed 18 January 2021).

5 J. Karanja, *Founding an African Faith: Kikuyu Anglican Christianity 1900-1945* (Nairobi: Uzima, 1999), 18.

illustrated the movement from the African culture and traditions. At first this seemed fine. Chinua Achebe,⁶ Ngugi wa Thiong'o,⁷ and other early African writers who described this situation demonstrated how the Africans were alienated from the African culture.

The best part of the story of AICs is that despite being alienated from the African culture, AIC members accepted the gospel and saw in it the formation of a new community and a new way of being African. In addition to accepting the gospel, the AICs also share in the task of evangelization and discipleship. In doing this, they collaborated in mission with other churches—though at times the other churches have taken time to recognize that if they are not against us, they are for us. From the outset, the AICs had to find a way to seek harmony among self, others, and God in this new-found faith. The first AIC in Kenya was founded before the 1921 meeting at Lake Mohonk. This was the Nomiya Luo Church in 1914. This church and others that followed came into being in reaction against missionary teaching, which they saw as an onslaught against African culture. Scholars have observed that the translation of the Bible led to the African understanding of the Hebrew scriptures that were closer to the African cultures. From the middle of the 1920s onward, a number of AICs were founded, some out of the Bible teaching on the Holy Spirit among the Quakers in 1927. The Quaker mission was challenged when members were filled with the Holy Spirit and exhibited emotionalism the missionaries could not accept, leading to a break. At the same time, in Central province, currently referred to as Mount Kenya Region, controversy over female circumcision led to the establishment of other churches. In hindsight, the issue was not that Africans were keen to practice female circumcision; rather, the practice became a peg on which the Africans could hang all their anger towards colonialism.

These churches collaborated and partnered in their challenge of mission and colonial oppression. They were not included in ongoing ecumenical discussions that began in 1907. The reason for this is that they were opposed to the structure of mission churches on the issue of race. The AICs were seen as clandestine movements theologically and politically. Later historians characterized them inroad areas (perceived or mapped to be receptive to the gospel) of African, Ethiopian, and independent churches that sought a divine mandate; hence, historians frequently regard them as being part of the African nationalist movement. Spiritual, Aladura, Zionist, Apostolic, Roho, and Akurinu

6 Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (London: William Heinemann, 1958).

7 Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (London: Heinemann, n.d.).

churches were close to African culture and inspired by the gifts and power of the Holy Spirit, and often followed strict laws of ritual purity. The African Pentecostal indigenous churches placed a high value on African culture.

AICs emphasize the Bible to include African cultural norms into their modes of worship, theology, and practice, albeit to varying degrees. Consequently, the AICs are perceived as authentic African expressions of Christianity. In this regard, AICs are good case studies for acculturation. The centrality of the African ethos in AICs helps Africans to survive in the modern world without losing their African culture while upholding the gospel. Besides being places of worship, AICs are communities of people who are concerned about each other's wellbeing, whether they participate regularly in religious activities or only when experiencing a particular misfortune.

Partnership and collaboration were part of African notions of community and social structure, helping their members to achieve social and moral progress. AICs desire that African people and societies be healthy and productive. In some cases, AICs have been politically active, working to unite and empower African people against external domination. These activities among the AICs demonstrate that they are strong partners and collaborators in Christian mission and that their narrative is significant.

From historical and contemporary perspectives, the AICs constitute a renewal movement that has sought to make Christianity more relevant to the African context. With the emergence of the AICs, the African worldview and African spirituality found fulfilment in a Christian way. The uniqueness of the AICs is found in the prominent use of traditional African beliefs, forms, symbols and practices, and the liberal interpretation of the Bible to respond to issues such as those posed by the spirit world in the African worldview. They are also noted for their emphasis on the Holy Spirit. This historical and spiritual significance of the AICs is to be found in their having pioneered the movement to contextualize Christianity in Africa by offering an expression for the African spiritual quest for meaning in a Christian way. In this way, AICs are a work in progress, demonstrating the significance of individual and institutional initiatives among Christians to respond to the contextual realities of the day.

As well as their collaboration and partnership around the challenges of the Western missionary onslaught against African communal life, AICs also partnered and collaborated ecumenically on the continent. They founded the Organization of African Instituted Churches (OAIC) in 1978, more than 15 years after the theological and political independence. Led by the Orthodox, the organization was founded in Cairo, Egypt. The aim of OAIC was to create a forum where AICs would meet together in fellowship and equip each other

to preach the gospel holistically. The OAIC office is registered in the Republic of Kenya under the Society Act and operates in seven African regions: East Africa (based in Kampala, Uganda), Southern Africa (based in Gaborone, Botswana), Madagascar, the Democratic Republic of Congo, West Africa francophone, West Africa anglophone (based in Accra, Ghana), and Nigeria. These regions are represented in the governing body (the General Assembly) and in the Executive Committee, which meets annually.

Today OAIC is an associate member of All Africa Conference of Churches and is recognized as an ecumenical body in working relationship with the WCC. It is also a member of the World Conference of Religions for Peace. At the country level, OAIC works through chapters. Each chapter bears its countries' name and is run by a general secretary as its chief executive officer. Programmes at the international office are echoed at regional and chapter levels in each country.

Exclusion of Women in Partnerships in Mission

Historically, mission has been seen as something only men do. “Missionary” as a term is a male noun to denote a male evangelist, male action, and male spheres of action. This was evidenced by the work that was allocated to women in the mission work, which involved children’s ministry, hospitality, visitations, and compassion—among others that are considered fit for women and, in effect, not mission enough. The missionaries were coming from a cultural context that had strong gender-segregated roles. As a result, it was not surprising the missionaries were men, and women took subordinate positions. These gendered notions of mission work shaped the meaning of “mission” as what males did in the mission fields.

However, the gendered notion of mission work did not mean that women were passive in mission. They were heavily engaged in mission work, but they were only seen as adjuncts to men: “They were systematically written out of the historical and anthropological records.”⁸ The work of mission was defined through the notion of domesticity, with women trained to do mission in the private sphere of the home. Even in the churches, the women’s mission was in the realm of social work and not in the leadership of the church. This resulted in the formation of large women’s organizations that provided all the support for the church. They did the ministry for the children, the youth, the adults, and the elderly. They provided for the education of the vulnerable and

8 Mary Kihuha, *A Theology of Inclusion: Women and Leadership within Pentecostal churches in Kenya* (Unpublished PhD Thesis, Yonsei University Seoul South Korea, 2019), 38.

those at the margins of society. While women's organizations did not work ecumenically, mission work on denominational levels was very strong. These organizations continued to operate as churches within churches with a structure parallel to the main church, which was led by men.

In Kenya especially, despite women's involvement in missionary work, they remained faceless and nameless at the centre of the church. Women were invisible in the ecumenical discussions. These discussions among missionary agencies began as a result of rivalry over geographical spaces and the people in those areas. The ecumenical discussions culminated in the Kikuyu conference of 1913. The discussions before 1913 saw no female representation in the dialogues. The Kikuyu conference of 1913 set the space for collaboration of mission agencies, but women were discussed rather than speaking for themselves. The women attended the meeting as spouses, and were only allowed in worship services, while the men discussed issues around collaboration and partnership. Among the things they discussed was ecumenical theological education. This was not realized until 1955, when St Paul's United Theological Education was established in partnership initially with Anglicans, Presbyterians, and Methodists and later joined by the Reformed Church of East Africa and the National Council of Churches.

Women were excluded from theological education in many denominations, and even those that allowed women did not do so before the 1940s. In 1943 Rasoah Mutua was admitted to Friends Theological college as the first and only woman in a class of men, mainly because of the nature of the Religious Society of Friends. Known as a religious group that emphasizes the "priesthood of all believers," this church had a non-hierarchical approach without ordained ministers—leading to equal participation among the adherents. When Rasoah Mutua completed her theological studies, she was not given the same leadership position as the other men but was led to work in the Quaker women's organization. Women who went to Theological College struggled with what they would become apart from being wives of the men who were training to be clergy.

The first women were admitted to St Paul's United Theological College in 1977. The first Deaconess Mildren Owani was a refugee from Uganda during the period of Idi Amin. Her experiences as the only woman at the faculty were not easy, and she struggled with being alone and suffered various forms of harassment. She was later joined by the Rev. Dr Nyambura Njoroge, a Kenyan woman, who also described the theological education as a patriarchal one that did not take the context into account and did not prepare them for

the parish ministry they were to later to join.⁹ Over the years, more women have studied and graduated with theological degrees, and women have now also joined the staff of the institution.

Against this backdrop, women have been underrepresented in the decision-making processes of churches and society around the world. This is evidenced by the underrepresentation of women in places of power within church leadership. The mission churches have had women theologically trained and ordained from the 1980s. However, it took time for women to ascend to senior church leadership. The Methodist Church was the first to elect women to the position of senior church leaders, when Catherine Mutua and Alice Mutuma were appointed. This was followed by the Anglican Church's consecration of the Rt. Rev. Emily Onyango and the Rt. Rev. Rose Okeno in 2021. These appointments and consecrations have had their own dynamics, and women are slowly accessing positions in church leadership. For women, partnership and collaboration have been seen in the women's organizations that have operated denominationally and now across divides through the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians.

Following a decision of the central committee of the WCC, a decade "In solidarity with women" was launched in 1988. The objective was to address churches and women at the local level to challenge structures and to respond to the issues in the society around them. The decade concluded in 1998 in Harare, after which a 20th anniversary was celebrated of the culmination of the ecumenical decade of churches solidarity with women in Kingston, Jamaica in October 2018 to reflect the achievements and challenges of building a just community.

Notable for this report and study was the launch of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians in Legon, Ghana, by a group of 70 women under the leadership of Prof. Mercy Oduyoye in 1989—one year after the start of the decade of solidarity with women. The other founding members included Dr Musimbi Kanyoro, Nyambura Njoroge, and Emily Onyango among others from Kenya and other countries. The official launch of the circle was the culmination of a decade of work behind the scenes, after Mercy Amba Oduyoye realized that while women were the majority in faith-based organizations, they were also absent in religious leadership and theological training. Religious beliefs and texts were often interpreted and used to buttress and legitimize women's marginalization. Prof. Mercy Oduyoye set out

9 Esther Mombo and Heleen Joziase, "From the Pew to the Pulpit: Engendering the Pulpit through Teaching 'African Women's Theologies,'" in *Men in the pulpit, Women in the Pew? Addressing Gender Inequality in Africa*, eds. H. Jurgens Hendriks, Elna Mouton, Len Hansen, and Elisabet le Roux (Stellenbosch: Sun Press, 2012), 184–94.

to find and mobilize African women who had studied or were interested in studying religion (all religions) to organize themselves with the deliberate goal to infiltrate and transform the religious space into one that embraced gender justice.¹⁰

The circle was thus founded as a multireligious pan-African organization, different from other organizations such as the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT), the Ecumenical Association of African Theologians (EAAT), and the Conference of African Theological Institutions (CATI). The circle is different from the other ecumenical bodies whose membership is predominantly Christian, as members include Muslim women and those from indigenous African religions. The circle aimed at transforming and empowering women in all religious traditions (Islam, Christianity, and African Indigenous Religions/Culture) and through re-interpreting faith resources. Its main activities were mentoring, training women to become advocates of gender justice, empowering women through research and publication, and training them to lead in the academia, faith-based organizations, and society in general.

In its academic work, the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians has been tremendous in bringing the voices of women from African content within ecumenical discourse—as evidenced in *The Ecumenical Review* of July 2001. Under the theme of “Transforming Ecumenism in Africa in the 21st Century,” several articles paid homage to the contribution of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians in ecumenical formation in Africa.

The collaboration and partnership of the circle is among women whose aim is to change the religious landscape through theological education and through epistemological inclusion in the wider context. They are part of the wider community of women who continue to change the religious landscape through starting churches and taking key leadership roles. Most of these women are in the Pentecostal and ministries landscape of the story of the church. These women do not fall within the patriarchal spectrum of women’s marital status. Bishop Margaret Wanjiru and Rev. Teresia Wairimu, for example, have defied odds to start ministries that have grown into large churches. They would not be able to fit into any of the women’s organizations of mainstream churches, but they command authority in their own churches. They provide role modelling for single mothers and or separated and divorced

10 Rachel NyaGondwe Fiedler, *A History of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians (1989–2007)* (Malawi: Mzuni Press, 2017). See also M. A. Oduyoye and M. Kanyoro eds., *The Will to Arise: Women, Tradition, and the Church in Africa* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1992); and I. Phiri and S. Nadar eds., *African Women, Religion, and Health. Essays in Honor of Mercy Amba Ewudziwa Oduyoye* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster, 2006).

women. The status within which they are defined is not a barrier to mobilize and preach the gospel of liberation. Their status is a statement that God has accepted them and called them to ministry. They have attracted a large following, as a great many people identify with their status and their ministry.

Partnerships and Collaboration in Mission: The East African Revival Movement

Introducing the East African Revival Movement

No other movement shaped Christianity in East Africa in the 20th century like the East African Revival Movement. One of the key features of revival was its insistence on unity, reconciliation, and cooperation across the board. The movement challenged race, patriarchy, and gender through preaching salvation and its key theme. Within the colonial context, race, ethnicity, patriarchy, and gender were entrenched within the systems of exclusion and discrimination. While the East African Revival may not have been a direct result of the IMC, it nevertheless presents valuable lessons on partnerships in mission as well as ecumenicity. It grew out of a movement in the church in East Africa during the late 1920s and 1930s, and its adherents are referred to as the “Balokole” (Luganda for “saved ones”) and the “Tukutendereza” (Luganda for “let us praise God”). The movement started in Rwanda and spread to other countries of the region. It arrived in Kenya in 1938 in Maseno. The special features of East African Revival Movement were personal salvation and public confession of sin. These requisite elements disturbed members of the nominal church at the time, especially the missionary fraternity who feared that its exclusivist nature would cause a schism within the African church. The revival movement spoke about the “oneness in Christ” where there was “neither male nor female;” the revival message was truly refreshing.

In many ways, therefore, the revival was ahead of its time; its egalitarian message clearly negated the principle of subjugation of one people by another, in whatever form. Its message reinforced the aspirations of the nationalists for freedom and equality; it sharpened the question of cultural domination associated with colonialism in general, and with the missionary endeavour in particular. Revivalism appropriates and interprets Christianity in a manner relevant to everyday Christian.

This is evidenced by the influence of the Keswick movement to the theopraxis of mission and ecumenism of the East African Revival Movement.¹¹

11 Johannes J. Knoetze and Robinson K. Mwangi, “A Socio-Historical Background to the

Drawing on this historical understanding of the revival, this section of the report reflects on the lessons to be learned for contemporary and future Christian engagement in mission and ecumenism—particularly inter-church cooperation in mission work, which also leads to healthy ecumenicity. Recognizing that members of revival were instrumental in establishing unity discussions in East African countries such as Kenya, Uganda, and Rwanda, this section also reflects on how the movement promoted unity and collaboration among Christians for mission and what this portends for contemporary Christianity in Kenya. However, the East African Revival Movement has not kept the momentum and passion for ecumenicity to be a contemporary model. This section will evaluate the revival movement and pick the lessons for ecumenicity in the 21st century. The section highlights the indigenous nature of the movement, which in turn affected the movement's praxis of ecumenicity and mission.

Indigeneity of the East African Revival Movement

The refusal of the revival to be schismatic enabled it to have many features of *ecclesiolae in ecclesia*. This was a positive thing, especially for the church, as many people joined the church due to the evangelistic endeavours of the revival brethren. The revival was firmly anti-clericalism, thus enabling Africans in churches dominated by Europeans to exercise leadership and to show that they could set and maintain higher moral and spiritual standards than their European counterparts, who were leading the churches. Over and against the centralized episcopal structures within Anglicanism, the revival movement reproduced the indigenous structure of the church, consisting of living Christian community groups clustered around some natural heads of a household. These leaders were known as the team or team of leaders and consisted of senior members of the revival. The team was made up of both male and female members, and married couples were often elevated to this position together.

A key feature of the revival was its strong focus on fellowship with other converts. Whereas these fellowships were conducted within the existing church structures, they had the hallmarks of separate entities. The fellowships were ecumenical in nature and were meant to strengthen the members of the revival movement in their faith. Structured opportunities for fellowship facilitated the ongoing process of identity reorientation and provided a safe, embracing environment in which new converts could receive spiritual and

practical support from other members of the revival.¹² The fellowships were a continuation of the African philosophy of ubuntu, as John Mbiti puts it succinctly, “the individual does not and cannot exist alone except corporately . . . He is simply part of the whole. The community must, therefore, make, create or produce the individual; for the individual depends on the corporate group.”¹³ On the ecumenical nature of the fellowships of the revival movement, Max Warren concludes that the members of the revival had an evident love for and fellowship with each other, “quite regardless of class, station or race, it gave one an altogether deeper and fuller conception of ‘fellowship’ than one had ever dreamed of before—the very essence of Koinonia, not merely in theory but in practice.”¹⁴

Mission as walking in the light

From the very beginning, the revival’s doctrinal emphasis continued much the same with its roots in the Keswick Convention in England and the evangelical awakening. The “blood of Jesus” was a prominent theme in their sermons and hymns. There was much preparation leading up to the East African Revival Movement,¹⁵ which had a huge impact on how the revival understood mission—that is, first and foremost in a practical sense. For the revivalists, they had to live holy lives worthy of emulation by non-believers. Wright succinctly observes that this moral imperative had practical dimensions explicated by missional ethics of practical holiness because “being holy meant living lives of integrity, justice, and compassion in every area of life.”¹⁶ Thus, the revivalists, as the people of God who are called to be a light to the nations, ought to walk in the light in their transformed lives as a holy people. The understanding of walking in the light as a missiological framework entails features such as biblical exposition, the centrality of Christ in the lives of believers, and public testimony and confession of both sin and faith. The revival thus seems not only to have contextualized much of its inheritance

12 Daewon Moon, “Testimony and Fellowship for a Continuous Conversion in the East African Revival,” *Studies in World Christianity*, 6 July 2018, <https://doi.org/10.3366/swc.2018.0218>.

13 John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (London: Heinemann, 1970).

14 Max Warren, *Revival: An Inquiry* (London: SCM Press, 1954), 50–51.

15 Richard Gehman, “The East African Revival,” *East African Journal of Evangelical Theology* 5:1 (1986), 36–55.

16 C. J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narrative* (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2006), 373.

from Keswick theology, but also to have gone a notch higher in its expression of practical holiness.¹⁷

The revival insisted from its origins that the membership in the movement be non-denominational, non-sexist, and non-racist, among other polarizing dimensions.¹⁸ Every member, irrespective of their background, was seen as having an equal say in the affairs of the movement. This is anchored in the ethos of Joe Church, one of the founding leaders who practised the team ministry approach and believed firmly in the radical equality of all people as sinners saved by the grace of Christ. Joe Church was European but did not espouse the paternalistic tendencies most common with his compatriots. The idea of bringing people of diverse backgrounds together shaped the *modus operandi* of the movement, as espoused in their mission and outreach activities. The unifying factor was that all were under the umbrella of Jesus Christ. The spiritual holiness of the Keswick movement helped Joe Church to accept fellow African revivalists as equals, something that was unheard of at the time.¹⁹ This in turn influenced the theology of the East African Revival Movement to accept fellow revivalists, irrespective of race or denomination.

Reconciliation occurred between those estranged: missionaries and Africans alike. Throughout the missional work of the revival, evangelistic efforts were always carried out by teams. Dr Church, for example, often insisted that Africans accompany him in his preaching engagements. While this espoused African communalism, it was also practical in the sense of being accountable and “walking in the light.” Through the revival teams and the preaching of the brethren, the revival message and work spread to Kenya, Tanzania, southern Sudan, and Congo. The use of teams to spread the gospel has been characteristic of the revival to this day. Itinerant preachers from different denominations walk side by side preaching salvation, a marked departure from missionaries who preached denominationalism. Dr Church was even invited to England accompanied by African Balokole (“saved ones”) to preach the gospel. Although the revival begun within the Anglican Church in Uganda and Rwanda, it spread across denominational boundaries, attracting members from other churches. As the revival message was shared by the brethren across denominational boundaries, members of the Methodist, Presbyterian,

17 Johannes J. Knoetze and Robinson K. Mwangi, “A Socio-Historical Background to the Keswick Theology in East African Revival Movement as ‘Walking in the Light’ Perspectives from Kenya,” *Missionalia* 46-3 (27 June 2019): 389–405, <https://doi.org/10.7832/46-3-283>.

18 Julius Gathogo, “Retracing Diakonia in East African Revival Movement,” in *Evangelism and Diakonia in Context* (2018), <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1ddcrp0.26>.

19 Collin Reed, *Walking in the Light: Reflections on the East African Revival and Its Link to Australia* (Victoria, Australia: Acorn Press, 2007), 18.

Moravian, Lutheran, and Anglican churches were brought together in bonds of love.²⁰ Denominational barriers crumbled, seeming less significant than the unity they found in Christ. Hostility between the races also broke down. Even during the ecumenical conventions hosted by the East African Revival Movement, church leaders from different denominations and races shared the same pulpit, something that would not have been allowed ecclesiastically.

Practical ecumenicity

The East African Revival Movement developed a new brotherhood replacing the traditional African communalism with a new form of communalism. This was evidenced in the leadership structure of the movement which emphasized the involvement of the laity as opposed to the rigid clericalism of the church.²¹ The revival reproduced the indigenous structure of the church, consisting of living Christian community groups clustered around their leadership. What emerged was a lived ecumenicity in the sense that different members from different churches, ethnic communities, and even races come together to support one of their own in funerals, weddings, etc. The essence of this was that every member was deemed to belong to the family of God. This practical ecumenicity depends heavily on African communalism. One could imagine Mbiti was talking of the East African Revival Movement when he said,

Only in terms of other people does the individual become conscious of his own being, his own duties, his privileges, and responsibilities towards himself and towards other people. When he suffers, he does not suffer alone but with the corporate group; when he rejoices, he rejoices not alone but with his kinsmen, his neighbours, and his relatives whether living or dead. When he gets married, he is not alone, neither does the wife “belong” to him alone . . . Whatever happens to the individual happens to the whole group and whatever happens to the whole group happens to the individual.²²

Thus, one of the gifts of the East African Revival Movement to the world is its practical ecumenicity, which focuses not on theological debates but rather on unity as the body of Christ. In this new ecumenicity, a new kinship

20 Gehman, “The East African Revival.”

21 It needs to be pointed out that the Church in Uganda, where the East African Revival Movement was incubated before expanding to other parts of East Africa, was highly clerical. It had even incorporated the traditional chiefs into the hierarchy of the church, and the masses were expected to be subservient.

22 John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (London: Heinemann, 1969), 171.

structure emerged, replacing African traditional communalism with a new form of communalism based on one's faith in Jesus Christ.

The First World War, African Responses, and Ecumenical Partnerships in Mission

The First World War fought among European nations brought to the fore the divisions among European mission agencies. This highlighted the fact that the cross followed the flag. During and after the war, for example, mission stations in East Africa were abandoned as the missionaries were either conscripted into military service or taken as prisoners of war.²³ In addition, financial resources from the home committees were also restricted due to the demands of war, adversely affecting mission work. With the defeat of the Germans, German territories were taken over by countries that had formed the allied forces. As a consequence, some of the German mission stations were taken over by mission societies from the allied countries. This scenario presented Africans the opportunity that had hitherto been denied to them: of taking over and leading the efforts of evangelization. "Without foreign financial assistance, Africans who had collaborated with missionaries, though in inferior capacities, were able to further the Christian cause according to their thinking and understanding of the Gospel."²⁴ With the absence of missionaries from the mission stations, African Christians responded to the situation by filling the leadership vacuum and ensuring that the fledgling churches did not just dissipate but thrived in a way that surprised even the missionaries on their return.

The churches that were best placed to survive the demands of World War were those that had, from the beginning, deliberately attempted to train African clergy.²⁵ In this sense, the Anglicans and Catholics made some considerable progress in their attempts to develop African leaders by the start of the war. However, even where missionaries had not sought to train African leadership, leaders emerged, ensuring there was no loss. This was exemplified by the Usambara–Digo synod of the Lutheran Church in Tanzania.²⁶

23 Richard V. Pierard, "Allied Treatment of Protestant Missionaries in German East Africa in World War I," *The Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology* 12:1 (1993), 4–7, at 7.

24 Michael Kpughe Lang, "World War One in Africa: Implications on Christian Missions," *Contemporary Journal of African Studies* 4:2 (2017), DOI: 10.4314/contjas.v4i2.2.

25 M. Louise Pirouet, "East African Christians and World War I," *The Journal of African History* 19:1 (1978), 117–30.

26 Ibid.

Establishment of African missions

To the African people, the First World War highlighted the fact that missionization was concomitant to colonization. Africans realized that missionaries were driven by the same interests as colonizers—that is, the extension of European ideologies and interests. This led the Africans to claim that there was no difference between the missionary and the colonizer. What was key for the Africans is that they began to question the authenticity of European Christianity. They wondered how the Europeans could slaughter each other in that manner while they were all supposedly Christians. Christianity had been touted as a “better” religion to indigenous African religions and European civilization as superior to that of the Africans. For the Africans, the Europeans fighting each other were a spectacle that had never been seen before.²⁷

Africans were recruited, often forcibly, as carrier corps to support armies whose supplies could not be moved by conventional methods, such as road, rail, or animals. Many other Africans joined the fighting, conscripted as soldiers. Britain for example had an African regiment known as the Kings African Rifles. Many of them were able to interact with other Africans from other parts of the continent and learned valuable lessons on how to engage the Europeans. For example, the war taught Africans that the Europeans could be challenged: particularly when the Africans were encouraged to kill “the ‘enemy’ white man, who hitherto had belonged to a clan that, by virtue of the colour of their skin, were held to be sacrosanct.”²⁸

As a result, movements of revolt soon emerged across Africa. Some of these movements had religious undertones.²⁹ In the Nyanza region of Western Kenya, the Mumbo cult, for example, grew rapidly during the war years and rejected Christianity, claiming that Europeans were the enemies of African people.³⁰ Whereas Mumboism was a quasi-religious, cultural, and political movement, it inspired Africans to form their own Christian churches. One of the very first African established missions was the Nomiya Luo Mission³¹

27 Michael Crowder, “The First World War and Its Consequences in Africa,” UNESCO, 5 October 2018, <https://en.unesco.org/courier/news-views-online/first-world-war-and-its-consequences-africa>.

28 Crowder, “The First World War and Its Consequences in Africa.”

29 These were movements such as John Chilembwe’s rising in Nyasaland (now Malawi) of January 1915, which had strong Christian undertones, while the Kitawala Watchtower movement in the Rhodesia preached the imminence of the end of the world and disobedience to constituted authorities. Others included Garrick Braide’s movement in the Niger Delta.

30 Crowder, “The First World War and Its Consequences in Africa.”

31 *Nomiya* is a Luo word which means “I was given.” While it may not have been directly

established by Yohana Owalo, and later the Roho (Spirit) Movement begun by Jeremiah Otanga, an Anglican Catechist and made famous during the war years by Alfayo Odongo Mango.³² Both of these movements originated from among the Luo community of Western Kenya, before spreading or inspiring similar movements in other parts of the country. What is clear, however, is that these and others like them were movements of revolt against European political, cultural, and religious domination.

Ecumenical partnerships in mission (African, European)

Missionary disunity was a scandal to the gospel. European missionaries in Africa had been propagating a form of Christianity with denominational undercurrents. The need for cooperation had been highlighted, leading to the 1910 World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh. Whereas the conference had set forth the vision of world-wide Protestant partnerships in mission, the outbreak of the World War I in 1914 pitted Christians against Christians and shattered this ecumenical dream.

Perhaps the war served as a harsh reminder that nationalism did not serve the interests of missionary endeavours. The behind the scenes work of the Continuation Committee headed by John R. Mott,³³ who had convened and presided over the Edinburgh Conference, bore fruit with the establishment of the IMC in 1921.³⁴ In Kenya, missionaries moved to formalize partnerships that had been initiated before the war. The unity conferences that had been held previously were revived, but sadly German missions withdrew their participation, a sign of the political realities occasioned by the war.

The missionaries moved to form an Alliance of Mission Societies, which had lasting impact on not only the Kenyan ecclesiastical scene, but the social scene as well. This alliance was able to bring together several mission societies, through which they brought resources together to establish schools and training colleges.

influenced by the First World War, it had become an exemplification of the fact that Africans had the capability to establish their own missions.

32 For an in-depth history of this movement, see Fatton C. Hoehler-Fatton, *Women of Fire and Spirit: History, Faith and Gender in Roho Religion in Western Kenya* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

33 Mott was a leading figure in the ecumenical efforts of the early 20th century. Founder of the Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions and the World's Student Christian Federation and a top official in the YMCA, he travelled throughout the world promoting Christian cooperation.

34 Howard C. Hopkins, *John R. Mott 1865–1955* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1979).

CHAPTER 10

Perspective(s) from South(ern) African Theologians on the Work and Involvement of the International Missionary Council over the Last 100 Years within the Church in South(ern) Africa

Hannes Knoetze

Introduction

It is with much gratitude to the trinitarian God for his graceful revelations, but also with deep awareness of the brokenness of the church, that this report from Southern Africa is written. The church can only participate in world history as a servant, in the footsteps of the servant king Jesus Christ, witnessing about the trinitarian God who loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not die but have eternal life (John 3:16). God did not send his Son to judge the world, but to be its Saviour (John 3:17); therefore, the work of the International Missionary Council (IMC), the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME), and the World Council of Churches (WCC) may never be to judge the world but to participate in God's actions to save the world. And this is what this report is about, it seeks to witness about the privilege of participating in the *missio Dei*.

Centre/Study Group

The Faculty of Theology and Religion at the University of Pretoria is the largest of its kind in South(ern) Africa and, as a *faculty*, also the oldest (there are seminaries that are older, but not faculties). The faculty dates back to 1917 when the Presbyterian Church and the Netherdutch Reformed Church of Africa (NHKA) began training their ministers at the University of Pretoria. The Presbyterian Church withdrew in the 1920s. In 1937, the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) joined but formed a separate section in the faculty. Up to 1999, the Faculty of Theology had two completely independent sections (A and B) for the two different churches (DRC and NHKA). These two sections

merged on 1 January 2000 and the faculty became a multi-ecclesial faculty, comprising of the two traditional partners. The Uniting Presbyterian Church (UPCSA) joined the faculty in 2002, and the latest partner is the Uniting Reformed Church (URCSA) which joined in 2012. Currently, the faculty is an ecumenical faculty where students from all denominations are welcomed.

In relation to the study group, the faculty sent invitations to all three of the other faculties in South Africa, as well as to individuals at other universities, networks, and associations. This included people in Botswana and Zimbabwe. Unfortunately, it seemed as if there were only a few individuals within all these organizations that are still doing research on the work of the IMC and the CWME. The COVID-19 pandemic has also played a role in getting people together for some collaborative research and a planned conference was cancelled. People who were invited or who have participated in this report, either through their earlier writings or oral inputs, include Prof. Jerry Pillay (University of Pretoria), Prof. Nico Botha (Emeritus University of South Africa), Prof. Tinyiko Maluleke (University of Pretoria), Prof. Piet Meiring (Emeritus University of Pretoria), Prof. Hannes Knoetze (University of Pretoria), Prof. Nelus Niemandt (Huguenote College Wellington), Prof. Daryl Balia (North-West University), Dr Gustav Claassen (General Secretary Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa), Prof. John de Gruchy (Emeritus University of Cape Town), Dr Eugene Barron (University of the Free State), Dr Prince Dibeele (Kgologano College Botswana), and Prof. James Amanze (University of Botswana).

Topics at the Conferences and Their Influence on Southern Africa

The research method used in this report was to read, as much as possible, Africa and African scholars to obtain a broad overview of the different perspectives and comments of those attending/studying the World Missionary conferences. The aim was to establish what they viewed as important statements or decisions, and then see how and whether these were applied or not applied in the South(ern) African context within the specific time. The sources reviewed include books such as *Transforming Mission* (David J. Bosch) and *Een liggaam baie lede*¹ (Dionne Crafford and Gustav Gous), as well as scholarly articles mainly by Nico Botha, who also conducted his PhD

1 Dionne Crafford and Gustav Gous, eds, *Een liggaam—baie lede: Die kerk se ekumeniese roeping wêreldwyd en in Suid Afrika* (Lynnwoodrif, Suid Afrika: Verba Vitae, 1993).

on the different mission conferences, but also by Tinyiko Maluleke, Hannes Knoetze, Piet Meiring, Jerry Pillay, Nelus Niemandt, and others.

Since the report was compiled by one researcher, it has definite limitations, and in no way is it presented as complete. Not all conferences are mentioned/studied due to the lack of available reports or feedback from Southern Africa scholars, although the content of the conferences could have been relevant. The working method in this section is to provide a South(ern) African perspective on the different World Missionary conferences.

Edinburgh, 1910

At the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910, the dream of a first worldwide mission conference came true when 1355 participants/Christians (not churches) came together. Only 17 of the 1355 participants were from the younger churches in India and China. No native Africans were present, but from the DRC in South Africa, Prof. G. I. Marais and missionaries Henry Gonin and Rev. B. P. J. Marchand were present.

David J. Bosch² indicates that a major concern at Edinburgh was the lack of missionary passion from churches in the West. Consequently, the connection between the church and mission was barely discussed. This leads to the following question: “What was the influence of the *‘sitz im leben’* of Europe on the understanding of God before the First World War?”³

The understanding of mission at Edinburgh is described by Nico Botha as the bringing of civilization from advanced people to backward peoples.⁴ Quoting from different sources, Knoetze elaborates on this, indicating that Edinburgh 1910 was an exercise of the “powerful” Christendom aimed at the “heathendom”—or the power of the West against the rest.⁵ As such, mission was described in military metaphors: missionaries were referred to as “Christ soldiers,” and words like “army,” “crusade,” and “marching orders” were used.

Botha elaborates on the importance of the interesting confrontation about the land issue in South Africa between Bridgman of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) in South Africa and

2 David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991), 369.

3 Johannes J. Knoetze, “A Long Walk to Obedience: Missiology and Mission under Scrutiny (1910-2010),” *In die Skriflig* 51:2 (2017), a2192, <https://doi.org/10.4102/ids.v51i2.2192>.

4 Nico Botha, “From Edinburgh to Achimota: The World Mission Conferences as a Source of Missiological Knowledge in the Thinking of DJ Bosch,” *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 31:2 (2005): 129–52.

5 Knoetze, “A Long Walk to Obedience,” 3.

Marchand from the DRC.⁶ This was 1910, two years before the founding of the African National Congress (ANC) (8 January 1912) and three years before the Land Act of 1913 in South Africa. The Land Act literally dispossessed Black people of the land, with 20 percent of South Africa's population owning 87 percent of the land.

According to Botha, Marchand argues that the Cape Colony had an enlightened native policy, and missionaries had a free hand in their work.⁷ Making a division between mission and politics, Marchand contends there is no problem pertaining to Black people and the land issue:

I know of no such problem from a purely missionary point of view. When you come to politics there is indeed such a problem, but I hold that missions as such, so long as they can carry on their work unfettered, have nothing to do with that problem. In my humble opinion, the less missionaries have to do with politics in any shape or form, the better for the exalted object they have in view and the less chance there will be of losing sympathy of the Government and the financial support for educational work which they now enjoy.⁸

Important themes that could have influenced the Southern Africa context include the absence of native Africans at Edinburgh; the understanding of mission at the conference; division between mission and church; mission and politics; and the land issue.

Lake Mohonk, 1921

In the minutes of the IMC founding assembly of 1921, the following persons are mentioned from South Africa: "Professor J. du Plessis, B.D., Professor in the Theological Seminary of the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa, J. C. Gibson, Esq., Chairman of the Executive Committee of the South Africa General Mission, Member of the Executive Committee of Fourth South African General Conference, 1912." The following are mentioned as co-opted members: "D. A. Hunter, Esq., F.R.G.S., Missionary of the United Free Church of Scotland Foreign Mission, Editor of the *Christian Express*, Lovedale, South Africa."

6 Botha, "From Edinburgh to Achimota."

7 Ibid.

8 World Missionary Conference, *Report of Commission VII: Missions and Governments* (Edinburgh and London: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier and New York, Chicago, and Toronto: F. H. Revell Company, 1910), 169–70.

Jerusalem, 1928

The world in which the Jerusalem conference took place in 1928 was fundamentally different from the world of 1910. This great disparity can be ascribed to two particular events, World War I (1914–18) and the Russian Revolution (1917), which “shattered Edinburgh’s confidence of sure victory.”⁹ Maybe this contributed to Anderson’s theme/summary of the Jerusalem 1928 conference: “Wherefore missions?”¹⁰

For the first time, “there was the realisation that Christianity was no Western religion and that the West was not Christian in its entirety.”¹¹ This puts the whole question of theological assumptions on the table. As a result of this realization and World War I, the Jerusalem 1928 conference was far less confident than the conference in Edinburgh in 1910. The point of departure of the Jerusalem conference was not the royal office of Christ, as at Edinburgh, but Christ as priest.

Jerusalem made significant strides in its definition of mission regarding (1) the centrality of the cross, and (2) the understanding of mission in terms of a comprehensive approach. In Edinburgh, the application of the cross was a “symbol of conquest, in Constantinian terms. In Jerusalem the cross again became the symbol of service, responsibility, and sacrifice.”¹² The view that mission is the kingdom’s servant showed that Jerusalem concerned itself with the social dimension of the gospel.¹³ As a result, the reality of secularism and syncretism were seen as threats to Christian mission. “To mention one example, secularisation was viewed as a great danger to Christianity and was identified as a sign of the times. Formulations like ‘our enemy is not civilization, but secularism; not science, but materialism’ reveal the utter suspicion with which Jerusalem [1928] looked at secularisation.”¹⁴

Despite the realization of secularization, issues such as the division of the world into two geographical areas—namely, Christian and non-Christian—remained unchallenged,¹⁵ and much attention was given to the relationship

9 David J. Bosch, *Witness to the World: The Christian Mission in Theological Perspective* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1980), 161.

10 Knoetze, “A Long Walk to Obedience,” 5.

11 Bosch, *Witness to the World*, 161.

12 *Ibid.*, 163.

13 Botha, “From Edinburgh to Achimota.”

14 Nico Botha, “Voices from the Third World on Epistemological Shifts in the World Council of Churches: The Case of the World Mission Conferences of Mexico City and Bangkok,” *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 32:3 (2006), 255–81, at 266.

15 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 369.

between the older and the younger churches.¹⁶ This may have been an issue because mission was not done by the church in the first place but by mission societies. Consequently, the local church never grew from its mission, whether spiritually, culturally, or relationally. This in turn led to the development of separate churches—older and younger—usually along racial lines. In short, the mission had no direct impact on the growth—spiritual or physical—of the local congregation.

This again might have contributed to the very negative view on religions other than Christianity that emerged at Jerusalem. The Jerusalem conference saw other religions as “perfect specimens of absolute error, masterful pieces of hell’s inventions, which Christianity was simply called upon to oppose, uproot and destroy.”¹⁷ Hocking led some American delegates at the Jerusalem conference to contradict the notion of Christianity as being in opposition to other religions. Instead, they pleaded for “an imaginative alliance with non-Christian religions, an alliance in which neither Christianity nor the other religions were to lose anything.”¹⁸

Although the conference concerned itself with the social dimension of the gospel, it did not criticize the structures of society, since the belief was that social changes would be achieved by the improvement of micro-structures.¹⁹ It is interesting to note that, despite the urgency to deal with the issue of racial conflict, the conference in Jerusalem, like the one in Edinburgh, refrained “from identifying the problem as white racism and used euphemisms like race problems, racial conflict or race relationships instead.”²⁰

According to the report of the Jerusalem meeting of the IMC in 1928, Yergan attempts to show the connections between racial conflict and politics, economics, and social change.²¹ He characterized racial conflict as European imperialism in Africa for the economic benefit of the continent related to its mineral wealth, oil, rubber, and cotton. Botha mentions the substitution of African chiefs with white magistrates, as some of the social and racial changes.²²

16 Knoetze, “A Long Walk to Obedience,” 5.

17 W. H. T. Gairdner, “Edinburgh 1910”. *An Account and Interpretation of the World Missionary Conference* (Edinburgh and London: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier, 1910), 137.

18 Bosch, *Witness to the World*, 162.

19 *Idem*, 164.

20 Botha, “From Edinburgh to Achimota,” np.

21 International Missionary Council, *Report of the Jerusalem Meeting of the International Missionary Council, March 24—April 8, 1928*. Eight volumes (London, Melbourne, Cape Town, Bombay & Shanghai: Oxford University Press, 1928), 4:218–19.

22 Botha, “From Edinburgh to Achimota.”

Also, Professor Jabavu, a South African member of the African team of delegates to Jerusalem, addressed the issues of land segregation, social segregation, and “all sorts of laws enacted against Black men, just because of their colour.” This pre-empted what would later be called “racial capitalism,” that is, a brand of capitalism with a strong race determinant.²³

Important themes that could have influenced the Southern Africa context include the following: that Christianity was/is no Western religion; the cross as the symbol of service, responsibility, and sacrifice; secularism and syncretism; the negative views of other religions; the relationship between older and younger churches (mission and the church); and a holistic understanding of racism as “a system” and its influence on social issues.

Tamaram, 1938

According to Botha, the *Dictionary of Mission* describes the conference at Tamaram as the “first really and truly worldwide ecumenical conference of Christianity in its almost 2000 years of history.”²⁴ As the conference in Jerusalem in 1928 was influenced by the post-World War I, so was the one in Tamaram in 1938 influenced and cut short because of World War II. In the same way, World War I has influenced the interpretation of Christ from his royal office at Edinburgh 1910, to his priestly office at Jerusalem 1928 after the war. The Second World War again influenced the interpretation of the office of Christ at the Tamaram conference, and this time with the emphasis on the prophetic office of Christ against the background of the tyrannies and fascism of Hitler in Germany and Mussolini in Italy, Marxism in Russia, and State Shintoism in Japan.²⁵ Against this background, the question on the table was: “Whence mission?” [Mission from which origin?], since the distinction between Christian and non-Christian countries was, in principle, abandoned.²⁶ Dividing lines no longer ran between Christianity and paganism because all people were looking for hope. The church was traumatized by the two world wars and realized at best that all of us are “Christopagans.”²⁷ The dawning of these realizations led to the discussions on the centripetal and centrifugal character of mission, as well as the nature of revelation, its locus, and authority.

23 Botha, “From Edinburgh to Achimota,” np. International Missionary Council, *Report of the Jerusalem Meeting*, 4:227–29.

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid.

26 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 369–370.

27 Knoetze, “A Long Walk to Obedience,” 5.

At the conference in Tambaram, it was recognized that church and mission belong together. However, as much as the church and mission were healed at Tambaram, a church-centric interpretation of mission emerged.²⁸ A Tambaram report on “The Place of the Church in Evangelism” contains a statement that clearly explains the comprehensive nature of witness: “The Gospel of Jesus Christ carries with it the vision and hope of social transformation and of the realization of such ends as justice, freedom, and peace. A living church cannot dissociate itself from prophetic and practical activities in regard to social questions.”²⁹ The strong emphasis on witness can be traced back to Barth’s theology as described in his booklet (1934) titled *Der Christ als Zeuge (The Christ as witness)*. With an emphasis on the witnessing church, pointing toward the kingdom, the Tambaram conference (1938) viewed the church as “the divine society founded by Christ and His apostles to accomplish His will in the world.”³⁰ There are not many Reformation definitions of the church as far as the missionary dimension of the church is concerned. However, the Tambaram conference made the following correction: “Tambaram spoke of ecclesiastical mission within the context of an ecumenical meeting, a fact which militated against delegates thinking only of their own denominational missionary programmes.”³¹

As with the previous conferences, the issue of racism was discussed again at the Tambaram conference with two distinct contributions. First, the church was exposed as being racist: “In many countries, denominational differences and the existence of deep racial divisions within the Churches themselves, obscure the Church’s witness to the Gospel and paralyse its efforts to win men for Christ.”³² Second, from a theological perspective, Tambaram identified racism as a “national idol” and a “household god.” The theological rationale for the renunciation of racism is twofold: “The Gospel is the Word of God for all humankind and the church is by definition a fellowship for all races. Tambaram draws an illuminating parallel between racism, cultural chauvinism, and sexism, indicating that the prophetic notion of the reign of God excludes all three.”³³

28 Botha, “From Edinburgh to Achimota.”

29 International Missionary Council, *The World Mission of the Church: Findings and Recommendations of the Meeting of the International Missionary Council, Tambaram, Madras, India, December 12-29, 1938* (London: International Missionary Council, 1938), quoted in Botha, “From Edinburgh to Achimota,” n.p.

30 Botha, “From Edinburgh to Achimota,” n.p.

31 Ibid.

32 International Missionary Council, *The World Mission of the Church*, 130.

33 Ibid.

The first African woman to represent Africa at a major world conference was Mina Tembeka Soga, a teacher, social worker, and church leader from the Eastern Cape in South Africa, and a member of the African team of delegates. Soga had a prophetic presence, as became clear from the nature of some of her statements at the Tambaram conference. In a way, she almost anticipated and pre-empted feminism and womanism. “Visionary and determined, Soga was, interestingly, articulating, though in the language of her period, some of the things contemporary feminism is emphasizing equal opportunity to all in all areas of life, irrespective of sex, race, or nationality.”³⁴

Important themes that could have influenced the Southern Africa context include the abandonment of the distinction between Christian and non-Christian countries (peoples); the close relation between church and mission, with a definite focus on the prophetic witness of Christ and the church; the recognition of a racist church; and the understanding of racism as a “national idol” or “household god,” thus racism is a spiritual/religious matter.

Whitby, 1947

As indicated in our discussion of the conference at Tambaram in 1938, mission was defined by evangelism. Considering this understanding of mission, Bosch remarks that the conference at Whitby in 1947 took place in an “atmosphere of embarrassment,”³⁵ since, at the time of the conference, “the shadow of the catastrophic war years still brooded over the world.” The question asked was the following: “Whither missions?” (Mission to what purpose?). This led to the launching of an ecumenical study on the “The Missionary Obligation of the Church.” After the war, the church struggled with the question regarding the Good News (*euangelion*) that the church must proclaim to a traumatized world. The orientation of the church towards the world changed after the Second World War from the church as a conqueror of the world at the conference in Edinburgh in 1910, to a church in solidarity with the world at Whitby in 1947.³⁶ One of the biggest gains of the conference at Whitby was the broadening of the understanding of mission to include more than just evangelism by adding the concepts of *kerygma* and *koinonia*. Hoekendijk, a Dutch missiologist, later added a third element, namely *diakonia*.³⁷

34 Botha, “From Edinburgh to Achimota,” n.p.

35 Bosch, *Witness to the World*, 175–78; Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 379, 451, 466, and 511.

36 Knoetze, “A Long Walk to Obedience,” 5.

37 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 511.

The concerns of the Whitby conference were not so much about the presence of preconditions for mission in the world, but rather whether the preconditions for mission were present in the church. After the war, the conference aimed at “[the] re-joining of severed threads and lines of communication and the reaffirmation of the bonds of fellowship established at Tambaram.”³⁸ Botha indicates that the emphasis was on the church as embodiment of mission, the church as *koinonia*, rather than on mission as a church activity.³⁹

The importance of the church and the purpose of mission were deliberated. Therefore, a discussion on the relationship between older and younger churches brought about the following: “Firstly, there was a rediscovery of the local church, and the younger churches as equals of the older ones. Secondly, in reflecting on the cooperation in mission between older and younger churches, the striking concept of ‘partnership in obedience’ was coined. The concept would come under scrutiny. The story is told of an Indonesian delegate who remarked, ‘Yes, partnership for you, but obedience for us.’”⁴⁰

From the remark of the Indonesian delegate, it is clear that the delegates from the younger churches felt inferior toward the older churches. While people like Stephen Neill perceived the church as revolutionary, someone like Bosch avoids the Whitby conference’s interpretation of the post-World War II context as a revolutionary context. Neill’s arguments at Whitby are reported as follows:

“From the beginning”, Neill argues, “in its essential nature the Church has been revolutionary. Christ sent it out as an explosive, corrosive, destructive force”. Neill goes on to say that the only way for the church not to become too closely integrated to the status quo was for the church to be revolutionary, meaning that “it has been appointed by God as prophet, critic and judge. It is the instrument in His hand of the permanent revolution.”⁴¹

Botha interprets Neill’s understanding according to the following two elements. First, it is the will of God that wherever there is injustice or oppression of the weak, the order of society should be reformed. Second, the church’s

38 Bosch, *Witness to the World*, 175.

39 Botha, “From Edinburgh to Achimota.”

40 *Ibid.*, n.p.

41 C. W. Ranson, *Renewal and advance: Christian witness in a revolutionary world* (London: Edinburgh House Press, 1948), 64. Quoted in Botha, “From Edinburgh to Achimota,” n.p.

leadership in the revolution is inextricably linked to the mission of caring for the poor and the oppressed.⁴²

Within the post-World War II context and the “embarrassment” of the church with its own shortcomings and fragile relations between the old and the younger churches, the Whitby conference formulated its understanding of mission and evangelization in a declaration entitled “Christian Witness in a Revolutionary World.” In the declaration, evangelization and social involvement are connected, and they give rise to creative tension. This also may be an indication of the underlying power struggles, where the older churches are the “haves” and the younger churches are viewed as the “have-nots,” the obedient partners. The declaration states:

As Christians, we are pledged to the service of all those who are hungry or destitute or in need; we are pledged to the support of every movement for the removal of injustice and oppression. But we do not conceive these things, good in themselves, to be the whole of evangelism, since we are convinced that the source of the world’s sorrow is spiritual, and that its healing must be spiritual, through the entry of the risen Christ into every part of the life of the world.⁴³

Important themes that could have influenced the Southern Africa context include the “atmosphere of embarrassment” and the broadened understanding of mission with the focus on *koinonia*, *kerygma*, and *diakonia*. Within the South African context, this is very important, especially when considering that it was the same year that the apartheid policy was officially established. This also brings to the forefront the understanding of mission and the church as a revolutionary institution, and the understanding of social injustices as spiritual.

Willingen, 1952

The Willingen conference was the second post-World War II conference with the unique context of the dramatic success of the Mao revolution in China between Whitby and Willingen.⁴⁴ Botha also draws attention to the following social developments at the time of the Willingen conference, which gave rise to an atmosphere of uncertainty: processes of decolonization in Asia and Africa; the revival of Eastern religions; the population explosion in the “Third World”; racism and apartheid in South Africa; the crisis of faith in

42 Botha, “From Edinburgh to Achimota.”

43 C. W. Ranson, *Renewal and advance: Christian witness in a revolutionary world* (London: Edinburgh House Press, 1948), 215. Quoted in Botha, “From Edinburgh to Achimota,” np.

44 Bosch, *Witness to the World*, 178-181.

the West; and the challenge of the legitimacy of Western mission.⁴⁵ Against this background, evangelization and social action were kept in creative tension in a comprehensive view on mission in the following manner: “Faced with the task of Christian witness in such a world, we are called to hear anew and accept once more our Lord’s commission, ‘Go ye therefore’; to realize the Church as the instrument in God’s hand; to face the problems of Communism and secularism; to raise a prophetic voice against social, economic, and racial injustice.”⁴⁶

It is in this context that Anderson indicates that the question “Why missions?” was asked at Willingen in 1952.⁴⁷ Bosch connects with the Willingen theme: namely, “The missionary obligation of the church.”⁴⁸ It was at the Willingen conference of the IMC that the idea (not the term) of the *missio Dei* first surfaced. Willingen recognized a close relationship between mission as solidarity with the incarnate and crucified Christ, and *missio Dei* in a broken and traumatized world. In the development of the *missio Dei*, it became clear that the church did not have its own mission, but that God’s mission has a church. Willingen did not conform to the Christological foundation of mission, but specifically opted for a trinitarian foundation of mission. Bosch indicates how the “mooring of mission to the doctrine of the Trinity” resulted in the introduction of the expression *missio Dei*. The technical term was not used at Willingen, but it was developed soon afterwards. However, all indications are that Hartenstein should be regarded as the *auctor intellectualis* of the concept, which in its simplest form gives expression to the idea of God’s mission.⁴⁹ This means that the foundation for mission is not found in the being of the church, but in God’s being. To put it differently, mission should not be based on ecclesiology or soteriology, but on the trinitarian God.

Both Botha⁵⁰ and Knoetze⁵¹ followed Bosch,⁵² indicating that the shift from a church-centred mission (Tambaram, 1938) to a mission-centred church (Willingen, 1952) took place. Thus, a shift from a church-centric

45 Botha, “From Edinburgh to Achimota.”

46 Norman Goodall, ed., *Missions Under the Cross. Addresses delivered at the Enlarged Meeting of the Committee of the International Missionary Council at Willingen, in Germany, 1952; with Statements issued by the Meeting* (London: Edinburgh House Press, 1953), 216.

47 Gerald H. Anderson, ed., *The Theology of the Christian Mission* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1961), 6.

48 Bosch, *Witness to the World*, 179.

49 Botha, “From Edinburgh to Achimota.”

50 Botha, “Voices from the Third World.”

51 Knoetze, “A Long Walk to Obedience.”

52 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 370.

interpretation of mission to a God-centric interpretation transpired. The redemptive work of God paved the way for both church and mission—the one is not subordinate to the other. Therefore, the shift came from the church being the sender to the church being the one sent. “Ironically this new interpretation of mission resulted in a somewhat ineffective understanding of the role of the church in mission.”⁵³

Since mission was not only understood as solidarity with the incarnate and crucified Christ, but because of mission’s solidarity with Christ, mission was also understood as solidarity with the world. According to the Willingen Report, solidarity from a missionary perspective dialectically reflects two sides.⁵⁴ On the one hand, solidarity means that the church should “accept involvement in the world and so in the Spirit of Christ incarnate and crucified.” On the other hand, solidarity is supposed to be “another kind of solidarity, the tragic, frustrating solidarity of a common need.”

Botha also reflects on the intriguing presentation of Von Thadden, who had survived Russian imprisonment and World War II.⁵⁵ Von Thadden, in his address entitled: “The church under the cross,” develops what could be regarded as a staurocentric ecclesiology. He argued that a church under the cross is a servant church, with a concrete concern for the poor, the miserable, and the sick. It is a church that is “the mouth of the dumb and a help for the tormented and oppressed!”⁵⁶ Von Thadden understands the church in the German context as a church of brotherhood, obedience, and suffering in the face of national socialism.

Important themes that could have influenced the Southern Africa context include the *missio Dei* concept. It was something new, not only for South Africa but for the whole church. However, in South Africa, the church-centred mission was still the order of the day since the church (especially the Afrikaans speaking church) was under the ruling of government. The understanding of mission not only as solidarity with the incarnated Christ, but also with the world, strongly influenced the Afrikaans speaking churches as it critiqued their support of apartheid also from a staurocentric ecclesiology perspective.

Ghana, 1957–58

The explicit purpose of the World Missionary Conference that took place in Achimota was the preparation of the IMC for its integration with the

53 Botha, “Voices from the Third World,” 256.

54 Goodall, *Missions Under the Cross*, 33.

55 Botha, “From Edinburgh to Achimota.” (Goodall, *Missions Under the Cross*, 53-60.)

56 Goodall, *Missions Under the Cross*, 53.

WCC. From there arose the most radical question in the IMCs history: “What is the Christian mission?” Although William Carey in 1806 suggested a worldwide mission conference for 1810 in Cape Town, it was only in 1957 that the first IMC conference was held in Africa. At this stage, Ghana was also one of the youngest independent states at the time, having received its independency on 6 May 1957. While many African states gained political independence around 1957-1958, economic power blocs were formed in the North.⁵⁷ This was the emergence of neo-colonialism, dividing the world into the rich North and the poor South. Political independence of African states did not bring economic welfare to Africa at all.

It is against this background that the opening statement of the conference, “The Christian world mission is Christ’s, not ours” was most applicable.⁵⁸ Bosch continues to describe Newbigin’s summary of the conference: first, “the church is the mission”—we cannot talk about the one without the other; second, “the home base is everywhere”—every Christian community is in a missionary situation; and third, “mission in partnership”—the end of every form of guardianship of one church over another. Knoetze comments that the interdependence between the *missio Dei* (the church is the mission), *missio ecclesia* (the home base is everywhere), and the *missio hominum* (mission in partnership) came together in Ghana.⁵⁹

In 1958, Van Randwijck and Blauw published a booklet entitled *Naar nieuwe wegen van gehoorzaamheid*, in which they discussed two intermingling developments that influenced the Ghana conference. The first was the fast growing technological and scientific developments of the Western world, enabling its continuous dominance of the largest part of the world. The second was a remarkable growth in mission towards the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. Botha⁶⁰ remarks that the imperialism of the West seemed to be favourable for mission and so they were very complacent, blissfully unaware of the rather ambivalent situation of “*niet alleen bewondering, maar ook weerzin*” (not only admiration but also disgust).⁶¹

Important themes that could have influenced the Southern Africa context include the radical question to be asked: “What is the Christian mission?” especially within the context of a newly independent state in Africa where the

57 Botha, “From Edinburgh to Achimota.”

58 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 370.

59 Knoetze, “A Long Walk to Obedience,” 5.

60 Botha, “From Edinburgh to Achimota.”

61 Roland K. Orchard, ed., *The Ghana Assembly of the International Missionary Council 28th December, 1957 to 8th January, 1958* (London: Edinburgh House Press, 1958), 11.

South African government was doing everything to enhance apartheid and separation between white people and Black people. Another important aspect is the understanding of “mission in partnership,” because it still relates to the relationship between the older and the younger churches. Within the South African context, it might also be described as the “giving/sending” churches and the “receiving” churches—what was then understood as a partnership. Furthermore, I am also of the view that the dominance of the West due to advancements in technology and scientific development basically confirmed and reinforced the views of white superiority in South Africa.

New Delhi, 1961

The New Delhi conference of 1961 in India was a joint conference between the IMC and the WCC. The WCC authorized a study project on “The Missionary Structure of the Congregation.” This joint conference signified a healing in the separation between the church and mission, as well as unity in mission. The IMC now became the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME). Botha draws attention to Bilheimer’s description of the world as an “interdependent world” and “an age of revolution in which immense changes are taking place in every sphere of human life.”⁶²

Some of these immense changes also faced the New Delhi meeting and the IMC when they were challenged by the fastest growing element in the WCC, with 45 Asian and 26 African churches among the 197 member churches. People like Bilheimer are acknowledged by Botha in their references to the challenge confronting the WCC. Bilheimer states that the WCC needs “to consider anew the meaning of the Gospel for the message, the life and the witness of the churches in the contemporary world.”⁶³

Within Africa it was a time of decolonization, and within the South African context 1960 was one of the most difficult ecclesiological and political years. On 21 March 1960, the Pan-African Congress (PAC) marched on the police station in Sharpeville in protest against the pass laws. The police opened fire, killing 69 people and wounding another 180. On 30 March 1960, the government called a state of emergency and detained another 18,000 people during the next few weeks. This led to the Cottesloe meeting in December 1960 between the South African churches and the IMC. It is in view of the

62 R. S. Bilheimer, ed., *New Delhi Speaks: The Message of the Third Assembly New Delhi 18 November to 5 December 1961 with the Reports of the Assembly's Sections on Christian Witness, Service and Unity and an Appeal to all Governments and Peoples* (London: SCM, 1962), 13, quoted in Botha, “Voices from the Third World,” 261.

63 Bilheimer, *New Delhi Speaks*, quoted in Botha, “Voices from the Third World,” 260.

foregoing that the quotes of Botha⁶⁴ of an “interdependent world,” an “age of revolution,” and “to consider anew the meaning of the Gospel” must be read. Such remarks were all directly relevant to the South African context since after Cottesloe the Afrikaans-speaking churches desisted from attending the meetings of the WCC. For the next 30 years there would be no official contact between the Afrikaans-speaking churches (mainly the DRC in South Africa), who were one of the founders of the IMC, the CWME and the WCC.

However, it also needs to be noted that Z. K. Matthews stepped from the Cottesloe consultation into the WCC. In this regard, Maluleke reports: “So impressed with ZK Matthews was the WCC delegation, which was led by the then WCC general secretary, Dr W. A. Visser ’t Hooft, that in 1962 Z. K. Matthews was appointed as the first Africa secretary of the WCC’s Division of Inter-Church Aid, Refugees and World Service, based in Geneva.”⁶⁵ And Botha states, “The New Delhi Assembly was a forerunner of the shifts in epistemology witnessed at the conferences arranged under the auspices of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) of the WCC between 1961 and 1981.”⁶⁶ Important themes that could have influenced the Southern Africa context include the withdrawal of the Afrikaans-speaking churches from the CWME and WCC.

Mexico City, 1963⁶⁷

The greater involvement of the churches from the third world, as described above, had a distinct impact on the World Missionary Conference in Mexico City in 1963. First, it leads to epistemological changes, and the simplest definition of epistemology has to do with understanding how we know what we know. In this regard, Gort’s analysis of Mexico is captured in the question: “How can the Christian congregation discover that which God is doing outside the Church?”⁶⁸ The conference acknowledged that the church should take the world and the prevailing context and situations of injustice, want, and distress seriously. The Mexico City conference responded by acknowledging that the church was to “take up its stance within these situations outside the gate and keep its eyes open for signs and signals of the liberating work of

64 Botha, “Voices from the Third World.”

65 Tinyiko Maluleke, “Forgiveness and Reconciliation in the Life and Work of Desmond Tutu,” *International Review of Mission* 109:2 (November 2020), 210–21, at 212.

66 Botha, “Voices from the Third World,” 262.

67 This reflection on Mexico City is mostly derived from Botha, “Voices from the Third World.”

68 J. Gort, *An Historical and Missiological Interpretation. World Missionary Conference: Melbourne, May 1980* (Free University, Amsterdam: Central Reproduction Service, 1980), 7, quoted in Botha, “Voices from the Third World,” 262.

God taking place there.”⁶⁹ The Mexico City conference resolved to undertake a thorough study of the missionary structure of the congregation.

It is important to notice that during this same time (1963) the Christian Institute (CI) was founded by Beyers Naudé and other church leaders mostly from the English-speaking denominations in South Africa. The hope was that the CI would bring together members of all races and all South African churches to “bearing witness to the unity of the church and the lordship of Christ over society.”⁷⁰

The greater involvement of third-world churches had a second impact on the construction of the notion of mission in six continents. The correct understanding of mission is, “if it is perceived as mission in, to and from all six continents. God’s mission is singular and undivided and therefore cosmic and inclusive; it is relative to the whole of creation: all peoples, places, times, and situations without exception.”⁷¹ As such, the official report on the Mexico City conference has rightly been titled “Witness in Six Continents.” Visser ’t Hooft argued at the conference that the word of God is not bound by a church with a great missionary passion and yet fails to be truly apostolic.⁷² Maluleke describes the DRC in these terms:

It is no surprise therefore that the DRC has been one of the most mission-minded church denominations in South (ern) Africa. Yet, the same church also championed the apartheid cause so that it made it seem as if the apartheid cause of separating people was aligned to the deepest objectives of Christian mission. This entanglement between mission and the politics of separation became a notable feature not only of the DRC in South Africa but also of the entire work of the Christian church in (South) Africa.⁷³

In Mexico City in 1963, Visser ’t Hooft argued that the church fails to be apostolic because its missionary passion is driven by exporting its own culturally and denominational conditioned brand of Christianity, and then

69 Gort, *An Historical and Missiological Interpretation*, 7, quoted in Botha, “Voices from the Third World,” 262.

70 Johannes J. Knoetze, “Ecumenism in the Dutch Reformed Church: The Relationship with the IMC and WCC on the Issue of Race Relations,” Unpublished report to the CWME (2021): 13.

71 Gort, *An Historical and Missiological Interpretation*, 7, quoted in Botha, “Voices from the Third World,” 263.

72 Botha, “Voices from the Third World,” 265.

73 Tinyiko Sam Maluleke, “Of Lions and Rabbits: The Role of the Church in Reconciliation in South Africa,” *International Review of Mission* 96:380-381 (January/April 2007), 41–55, at 45.

imposing the latter on other people. “If so, it has not grasped that the Word of God cannot and must not be imprisoned in any human form of expression but claims the sovereign right to make its own impact upon every people and to create its own forms of expression.”⁷⁴

At Mexico City there were some examples where the understanding of mission was described in terms of a “struggle,” especially by the youth delegation at the conference. The hermeneutic of struggle was used in the following manner as the young participants felt challenged as follows: “We must enter into the struggles of our time and work against misery, hunger, social injustice, racial hatred and political tyranny.”⁷⁵ This led to the understanding at the Mexico City conference that these activities “could take the form of solidarity with the labour unions, involvement in the student movements, and participation in the work of political parties.”⁷⁶

Another shift at Mexico City took place when the delegates looked at secularization dialectically rather than reductionistically. The dialectic view is indicated, for example, in the message to the churches issued at Mexico City conference:

Our world is changing faster than it has ever done before. New patterns of life are taking form for the whole of mankind. In this revolutionary change, science and technology play a decisive part. This means two things: it makes possible for masses of people greater freedom, greater security, more leisure, and more truly human life; but it poses a great question—is technology to be the servant of man or his master? It is a question of life and death for the world.⁷⁷

The grappling with secularization from the perspective of Christian mission at the Mexico City conference indicated that delegates were looking for a “new theological understanding of mission.” When secularization is described in terms of “ambiguity,” it opens a process of possibilities for both human freedom and human enslavement. However, the conference was unable to discern a clear vision of the missionary task in a secular world.⁷⁸

74 W. A. Visser ‘t Hooft, “Missions as the Test of Faith,” in *Witness in Six Continents. Records of the Meeting of the Commission on World Evangelism of the World Council of Churches Held in Mexico City December 8th to 19th, 1963*, ed. Ronald K. Orchard (London: Edinburgh House Press, 1964), 20–28, at 24, quoted in Botha, “Voices from the Third World,” 265.

75 Ronald K. Orchard, ed., *Witness in Six Continents. Records of the Meeting of the Commission on World Evangelism of the World Council of Churches held in Mexico City December 8th to 19th, 1963* (London: Edinburgh House Press, 1964), 17.

76 Botha, “Voices from the Third World,” 265.

77 Orchard, *Witness in Six Continents*, 173.

78 Botha, “Voices from the Third World,” 266.

Important themes that could have influenced the South(ern) Africa context include the epistemological questions asked at Mexico City as well as the focus on discovering God's liberating presence in the world outside the church. The understanding of mission from all six continents again also addressed the issue of the relationship between the older and the younger churches which was at that time very important in the South African context. Also, the discussions on secularization could have influenced the South African churches.

Uppsala, Sweden, 1968

The WCC assembly in New Delhi (1961) authorized a study project on "the missionary structure of the congregation." At the WCC assembly in Uppsala, two reports of the study project served: one from the Western European working group and one from the North American working group. Bosch argues that both reports had little to say about the "missionary structure of the congregation," but nevertheless had a profound influence on the assembly's understanding of mission. The Europeans identified the goal of mission as "*shalom*," and the North Americans identified it as "humanisation." The North Americans stated in their report:

The fundamental question was that of the true God, and the church responded to that question by pointing to him. It was assuming that the purpose of mission was Christianization, bringing man to God through Christ and his church. Today the fundamental question is much more that of *true* man, and the dominant concern of the missionary congregation must therefore be to point to the humanity in Christ as the goal of mission.⁷⁹

This contrasts with the description of Whitby conference's 1947 understanding of mission as "evangelism"—or was this a "new humanitarian" definition of evangelism? However, mission became an umbrella term; it was overtaxed with health and welfare, youth projects, economic and social development, and activities of political interest groups. "The distinction between church and world has for all intents and purposes been dropped completely."⁸⁰

The WCC assembly in Uppsala (1968) planned to establish a programme to eliminate racism across the world. From this planning the Programme to Combat Racism (PCR) followed, which had a direct influence not only in the South African churches but also in the South African society.

⁷⁹ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 382. Italics in the original.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 383.

Important themes that could have influenced the South(ern) Africa context include topics that would be very relevant in the South African context, especially within the Afrikaans churches which no longer attended these meetings. I believe this would have been a great challenge for the Afrikaans churches. De Gruchy⁸¹ makes the following three observations regarding the PCR: First, it tested the commitment and fellowship of the churches. He tells the story where a white member of synod spoke against the PCR because his son was fighting on the borders of South Africa against the terrorists. In a response, a Black pastor spoke in favour of the PCR because his son was fighting on the other side as a member of the liberation army. What a test for fellowship and commitment. Second, if it were not for the Black members of churches, many churches might have withdrawn from the WCC. Although it was not primarily about membership, it was important because it meant contact with Christians throughout the world. But it also meant commitment from the churches against the racism in South Africa. The question was how real is the commitment? Third, it made the South African churches aware that time for nonviolent change was running out. The real issue thus was not so much about the WCC and its doings, but about the church in South Africa and what they were doing to prevent disaster.

Bangkok, 1972–73

The shift that came about at the conference in Bangkok in 1972–73 was stirred by Philip Potter in his report to the conference when he introduced the concepts of “context of mission” and “mission in context.”⁸² Using this “new language” indicated a clear shift from the understanding of mission as one-way-traffic from the West to the rest of the world. In scrutinizing the world as “one world” and “divided world,” Potter illustrates the inconsistency of a world drawn together through science, technology, rapid communication, and the mass media, while at the same time being divided politically, economically, and racially. Maluleke reminds us that we are not only talking about a divided world, but also about a divided church and even a group of churches whose mission method and main mode of existence was that of dividing.⁸³ Historically, the South African church has been comfortable with divisions along the lines of race. Potter critiqued the Mexico City conference

81 John W. De Gruchy, *The Church Struggle in Africa* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 133–34.

82 Philip Potter, “Director’s Report: Christ’s Mission and Ours in Today’s World,” in *Minutes and Report of the Assembly of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches December 31, 1972 and January 9–12, 1973* (New York: World Council of Churches, Publications Service, 1973), 51–63.

83 Maluleke, “Of Lions and Rabbits,” 46.

because it did not attend to the circumstances of Black people. To make the point he referred to the fact that no attention was paid to the march for civil rights of Black people on Washington in 1963, and nothing was said about the emergence of the liberation movements in Southern Africa. These issues should not be divorced from mission and evangelism. Potter continued to draw attention to the disreputable fact that “the period of Western mission was also the period of European and American political and economic imperialism.”⁸⁴ Important is to understand that the meaning of salvation is almost senseless if the local context in which mission and evangelism takes place is not taken into consideration.⁸⁵

In view of the above, the Bangkok conference found itself embarrassed with the local congregation. The parish system was called immobile, self-centred, and introverted. The conference declared: “Without the salvation of the churches from their captivity in the interest of the dominating classes, races and nations there can be no saving church.”⁸⁶ In a letter from the Bangkok Assembly of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism to the churches, the commitment to do mission in terms of an involvement in the praxis of liberation is well articulated:

We commit ourselves more fully in the struggle against everything that oppresses men and women today, not only the sin that is in them but also that is in societies. The scandals of racism, of social injustice, of economic and political oppression, the tragic shame of the Indochina war or the bloody suppression of liberation movements, the dehumanization of technological civilization and the threat that it poses for the future of humanity, all these challenge Christians urgently to express in action the salvation of Jesus Christ.⁸⁷

In his reflection on the conference, Bosch⁸⁸ indicates that Hoekendijk and others who attacked the institutional church, represent an irrational view because there can be no talk about the church’s involvement in the world if its right to exist is disputed *a priori*.⁸⁹

84 Botha, “Voices from the Third World,” 269.

85 *Ibid.*, 270.

86 Knoetze, “A Long Walk to Obedience,” 6.

87 *Minutes and Report of the Assembly of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches December 31, 1972 and January 9-12, 1973*, 2.

88 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 385.

89 Knoetze, “A Long Walk to Obedience,” 6.

Some of the reputable evangelicals, such as Winter, McGavran, Tippett, Glasser and Beyerhaus, responded to the Bangkok meeting in a publication accusing the CWME of losing sight of the “pre-eminent goal of Christ’s great commission, the eternal redemption of the unsaved ‘two billion’ who by their sin, superstition and ignorance are separated from God, the fountain of life.”⁹⁰ The concern some evangelicals had about the Bangkok meeting seems to be what they viewed as a reductionist theology of salvation.

Through the contributions of Africans, Asians, and Latin Americans, a new way of doing mission emerged when they introduced the “action-reflection” model or the “experience-centred” approach. “In a sense, one can say that at Bangkok the ‘we think therefore we know’ epistemology was substituted by a ‘we experience, we suffer, we struggle therefore we know’ epistemology.”⁹¹

Missiologists like Verkuyl⁹² and Witvliet⁹³ have reflected extensively on the “action-reflection” or the “experience-centred” approach. At the mission conferences before Bangkok, conferences were structured along the lines of long well-prepared speeches, studies undertaken, and extensive reports written on diverse issues in mission and evangelism. However, the participants sensed that something entirely new was needed, since the customary paradigm of rational, neat, and elaborate reflection no longer met the challenges confronting Christian mission. At the Bangkok conference there was only one presentation, and the rest of the conference was structured in study groups to facilitate the participation of everybody. Verkuyl explained that this method was used to avoid dominance by the Western theologians. In this regard, the conference was a great success because up until that time the contributions of participants from the third world had been suppressed. The voices of Africans were heard through the stories they told. Witvliet remarked that the stories told were just “as important as the theological reflection on liberation and social justice.”⁹⁴

Closely related to the introduction of Potter regarding context and the participation of Africans in Black theology as one of the modes of liberation theology appeared at the Bangkok conference:

90 Botha, “Voices from the Third World,” 268.

91 *Ibid.*, 270.

92 Johannes Verkuyl, *Jezus Christus de bevrijder en de voortgaande bevrijdingen van mensen en samenlevingen: de betekenis van de wereld-conferentie voor zending en evangelisatie in Bangkok* (Baarn: Ten Have, 1973).

93 Th. Witvliet, “Bevrijding en Sociale Gerechtigheid (Sectiell),” in Verkuyl, *Jezus Christus de bevrijder*, 63–73.

94 Botha, “Voices from the Third World,” 270–71.

First, as a contextual theology, it includes reflection on the experience of the Christian community in a particular place and at a particular time. Almost perfect examples are the responses formulated by black Christians in North America and South Africa in a context of racial oppression. Second, black theology cannot be universalised, precisely because it is contextual in nature. Third, the black experience of suffering and oppression is the hermeneutic key for understanding God's revelation in Jesus Christ. Fourth, black theology identifies Christ as the brother of the oppressed who places himself unequivocally on the side of the oppressed and the powerless.⁹⁵

Other examples from Africa for a new or better way of doing mission was the way in which the proposal for a moratorium on missionaries stated in 1971 in New York by John G. Gatu featured at the Bangkok conference. Gatu's original proposal was a complete withdrawal of missionaries from Africa for five years. He originally viewed it as a temporary suspension and that they could return after five years. However, at the Reformed Church in Milwaukee, USA, he radicalized the call with the slogan "Missionaries go home. Full stop." When Gatu was accused of jeopardizing the catholicity of the church by calling a moratorium, he responded with the question: Does the presence of the missionaries make the church catholic? The motivation for Gatu's call for a moratorium was the one direction of information from the West to the rest, where Africans are seen as mere consumers of Western information and theology.⁹⁶ Reference is made to a motion by Setiloane, one of the South African participants in the Bangkok conference, that the material on the moratorium should be included in the report of the committee looking at partnership.⁹⁷

Botha mentions that

there are at least five elements constituting the prophetic nature of the moratorium call as it emerged at Bangkok. First, the moratorium call should be interpreted first and foremost as a call to churches to work for their self-hood and identity. Second, those churches who are no longer in a position to send money and personnel were challenged to use their resources for educating people for mission back at the ranch. Third, churches were challenged to give financial support to those who were struggling against unjust and dehumanising systems. Four, churches on both

95 *Ibid.*, 272–73.

96 Botha, "Voices from the Third World," 21.

97 *Minutes and Report of the Assembly of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches December 31, 1972 and January 9–12, 1973*, 23–24.

sides were challenged to develop “mature partnerships.” Five, the moratorium call was broadened to cover situations of political domination of a majority by a minority. An almost perfect example of this was the withdrawal of the white fathers from Mozambique under colonial rule.⁹⁸

Important themes that could have influenced the South(ern) Africa context include the important focus on the context. The church in South Africa would benefit if they were more aware of their own context as well as the international context. On the other hand, they took cognizance of the national and international contexts, but it let the churches turn inwards to take care of their own theology and culture. In that sense, Maluleke was correct: we were dividing churches. The South African churches would have benefitted if they had listened to each other’s stories and attended to the epistemology Botha describes, “We experience, we suffer, we struggle therefore we know.” The Afrikaans churches experienced the moratorium in a very direct and negative way when their missionaries were sent home.

Melbourne, 1980

Botha describes the context of Melbourne from the perspective of persons like Banana, Fung, and Beato; he also refers to the analyses surfacing in statements and declarations on El Salvador, Latin America, South Africa, and from the women and the South Pacific.⁹⁹ At the conference in Melbourne, the poor stood central. Poverty is not a necessity but a consequence of structural arrangements. Therefore, the poor are not poor by mistake, but by design. In this regard, the report on South Africa was a good example of where laws, structures, and systems keep people poor. In hermeneutical terms, the poor will be viewed as the “sinned against.” Botha remarks how Fung argued for a praxiological need for a missionary movement of the poor. Melbourne also had a focus on feminism, since the women were still struggling to let their voices be heard. The women at Melbourne saw themselves as accountable to God and responsible for society and aware of the importance of their participation in the church and the unique role they play. Botha summarizes “both the global and particular analyses of Melbourne, the division of the world into the powerful and the powerless, into oppressors and oppressed and the need of both for liberation, strikes one as important.”¹⁰⁰

98 Botha, “Voices from the Third World,” 276–77.

99 Nico Botha, “Mission as Prophecy, in Dialogue with the World Mission Conferences, Edinburgh 1910—San Antonio 1989” (PhD thesis, Unisa, 1994), 119.

100 Botha, *Mission as Prophecy*, 120.

At the Melbourne conference, the poor became the “dominant hermeneutical category.”¹⁰¹ According to Botha,¹⁰² some even say they forced a redefinition of mission on the Melbourne conference. In this regard, it is indicated that the epistemological and method changes that started at Bangkok were further implemented here. To elaborate further, the Melbourne conference put forward very distinct ideas of the church’s involvement with the poor. For instance, churches should: “*Become churches in solidarity with the struggles of the poor.* The poor are already in mission to change their own situation. What is required from the churches is a missionary movement that supports what they have already begun, and that focuses on building evangelizing and witnessing communities of the poor that will discover and live out expressions of faith among the masses of the poor and oppressed.”¹⁰³

According to the context of the Melbourne conference, missiology can be described as the critical reflection upon the ongoing struggles of the poor and the church’s involvement in those struggles. This definition was backed by a “spirituality of kenosis.” This understanding not only asked of the church but also enabled the church to be present during human, power, and poverty struggles, and to witness to the hope that is in Christ.

Important themes that could have influenced the South(ern) Africa context include the understanding of scripture from a hermeneutic of the poor that would have benefitted the relationship between the “older and the younger” churches.

San Antonio, 1989

The conference at San Antonio gave specific attention to the voices of anguish and pain.¹⁰⁴ Since Jerusalem (1928) the concept of secularization was always part of the agenda of the IMC/CWME. Again, it featured at San Antonio, but what was different at San Antonio was that the definition of secularization was strikingly positive. “Many would see ‘secularisation’ partly as a fruit of the gospel, releasing humankind from ancient powers and emancipating people to make mature choices and take responsibility for their destiny.”¹⁰⁵ Against this backdrop, reference was made to economic injustice in Latin

101 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 435.

102 Botha, *Mission as Prophecy*, 121.

103 *Your Kingdom Come: Mission Perspectives. Report on the World Conference on Mission and Evangelism. Melbourne, Australia 12–25 May 1980* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1980), 177. Italics in the original.

104 Botha, *Mission as Prophecy*, 124.

105 *Ibid.*, 125.

America, Africa, Asia, and the Pacific; racism in South Africa; and exploitation by affluent countries of poor countries through transnational corporations.

Furthermore, San Antonio gave attention to the following matters: First, it looked at the renewal of communities in mission from the framework of a social analysis and considered a renewed understanding of the Trinity. Second, closely related to the renewal of communities was the issue of the use of land, which was a central theme at the conference. On the one hand, the discussion was on the violation of God's creation, and on the other hand, the proper use of the earth's resources. "Others were faced with the struggles of indigenous people for self-determination: Australia, New Zealand, North America, Latin America, the Pacific Islands, Palestine, the Middle East, South Africa and Southern Africa."¹⁰⁶ The question they addressed at San Antonio can be formulated as follows: What is the interplay between the kind of ecological analysis done and the fundamental theological notion that the earth is the Lord's?¹⁰⁷ Third was the issue of the use of power. This always played a significant role in the South(ern) African and other contexts.

Power, creative power should be used for the liberation of the poor and the restoration of those who are broken. It is therefore small wonder that he speaks about the *power of brokenness* . . . the power of brokenness is exemplified by the suffering servant of the Old Testament who releases, liberates, and transforms towards a more human, compassionate, and just society. In the New Testament the power of brokenness is exemplified by no one else but Jesus by way of confronting the evil powers, by being executed and by being vindicated in the resurrection.¹⁰⁸

Some other aspects that need further mention are the centrality of prayer and worship at the San Antonio conference. The notion of walking the way of the cross is also a rather creative way of practically bringing together the two parts of the conference. "Walking the way of the cross" brought the two parts of the conference theme together in a powerful way: nowhere does the prayer "Your will be done" ring more powerfully than in Christ's prayer in Gethsemane; nowhere does the call to mission in Christ's way express itself more eloquently than in the taking up of one's cross to follow Christ."¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 127.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 132. Italics in original.

¹⁰⁹ Frederick R. Wilson, ed., *The San Antonio Report. Your Will be Done: Mission in Christ's Way* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1990), 85.

Important themes that could have influenced the South(ern) Africa context include important issues such as the renewal of communities; the land issue; and the power of brokenness.

Edinburgh, 2010

The centenary of the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference in 1910 was also a very important ecumenical conference and the involvement of the CWME must be recognized. For this report, it is also important to note the contribution of the South African, Daryl Balia. He was not only very much involved in the organising of the event, but also co-editor of a one of the study books that were produced by the conference. The book, with the title *Witnessing to Christ today* (2010), covers the different themes discussed at Edinburgh 2010.¹¹⁰

Important themes that could have influenced the South(ern) Africa context include the fact that C. J. P. Niemandt, another South African present at Edinburgh 2010, responded with an article on “Mission and Power” (2011).¹¹¹

Busan, 2013

The WCC assembly in Busan (2013) gathered under the theme: “God of life, lead us to justice and peace.” It was attended by 935 official delegates, with the participants representing more than 300 churches and 100 countries.¹¹² At Busan, a unity statement was issued lamenting the painful situation where diversity leads into divisions. The call for unity of all creation is much more powerful and is founded in a shared scriptural vision and understanding of the eucharist as the fullest understanding of communion. In this regard, the South African theologian Ernest Conradie made a valuable contribution regarding eco-theology at the Busan assembly with papers like “The God of life: A Counter-Intuitive Confession”¹¹³ and “What on Earth Did God Create? Overtures to an Ecumenical Theology of Creation.”¹¹⁴

110 Due to space, the themes will not be discussed here, and I gladly refer readers to the book.

111 Cornelius J. P. Niemandt, “Mission and Power—The Relevance of the Edinburgh 2010 Discussion in the Theological Engagement with Violence.” *Verbum et Ecclesia* 32:2 (2011), Art. #491, <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/ve.v32i2.491>.

112 Cornelius J. P. Niemandt and Jerry Pillay, “Trends in Ecumenism and Mission: Four Significant Ecumenical/Missional Events from 2010–2013,” *Reformed World* 65:1 (2015), 31–50, at 32.

113 Ernst M. Conradie, “The God of Life: A Counter-Intuitive Confession,” *The Ecumenical Review* 65:1 (2013), 3–16.

114 Ernst M. Conradie, “What on Earth Did God Create? Overtures to an Ecumenical Theology of Creation.” *The Ecumenical Review* 66:4 (2014), 433–53, <https://doi.org/10.1111/rev.12120>.

This endorsed ecclesiology tabled at the assembly as *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* stresses the importance of unity as recognizable as “the one, holy, catholic, apostolic church.”¹¹⁵

A new mission affirmation, the first in 30 years, was presented at the WCC Busan assembly—*Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes*. In this document, mission is understood as the flourishing of all creation. As such, this document calls for a mission understanding that moves beyond a narrowly human-centred approach to reconciliation with all created life.¹¹⁶ Related to the above, a discussion of life in a pluralistic world with different religions, worldviews, and cultures follows. Busan put forward some principles when Christians engage with other religions. Some of these principles that Niemandt and Pillay¹¹⁷ mention are the following: Acting in God’s love; imitating Christ; conduct yourself with integrity, charity, compassion, and humility; do acts of justice and service; reject violence; respect all people and their freedom of religion and belief; and build inter-religious relationships. As alluded to in *Together towards Life*, one might say that that conversion made place for conversation.

The assembly at Busan understood that justice belongs to the core of mission. Niemandt and Pillay draw attention to the fact that justice and community belong together.¹¹⁸ These are not two separate entities, the separation of these two is a false dichotomy. We can only speak of “justice in communion” and “communion in justice.” When understanding justice within communion, the issue of power is put on the table, and also power within mission. The *Together towards Life* document aptly describes this relation between mission and power when describing that the shift must be from “mission to the margins” to “mission from the margins.” “Mission from the margins calls for an understanding of the complexities of power dynamics, global systems and structures, and local contextual realities.”¹¹⁹ This clearly links to the relation between evangelism and social action. It is succinctly stated that evangelism and social action are not only done alongside each other, but that evangelism has social consequences as we call people to love and repentance in all areas of life.

115 Niemandt and Pillay, “Trends in Ecumenism and Mission,” 34.

116 Ibid., 37.

117 Ibid., 39.

118 Niemandt and Pillay, “Trends in Ecumenism and Mission,” 41.

119 Jooseop Keum, *Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes. With a Practical Guide* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2013), #37.

From the document “Ecumenical Covenant on Theological Education,” the strategic importance for the future of world Christianity is clear. Theological education is viewed as the seedbed for the renewal of the churches, their ministries, and their missions. Some of the challenges facing theological education are the rise in student numbers; the fast-growing Pentecostal churches in theological education; the demand to create more space for women leadership; funding; and quality or standard of theological education. The Busan assembly stated unequivocally that theological education and leadership are about the priesthood of all believers, and the training of the whole people of God is a key to the mission of the church.¹²⁰

Within the South(ern) African context, the outstanding theme to influence the local church is “justice in communion” and “communion in justice.” Another important theme with the fast-growing church in Africa is theological education, with all the above-mentioned challenges as well as eco-theology.

General Remark

After two decades of no relationship, the DRC and the WCC began to establish contact again in the 1980s. The result was that 30 years after the DRC attended the WCC assembly in New Delhi in 1961, they were again invited as guests to the 7th Assembly of the WCC in Canberra, Australia, in 1991. At the 8th and 9th assemblies of the WCC in 1998 and 2006, the delegates of the DRC were registered as observers. On 8 August 2012, Dr Kobus Gerber, then the general secretary of the DRC, sent an email to the WCC headquarters in Geneva applying for readmission of the DRC to the WCC. After much deliberation and many visits between the two institutions, the DRC received full readmission to the WCC in Trondheim in June 2016.

Main Findings, Insights, and New Questions Emerging from Studies and Discussions

- The church all over the world is challenged by the same issues, but we are challenged differently and therefore we need each other.
- What are the reasons for the rapid growth of Christianity in Africa?
- What does “justice in communion” or “communion in justice” entail in a pluralistic world?

120 *Ibid.*, 45.

Interest for Other Regions

- The unique ecclesiological context of South(ern) Africa.
- The good interreligious relationships in South Africa.

CHAPTER 11

Middle East Study Centre Historical Report

Wilbert van Saane

Introduction

The centenary of the International Missionary Council (IMC) (1921–2021) presents the churches with an opportunity to take stock of the ways in which they have cooperated in mission during the past century. This centenary and the 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in Karlsruhe in 2022 also provide an opportunity to explore new models for missionary cooperation. The theme of the assembly is “Christ’s love moves the world to unity and reconciliation.” This theme invites the churches to rethink the nature and modes of Christian mission while honestly facing their disagreements and divisions; to rejoice in their growth in mutual understanding; and to look for fresh ways of cooperation and reconciliation. This text is a contribution to this process from the perspective of the churches of the Middle East.

Historically, cooperation in mission has been a primary motif and concern of the ecumenical movement. A concern for cooperation was one of the main reasons to convene the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910, and led to the establishment of its Continuation Committee, which in turn resulted in the founding of the International Missionary Council (IMC) in October 1921. In the century that followed, the missionary and ecumenical landscapes changed in multiple ways. Doctrinal and cultural differences that previously seemed insurmountable became less of a hindrance for cooperation. Antagonisms and rivalries that had bitterly divided the churches were replaced by a degree of mutual trust and collaboration in a process facilitated by ecumenical organizations. The IMC and its successor, the WCC Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME), made no small contribution to this process. Some important ecumenical events took place in the Middle East, and a number of Middle Eastern churches, organizations, and individuals played a significant role. This report sheds light on these contributions from the Middle East.

This text was prepared by the Middle East IMC centenary study centre, which was convened upon the request of the CWME. The group consisted of representatives from the different ecclesial families that together constitute the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC): Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant. The core members of the group were: Rt. Rev. Archimandrite Dr Jack Khalil and Dr Souad Abou el Rouss Slim (Eastern Orthodox), The Ven. Garen Yosoukhanian (Oriental Orthodox), Rev. Dr Roupheal Zgheib (Catholic), The Ven. Dr John Holdsworth and Rev. Dr Wilbert van Saane (Protestant), and Rev. Dr Antoine Al Ahmar (on behalf of the MECC). The composition of the study centre was facilitated by the general secretary of the MECC, Dr Michel Abs. The group was supported by the following individuals at various stages of the process: Rev. Dr Gabriel Hachem, Ms Seta Hadesian, Dr Frieda Abs Haddad, Rev. Dr Tharwat Wahba, and Mr Jan Meerkerk. The contents of this text were discussed at three meetings of the study centre: one online meeting on 3 September 2021; a meeting at the Near East School of Theology in Beirut on 6 November 2021; and a meeting at the Saint John of Damascus Institute of Theology at Balamand University on 13 December 2021. The text was authored by the core members of the group, with the representatives of each ecclesial family paying special attention to the section of the text that concerns their tradition. It was compiled and edited by Wilbert van Saane.

The primary aim of this report is to trace and analyze the development of cooperation in Christian mission in the Middle East in the period 1921–2021. In order to clarify the method and approach of the Middle East study centre, we need to say a few words about the specific historical and missiological context, anticipating a deeper discussion later in this report.

In the first half of the 20th century, cooperation in mission took place within but hardly across the major denominational families. Protestant missionaries to the Middle East formed their missionary and Christian councils, thereby advancing cooperation. Parallel to this, the Roman Catholic missionary orders and churches coordinated among each other and with the Eastern Catholic communities. The Eastern Orthodox churches forged strong bonds among each other and entered a phase of renewed missionary engagement. The Oriental Orthodox churches were occupied with their nations' challenges and sufferings, which prompted them to renew their mission and service and seek cooperation with other churches.

In the second half of the 20th century, there was a gradual increase in interdenominational communication and cooperation. Catalysts were the rise of the ecumenical movement worldwide, the renewal movements within Orthodoxy, and the Second Vatican Council. The unifying efforts of

the Protestant missionaries, which had at first found an expression in the Near East Christian Council, led to the formation of the Near East Council of Churches in 1962, which also included the Syriac Orthodox Church. Intensified ecumenical work and interaction in the context of the WCC led to the formation of the MECC in 1974, with Protestant and Orthodox member churches. The circle of members gradually grew, and in 1990 the Catholic churches of the region also joined. The MECC consisted of four ecclesial families: Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant. This created a unique ecumenical setting for cooperation in and joint reflection on mission.

In light of these historical developments, this report presents historical reflections on cooperation in mission in the Middle East from the perspectives of the four ecclesial families that are represented within the MECC, even if some of these families did not have an official connection with the IMC and the CWME for some part of the 20th century. These four perspectives are followed by reflections on cooperation through interdenominational and ecumenical organizations. The report signals themes, interwoven in the narrative, that are especially relevant for cooperation in mission of the churches of the Middle East. As this report demonstrates, regional, political, social, and economic factors have shaped the understanding and practice of mission of the churches of the Middle East. For that reason, we briefly consider the context before turning to the four perspectives.

The Political, Social, and Economic Context of the Middle East

In this report, the term “Middle East” refers to the geographical area of Egypt, the Arabian Peninsula, Palestine, Jordan, Iraq, Iran, Syria, Lebanon, Cyprus, and Turkey. This region hosts multiple languages, cultures, religions, and ethnic groups. It is nevertheless unified by a shared modern history. From an ecclesiastical perspective, this region may be viewed as a unit because of the multiple interconnections between the churches.

Most of this territory was part of the Ottoman Empire and was caught up in the violence that accompanied its demise. The First World War also caused deep suffering in the region. The extermination, dispossession, and displacement of Armenians, Assyrians, Syriacs, and Greeks during the first quarter of the 20th century was a defining experience for the Christians of the region. The survivors had to rebuild their communities, institutions, and religious

life elsewhere in the region, or even beyond. This stamped the mission of all the Christian churches, and at times led to unexpected forms of cooperation.

A second defining reality was the mid-20th-century decolonization. It was preceded by the relatively peaceful interbellum French and British mandates in Jordan, Palestine, Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon, during which the churches developed their institutions. The decline of British and French political influence and the emergence of independent nation states was accompanied by social and political turmoil. In the independent nations of Saudi Arabia, the Gulf states, Jordan, Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon the churches had to position themselves anew and redefine their mission. In Palestine, the State of Israel was established and many Palestinian Arabs were displaced to neighbouring countries, while those who remained in Palestine were denied an independent state. The State of Israel engaged in various wars with its Arab neighbours and suppressed various Palestinian uprisings. In this context, the churches found *diakonia*, care for refugees, and questions of justice inevitably high on their list of priorities.

A third reality that had a defining influence on the mission of the churches were the political struggles within nation states. At times, armed conflict erupted, for example in Cyprus (especially in 1974), the Iran-Iraq war (1980–88), the Lebanese civil war (1975–90), Iraq after the US invasion (2003–2011), and the Syrian war (2011 and onwards). Additionally, in many nations human rights were under constant pressure, which curtailed the mission of proclamation and care for new believers.¹

A fourth important reality was the economic development of the region. During the second half of the 20th century, the populations of the Middle East nations ballooned in a context of rapid urbanization and industrialization. Relatively few people still owned land and relied on agriculture, which was a neglected sector in most countries. Most countries lacked mechanisms for the redistribution of wealth. This resulted in a widening gap between rich and poor, both among the people from the region and among migrant labourers who were attracted to the growing economies. The number of urban poor was especially high.² The churches could not ignore this and focused their mission on such urban and poor contexts.

Having sketched some social, political, and economic factors in very general lines, we are now in a position to explore the missionary engagement of

1 Heather J. Sharkey, "Mission and Evangelism," in *Christianity in North Africa and West Asia*, ed. Kenneth R. Ross, Mariz Tadros, and Todd M. Johnson (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), 347–59.

2 Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples* (London: Faber and Faber, 1991), 436–39.

the churches, and especially their efforts in cooperation. We will first consider the Orthodox churches.

The Eastern Orthodox Churches and Cooperation in Mission

Defining Eastern Orthodox mission

In the MECC, the Eastern Orthodox ecclesial family comprises the Greek Orthodox Church of Antioch and All the East, the Greek Orthodox Church of Jerusalem, the Greek Orthodox Church of Cyprus, and the Greek Orthodox Church of Alexandria and All Africa.

In the Orthodox tradition, the words that are equivalent to the connotation given to mission by Western churches are *apostoli* and *martyria*. As the meaning of *apostoli* suggests, it is derived from the title *apostolos*. The mission of the church is to continue the witness, the proclamation, and the social service that the apostles started. The mission of the church is summarized in Acts 2:42 and 44 (NAS) as follows: “And they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teachings and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer . . . And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common.” Accordingly, in the Orthodox view, the mission of the church is to proclaim the gospel, to give Christ in the eucharist to all the fellowship of those who accept his gospel, believe in him, and are baptized in the church. Finally, an important part of the church’s mission is to share the material blessings of Christ with those who are in need.

Orthodoxy and mission in the Middle East in history

The Middle East is the historical cradle of Christianity, dating back to the apostolic era. Antioch and its church became a major centre from which the Christian faith was disseminated throughout the entire Roman world. The apostles Peter and Paul are traditionally credited with heading the church at Antioch, where the followers of Christ were first called “Christians” (Acts 11:26). When the administrative structure of the church was developed, Antioch emerged naturally as a primatial patriarchal see. Alexandria, which was closely connected with the ministry of the apostle Mark and was the home of lively theological activity, also became a patriarchate, as well as Jerusalem where the church had begun. When Constantinople became the

new capital of the Roman Empire, it was also made a patriarchate. Together these patriarchates are often referred to as the *Rūmi* church.³

Historically, the Orthodox churches of the Middle East endured many hardships and tribulations, especially after the subjugation of the entire region to successive religious and political regimes, which often showed hostility toward the Orthodox constituency. Yet, the indissoluble communion and unity of the Orthodox churches was never broken. The patriarchs always maintained solidarity with each other. Together they safeguarded the Orthodox and apostolic faith and its liturgical tradition, whenever they were threatened.

For the Eastern Orthodox churches, the early modern period was marked by the traumatic experience of proselytism leading to recurring schisms, especially that of 1724 when some of their members embraced Uniate Roman Catholicism.⁴ From the perspective of the Orthodox churches, the appearance of both Western monastic orders and, later, Protestant missionaries in the Middle East created ruptures, discord, and divisions among Christians. The Catholic and Protestant communities throughout the region came into being when members of the Orthodox churches moved their allegiance either to Rome or to the Protestant communities. To the Orthodox, this was tantamount to Western infiltration and led to divisions and rivalry that harmed the common witness to the gospel. Thus, in the Orthodox view, one of the major obstacles to cooperation in mission was proselytism. The presence of Western missions also resulted in the association of Christianity with Western powers, and caused more harm to Christians, who were already facing persecution and famine and were forced to leave their lands in huge waves of emigration.⁵ More recently, Orthodox have pointed out that, even in the 21st century, Protestant mission initiatives continued to use unethical means to persuade their converts. In light of their painful history with Catholic and Protestant missions and continuing concern about the ethics of mission, Orthodox have placed the subject of proselytism high on the ecumenical agenda.

In spite of proselytism and the harm it inflicted, the Orthodox patriarchates continued their mission and witness to the gospel through the efforts

3 George Atiyeh, "The Rise of Eastern Churches and Their Heritage (5th–8th Century): Churches of the Byzantine Tradition," in *Christianity: A History in the Middle East*, ed. Habib Badr, Suad Abou el Rouss Slim, and Joseph Abou Nohra (Beirut: Middle East Council of Churches, 2005), 293–316.

4 For a detailed narration of this period, see Constantin A. Pachenko, *Arab Orthodox Christian under the Ottomans: 1516–1831*, trans. Brittany Pheiffer Noble and Samuel Noble (Jordanville: Holy Trinity Seminary Press, 2016), 364–408.

5 For an exploration of the motives of migration, see David Thomas, "Arab Christianity," in *The Blackwell Companion to Eastern Christianity*, ed. Ken Parry (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 20–21.

of their members and thanks to the unity with the other Eastern Orthodox churches, which provided strong support during those trying times.

Missionary and ecumenical renewal in the 20th century

At the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, two major events marked the history of Eastern Orthodoxy in general and the Patriarchate of Antioch in particular. The first was the election of a patriarch from the Indigenous community in 1898, following a period of 180 years when erudite patriarchs were sought from other Orthodox patriarchates to help stand against the Western orders and missionaries, and the second was the end of Ottoman hegemony over the region.

As a result of these events, the mission of the Orthodox churches in the 20th century developed enormously. New schools were established and the existing schools flourished, and the hierarchs exercised their pastoral work with devotion and self-denial, while the laity contributed to the revival of education, including theological formation, liturgical life, pastoral care, and church-related activities for youth.

Some institutions were financed and governed by the Orthodox Church but were operated as interdenominational bodies, employing staff from all religious affiliations. The school of Bkeftine in Lebanon was a striking example of that. It followed the national curricular programme and recruited its staff from different religious groups, and none of the students were required to attend the Orthodox liturgical services of worship. Maronite students, for instance, were sent to attend the Maronite church services in their own church in town.

Gregorios IV Haddad, Patriarch of Antioch (1906–28), set the tone for the 20th-century Orthodox approach to mission. He guided his community through trying years of war and political change and worked tirelessly for peaceful coexistence between Muslims and Christians and the wellbeing of all. He put this principle in practice in the relief work he initiated for the destitute during World War I, when famine struck the region. Relief services extended by the patriarchate thus presented an example of Christian charity and witness devoid of any attempt at promoting self-interest, in accordance with the spirit of the gospel. Such a non-discriminatory practice characterized the mission of the Eastern Orthodox churches throughout the 20th century. They combined a commitment to freedom of religion and human rights with a deep social concern.

The Eastern Orthodox churches were deeply affected by the emigration of many members during the 20th century. Migration was prompted by the difficult economic circumstances in the region, by the political upheaval, and,

in the case of the Greeks of Asia Minor, by the Greek-Turkish War of 1922 and the population exchanges that followed it.⁶ The émigrés established faith communities all through the world, adopting the languages of their new lands while continuing to practice their faith in their Orthodox mother churches. This was especially true for the Patriarchate of Antioch. Whereas the diaspora of the Patriarchate of Antioch was found in the Americas, Australia, and elsewhere, the diaspora of the Patriarchate of Alexandria was mostly found in African countries. New forms of cooperation in mission developed, especially when newly established Orthodox communities placed themselves under the jurisdiction of Alexandria. The Greek Church of Cyprus also supported Orthodox communities in Africa, especially in Kenya.⁷

An important development in the 20th century was the springing up of a cross-continent Orthodox Youth Movement in the 1940s. This movement sought to nurture and educate believers in the principles of their faith and to revive liturgical practices and monastic traditions, and emphasized the role and responsibility of the laity in the life of the church community. It promoted the publication of books and research in theology and other related fields.⁸ The youth movement of the Church of Antioch played a leading role in establishing the international Orthodox youth alliance that came to be known as Syndesmos. Through Syndesmos, ecumenical bonds were forged between the Orthodox churches and other Christian entities, such as the World Student Christian Federation (WSCF). Theological education received a major impetus by the establishment of the Theological Institute of Saint John the Damascene in 1970. In 1988, general academic education was further promoted by the Church of Antioch through the establishment of the University of Balamand by the late Patriarch Ignatius IV. Inspired by the tradition of the Antiochian Orthodox tradition, the university promoted values of tolerance, openness, and compassion, with no discrimination on the basis of religion, race, sex, nationality, or physical disability.

The Eastern Orthodox churches helped prepare the ground for the ecumenical movement and were instrumental in founding the MECC. In 1902, Patriarch Joachim III issued an encyclical letter to all the Orthodox churches asking them to jointly find ways towards rapprochement with the other churches. His second encyclical letter, issued in 1920, went into more

6 Brian Stanley, *Christianity in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2018), 320-23.

7 Stephen Hays, "Orthodox Mission in Tropical Africa," <https://missions.hchc.edu/articles/articles/orthodox-mission-in-tropical-africa>.

8 Sortiris Roussos, "Eastern Orthodox Christianity in the Middle East," in *Eastern Christianity*, ed. Anthony O'Mahony and Emma Loosley (London: Routledge, 2010), 107-19.

detail, calling for “mutual accountability between the churches, for a sharing of knowledge about their respective traditions, and for commitment to a common diaconal work.”⁹

When the Near East Council of Churches was established, which consisted of the Protestant churches of the region and the Syriac Orthodox Church of Antioch, the Orthodox churches entered the negotiations on constitution and membership and helped create the MECC in 1974. The Orthodox Youth Movement, and especially its Beirut secretary Gabriel Habib, played an important role in fostering an ecumenical spirit at the grassroots level.¹⁰

The Middle East Orthodox churches have demonstrated their emphasis on faith-in-practice, especially in the face of crises and at times when the state could not provide the necessary support. They set up hospitals, dispensaries, nursing homes, and relief agencies for displaced population groups as well as homes for children deprived of normal family life. In Cyprus, the Greek Orthodox Church played an important role in the 1970s, when more than 200,000 were displaced.¹¹ In Syria and Lebanon, the patriarchate brought relief to many during the multiple crises of the past decades, especially through its Department of Ecumenical Relations and Development (DERD).¹²

This brief historical survey demonstrates that Orthodox mission in the Middle East was characterized by faith-in-action. In the Orthodox view, the meaning of Christian witness is found in the church fathers’ exegesis of the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10), in which the “stranger” is Christ himself. Moreover, the man who fell among thieves is likened to Christ also. The tender as well as he who was attended to are one in the thought of the fathers because they were united by the bond of neighbourly love. As the text of the Orthodox prayer for the Sunday liturgy written by Saint John Chrysostom states, “You are the Offeror as well as the One who is offered, O Jesus our King.”

9 Tamara Grdzeldze, “Orthodox,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Ecumenical Studies*, ed. Geoffrey Wainwright and Paul McPartlan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 68–69.

10 Jean Corbon, “Ecumenism in the Middle East: I. History,” in Badr, Slim and Abou Nohra, *Christianity: A History in the Middle East*, 876–77.

11 Elizabeth H. Prodromou and Nathanael Symeonides, “Orthodox Christianity and Humanitarianism: An Introduction to Thought and Practice, Past and Present,” *The Review of Faith and International Affairs* 14:1 (2016), 1–8, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/15570274.2016.1145479>.

12 Alexi Chehadeh, “Diakonia in the Greek (Rum) Orthodox Tradition: The Context of Syria and GOPA-DERD,” in *International Handbook on Ecumenical Diakonia: Contextual Theologies and Practices of Diakonia and Christian Social Services – Resources for Study and Intercultural Learning*, ed. Dietrich Werner et al. (Oxford: Regnum Books, 2021), 179–85.

The Oriental Orthodox Churches and Cooperation in Mission

Oriental Orthodoxy and mission

The Oriental Orthodox ecclesial family in the Middle East includes the Coptic Orthodox Church, the Syriac Orthodox Church of Antioch and All the East, and the Armenian Apostolic Church – Great House of the Catholicosate of Cilicia. Their sense of mission is shaped by their “apostolic biblical foundation,” which they share with the Eastern Orthodox tradition.¹³

The Oriental Orthodox churches have ancient traditions of mission. In the early Christian centuries, missionaries from Alexandria travelled south to bring the gospel to various African peoples.¹⁴ The peoples of the Caucasus were evangelized by the Armenian Church.¹⁵ Coptic, Syriac, and Armenian lay people and monks evangelized as they travelled, for example along the silk roads and in North Africa.¹⁶

In the 20th century, the Oriental Orthodox churches were affected profoundly by the political, economic, and social ruptures in the region. This often resulted in cooperation of Oriental Orthodox churches with Roman Catholic monastic orders such as the Capuchins, Franciscans, and Jesuits, and with Protestant missions, especially in the fields of relief, education, and medical support.

Oppression, persecution, and mission

In Egypt, World War I was followed by revolution and tensions between Egyptian nationalists and the British government. The second half of the century saw the rise of pan-Arabism, Nasserism, and religiously motivated political groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood. At times, Coptic Christians faced discrimination and legal restrictions.¹⁷ The relations with the Egyptian government were sometimes strained and reached their lowest point in 1980, when

13 Aho Shemunkasho, “Oriental Orthodox,” in Ross, Tadros and Johnson, *Christianity in North Africa and West Asia*, 247–58.

14 Stephen Bevans and Roger Schroeder, *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2004), 113–14.

15 Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity, Volume II: The Thousand Years of Uncertainty AD 500–AD 1500* (New York and London: Harper & Brother Publishers, 1938), 249–50.

16 Stephen Neill, *A History of Christian Missions*, revised for the second edition by Owen Chadwick (London: Penguin, 1986, first edition 1964), 129–31.

17 Samuel Tadros, “Egypt,” in Ross, Tadros and Johnson, *Christianity in North Africa and West Asia*, 68–79.

Patriarch Shenuda III was exiled by President Anwar al-Sadat.¹⁸ In subsequent decades, the relations with the government improved, but Coptic Orthodox churches were targeted repeatedly by extremist Islamist militant groups.

The Syriac Orthodox Church and the Armenian Orthodox Church were impacted by the devastations of the Armenian genocide and the Sayfo, in which hundreds of thousands of their members were killed, dispossessed, uprooted, and displaced. Communities of surviving Armenians and Syriacs had to rebuild their societies and their institutions in places such as Jezire in Northeast Syria, Aleppo, and parts of Lebanon. In the early 21st century, Syriac and Armenian communities in Iraq and Syria suffered new blows as a result of violence, environmental degradation, and the resulting poverty, causing fresh waves of emigration. These churches accompanied their people through these trials, and moved with them, as is seen in the relocation of their patriarchates.

Protestant mission agencies and missionaries provided humanitarian assistance to Syriac and Armenian communities during the genocide and Sayfo, and also at later stages. In many cases, they coordinated their efforts with the leadership of the Orthodox churches. For that reason, the relations between the Protestant missions and these communities in Lebanon, Syria, Jerusalem, and Cyprus were quite harmonious. In some cases, Protestant agencies devolved properties to Orthodox churches, such as the present location of the Catholicosate of Cilicia.

Care for orphans who had survived the genocide or the Sayfo was a marked aspect of mission. During the League of Nations mandates, many Armenians and Syriacs lived in refugee camps in places such as Beirut, Bourj Hammoud, Sidon, Galilee, Tripoli, Latakia, Damascus, Port Said, Alexandria, and Jezire. Among these displaced and destitute communities, Protestant missionaries set up and managed a large number of orphanages. They provided schooling, vocational training, and income-generating projects. The non-sectarian American organization Near East Relief (in 1928 it was renamed Near East Foundation) was one of the largest players and is credited with the salvation of more than one million lives.¹⁹ But Protestant agencies and individuals also contributed much. To illustrate this, we briefly refer to the work of two missionaries. Danish missionary Maria Jacobsen, who had worked with survivors

18 Otto F. A. Meinardus, *Two Thousand Years of Coptic Christianity* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 1999), 84–85.

19 Davide Rodogno, “Beyond Relief: A Sketch of the Near East Relief’s Humanitarian Operations, 1918–1929,” *Monde(s)* 6:2 (2014), 45–64. Keith David Watenpugh, *Bread from Stones: The Middle East and the Making of Modern Humanitarianism* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015), 91–123.

of the Hamidian Massacres (1894–96) in Kharpert, started orphanages in Sidon, Aley, and Byblos for the survivors of the Armenian genocide. She was called *mayrig* (mother) by many Armenians.²⁰ In the orphanage that she managed in Byblos, the so-called Bird's Nest, she cooperated with Armenian Apostolic clergy, who taught the children and administered the sacraments according to the Armenian Apostolic tradition. Swiss missionary Jacob Küntzler engaged in medical, relief, educational, and advocacy work, at first in the ravaged city of Urfa (1899–1922) and later in Lebanon (1923–49). Küntzler helped thousands of orphans escape death during the genocide and organized their transfer to Syria and Lebanon, where he continued to care for them.²¹ He worked for better social and economic conditions among the refugee populations and was called *baba* (father) by many under his care.

Ecumenism and proselytism

The work of missionaries among Oriental Orthodox communities was not exclusively devoted to the survivors of the genocide and the Sayfo, and the relations between the missionaries and the church leaders were sometimes tense. In Egypt, Catholic and Protestant missionaries worked in competition with each other and with the Coptic Orthodox Church. In spite of this rivalry, they served many through their educational work and helped spark renewal within the Coptic Orthodox Church.²²

The Oriental Orthodox churches were among the first to become members of official ecumenical bodies. In 1948, the Coptic Orthodox Church became a founding member of the WCC. The Syriac Orthodox Church and the Armenian Orthodox Church became members in 1960 and 1962, respectively. In 1964, the Syriac Orthodox Church responded positively when the Protestant churches formed the Near East Council of Churches, leaving behind the idea of a council of missions and churches. In 1974, the other Oriental Orthodox churches became members of the MECC, along with the Eastern Orthodox and Protestant churches.

The issue of proselytism was a source of pain for the Oriental Orthodox churches, especially during the 19th century. The challenge to bring members of the Oriental Orthodox churches into the folds of Catholicism and Protestantism was a cause of deep concern and resulted in conflicts and

20 Maria Småberg, "Mission and Cosmopolitan Mothering: Saving Armenian Mothers and Orphans, 1902–1947," *Social Sciences and Missions* 30 (2017), 44–73.

21 Jakob Küntzler, *Im Lande des Blutes und der Tränen: Erlebnisse in Mesopotamien während des Weltkrieges (1914–1918)*, herausgegeben von Hans-Lukas Kieser (Zürich: Chronos, 1999).

22 Heather J. Sharkey, *American Evangelicals in Egypt: Missionary Encounters in an Age of Empire* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008), 44–47.

excommunications of members of the Oriental Orthodox churches who converted to Catholicism or Protestantism. However, interdenominational antagonism faded to the background when solidarity in suffering and ethnic solidarity became more prominent in the face of the genocide and the Sayfo and their aftermaths. Armenians and Syriacs were focused on group survival, emphasizing their common ethnicity, and the missionaries supported and brought relief. The growth of an ecumenical spirit within the missionary movement and the reduction of Western missionaries in the region also contributed to the de-escalation of tensions over proselytism.

Missionary renewal

The Oriental Orthodox involvement in mission received a new impetus from various renewal movements in the 20th century. The Coptic Orthodox Church went through a period of theological and monastic renewal, which had distinctly missionary dimensions, expressed in intellectual activity, literature work, social activism, and a fresh appeal to the faithful.²³ By the end of the 20th century, the phenomenon of pilgrimage to Coptic monasteries was an important aspect of Coptic church life. The key figures of this renewal were also associated with the Sunday school movement, which emerged in the Armenian and Coptic churches. This movement was founded in Egypt by Archdeacon Habib Girgis (1876–1951) and by Catholicos Sahak II Khabayan (1849–1939) at the Forty Martyrs Church in Aleppo. Sahak's successor Bedros I Sarajian (1870–1940) developed it further. The Oriental Orthodox Sunday schools were “based on a Protestant model, offered a biblical and liturgical catechesis to all, and invited them to make a concrete commitment.”²⁴ The Coptic Orthodox Church also renewed its missionary engagement in African countries, especially Kenya, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Namibia, and Sudan. This led to the establishment of Coptic churches and monasteries in these countries. The relations between the Coptic Orthodox Church and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church were also part of this African outreach, but they were beset by political and ecclesiastical problems.²⁵ The monasteries had a central role in the mission of the Syriac Orthodox Church,

23 Metropolitan Bishoy, “Revival of the Egyptian Church,” in Badr, Slim and Abou Nohra, *Christianity: A History in the Middle East*, 775–96. See also Anthony O'Mahony, “The Politics of Religious Renewal: Coptic Christianity in Egypt,” in *Eastern Christianity: Studies in Modern History, Religion and Politics*, ed. Anthony O'Mahony (London: Melisende, 2004), 81–91.

24 Anthony O'Mahony, “The Coptic Orthodox Church in Modern Egypt,” in O'Mahony and Loosley, *Eastern Christianity in the Modern Middle East*, 66–67.

25 Meinardus, *Two Thousand Years of Coptic Christianity*, 134–36.

but its monasteries were located in territories that were the scene of war and displacement. Nevertheless, pilgrimage to the monasteries in the old heartlands of the community, such as the Tur Abdin region, remained a significant part of the spirituality of the diaspora communities.²⁶

As the Armenian and Syriac communities became more settled in Syria and Lebanon, the churches developed their own understanding and practice of mission, often emerging from the grassroots. A good example of this was the Armenian Relief Society, which began prior to the genocide as a movement of women providing social and medical aid under the name Armenian Red Cross. After the genocide, the Armenian Relief Society continued to grow in the Armenian diaspora. It remained a non-sectarian humanitarian organization and was organized in local chapters, giving women the opportunity to meet the social, educational, and medical needs of their communities. In Lebanon it became known as the Armenian Relief Cross. In 1939, Patriarch Sahak II blessed the organization and designated a Friday in Lent as a day of fasting and fundraising for the Society. Another example of grassroots mission was the Armenian Church University Students' Association (ACUSA), which was founded in 1963, upon the request of the Dean of the (then still Protestant) American University of Beirut. Working with the blessing of the Catholicosate, it brought together Armenian students from different universities and connected them to the wider ecumenical movement, cooperating with the WSCF, Syndesmos, and the youth departments of the WCC and the MECC.

The violence and displacement that the Oriental Orthodox experienced shaped the understanding and praxis of mission. The expulsion of Syriacs/Assyrians and Armenians from their historical homelands caused the churches to re-emphasize their ties to their peoples, cultures, and their lands. Unlike the Coptic, Ethiopian, and the Malankara and Malabar churches who remained in their homelands, the Armenians and Syriacs were deported and resettled during the 20th century and, prompted by further economic crises, wars, and violence in the 21st century, continued to migrate in large numbers to Western countries. As a result, the preservation of their unique identities became an important part of their mission. Catholicos Aram I of the Armenian Apostolic Church spoke of an “ethnic mission.”²⁷ Their ancient languages—Syriac,

26 Heleen Murre-van den Berg, “De Syrisch-Orthodoxe Kerk,” in *Handboek Oosters Christendom*, ed. Herman Teule and Alfons Brüning (Leuven: Peeters, 2018), 158–71.

27 See Catholicos Aram I's Armenian work *Facing New Horizons* (Antelias: Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia, 2018), 132 and 147. For an elaborate description of his view on mission and ethnicity, see Aram Keshishian, *The Witness of the Armenian Church in a Diaspora Situation: Problems, Perspectives, Prospects* (New York: Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church in America, 1978). Aram I, *Taking the Church to the People* (Antelias: Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia, 2011), 76–105.

Armenian, and Coptic—and their interwovenness with the Christian tradition were part of the unique identity they cherished and fostered.

Their involvement in the ecumenical movement enabled the Oriental Orthodox churches to develop fresh missiological visions. This was especially evident in the work of Aram I, who served many ecumenical bodies and was moderator of the Central and Executive Committees of the WCC for two terms (1991–2006). Aram I presented a broad ecumenical vision for unity and mission in the Middle East, springing from the eucharist and expressing itself in local *diakonia*, solidarity with the oppressed, and dialogue with Muslims.²⁸ He adopted the ecumenical idea of God’s mission and emphasized that the church itself had no mission but was part of God’s mission. He explicated this understanding of mission in four ways: eucharist and liturgy were the heart of the church; *diakonia* was an expression of the servant nature of the church; martyrdom was a sign of the indestructible resurrection life of the church; and there was a need to continuously take the church “beyond its walls” to the people by renewing the church according to the changing context.

The Roman Catholic Church and Cooperation in Mission

Catholic mission and re-unification

The Catholic ecclesial family in the Middle East comprises the Maronite Church, the Greek Catholic Melkite Church, the Chaldean Catholic Church of Babylon, the Syriac Catholic Church, the Coptic Catholic Church, the Armenian Catholic Church, and the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem. The history of the Eastern Catholic churches and their relationship with Rome is complex. They had their own monastic and clerical traditions, which traced their lineage back to Saint Anthony the Great and Saint Basil the Great.²⁹

Even though the concept of mission in the Roman Catholic church went through a paradigm shift between the 15th century and the Second Vatican Council and even though many official texts published before Vatican II ascribed dignity to the Eastern Christians and to the local cultures, on the practical level the missions and the missionaries continued to be influenced by the paradigm of re-unification. Ever since the Council of Ferrara-Florence

28 Archbishop Aram Keshishian, *Orthodox Perspectives on Mission* (Oxford: Regnum Books, 1992), 96–106.

29 A detailed consideration of the interactions of these orders with the Latin missions is beyond the scope of this report.

(1437–45), Roman Catholic missionary work in the Middle East was partially driven by this objective of re-unification, namely the re-unification of the Eastern and Oriental churches with the Roman Catholic Church. The Council of Trent (1545–63) reinforced this goal, and in its wake Catholic missions introduced new ecclesiological and soteriological concepts into the Eastern and Oriental churches, such as the papacy and its universal jurisdiction and an exclusivist principle of salvation.³⁰ As has been noted, these churches often perceived the activity of the Catholic missionaries as proselytism and detrimental to Christian unity. The Maronite Church was the exception. It was the only church that unanimously restored communion with the Roman Catholic Church. In all other cases, the Roman missions resulted in segments of the Eastern and Oriental churches unifying with Rome. The status of these “uniate” churches is a subject of continuing debate within the ecumenical movement, caught as they were between Rome and their mother (Oriental and Eastern Orthodox) churches. A discussion of this problem falls outside the scope of this report, but we signal that it has significant bearing on mission in unity in the Middle East.

While the encyclical on the Eastern churches, *Orientalium dignitas*, which was issued by Pope Leo XIII in 1894, embraced the diversity of rites within the one Catholic Church and opposed Latinization, thus providing the uniate churches with a degree of recognition and legitimacy, it continued to cast the Eastern and Oriental Orthodox churches as being “in a state of want” and emphasized that they needed to be “called back.” As a result, Catholic missionary work in the Middle East between 1894 and the Second Vatican Council (1962–65) continued to be marked by a degree of proselytism, which continued to strain relations with the Eastern and Oriental churches. In addition, since the appearance of Protestant missions on the scene, Catholics and Protestants engaged in a kind of missionary competition, vigorously building educational, medical, and social institutions. While this was a disservice to Christian unity, this rivalry contributed to educational, economic, and social progress of the societies of the Middle East.

For most of the period under consideration, the religious orders were the primary agents of Catholic mission in the Middle East. The orders that were part of the eastern Catholic churches, such as the Maronite orders, were active in education, health care, printing and media ministries, and other forms of mission. The missionary work of the Maronite orders also extended to other continents, especially among diaspora Maronite communities. The history

30 Gabriel Hachem, “Les défis ecclésiologiques et oecuméniques au Moyen-Orient,” *Le Proche-Orient Chrétien*, 68. Gabriel Hachem, “Ecclesiology,” in Ross, Tadros, and Johnson, *Christianity in North Africa and West Asia*, 409.

of these indigenous orders is often overlooked in the historiography, which often focuses on the Western orders, but is crucial to the understanding of Catholic mission in the region.³¹

The Franciscans, Dominicans, and Carmelites had a missionary presence in the area from the time of the Crusades and sustained this. From the 17th century, the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith gave the missionary work direction and coordination. This led to a renewal and increase in the missionary activity of the monastic orders in the region. Franciscans and Carmelites, and later the Dominicans, renewed and expanded their work. Capuchins and Jesuits arrived and began to work in various parts of the region. The high colonial period, which continued in the Middle East through the French and British mandates, was an especially fruitful period for Catholic missionary orders. New orders arrived that were focused on education, social, and medical work, such as the Sisters of Charity, the Little Brothers of Mary, and the Brethren of Christian Schools. They initiated many institutions that continue to operate until the present.³² Some of these orders engaged in collaborative efforts, such as the Sisters of Charity and the Lazarists. They provided an effective model of intra-Catholic missionary cooperation. The work of the orders continued throughout the 20th and early 21st centuries, not seldom in the face of great challenges.

The Second Vatican Council and renewal in mission

The Second Vatican Council ushered in a new era in Catholic missions. It presented the church as the pilgrim people of God, who are engaged in mission. This opened the way for a more comprehensive understanding of mission similar to the notion of *missio Dei*, which was developed simultaneously in the ecumenical movement. The Council also displayed a new ecumenical openness, even though the remaining obstacles to unity were not ignored. It constituted a thaw in the relations with the Eastern and Oriental Orthodox churches and resulted in a joint declaration of Pope Paul VI and the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, Athenagoras I, which breathed a spirit of penitence and mutual pardon. It also spoke more appreciatively of Protestant traditions than any Catholic doctrinal statement had done before. Finally, the Council expressed a respect for other religions and emphasized

31 For an introduction to Maronite monasticism see Georges-Joseph Mahfoud, *L'organisation monastique dans l'Église Maronite: étude historique* (Beirut: Université Saint-Esprit de Kaslik, 1967).

32 For an overview of the work of Catholic missionaries in the Middle East, see Salim Daccache, "Catholic Missions in the Middle East," in Badr, Slim and Abou Nohra, *Christianity: A History in the Middle East*, 687–712.

the importance of interfaith dialogue. All these developments affected Catholic missions in the decades that followed, which was especially seen in a growth in “cooperation, dialogue, mutual respect, joint endeavour, and cultural interaction.”³³

One of the most impressive displays of intra-Catholic cooperation in mission was the growth of the work of Caritas, a Roman Catholic humanitarian organization, in the Middle East in the last quarter of the 20th and the early 21st century. Working on behalf of the Catholic churches of the Middle East and embedded in these churches on the level of parishes, dioceses, and the national church, Caritas offered relief and development services throughout the region to local people and migrants and refugees alike. Caritas embodied the spirit of Vatican II in that it mobilized the laity to contribute to fundraising and the implementation of services.

Vatican II opened the way for a joint consideration of thorny missiological subjects. The Joint Working Group of the Roman Catholic Church and the WCC, which was created in 1965 immediately after the Second Vatican Council, turned its attention to proselytism. In the decree *Orientalium ecclesiarum*, the council recognized the right of the Eastern Catholic churches to live according to their own tradition on the liturgical, disciplinary, theological and spiritual levels. Moreover, the publication on the same day of the *Unitatis redintegratio* decree on ecumenism and *Orientalium ecclesiarum* underscored the intrinsic link between these two realities. This laid on the Eastern Catholic churches a special responsibility in the search for Christian unity and more particularly with the Orthodox world.

Just before the Second Vatican Council, and under the influence of Sunday schools of the Orthodox churches, the Institute of Notre Dame des Dons in Achrafieh, Beirut, of the Antonine Sisters undertook a renewal of the catechesis in the Catholic Church based on the Bible, the liturgy, and the life of the catechists and rooted in the Antiochian tradition. The aim was to give the young generation a religious education that was relevant to the modern world. This was the first step on the path toward a common catechesis based on the common tradition. This project was realized in 2005 after the Accord of Charfeh between the Catholic and Orthodox patriarchs in 1996.³⁴ As a result, the Catholic churches witnessed the rise and flourishing of centres for theological and catechetical formation for religious and laypeople, to prepare them to hand over the faith to the new generations.

33 Daccache, “Catholic Missions,” 707.

34 Catholic and Orthodox Patriarchs of the East, “L’Accord de Charfeh,” Infocatho, 14 October 1996, http://infocatho.cef.fr/fichiers_html/oecumenisme/uniteaccords/accordcharfeh.html.

Catholic educational institutions, both schools and universities, helped fashion a culture of understanding and co-existence among new generations, both Muslims and Christians, through the quality of education and values that they handed over. Catholic monasteries played a big role in the educational field, as monastic orders managed schools and even universities. At the same time, the monasteries were always places for searching for God through wisdom and they continued to attract seekers of God. The monks and nuns thus lived between prayer and mission.

Mission as Christian presence in the Middle East

In 1990, the Catholic churches of the Middle East became members of the MECC, which was a momentous step. This made the MECC the main platform for ecumenical conversations in the region. Just before this, in 1989, the MECC Commission on Faith and Unity presented a special report entitled “Proselytism, Sects, and Pastoral Challenges: A Study Document.”³⁵ This document called for a pastoral agreement among the churches, “a dialogue of love” in which issues of proselytism could be resolved.³⁶

The final decade of the 20th century saw fresh missiological reflection: for example, in the letters of the patriarchs of the East, especially the letter entitled “Christian Presence in the East, Mission and Witness” (1992). In it, the patriarchs defined mission as *houdour* (presence). *Houdour* was interpreted not in a passive sense, but as a meaningful, active, presence that had an impact on society and was a sign of the presence of God. It was described as a presence on different levels, but above all as an incarnated presence: in prayer, service, ecumenical dialogue, and human rights. It was an invitation to the churches “to be ‘with,’ ‘in,’ ‘for,’ and not ‘against,’ ‘outside,’ or even ‘on the margins’ of the society in which we live.”³⁷

Further important missiological reflection was expressed in the post-synodal exhortation “New Hope for Lebanon” (1997). Although it was a synod for Lebanon, its insights embraced the whole Middle East. It had significant implications for collaboration in mission because it called the Catholic Church in Lebanon to a renewal on different levels—intra-ecclesial, inter-ecclesial, and interreligious—as well as an engagement for reconciliation and peace in

35 For a discussion and interpretation of this document, see David A. Kerr, “Mission and Proselytism: A Middle East Perspective,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 20:1 (1996), 12–22.

36 *Ibid.*, 18.

37 Eastern Catholic Patriarchs, “La présence chrétienne en Orient témoignage et mission,” 2ème Lettre pastorale, Pâques 1992, *Documentation catholique* 2052 (1992).

society. According to this document, mission was to live communion on the personal and structural levels, so that the church may live its mission fully.

These insights were echoed by the Patriarchal Synod of the Maronite Church (2003–06). While being aware of the challenges and threats to Middle East Catholic communities, the synod denounced an attitude of isolation, calling the faithful to identification with the Arab world, solidarity with Muslim neighbours, and a life of witness and dialogue. “[O]ur Synod calls upon us not to limit our apostolic testimony to our own environment, but to go beyond it and reach out for new human horizons that lack the vivifying word of the Gospel.”³⁸ Another issue raised by this synod was the diaspora and its impact on Maronite identity. Just like the Orthodox churches, this was equally pertinent to all the Eastern Catholic churches because of the emigration of their faithful and their desire to maintain contact with their churches.

On the regional level, the special assembly for the Middle East of the Synod of Bishops, which was held at the Vatican in 2010, paid extensive attention to the mission of the Roman Catholic Church. The understanding of mission presented in the preparatory document (the *Lineamenta*) focused on maintaining faith and witness in the Middle East, mindful of the threats to Christian communities, and nevertheless rejecting isolation and a ghetto-mentality. The missiological implications of migration from and to the Middle East were further explored, and churches were encouraged to be attentive to migrants living among them. As in “New Hope for Lebanon,” these missiological considerations were based on an inclusive communion-ecclesiology: “The life of the Church and the Churches of the Middle East must be a communion of life in love, according to the model of the union of the Son with the Father and the Spirit.”³⁹ The *Lineamenta* also paid attention to common witness with the other churches, highlighting the importance of the Christian schools, where children from many backgrounds came together. The text celebrated the agreements reached on mixed marriages, first communion, and a common catechism, while expressing a continued longing for common dates for Christmas and Easter. The special assembly of the Synod of Bishops was followed by an apostolic exhortation, in which Pope Benedict XVI spoke appreciatively about a “spiritual ecumenism” in the everyday life of parishes, schools, monasteries, and universities in the Middle East. The exhortation also

38 Maronite Patriarchate of Antioch and the Entire East, *Maronite Patriarchal Synod: Texts and Recommendations* (Bkerke: Saint Maron Publications, 2008), 61.

39 Special Assembly for the Middle East of the Synod of Bishops, “The Catholic Church in the Middle East: Communion and Witness” (Vatican City, 2009), https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20091208_lineamenta-mo_en.html.

mentioned the already existing “ecumenism of service” in which Christians from different traditions work together for the common good.⁴⁰

In conclusion, during the period 1921–2021, the mission of the Catholic churches of the Middle East thus shifted from an approach that emphasized the institutional church to a collaborative and inclusive approach, nourished by a communion-ecclesiology. Official interaction between the Roman Catholic Church and the WCC/CWME began after the Second Vatican Council and, on the level of the Middle East, took place primarily within the context of the MECC.

As was the case in other communities, the mission of Catholic communities in the Middle East was hampered by large-scale emigration of Christians from the region. Illustrative was the exodus of Chaldeans from Iraq and Iran; an estimated 70 percent of the members of the Chaldean Church emigrated since 2003.⁴¹ On the other hand, Christian presence in the Gulf countries increased, which affected mission in these countries. While many Christians left the traditional homelands of Christianity, flourishing churches sprang up in the Gulf, where large numbers of people were living their faith and witnessing in their daily life. They brought their faith with them and were very active in catechesis and formation to transmit their faith.

Protestants and Cooperation in Mission

Defining Protestant mission

Protestantism in the Middle East and Gulf regions has always been a diverse phenomenon. The European and American Protestant missions to the region, which took a high flight in the 19th century and continued into the late-20th century, were characterized by a diversity of nationalities, cultures, missionary approaches, and theologies.⁴² Protestant mission is here interpreted with reference to the five marks of mission, which were articulated by an Anglican

40 Pope Benedict XVI, “Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Medio Oriente* of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI to the Patriarchs, Bishops, Clergy, Consecrated Persons, and the Lay Faithful on the Church in the Middle East: Communion and Witness” (Vatican Press, 2012), https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20120914_ecclesia-in-medio-oriente.html.

41 Anthony O’Mahony, “Catholics,” in Ross, Tadros and Johnson, *Christianity in North Africa and West Asia*, 280.

42 For a good impression of the diversity in Protestant missions, see Heleen Murre-van den Berg, ed., *New Faiths in Ancient Lands: Western Missions in the Middle East in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2006).

working group and widely accepted in the Anglican Communion at the end of the 20th century. These five marks are: proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ; the teaching, baptizing and nurturing of new believers; loving service in response to human need; the transformation of unjust structures of society; and the safeguarding of creation.⁴³ Protestant mission in the Middle East has displayed these marks to varying degrees in the period 1921–2021.

Protestant mission in a changing political landscape

The influence of European colonial powers in the region, especially Britain and France, facilitated the propagation of Protestantism. British trading posts in the Gulf region enabled the Anglican Church to freely establish itself. Within the Ottoman Empire things were not quite so simple, but European influence was nevertheless one of the factors that made Protestantism flourish. The French and British League of Nations mandates, which replaced the Ottoman Empire, were even more conducive to Protestant mission, so that by the mid-20th century Protestantism, albeit only a small demographic, was well-established in the region with numerous churches and educational, social, and medical institutions.

In the 19th century, Protestant missionaries arrived in the Middle East with high hopes for conversion of Muslims and Jews. Initially, they did not intend to establish autonomous Protestant denominations. Nevertheless, that is what they ended up doing, and they drew their members not from Jewish and Muslim communities, but from the Orthodox, and to a lesser extent, Catholic churches. As has been noted, this resulted in hostility and sometimes open conflict between the Protestants and the other ecclesial families. In the 20th century the relations gradually improved. The situation in Cyprus and the Gulf was different from the beginning. The Anglican Church there was focused mostly on pastoral care and evangelism among the expatriate communities, initially especially the British; but as migration of Christians to the region increased, it ministered to a great variety of Christian expatriates.⁴⁴

Relief work, education, and development were important aspects of Protestant mission in the 20th and early 21st centuries: for example, among the survivors of the Armenian genocide and the Sayfo. In the context of the British and French mandates Protestant missions could operate with

43 For a detailed exploration of these five aspects of mission, see Andrew Walls and Cathy Ross, eds, *Mission in the Twenty-first Century: Exploring the Five Marks of Global Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2008).

44 Angela Murray, *The Anglican Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf: The Unfolding Story* (London: Gilgamesh Publishing, 2020).

relatively much freedom and, at times, received financial support from the mandated governments.

The decolonization changed the face of Protestant mission in the region. Many Arab governments restricted access for foreign Protestant missionaries and, if they admitted them, anxiously controlled their movements. Protestant mission was often identified with Western political interests. The decrease in foreign missionary personnel meant that the local Protestant churches were now the main agents of Protestant mission in the region. In some cases, foreign missionaries entered Middle Eastern countries as so-called tent makers, exercising secular professions while at the same time (clandestinely) engaging in missionary activities.

Early expressions of cooperation in mission

The problematic fact of Protestant missions working in territories that had a strong Catholic and Orthodox demographic, as was the case in a number of Middle Eastern countries, was acknowledged during the preparations of the World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh in 1910. The aim of this conference was to promote cooperation among Christian mission agencies and missionaries who worked in the “non-Christian world.” The Anglican Bishop H. H. Montgomery, who was involved in the conference preparations, was the first one to raise questions about the designation of “South America, Palestine, Syria, and Turkey as mission fields.”⁴⁵ In the view of Montgomery and other Anglican theologians, proselytizing work of Protestants among Catholics and Orthodox could not be considered Christian mission. Others objected that the Middle Eastern countries were not *predominantly* Orthodox and Catholic, unlike South America, where the vast majority of the population belonged to the Roman Catholic Church. A compromise was reached with regard to the Middle East. The work of the missionaries and their institutions was included in the deliberations of the conference, but no statistical information about the Christian communities they had formed was shared, on the grounds that these Christians were primarily proselytes from the Oriental churches.⁴⁶

The partial inclusion of the Middle East in the considerations of the Edinburgh conference meant that Protestant missionaries who worked in the Middle East could serve as correspondents, delegates, and advisers to the conference. And that is indeed what some did. Among them, the names of William H. Temple Gairdner, who served with the Church Missionary

45 Brian Stanley, *The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910* (Grand Rapids/Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans, 2009), 50–55.

46 Stanley, *World Missionary Conference*, 63–64.

Society in Cairo, and Samuel M. Zwemer, an American Reformed missionary to Arabia and Egypt, stand out.⁴⁷ Zwemer was one of the main organizers of the international conferences for missionaries who worked in predominantly Islamic countries, the first of which took place in Cairo (1906), the second in Lucknow (1911), and the third, which was really a series of consultations under the auspices of the IMC in February, March, and April 1924, culminating in a general meeting in Jerusalem in April 1924.

The Jerusalem 1924 conference, which was hosted by the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem at the Mount of Olives and was chaired by John R. Mott, appears to have given impetus to the emergence of the Council for Western Asia and Northern Africa, which was renamed the Near East Christian Council for Missionary Cooperation in 1929.⁴⁸ It was a network of no less than 181 missionary organizations from 19 countries in the Middle East and North Africa.⁴⁹ For the first seven years, this council had its headquarters in Cairo; in 1934, it moved to Beirut. Such cooperative councils and conferences for missionaries were explicitly promoted by the World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh and by the IMC, in light of the “magnitude and gravity of the task committed to it in the evangelisation of the world.”⁵⁰ It was the Near East Christian Council that sent representatives to the meetings of the IMC. The representatives were drawn from the missionaries and the local pastors.⁵¹

Before this regional council was established, the Edinburgh 1910 conference had already resulted in closer cooperation among missionaries in Syria and Lebanon. After taking notice of the proceedings of the Edinburgh conference, the American missionaries organized a conference for missionaries working in the educational field in 1911. This conference became an annual fixture, only interrupted by World War I, and in 1920 the group first used the

47 William H. Temple Gairdner, *“Edinburgh 1910”: An Account and Interpretation of the World Missionary Conference* (Edinburgh and London: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier, 1910).

48 William R. Hogg, *Ecumenical Foundations: A History of the International Missionary Council and Its Nineteenth-Century Background* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1952), 214.

49 Hovannes Aharonian, *The Armenian Evangelical Church on the Crossroads* (Beirut: Middle East Council of Churches, 1988), 303.

50 World Missionary Conference, 1910, *Report of Commission VIII: Co-operation and the Promotion of Unity* (Edinburgh and London: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier / New York, Chicago, and Toronto: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1910), 4.

51 See e.g., the *Minutes of the Assembly of the International Missionary Council, Ghana, December 28th, 1957, to January 8th, 1958* (London and New York: International Missionary Council, 1958), 11, which lists as delegates from the Near East Christian Council one American missionary (Harry Dorman Jr.), one Lebanese pastor (Farid Audeh), and one Iranian pastor (Adle Nakhosteen).

name United Missionary Council of Syria and Palestine (UMC). The UMC became an important vehicle for cooperation among Protestant missionaries and local churches, especially in the 1920s, when it organized a conference for evangelical churches and organizations (1924) and it widened its membership so as to include churches as well as missionary societies (1929).⁵² In the 1930s, the UMC established a committee that promoted cooperation between Protestants and Eastern Christians in social and educational work. This committee included Orthodox individuals who were appointed by their churches. Among them were the prominent Orthodox scholars Charles Malik and Asad Rustum.⁵³ In other areas, such as the Balkans and Turkey and Mesopotamia, similar conferences of missionaries were established in the 1920s.⁵⁴

While the influence of the conference for missionaries in Jerusalem in 1924 on ecumenism in the Middle East is traceable, the IMC's conference in Jerusalem in 1928 took less notice of its Middle Eastern setting. Among the official representatives and co-opted members were 14 individuals working in Middle Eastern countries, most of them foreign missionaries. The Council of Western Asia and Northern Africa was represented by Fareedeh el Akle, a teacher from a school of the Society of Friends in Lebanon. An Arab Presbyterian pastor from Tripoli was also in attendance.⁵⁵ The IMC had opted for Jerusalem because of its symbolic significance for Christianity, but also because it wished to gather in Asia, after the two previous major missionary conferences which had taken place in Edinburgh, Scotland, and Lake Mohonk, New York. Jerusalem was conveniently located for delegates from East and West, most of whom arrived by ship.⁵⁶ The conference took place on the Mount of Olives, in buildings that had been constructed by German Protestants and had been used by the British mandate government. The Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem had made a church and palace on the Mount available. The Anglican Bishop of Jerusalem, the Rt. Rev. Rennie

52 George Sabra, "Protestantism and Ecumenism in the Middle East," 7–8. Published in Arabic as "قانون وكمسالم او قولي جونا الى" في: رصاعم تي برع تو هوال وحن: يف: "قون وكسالم او قولي جونا الى" (2008) ص. 462–86. I am quoting the unpublished English version here.

53 Ibid., 8–9.

54 Salim E. Sahiouny, "The Unity of the Church in the Middle East" (DMin thesis, McCormick Theological Seminary, 1981), 17.

55 International Missionary Council, *Addresses and Other Records: Report of the Jerusalem Meeting of the International Missionary Council, March 24th–April 8th, 1928* (London: Humphrey Milford/Oxford University Press), 205–16.

56 Basil Mathews, *Roads to the City of God: A World Outlook from Jerusalem* (New York: Missionary Education Movement of the United States and Canada, 1928), 16–17.

McInnes was in attendance and led devotions.⁵⁷ Yet the conference was not hosted by a local church, and no specific attention was paid to the churches of the Middle East. One of the chief issues under discussion was cooperation between missionary societies and newly independent local Protestant churches, but most of the cases were drawn from China, Japan, and India.⁵⁸

Similarly, the Tambaram conference of the IMC in India in 1938 does not seem to have had a notable impact on unity in mission in the Middle East, even though it adopted a message of peace, which had been drafted by the delegates from Japan and China whose countries were at war at that time and which also included a reference to the suffering and conflict in Palestine.⁵⁹

Toward a Council of Churches

The Lebanese theologians Hovannes Aharonian and George Sabra have both traced a growing awareness of the importance of inclusion of the local churches. Aharonian, who was highly involved in the formational process of the MECC, wrote: “It was soon discovered that if the missionary endeavor is not the expression of the local churches, their worship and witness, Koinonia and Diakonia, it is foreign, ineffective, and cut off from its subsoil.”⁶⁰ According to Aharonian, the inclusion of local Protestant churches into the ecumenical bodies was realized in the 1950s. The UMC dissolved itself in 1952. The Near East Christian Council continued, but as a council of Protestant churches and missionary organizations. Under the influence of the developing partnership theology of the IMC/CWME in which the local church was viewed as the primary agent of mission, the missionary organizations were no longer considered as members of this council in 1962. The missionaries who remained on the council were considered representatives of the local churches.

In 1964, the council was renamed Near East Council of Churches, a local secretary was appointed, and the Orthodox churches were approached to consider membership. As was described, the Syriac Orthodox Church was the

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁵⁸ International Missionary Council, *The Relations between the Younger and the Older Churches: Report of the Jerusalem Meeting of the International Missionary Council, March 24th-April 8th, 1928* (London: Humphrey Milford/Oxford University Press), 54–129.

⁵⁹ International Missionary Council, *The World Mission of the Church: Findings and Recommendations of the Meeting of the International Missionary Council, Tambaram, Madras, India, December 12–29, 1938* (London and New York: International Missionary Council, 1939), 184–85.

⁶⁰ Aharonian, *The Armenian Evangelical Church*, 303.

first to join, in 1964. A number of important ecumenical events took place in the second half of the 1960s and early 1970s, such as a Sodepax meeting in Lebanon in 1968 and the launching of an inter-Orthodox dialogue at Balamand in 1973. Such gatherings prepared the ground for the founding of the MECC in 1974, with participation of the Protestant, Eastern Orthodox, and Oriental Orthodox churches.⁶¹

From Foreign Missions to Mission through the Local Church

As was noted, in the 1950s and 1960s, the IMC and the CWME developed a partnership theology that emphasized the agency of the local church and cast the mission agencies of Western churches in a more supportive role.⁶² This prioritization of the local church was related to the development of the idea of *missio Dei*: mission was no longer perceived as “the way from church to church,” but as participating in the mission of God, in which all the faithful have a role to play. Of course, the mood of the decolonization also played a role at this time. Mainstream Protestant mission agencies reflected this in their policies and gradually withdrew foreign missionaries from the Middle East, preferring to support their partners financially instead. The American Presbyterians, for example, devolved many mission properties and institutions to the local Presbyterians and gradually reduced the number of missionaries. By the end of the 20th century, a fraction of the once so numerous American missionaries was left. This changed the face of Protestantism in countries like Iran, Lebanon, and Syria. While the missionaries outnumbered the local clergy by far in the 1950s, the latter were firmly in charge of their denominations by the end of the century, even though the volume of the work decreased with the withdrawal of the missions.⁶³

The departure of the missionaries meant that the Protestant churches now faced a new era in which they had to rethink their mission in the region. They continued their educational mission, even though some of their flagship projects, such as the American University of Beirut, secularized. Theological

61 Jean Corbon, “History,” 875–79.

62 For an overview of the development of partnership theology in the IMC and the CWME, see Lothar Bauerochse, *Learning to Live Together: Interchurch Partnerships as Ecumenical Communities of Learning* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2001).

63 Stanley H. Skreslet, “American Presbyterians and the Middle East,” in *A History of Presbyterian Missions 1944-2007*, ed. Scott W. Sunquist and Caroline N. Becker (Louisville: Geneva Press, 2008), 215–33.

education was now also in local hands, and in some cases the Protestant churches joined forces to continue this work. Protestants also continued medical missions, albeit on a smaller scale. Hospitals were costly and could not be sustained without structural mission support, but clinics and dispensaries continued to be managed by the churches. One of the detrimental factors was the large-scale emigration from the region, which weakened the small Protestant churches and hampered their mission.

On the matters of ecumenism and proselytism, the Protestants were divided. The older mainstream churches threw themselves into ecumenical work with considerable enthusiasm. Younger Protestant churches, such as some (though not all) Baptist and Pentecostal groups, were less keen on ecumenical cooperation and continued to view Orthodox and Catholics as nominal Christians at best, and therefore targets of evangelism.⁶⁴ As in the case of the 19th-century missions, their membership was drawn chiefly from Orthodox, Catholic, and now also mainstream Protestant backgrounds.

The first two decades of the 21st century were not a time of missiological renewal in Protestantism. Protestants responded to the crises in Iraq and Syria by focusing on relief work, with some new evangelistic initiatives especially among the Muslim refugee populations in the region. The general pattern was that local Protestants took the lead, with financial support of partner churches from abroad. Foreign missionaries and external support no longer came from Western nations alone, but also from countries such as Korea and Singapore.

Migrant Christian communities became more established, especially in the Gulf region, where they gave shape to their specific mission within the limitations set by these countries. In this region, cooperation among migrant Christian communities was often facilitated by the Anglican Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf, which developed a unique mission and ecclesiology in these environments, focusing on presence.⁶⁵ Anglican churches often hosted other Christian communities in their sanctuaries.⁶⁶ Hospitality became a chief virtue and expression of Christian mission.

64 Melanie E. Trexler, *Evangelizing Lebanon: Baptists, Missions, and the Question of Cultures* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2016), 188–89.

65 Murray, *The Anglican Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf*, 358–60.

66 Hrayr Jebejian, “Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Yemen,” in Ross, Tadros and Johnson, *Christianity in North Africa and West Asia*, 177–89.

Missionary Cooperation in Interdenominational and Ecumenical Bodies

We now briefly consider cooperation through interdenominational and ecumenical bodies that were created in the course of the 20th and early 21st centuries.

Missionary efforts through the media included radio programmes, especially after 1945. Christian radio was initially dominated by Protestant broadcasters, which often did not seek to work in partnership with the local churches. In 1979, the MECC brought together different broadcasters in an attempt to coordinate and align broadcasting with the practices of local churches, but this effort was not sustained.⁶⁷ Television was also utilized for missionary purposes, often by denominational broadcasters, such as *Télé Lumière/Noursat*, which is governed by Catholic bishops but has an ecumenical mission, but also by interdenominational and ecumenical organizations, such as *Sat-7*.⁶⁸

In addition to the growth of the denominational ministries for children and youth, interdenominational and ecumenical organizations also advanced missionary work among children and youth. To name but a few, Youth for Christ, the World Student Christian Federation (WSCF), and the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), each with their distinct emphasis, served young people from various backgrounds. In 2019, an ecumenical youth event took place in Beirut, co-organized by the MECC and the Brothers of Taizé, which intended to encourage Christian youth from the Middle East churches in their life and witness.

Cooperation in mission was constant in the work of the Bible societies in the region, who did not only serve the various Christian churches, but also made the Bible and biblical literature available to migrants, refugees, and other specific groups.⁶⁹

Lastly, the MECC not only served as a platform for ecumenical cooperation, but also developed ecumenical diaconal programmes in which the churches cooperated, for example its services to refugees. The cooperation of

⁶⁷ Jos Strengtholt, *Gospel in the Air: 50 Years of Christian Witness through Radio in the Arab World* (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 2008), 847–53.

⁶⁸ Sara Afshari, "Christian Media," in Ross, Tadros and Johnson, *Christianity in North Africa and West Asia*, 417–26.

⁶⁹ Hrayr Jebejian, *Bible Engagement: The Discovery of Faith, Hope and Self* (Bible Society in the Gulf, 2019). The history of the American Bible Society contains a chapter on the early history in the Levant: John Fea, *The Bible Cause: A History of the American Bible Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 108–19. A comprehensive history of the work of the Bible societies in the region remains to be written.

Christian relief and development organizations in the ACT Alliance, which began in 1995 in Geneva, is another example of ecumenical cooperation in mission in the Middle East.

Joint missiological reflection continued in the 21st century. Ten years after the uprising of the Arab Spring, a group of ecumenical theologians and experts in social, human, and geopolitical sciences published a document entitled *We Choose Abundant Life* with reference to Deuteronomy 30:19b. It reflected on ecclesial identity in the service of mission, and it offered a model of conviviality with Muslims and Jews. It was a contribution to ecumenical reflection on the churches' work for the common good of all the societies of the Middle East.⁷⁰

Cooperation in Mission in the Middle East, 1921–2021: Observations

In this final section, we analyze the developments that we have sketched in the overview of the history of churches and missions in the past century. We make a number of retrospective observations on different aspects of Christian mission, especially with regard to cooperation. Some of the points we highlight are specific challenges to the churches of the Middle East. Others are challenges that churches in other parts of the world also face. All these observations serve as invitations for further study and reflection.

The churches of the Middle East were able to cooperate in proclamation in a number of ways, especially through the work of Christian media and the Bible societies. Witness through the media was rather fragmented, in spite of some ecumenical efforts, and deserves further consideration and coordination in order to develop a common vision for the Middle East. The hospitality that churches offered to each other in terms of sharing space, especially in the Gulf region, was a service to the proclamation of the gospel and reminded the churches of the importance of hospitality and Christian presence.

Unfortunately, intra-Christian proselytism created suspicion and at times even hostility among Christians. Following the efforts on the international ecumenical level, especially by the CWME, the MECC made serious efforts to heal the wounds of the past and develop good practises for the present.⁷¹

⁷⁰ *We Choose Abundant Life, Christians in the Middle East: Towards Renewed Theological, Social, and Political Choices* (Beirut, 2021), https://drive.google.com/file/d/1y1gtPnSfQIUfAulEly7aNWq_qbbTyApO/view?fbclid=IwAR361w0N1hJbcjZ8lms1pCO4OzKMt1khtJ0pqe9WqyMPUgd3qUZxWY4ro.

⁷¹ Well before the establishment of the MECC, the Near East Christian Council was already

More work remains to be done, as some Protestants continued to view members of other churches as objects of their conversionist missions and sometimes use unethical means of persuasion. On the other hand, Protestant theologians repeatedly showed their concern for the waning of the missionary spirit within the ecumenical movement.⁷² New conversations to foster understanding and cooperation between the churches and the mission agencies that continue to work in the region are needed. These conversations need to address the relation between evangelism and *diakonia*, as *diakonia* is sometimes made an instrument of proselytism.

The churches responded to the pain of the oppressed, marginalized, and displaced in collaborative ways. Perhaps this was the area of the most intense cooperation, especially through networks of Christian humanitarian and relief organizations. One area in which they stood together is in the service of and advocacy for the plight of the Palestinians.⁷³

Migration was a reality that shaped the mission of all ecclesial families. The emigration of Christians to Western countries raised questions about diaspora, inculturation, and identity. The Middle East churches became global communities with a continued attachment to their homelands and an inculturated presence in many different societies. Migration and displacement of Christians within the Middle East brought new challenges, but also new opportunities for Christian witness. Migration of Christians to the Middle East, especially to the Gulf region, strengthened the witness of the churches in surprising new ways and placed hospitality high on the missiological and ecclesiological agenda.

In terms of teaching, baptizing, and nurturing young and new believers, much progress was made by the churches. The renewal and increase of Christian schools, Sunday schools, youth and student movements gave young people the opportunity to grow in faith. The agreements on the development of a joint catechism and first communion were important steps in the ecumenical process. As they grew, the educational and also the medical institutions that were founded by the churches and the mission agencies professionalized and, in some cases, commercialized, losing some of their initial

addressing the issue of proselytism, which was cause of tension and mutual suspicion, especially between the Orthodox churches and the evangelical missions. See Harry Dorman's address in *Minutes of the Assembly of the International Missionary Council. Ghana, December 28th, 1957 to January 8th, 1958* (London and New York: International Missionary Council, 1958), 147.

72 Aharonian, *The Armenian Evangelical Church*, 290–91.

73 Melanie A. May, *Jerusalem Testament: Palestinian Christians Speak, 1988-2008* (Grand Rapids/Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans, 2010).

missionary spirit. The role of these institutions within the mission of the churches deserves ongoing reflection. Theological education for the ministry and for laity is part of this important field of missiological reflection. In some countries, the existence of Christian schools is at risk because of various crises, a problem that merits attention on the ecumenical level.

In relation to the institutional aspects of mission, a reconsideration is needed of the missionary aspects of *waqf*, endowed land, and more generally the use of land by the churches. The Christians of the Middle East are attached to their ancestral lands and churches own a good deal of land; but how is it placed in the service of mission? In the Orthodox observation of Epiphany, it is customary for believers to present their money to be blessed. This ritual “moving of the money” is an appropriate symbol for a reconsideration of the church’s assets in light of its mission.

In the Orthodox and Eastern Catholic traditions, monasticism played an important role in the mission of the churches in the period 1921–2021. In fact, some churches witnessed a renewal of monastic life and ministry. The monastic orders served communities by their educational, cultural, and social service. At the same time, the monasteries continued to be places for meditation, prayer, and wisdom. In all these ways, monks and nuns transcended denominational boundaries.

Over the past century, the blood of Christian martyrs, some of whom were monks and missionaries, spoke loudly of continuing terror, injustice, and discrimination in the countries of the Middle East.⁷⁴ However, martyrdom also had an important missionary dimension and strengthened the churches in multiple ways. The martyrs followed Christ in his suffering and self-giving, and as such were witnesses. Appreciation of the witness of the martyrs did not exclude a commitment to human rights, including the freedom of religion and the right to change one’s religion, which was at the heart of the missionary-ecumenical movement ever since the IMC was founded.

In the early 21st century, some Middle East societies were devastated by poverty and violence. All across the region, environmental devastation increased; water became scarcer, pollution more widespread. All these were chief causes of migration and the decline of Christian and other communities. The interrelatedness of these realities prompted the churches to reconsider justice, peace, and the integrity of creation, and to observe the season of creation, following the efforts of the ecumenical movement elsewhere. The role of women in church and society was a special concern in the Middle East.

⁷⁴ For a recent count of Coptic Orthodox martyrs, see Gergis Ibrahim Saleh, “The Martyrs of the Coptic Orthodox Church in the Twenty-First Century,” in *The Magi Initiative East-West* (Beirut: Bible Society, 2020), 144–51.

Finally, interfaith relations and the discussion of the theology of religions in the context of the Middle East continued to be relevant and pressing. Different perspectives on interreligious relations resulted in different missionary approaches. There were valuable contributions by theologians from the various traditions, but little concerted ecumenical effort. As Christian mission in the region is now carried out primarily by local churches, and leans less on Western political power, the discussion on mission and the theology of religions may be conducted in a less charged and more open manner than it was before, perhaps even in consultation with Muslim theologians.

Conclusion

The historical overview and analysis presented in this report offer an image of growing ecumenical cooperation in witness in the Middle East, which began in the wake of the Edinburgh 1910 conference and the establishment of the IMC in 1921. We have also noted the importance of Orthodox initiatives and the watershed of the Second Vatican Council in Catholicism. In all ecclesial families, intra-denominational forms of cooperation prepared the ground for ecumenical cooperation. The high water mark of cooperation in mission came in 1990, when the Catholic churches joined the MECC. The stage was set for a unique cooperation, which at times indeed materialized in joint witness and service. However, during the first two decades of the 21st century, the churches and the ecumenical organizations in the region were at times so overwhelmed by the various political, social, and economic crises that the ecumenical advance stagnated.

Many missiological challenges remain. This report identifies a number of themes that deserve further study in the service of cooperation, most notably migration, diaspora, and identity; witness through the media; monasticism; martyrdom; education and medical work; proselytism and *diakonia*; justice, peace, and the integrity of creation in the Middle East context; and interfaith dialogue and cooperation. These themes will continue to occupy the minds of Christians in the Middle East and will need to be addressed in further ecumenical conversations.

CHAPTER 12

Latin America: The “Neglected Continent”?

Carlos E. Ham and Adolfo Ham

Introduction

This study and presentation are prepared by the Evangelical¹ (Ecumenical) Seminary of Theology (SET) in Matanzas, Cuba. SET is a non-profit Christian academic community founded in 1946,² working on pastoral formation as well as lay training in the areas of Bible, theology, and sciences of religions, with an ecumenical, interdisciplinary, contextual, inclusive, and liberating vision for God’s mission, at the service of churches in Cuba and other countries. It provides all the people who participate in its teaching programs a rigorous academic training, a solid spiritual preparation, and a vocation for service, within a communitarian, ecumenical, and diverse experience. Special attention is given to deepen the historical sense of Cuban patriotism and nation.

Our study begins by analyzing the historical background of Protestant missionary work in Latin America and the way it has related to the Edinburgh 1910 World Missionary Conference and the IMC. It studies the role of the Committee on Cooperation in Latin America (CCLA), in organizing a number of missionary conferences. We focus more intentionally on the 1929 Hispanic American Evangelical Congress held in Havana. As we will see, even though none of these events were a direct result of the International Missionary Council (IMC) work, they produced their own important “understandings and practices of mission” as well as various reflections and projects “of cooperation in mission that inspired the founding of the IMC,” as expressed in the document, “Thematic Framework of Reference for the IMC Centenary Study Process 2021–2022.”

We will be studying the presentations and outcomes of the commemoration of the 80th anniversary of the 1929 Havana Congress, which took place at our Seminary in 2009 under the theme, “Mission and Evangelism for the

1 In general, the term ‘Evangelical’ refers in this article to the mainline Protestant churches, as it is used in the original Spanish language.

2 The same year that we celebrate the IMC Centenary, SET commemorates its 75th Anniversary.

21st century in Latin America and the Caribbean.” Particular attention will be given to examples of Latin American participation at IMC events and its involvement in Latin America, highlighting a Cuban illustration. The presentation will conclude concentrating on “Cooperation in Mission in the Field of Theological Education.”

Historical Background

The World Missionary Conference held in Edinburgh in 1910 under the slogan “the evangelization of the world in this generation” marks the beginning of the modern ecumenical movement. Although the delegates included missionaries from the United States serving in Latin America, this continent was excluded because it was considered “Christian” or already “evangelized” because of the robust historical presence of the Roman Catholic Church in the region. These missionaries did not agree with this thesis, considering the Latin American continent “pagan.” In fact, according to Arturo Piedra, before the Edinburgh Conference, “the Protestant missions in the USA had already made the determination to do mission in Latin America. The effects of the Spanish-American War (1898) and the North American control of the Panama Canal (1902) influenced to convince the USA to strengthen its ties with Latin America.”³

After the Edinburgh gathering, a “Conference on Missions in Latin America” was held in New York in March 1913, which resulted in formation of the CCLA. The CCLA would be responsible for coordinating future mission conferences in Latin America and therefore marking the beginning of Latin American ecumenism. The first of these to be organized was the Congress for Christian Action in Latin America, held in Panama City in February 1916. But it was still considered “foreign” as it was conceived and coordinated by US missionaries and executives of foreign mission boards and was held completely in English.

The impact of the Panama congress was not only quantitative but also qualitative, because “it had a psychological effect on the Protestant missionaries, persecuted by the ghost which reminded them of the illegitimate character

3 Arturo Piedra, *Evangelización Protestante en América Latina. Análisis de las razones que justificaron y promovieron la expansión protestante* (Quito: CLAI, 2002), 113. This book is the result of a thesis by which the author demonstrates that CCLA, perhaps unconsciously, became an instrument of US political interference in Latin America.

of their work.”⁴ Robert Speer⁵ wrote a letter from the Dominican Republic reporting that conditions had changed considerably in Latin America, where there was a stronger sense of Protestant mission ownership. For Samuel Guy Inman, the Panama Congress had defined the legitimacy of Protestant Missions Work in Latin America.⁶ The role played by John R. Mott⁷ in the congress demonstrated that the ecumenical work that was born in Edinburgh had been reconciled in Latin America. In Montevideo 1925, the second conference planned by the CCLA in Latin America, the Panama meeting was evaluated positively because it mobilized the Protestant mission, and their boards were called to engage more actively in Latin America.

At the time, the leaders of the CCLA agreed that Protestantism had become “a powerful and influential force” through the following actions:

- creating institutions under regional and general auspices;
- creating theological seminaries in Mexico, Puerto Rico, Chile, Argentine, and Brazil;
- founding journals and libraries in Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, and Chile;
- promoting joint literature collaboration in Brazil and Santo Domingo;
- establishing training schools in Argentine;
- encouraging joint pedagogical work in Brazil, Chile, Cuba, and Puerto Rico;
- creating joint hospitals in Mexico, Santo Domingo, and Brazil;

4 Ibid., 174.

5 Robert E. Speer (1867–1947), a lay missiologist, was the general secretary of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America until his retirement in 1937. He played a very active role in the Edinburgh 1910 World Missionary Conference and in the subsequent missionary work in Latin America and other parts of the world. Speer also served as chair of the CCLA.

6 Samuel Guy Inman, *Evangelicals at Havana: Being an Account of the Hispanic American Evangelical Congress, at Havana, Cuba, June 20–30, 1929* (New York: Committee on Cooperation in Latin America, 1929).

7 John R. Mott (1865–1955), “a Methodist layman, was intercollegiate secretary of the Young Men’s Christian Associations (1888), founded the World Student Christian Federation (1895) and became its general secretary. He chaired Edinburgh 1910 and its continuation committee . . . [and] the IMC.” Tom Stransky, “International Missionary Council,” in *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement, 2nd Edition*, ed. Nicholas Lossky et al. (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2002), 596.

- holding annual interdenominational conferences in Cuba, Dominican Republic, Chile, and educational efforts in Brazil, Cuba, Río de la Plata, and Mexico.⁸

Panama was seen as part of the Edinburgh process. As Piedra underlines, “No wonder that under the leadership of Mott CCLA could re-consider the future of the Latin American needs. Meanwhile Mott tried to let the officers of CCLA consider them as part of the positive consequences of Edinburgh it is obvious that as the work of CCLA became consolidated, the negative aspects of Edinburgh were forgotten.”⁹ For instance, in the meeting in Montevideo the emphasis on non-Christians in Edinburgh was recognized, which further encouraged the missionary work in the continent among the non-converted.

Piedra underscores the notion and practice of “Pan-Americanism” beginning in the 1880s and expanded, particularly in early 20th century, “dominated by the USA with the purpose of defending its geopolitical and commercial interests.”¹⁰ The new Protestant expansion strategy that commanded the CCLA not only occurred within the framework of the American union that the US government yearned for, but came to openly endorse that Pan-American movement. Hence, the CCLA’s interest in the unity of the American republics was not an isolated event, but a consistent idea that became a fundamental part of its religious program. The Congress of Panama is a clear example of Protestant expectations in this regard, and its organizers did not hesitate to point out that one of its key objectives, alongside religious purposes, was to strengthen this relationship.

In fact, ideologically, the field was prepared because the Latin American intelligentsia was in favour of shifting their relations from Spain, which denoted backwardness, unfreedom, and intolerance, to the US, which allegedly expressed tolerance. Progress was the great word, as was, of course, Protestantism instead of Roman Catholicism, which meant for them all the negative characteristics they knew.

So, some of the participants saw the significance of the Panama congress not just in its religious projection, but in the framework of the Pan-American proposal. From there on, for two decades after the event, the CCLA’s leaders located their participation in Pan-American ideas starting with this congress. Hence, Latin American Protestant mission efforts were propelled by and

8 Piedra, *Evangelización Protestante en América Latina*, 176.

9 *Ibid.*, 208–209.

10 *Ibid.*, 10.

served imperial and hegemonic interests, although that could have been done unconsciously.

Analyzing the dynamics between “internationalism” and “imperialism,” Piedra reflects that “‘international’ was nothing more than imperial and the success of the international expansion of missions was linked to the success of the expansionist’s politics of the Protestant Christian Nations. But there is no doubt that the internationalism of missions was sometimes fused with the imperialism of Western powers.”¹¹ Among the various examples of this in Latin America, we can mention the case of Cuba. After the “*mambises*”¹² virtually defeated and bankrupted the Spaniards in the Spanish American Cuban war in 1898, the USA took over the country at the beginning of the 20th century and the American Protestant missionaries came in as well, following in the footsteps and “blessing” their country’s business people. These missionaries coming from the USA disregarded the work and sacrifices of the Cuban “patriotic missionaries” that founded most of the mainline Protestant churches at the end of the 19th century.¹³ In contrast, as far as we know, the Latin American Protestant missionaries that came after, serving in other countries of our region, were in general terms quite different, since for them “nationalism” was not so evident compared to the attitude of some American missionaries. There was more a “horizontal” relationship between them, a sort of a “Pan-Latin American” solidarity where geographic “mission boundaries” were difficult to define.

On a more positive note, assessing the Committee on Cooperation in Latin America’s work, Arturo Piedra points out,

No doubt that CCLA brought Latin America fresh perspectives about faith, especially those coming from the trend of the social gospel in USA. We must recognize the interest shown to understand the social and religious situations of those countries and their conviction that they were in a different context which required a

11 Ibid., 12.

12 The plural for *mambi*, Cuban guerrilla fighter during the Ten Years’ War (1868–78) and the Independence War of 1895. They were widely viewed as heroes by the Cuban people for their willingness to sacrifice comfort to attain the independence of their country, <https://loc.gov/tr/hispanic/1898/mambises.html>.

13 “As we have seen the unconditional loyalty of the USA Protestants to their nation was difficult to avoid. The ‘internationalism’ and the ‘universalism’ which served the Protestant Missions to evangelize cultures, was not sufficient to displace cultural provincialism in their work. While on the one hand national and regional identity was minimized, on the other, Pan-American vision which promoted its nation, was praised. When the opportunity came to decide for one or the other, missionaries preferred to support their country.” Piedra, *Evangelización Protestante en América Latina*, 79.

different idea of faith especially engaged with social betterment . . . Its great deficiency was that its religious proposal aimed more towards the interest of the middle and high classes in Latin America. But that does not undervalue their contribution to look for new theological keys, inspired by social engagement, to avoid the vision of a Christianity which ignores the contextual particulars and national histories.¹⁴

At Panama, there was an intentional effort to develop the educational level of the churches and leaders in the region through the creation of theological seminaries, as well as social services and the founding and building of hospitals and other similar institutions. There was a lifting of awareness of the need to pass these ministries to the hands of Latin American Protestants.

Subsequently, the CCLA planned two conferences, one in South America and one in the Caribbean-Central American region. The first one was held in Montevideo, Uruguay in March 1925, but still did not reflect a genuine Latin American identity, as this event continued to be sponsored by the North American mission boards and was carried out in both English and Spanish. However, it was considered a bridge between the Congress of Panama and the Congress of Havana.

The 1929 Hispanic-American Evangelical Congress in Havana

The Havana Hispanic-American Evangelical Congress was held on June 1929, as stated above, for the Protestant churches of the northern part of Latin America, namely, Mexico, Colombia, Venezuela, Central America, and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean (Cuba and Puerto Rico).¹⁵ As in the two previous Latin American Protestant missionary conferences, this one was not organized directly by the IMC, but it mainly followed what we would call the “Edinburgh ethos,” that is, ecumenical cooperation in mission. As its name implies, this congress opened a new chapter in the search for Latin American Protestant identity since it was planned and organized by Latin Americans and was held entirely in Spanish.¹⁶

14 Piedra, *Evangelización Protestante en América Latina*, 228.

15 Hence, most references to the Caribbean region in this article are made in relation to these Spanish-speaking islands, which are also part of Latin America.

16 The chair of the meeting, Gonzalo Báez Camargo, noted on this regard that “in Panama the Anglo-Saxons dominated, in Montevideo the Latin Americans had a much bigger role to play, but at Havana, the role of the Americans was like the one of the Latin Americans in the Panamá meeting.” Gonzalo Báez-Camargo, *Hacia la renovación religiosa en Hispanoamérica* (México, DF: Casa Unida de Publicaciones, 1930), 23.

Therefore, the importance of the Havana congress is that for the first time it gathered the Latin American Protestants as agents of God’s mission in the continent, walking with their own feet and without the US tutelage, as had occurred in previous congresses. Just as the Edinburgh conference had a global impact, in Latin America the congress of Havana marked the beginning of Latin American unity for mission and thus created the basis for a Latin American Protestant missionary work. Furthermore, the Havana Congress also contributed to a socio-political awareness among all participants, as various analyses were made on new emerging contexts of mission in the region.

It is precisely after the Havana Congress that various councils of churches and seminaries in different countries of Latin America were founded. Some historians also marked this congress as the beginning of the Latin American Council of Churches (CLAI) and there was even a reference to the need for creating an international federation of Protestant churches, which actually took place in 1948, with the creation of the World Council of Churches (WCC).

As a matter of fact, and as pointed out earlier, one of the reasons this new Protestant missionary movement became popular, particularly among the intellectuals of the continent, was its variety of concepts and practices of freedom. There were new ideas related to Christian thought as well as new and relevant understandings of democracy. These progressive trends permeated the historical and overwhelming Roman Catholic tradition that had imposed a monolithic, hierarchical, and clerical style of church life. The fact that the “common people” in the pews could have access to different translations of the Bible and actively participate in liturgy and the work of the church brought significant changes. Most missionary efforts by Protestant churches became more attractive to people than those of the Roman Catholic Church in many countries.

Commemoration of the 80th Anniversary of the Havana Congress

A conference took place at SET in Matanzas, Cuba, on 22–26 June 2009 to celebrate the 80th Anniversary of the Havana Congress. This event was done in the framework of the centennial celebration of the 1910 World Missionary Conference of Edinburgh as well. There were participants from the WCC, the CLAI, the Caribbean Conference of Churches (CCC), the

Cuban Council of Churches (CIC), the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Centre (CMMLK) and SET (which hosted the event), among others.¹⁷

This event in Matanzas was not just commemorating the anniversary of a relevant gathering, but eight decades after, it followed its spirit of Protestant Latin American indigenous commitment and unity towards the missionary endeavour, fully engaged in the various settings of the continent and entirely independent from the US missionaries. As it can be observed in the documents, lectures, and presentations, it was also very contextual, analyzing the diverse socio-political realities of the region where the churches carry out the *missio Dei*.

The 92 participants—namely church and ecumenical leaders, as well as scholars from churches and ecumenical movements (42 from abroad and 50 Cubans)—met under the theme “Mission and evangelism for the 21st century in Latin America and the Caribbean.” They represented a wide range of Protestant denominations and a variety of movements, which testified to the diversity and vitality of Latin American and Caribbean Protestant movements long after the Havana Congress.

Three themes were central in the reflections of the 1929 Havana Congress. Those themes continued to be pivotal in the task of reading God’s mission from a Latin America perspective for the 21st century. These were, first, Latin American Protestant identity, rooted and embodied in the culture and history of their people; second, Christian unity in relation to common witness in Latin America; and third, the holistic character of church’s mission, in obedience to God’s commission to proclaim the kingdom of God in word and deed.¹⁸

Four objectives were set for the 2009 Havana conference’s commemoration, which were met to a great extent, namely (1) to conduct an analysis of the Latin American context where the churches accomplish their mission; (2) to continue critically studying Protestant mission and evangelism in Latin America of the past 80 years; (3) to reflect on the challenges and opportunities for Latin American churches to complete their transforming mission; and (4) to contribute from Latin America to the centennial celebration of Edinburgh in 2010.

The participants at the 2009 event delivered a statement that covered, among other things, the following sections: the meaning of the 1929 Havana Congress; some biblical paradigms to rethink God’s mission; mission

17 Nilton Giese, ed., *Misión y Evangelización en América Latina y el Caribe para el Siglo XXI: Congreso Evangélico Hispano-Americano de La Habana* (Quito: CLAI, 2009), 241.

18 Carlos E. Ham, “Misión y evangelización en la América Latina y el Caribe para el siglo XXI. Visión de otros contextos: Diálogo Norte-Sur,” *Revista Caminos* (2009), 14–17.

and evangelism; the perspective of marginalized sectors; and a path of enculturation.

The participation of the Protestants in the struggles for liberation, especially in the Mexican Revolution, in the critical reactions against US military and economic expansionism in Latin America and the Caribbean and in the struggles of the manual and agricultural workers, the Indigenous peoples and the students in favour of democratic regimes, was significant. It generated a group of missionaries and nationals with a critical understanding of Protestant Christianity that affirmed the interests and culture of these countries of the region.

The 1929 Havana Congress gave birth to a new generation in the Evangelical Protestantism of Latin America that would facilitate the development of what the church has become today in its ecumenical and liberating dimension, from its understanding of obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ.

International Missionary Council (IMC) and Latin America

Even when the IMC was “uniting the Protestant national missionary councils and councils of churches in Africa, Asia and Latin America in a federation with Protestant councils of missionary agencies in Europe and North America,”¹⁹ we have not found many traces of the IMC in Latin America, at least in its early days, compared to its involvement in other regions. As John H. Sinclair and Arturo Piedra point out,

Many Protestant Christians in the nineteenth century did not take seriously Protestant missionary activity in Latin America . . . Latin America as ‘the neglected continent’ was an expression coined by Evangelicals in Great Britain who founded the South American Mission Society, the Regions Beyond Missionary Society, and the Evangelical Union of South America in the nineteenth century. A booklet by Lucy Guinness and E. C. Millard, ‘The Neglected Continent’ (1894), spread this concept.²⁰

In the time of Edinburgh, John R. Mott was not convinced that there was a mission in Latin America. On a visit to the continent in 1896, he became aware of the difficulties in carrying out this task in Roman Catholic

19 Stransky, “International Missionary Council,” 595–98.

20 John H. Sinclair and Arturo Piedra Solano, “The Dawn of Ecumenism in Latin America: Robert E. Speer, Presbyterians, and the Panama Conference of 1916,” *The Journal of Presbyterian History* 77:1 (Spring 1999), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23335251>.

territories. Still, in his 1897 book *Strategic Points in the World's Conquest* he maintained this position. His interest in Latin America grew out of the Spanish-American War (1898) and the geopolitical importance of the region. He verified that these nations were waiting for the help of the USA. His ideas began to be expressed more clearly from 1905, which had ended for him the era of the “neglected continent” now “the most accessible continent in the world because of its seas, rivers and rail communication . . . to which they were also exposed to the devastating touch of the bad of western civilization,” also due to the “identity of our fundamental political principles . . . The missions need greater freedom of action and all reasonable protection”²¹ that were guaranteed with the relationship with the USA. The Roman Catholic religion failed in Latin America to address all the moral vices that the missions found in other continents. “According to Mott the resurgence of the Monroe Doctrine also demanded religious as well as political responsibility.”²² To a certain extent, we continue to observe this pattern or mindset of disregard in relation to the Latin America field throughout the documents studied, at least during the early stages. This understanding would also have a direct impact in the formation of the IMC in general and its presence in Latin America in particular.²³

As a matter of fact, at the 2009 Matanzas gathering, as far as the documentation is concerned, only one lecturer referred to the IMC, that is, Adolfo Ham, who quoted W. R. Hogg, mentioning the “omissions” at the Edinburgh conference in 1910: the women issue, literature, medicine, and, what was more important, Latin America, since the organizers thought that Latin America was not mission territory, because the Roman Catholic Church was already involved. The self-limitation that the conference imposed on itself was “to direct missions to non-Christian nations.” Hogg says that Latin America “was a ‘borderline’ case and in the hectic pressure that was Edinburgh there was no time to work it out.”²⁴

21 Piedra, *Evangelización Protestante en América Latina*, 120.

22 Ibid. The Monroe Doctrine was the cornerstone of U.S. foreign policy enunciated by President James Monroe in his annual message to Congress (2 December 1823) declaring that the Old World and New World had different systems and must remain distinct spheres. One of the basic points affirmed that any attempt by a European power to oppress or control any nation in the Western Hemisphere would be viewed as a hostile act against the United States, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Monroe-Doctrine>.

23 For example, in the IMC entry of Encyclopedia.com we find references to the regional ecumenical organizations (councils of churches) in Asia and Africa, but no mention is made of Latin America. “International Missionary Council,” Encyclopedia.com, <https://www.encyclopedia.com/religion/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/international-missionary-council>.

24 W. R. Hogg, *Ecumenical Foundations* (New York: Harper, 1952), 131.

J. H. Oldham, the secretary of the conference, had to face this problem, and Robert E. Speer was so keenly disturbed by this exclusion that with several delegate friends he led a rump session at the Edinburgh conference itself to discuss Latin America's needs. The original group invited several board secretaries with responsibilities in that continent to a second informal meeting in that city. Together they considered the vast area's claims and agreed that these could be appraised only by a Latin American gathering like the one then meeting in Edinburgh. In that second rump session, a promise was made "on behalf of the churches of Great Britain and North America that these interests would be made for such a meeting."²⁵

The direct outgrowth of these sessions was the two-day Conference on Missions in Latin America called by the Foreign Missions Conference and held in New York in March 1913. At that time Robert E. Speer could declare that greater attention had been drawn to missionary work and its urgency in Latin America by its omission at Edinburgh than by its possible inclusion. That conference [as stated earlier] appointed the Committee on Cooperation in Latin America. The new body was concerned not to convert Roman-Catholics, but to survey the needs of unevangelized millions and to co-ordinate Protestant efforts to meet those needs. One outcome was the great Panama Congress in 1916.²⁶

The Panama congress, as pointed out earlier, did not have a direct relationship with the Edinburgh's Continuation Committee. With this move, as far we read the subsequent history, the US missionaries became, perhaps some unconsciously, instruments of imperial domination and colonization in the continent.

According to Hogg, "In one respect, the Panama Congress marked a definite advance over Edinburgh. Rather than being a 'home base' gathering of missionary experts, it was a conference of nationals and missionaries in Latin America. Moreover, Panama like Edinburgh wanted a continuing organization to perpetuate the cooperative endeavour it had initiated. It resolved unanimously that CCLA should be that body."²⁷ Following the Panama congress, appointed deputations visited seven Latin American countries from February to April 1916, namely Perú, Chile, Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, and Puerto Rico.²⁸

25 *Ibid.*, 132.

26 *Ibid.*

27 *Ibid.*, 174.

28 *Ibid.*, 175.

Another relevant indicator of the “neglecting attitude” towards Latin America is the fact that W. R. Hogg does not even mention this continent when he describes in 1952 the formation of the IMC in 1921 at Lake Mohonk. Now, as we reflect on this historical fact, a question that arises is who sets the standards for missionary work? Who defines the centre or the periphery as we pursue God’s mission? Latin America perhaps was perceived as “the neglected continent,” at the periphery, by the imperial powers of those times, whereas the self-understanding of the Protestant churches in the continent led to a different picture. A good example of this was the Havana 1929 Hispano-American Evangelical Congress, which, as noted earlier, was entirely planned, celebrated, and followed-up by Latin Americans.

Nevertheless, despite this initial neglectfulness, we observe how progressively Latin American representatives started to integrate into various IMC events. Samuel Escobar mentions the case of John A. Mackay,

a Scottish Presbyterian who was a missionary in Peru since 1916 and later in Mexico, before becoming President of Princeton Theological Seminary . . . Twelve years after the Panama Congress, at the initial meeting of the International Missionary Council (1928) in Jerusalem, Mackay made very clear the legitimacy of a Protestant missionary presence in Latin America: ‘Sometimes those who are interested in Christian service in South America are apt to be regarded as religious buccaneers devoting their lives to ecclesiastical piracy, but that is far from being the case. The great majority of men [*sic*] to whom we go will have nothing to do with religion. They took up this attitude because religion and morality had been divorced throughout the whole history of religious life in South America.’²⁹

It is important to highlight here that missionary work carried out by Protestants, in general terms, did not have any intention to “steal” Roman Catholic sheep, or to proselytize among converts of this Christian tradition, rather to evangelize those who did not have the opportunity to encounter Jesus Christ.

Another example of Latin America’s gradual involvement with the IMC is cited by Carmelo Alvarez when he points out that the conference in Tambaram, India, in 1938 was organized by the IMC and “included the first Latin American delegation of distinguished ecumenists as participants. The Latin American message was summarized in this way: ‘Protestant missions in

29 Samuel Escobar, “It’s Your Turn, Young Ones—Make me Proud! Evangelical Mission in Latin America and Beyond,” in *The Reshaping of Mission in Latin America*, ed. Miguel Alvarez (Oxford: Regnum Edinburgh Centenary Series, 2015), 12–13.

Latin America rest directly upon the claims of urgent human need and the Christian consciousness of obligation to make disciples of all nations.”³⁰

Interesting, this quote contains what can be considered an “embryo” of the “Holistic Mission” (*misión integral*)³¹ so popular especially among Latin American Evangelicals in the 20th century. Its main exponent, René Padilla, underlines in this regard that “the challenge to both Christians in the West and Christians in underdeveloped countries is to create mission models centred on a prophetic lifestyle, models that point to Jesus Christ as the Lord of the whole of life, to the universality of the church and the interdependence of human beings in the world.”³² Alvarez goes on to say that

the report resulting from this 1938 conference affirmed that Latin America had a role to play in the ecumenical world of the day and showed that Protestantism was a powerful transforming force in Latin America. Protestantism in Latin America continued to be challenged by the intellectual and upper classes to be an enlightened religion. The International Missionary Council was encouraged to implement a series of recommendations enabling these “younger churches” to play a relevant role in the changing societies of Latin America. The Protestant churches of Latin America were, again, voicing their search for identity and mission in their region as well as asserting a place for themselves in the global ecumenical movement.³³

International Missionary Council serving Latin American Missions: A Cuban Example

An interesting example of how the IMC supported Latin American churches can be found in an effort to investigate the sustainability of the churches in the region to carry out their mission. The same year that the Cuban Council of Evangelical Churches was founded (1941), the latter published a report that was the result mainly of a survey implemented at different levels. Published as a book, it states in its introduction that “a research made

30 Carmelo Alvarez, “The Ecumenism of the Spirit: Emerging Contemporary Contexts of Mission in Latin America,” in *The Reshaping of Mission in Latin America*, ed. Miguel Alvarez (Oxford: Regnum Edinburgh Centenary Series, 2015), 55.

31 The *misión integral* involves an intrinsic relationship between *diakonia* and evangelism as two essential legs of God’s mission, that is, “The Judgment of the Nations” (Matt. 25:31-46), by which assisting those hungry, thirsty, the strangers, the naked, the sick, those in prison, we are serving Jesus Christ for whom we are “making disciples of all nations” (Matt. 28:19).

32 René Padilla, *Misión Integral: Ensayos sobre el Reino y la iglesia* (Grand Rapids: Nueva Creación, 1986), 135.

33 Alvarez, “The Ecumenism of the Spirit,” 55.

among the Evangelical Churches in Cuba was developed at the request of the Latin American delegates in Madras, December 1938. These delegates requested from the [IMC's] Department of Social and Economic Research to help the churches in their respective countries to study the economic foundation of the evangelical movement."³⁴

Interestingly, its author, J. Merle Davis, underscores that "the Cuban Church of the future, in its structure and in its emphasis, should be different of the North American Church. The Gospel of Christ will be felt more deeply in Cuba when it appeals to the Cuban ideological sources and motivation, and when its roots find support in Cuba more than in the United States."³⁵ The book's seven points, in "Observations and Conclusions," to "set the Cuban Evangelical Churches on a more solid foundation" can be summarized as follows:

1. The Evangelical Church has experienced a notable growth and has been firmly established in just over a generation in Cuban cities and towns.³⁶
2. The educational work of the Evangelical Church is considered of high quality and has made a permanent impression in national life. The fact that the beneficiaries cover 90 percent of its expenses means that they belong to the middle class and therefore can afford to pay for the education of their children.
3. The Cuban Evangelical Churches are extremely weak economically, and most of their members are poor.
4. This issue must be brought to the attention of the whole body of the members, pastors, missionaries, and board of missions; and a study must be carried out toward supporting the future of the evangelical movement.
5. It is also necessary to take all precautions to avoid the young churches receiving donations of money that would prevent them from doing things that they can do on their own.

34 J. Merle Davis, *La iglesia cubana en una economía azucarera* [The Cuban Church in a sugar economy] (Havana: Cuba Intelectual, 1941), 3.

35 Davis, *La iglesia cubana en una economía azucarera*, 4.

36 An important detail here to consider is that the history of Cuban Protestant missions was counted starting with the introduction of the US missionaries, which coincided with the US intervention at the beginning of the 20th century, that is, the pioneering work of the "patriotic missionaries" in the previous century was not even taken into account.

6. The Evangelical Church still has not adjusted in program, sustenance, and leadership to the social and economic conditions in Cuba. The church is a costly institution for the middle class, mainly among poor people. It is an Anglo-Saxon and democratic institution in a Latin and feudal society. It is an urbanized institution that attempts to widen itself to a rural ambience.
7. The Cuban church is poorly resourced to start expanding itself to rural regions. Its programme is still not adjusted to deal with the economic and social obstacles for its development.³⁷

After describing "A New Strategy," the author suggests a better use of land and unoccupied time; capacity building for agriculture and industry; and the rehabilitation of individuals and homes, among others. He ends with the sentence, "Through such concept of the task of the Evangelical Church in Cuba, the hundreds of sanctuaries and chapels located in different regions of the island, can become not only centres of spiritual power, but also sources of economic and social redemption for which the declaration of Christ that he came 'in order to have life and life in abundance' can become a reality."³⁸ These thoughts are more relevant than ever in Cuba, where churches are increasingly engaged in food production for the population. The church is thus not limiting its mission to satisfying the spiritual needs of the people, but addresses all their necessities holistically and creatively.

This again is an example by which the IMC contributed to empower the Cuban Protestant missions in the first half of the 20th century. It is interesting that 80 years after the publication of the survey, many of the findings of this "strategic planning" are still valid for our churches and theological institutions, for example, encouraging holistic mission (mission and *diakonia*), self-sustainability (instead of "foreign" funding), ecumenical cooperation, capacity building, and the need to become more indigenous. These recommendations have had a positive impact in theological education even in our day.

In 1984, an ecumenical gathering took place at SET to examine "the missionary heritage of the Cuban churches" with the participation of missionaries from the USA and church leaders in the country. We did not find traces of the IMC heritage per se, but it was mentioned that the Protestant churches in the island were founded by the "patriotic missionaries" in the second half of the 19th century. These were lay patriots who were persecuted by the Spanish

³⁷ Davis, *La iglesia cubana en una economía azucarera*, 128–30.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 137.

colony because of their independence ideas and struggles and had to flee to the USA where they converted to the Protestant tradition.

One of the lecturers at this consultation, Adolfo Ham, pointed out,

It is a historical fact that the first Protestant missionary efforts of importance were those heroes that Rafael Cepeda has rightly called the “patriotic missionaries” in the period from 1880 to 1898, such as Alberto J. Díaz, Enrique Someillán, Evaristo Collazo, Pedro Duarte, Manuel Deulofeu, Isidro Barredo, etc. All of them were displaced and replaced by the missionaries from the United States who, in the period from 1898 to 1914, assumed the direction of the work in Cuba. Symptomatically, these missionary efforts were under the jurisdiction of the “National Mission Boards,” just as in Puerto Rico, indicating that Cuba was considered a territory of the United States. This situation must be added to the fact that most of the missionaries will come from the southern United States, from southern denominations, such as the Methodist Episcopal Church of the South (MECS), the Presbyterian Church of the South, the Southern Baptist Convention, among others. Not only was the thinking of the churches of the South more conservative theologically and politically than those of the North, but the same could be asserted of the Boards of Domestic Missions, since the Boards of Foreign Missions were more liberal in their work; the missionaries adapted more to national idiosyncrasies and cultures than in the previous case.³⁹

The *International Review of Mission* devoted an issue to this mission gathering in Matanzas in 1985. Eugene I. Stockwell, at that time the director of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, who attended event, wrote in the editorial, “What intrigues Cuban Protestants today is that these ‘patriotic missionaries’ were deeply convinced of the need for freedom from Spain and its colonialism, as today’s Cubans struggle to live out a freedom from the effects of United States’ colonialism.”⁴⁰ This is indeed one of the main challenges of the mainline Protestant churches on the island today when the US administration has been increasing further sanctions against our country, but also when some Cuban church leaders and pastor exhibit annexationist tendencies towards the USA.

39 Adolfo Ham, “The Cuban Protestant Missionary Heritage Seen from the Ecumenical Perspective,” in *Missionary heritage in Cuba*, ed. Rafael Cepeda (San José: DEI, 1986), 57–58.

40 Eugene L. Stockwell, “Editorial,” *International Review of Mission* 74:295 (July 1985), 316.

Cooperation in Mission in the Field of Theological Education

Theological education is one of the areas identified in the “Thematic Framework of Reference for the IMC Centenary Study Process 2021–2022.” As pointed out earlier, from the very beginning of holding mission conferences in Latin America—starting with the Panama gathering—there was a clear and deliberate plan and further implementation toward theological formation, after which theological institutions and seminaries were created and developed.

In 1960, José Míguez Bonino summarized theological education in the following points:

1. I believe that denominational theological training in this situation is an aberration, an absurdity. No single denomination can cope with these problems. Or, rather, these problems cannot be tackled in the perspective of a single tradition. The whole Christian tradition as it is represented in the different confessions must be brought to bear in the situation. I think that only united theological education makes sense here.
2. Theological education has to be closely attached to the life of the Church—or rather integrated in it. I do not intend to detract from the academic freedom and the critical function of a seminary. But I believe that the theological schools are the only places in Latin America where the young growing and changing churches can reach a self-understanding which is indispensable for their task. And this can only be done when these schools are vitally related to and integrated into the ongoing life of the churches. Only thus shall we be able to “discover” the new pastor which our churches need, the theology which corresponds to the Word of God in our situation. This includes, of course, our responsibility for the training of the laity. The seminary—in the mission field at least—dare not be a self-enclosed institution waiting for the Church to send its students to it; it has to be a centre of ecclesiastical life and thought reaching out into the churches.
3. I think that a conclusion can be drawn concerning the debated problem of faculty: we have to keep mixed faculties of missionaries and nationals. The case for a national faculty has been sufficiently made—usually by missionaries. It is high time for the nationals to plead the case for missionary (by which I mean teachers from abroad) professors. We cannot let a stupid nationalism blind us to that need: theological education in our countries cannot let go the experience, the insight and the ability developed by the mother churches in centuries

of life and thought. And these things cannot be found in books: they have to come to us embodied in the missionary.

4. We have to key up our programme to different types of needs—even if it complicates our organization and breaks down some of our neat, academic classifications. We have to keep on training pastors for the common—and basic—life of the congregations. But we need also a mobile specialized ministry: with students, workers, for teaching, for social work, for music and other fields. Of course, this requires an expansion in equipment, faculties and resources which is still in a large measure beyond the possibilities of the younger churches. But may I suggest that this would be a most fruitful—if less spectacular than others—form of investment for the Mission Boards?⁴¹

Thinking in terms of the educational philosophy for mission of our seminary today, and its curricula, we must emphasize the achievements of all this reflection, and how to be sure that in all our courses, these critical and positive points may be somehow included at least in their spirit and according to our context. We highlight the following points.

(1) Today, when there is a tendency towards the sectarian or denominational approach to theological formation, ecumenical theological education is critical.

(2) Missional formation cannot be divorced from the reality and ministry of the churches, which ought to be the *raison d'être* of this endeavour.

(3) In these times of globalization, international cooperation for theological education, especially in the South-South relationship, is crucial.

(4) In theological formation for mission, Biblical sciences are not enough. Also required is holistic and interdisciplinary capacitation to interpret the “mission field,” the context where God’s mission is being shared. This cross-fertilization between Biblical text and the respective context provides the necessary tools towards missional formation.

We should also work in agreement with the Cuban Council of Churches, the Latin American Council of Churches and the Caribbean Conference of Churches, or the extant organizations. Contacts and conferences with other seminaries and theological schools in Latin America and the Caribbean, not only the Spanish speaking islands, would be important for exchanging our curricula on capacity building for the *missio Dei*.

41 José Míguez Bonino, “Theological Education for a Church in Transition: Viewpoint of a Latin American,” *International Review of Missions* 49:194 (April 1960), 155–56.

Conclusions

In the early days of global ecumenical efforts to share God’s mission, Latin America was considered the “neglected continent” and therefore was excluded from the 1910 Edinburgh World Missionary Conference because it was already regarded as Christian, due to the long-standing Roman Catholic presence in the region. Despite this, the Edinburgh ethos was extended to the continent by the US missionaries, propelled—consciously or unconsciously—by US imperial and hegemonic interests.

One of the authors consulted in this research, Arturo Piedra, takes this position extensively. Nevertheless, the “Presentation” of Piedra’s book notes his criticism of the missionaries but also that “his motivation is not any resentment trying to de-authorize the legacy that the Evangelicals have received from the North. On the contrary, trying to place the facts with honesty facing the vertical North-South missions, he presents a historical study which permits us, in Latin America, to understand, discern and receive with more solidity and new angles, his actual present Christian experience.”⁴²

Latin American missionaries were not present at the formation of the IMC at Lake Mohonk in 1921. Nevertheless, representatives of the region progressively started to integrate with IMC work, voicing their search for identity in mission and exercising influence.

In this regard, Eliseo Vílchez-Blancas points out that

the Latin American missionaries, like J. A. Mackay (although Scottish) and Alberto Rembao, had a significant impact on Jerusalem and Madras, shaping the ecumenical movement with a certain Latin American dose. The Latin American missiological perspective—of the first and second generation of Latin American evangelicals—brought certain clear themes to the WCC: the indigenous character of the church and the non-sectarian character of mission, promoted in terms of cooperation and evangelical integration. These were two proposals that marked Havana 1929 and Madras 1939 [*sic*]. Latin American efforts and processes, such as united publications and seminaries, church councils (e.g., in the 1930s, the Evangelical Alliance of Lima and Callao, predecessor of the National Evangelical Council of Peru), and indigenous churches (such as the Peruvian Evangelical Church from 1922) are clear traces of a Latin American Protestantism, *sui generis* on a global level. Note that this is distant from the processes of nationalization of the Presbyterian, Methodist and Baptist churches, which would take place in the 1970s, after one hundred years of government by foreign missionary agencies.⁴³

⁴² Piedra, *Evangelización Protestante en América Latina*, ix.

⁴³ Eliseo Vílchez-Blancas, comments shared in an email on 15 November 2021.

The points we have raised on theological education are put into the perspective of cooperation in mission in Cuba in relation to the Caribbean region. Our seminary itself is, in fact, an example of the ecumenical cooperation in ecumenical training and formation for the mission of the church.

Finally, the Cuban mainline Protestant churches in general and our theological seminary in particular are being challenged by the “patriotic missionaries” legacy of mission, ecumenism, and sense of nation!

CHAPTER 13

Dreams of Cooperation: A Case Study of Education for Mission Based in Costa Rica

Karla Ann Koll

In October of 1921, representatives of national mission organizations from North America, Europe, Australia, and South Africa, as well as several people from Asia, gathered at Lake Mohonk in New York State to found the International Missionary Council (IMC). The dream expressed at the World Missionary Conference held in Edinburgh a decade earlier of an international body for missionary cooperation had come to fruition. Some of the mission boards represented by the Foreign Missions Conference of North America at the meeting were engaged in mission work in Latin America. However, as had been the case at Edinburgh 11 years earlier, Latin America was left out of the discussion.

A few months prior to the meeting of mission representatives at Lake Mohonk, a group of mission leaders gathered in the context of the annual Keswick conference at Stony Brook on Long Island, New York. Harry and Susan Strachan, British missionaries who had worked in Argentina for several years, called the group together to share their dream for mission in Latin America. This vision called for bringing the missions and churches already working in the region together in focused evangelistic efforts. By the end of the meeting, the group officially incorporated the Latin America Evangelization Campaign (LAEC). By the time of the meeting in Lake Mohonk, the Strachans were already setting up their base of operations in the small Central American republic of Costa Rica.

The new mission established by the Strachans went far beyond other interdenominational faith missions in the model of cooperation between churches it proposed. For this reason, it provides an interesting case study of contrasting models of cooperation in mission. The historical trajectory of cooperation in mission formalized at Lake Mohonk and the model of cooperative evangelism initiated by the LAEC converged several decades later around the importance of education for mission. Upon their arrival in Central America, the Strachans immediately recognized the need to train Latin Americans. They began with a Bible training school for women that quickly became a

coeducational Bible Institute. In the 1940s, the institution became the Latin American Biblical Seminary (*Seminario Bíblico Latinoamericano*—SBL). The Theological Education Fund (TEF) created by the IMC played a fundamental role in drawing the SBL into the ecumenical movement. In important ways, the connection to and support from the international community through the TEF and its successor agencies allowed the SBL to engage more fully with the context of Latin America and the Caribbean as well as to develop its own theological perspectives. The need to reach out in Latin America with a theological message of life and hope has continued to evoke dreams of cooperation in mission education, dreams continued today in the Latin American Biblical University (*Universidad Bíblica Latinoamericana*—UBL).

A New Model of Cooperation in Mission in Central America

Prior to exploring the interdenominational faith mission model the Strachans brought with them and then developed further in Costa Rica, it is important to see the role Central America played in the Protestant missionary imagination as the 20th century began. In 1894, British evangelical Lucy Guinness published a book with the title *South America: The Neglected Continent*.¹ If South America was being neglected by Protestant mission efforts, the tiny republics of the isthmus connecting South America with North America were almost completely ignored. After Central America gained independence from Spain in 1821, the Roman Catholic Church remained the official religion of the new republics. By the mid-19th century, the governments of the region began to permit the practice of other forms of religious expression in the interest of attracting Protestant immigrants from Europe and North America.

In the late 1880s, Central America caught the attention of Cyrus Ingerson Scofield, a Congregationalist pastor from Dallas. As a popular speaker, Scofield was already popularizing the dispensationalist theology that he would later codify in his reference notes for the Bible. Scofield read the risen Christ's command to his disciples to be his witnesses in "Jerusalem and in all Judea and in Samaria" in Acts 1:8 as a biblical mandate for Christians in the United States to evangelize the lands closest to them. His inquiries to various mission boards informed him that the only organized Protestant mission work in the region, in addition to the Moravians who had been present on the Caribbean

1 Lucy Guinness and E. C. Millar, *South America: The Neglected Continent* (London: E. Marlborough & Company, 1894).

coast of Nicaragua since 1849, was the work of the Presbyterian Church USA in Guatemala. Scofield organized the Central American Mission (CAM) in 1890. The first missionary couple sent by CAM arrived in Costa Rica in February of 1891.²

In February of 1916, representatives of Protestant mission boards working in Latin America gathered in the Panama Canal Zone in the Congress on Christian Work in Latin America. The Panama Congress was convened by the Committee on Cooperation in Latin America (CCLA), an organization of mission boards formed in 1913 in response to the decision to exclude Latin America from consideration in Edinburgh. In Panama, the boards and societies working in Central America stressed the lack of mission personnel working with the Spanish-speaking and Indigenous populations of the region. Only the CAM and the American Bible Society had a presence in all five republics. In addition to the Presbyterians in Guatemala, the report lists the British Wesleyan Methodist Mission Society, the Plymouth Brethren, the Friends Church of California and the American Baptist Home Mission Society as working with local populations.³ As a result of the Panama Congress, the American Baptists extended their work in the region from El Salvador into Nicaragua.⁴ The Board of Foreign Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church of the United States responded positively to the request of the CCLA to begin work in Costa Rica.⁵

The small Protestant missionary force in Central America failed to organize a follow-up conference to the Panama congress. The level of coordination among mission societies and nascent churches envisioned by the mission leaders who gathered at Lake Mohonk was impossible for tiny Protestant communities in the Central American republics. However, a new model of cooperation in mission, one that would open new possibilities for evangelism and theological education, was about to be implemented in the region.

Harry Strachan and Susan Beamish entered the faith mission movement through the East London Missionary Training Institute, also known as Harley College. Grattan and Fanny Guinness founded this school in 1873 on the advice of Hudson Taylor of the China Inland Mission. Through their

2 Mildred W. Spain, "*And in Samaria*" (Dallas: The Central American Mission, 1954), 6–10.

3 Committee on Cooperation in Latin America (CCLA), *Christian Work in Latin America*, Report of the Panama Congress on Christian Work in Latin America, February 10–19, 1916 (New York: The Missionary Education Movement, 1917), Vol. I, 167–69; and Vol. III, 478–81.

4 Jorge Pixley y Jerjes Ruiz, *Con fe viva: 75 años de aporte bautista al pueblo de Dios en el Pacífico de Nicaragua*. (Managua: Convención Bautista de Nicaragua, 1992), 19–24.

5 Wilton Nelson, *Historia del protestantismo en Costa Rica* (San Jose: Publicaciones IINDEF, 1983), 195–99.

personal contacts and the hundreds of young people they trained, as well as the missions that they and their family members founded, the Guinneses propagated the model of interdenominational faith missions beyond China to other parts of the world, including Latin America.⁶ The 1894 book by Lucy Guinness mentioned above led to the establishment of a mission effort in Peru that from 1900 on was carried out under the name of the Regions Beyond Missionary Union (RBMU).⁷ Susan Beamish was sent to Argentina by RBMU in 1901. Harry Strachan arrived several months later.⁸

At the end of 1904, Harry and Susan, now married, moved to the town of Tandil to take over missionary work that had been started by a Plymouth Brethren missionary some thirty years earlier. During fifteen years in Tandil, the Strachans gained valuable pastoral experience as the congregation slowly grew under their leadership.⁹ Spurred by the refusal of the 1910 Edinburgh World Missionary Conference to consider Latin America as a viable field for Protestant mission work, several evangelical leaders and supporters in Britain brought several small mission societies working in South America, including RBMU of Peru and RBMU of Argentina, together in the Evangelical Union of South America (EUSA).¹⁰

Harry Strachan's vision for continent-wide evangelization grew out of his service in Argentina. He became convinced that traditional patterns of missionary activity, centred on forming congregations, were not sufficient to spread the gospel to the millions of Latin Americans who were dying without a saving knowledge of Christ. While in Tandil, he began to experiment with different evangelization techniques in the surrounding areas, such as the use of a tent for evangelistic campaigns and selling Bibles and Christian literature out of a horse-drawn wagon. The leaders of the new home office of the EUSA were not very responsive to Harry's desire to dedicate himself to evangelistic work fulltime on a regional level. World War I also disrupted communications between Argentina and Britain, as well as reduced the resources available for mission.¹¹

6 Klaus Fiedler, *The Story of Faith Missions: From Hudson Taylor to Present Day Africa* (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 1994), 34–38.

7 *Ibid.*, 128, 152 notes 42 and 44.

8 On the paths Harry Strachan and Susan Beamish took to Harley College, their experiences there, and their call to mission service, see R. Kenneth Strachan and W. Dayton Roberts, *Harry and Susan: The Early Days of the Latin America Mission*, unpublished manuscript, 1981, 10–21.

9 W. Dayton Roberts, *One Step Ahead: The Innovative Strachans and the Birth of the Latin America Mission* (Miami: Latin America Mission, 1996), 33–44.

10 *Ibid.*, 45–46.

11 Roberts, *One Step Ahead*, 40–51. Strachan and Roberts, *Harry and Susan*, 47–51.

Wartime conditions and travel restrictions made it impossible for the Strachans to take their furlough in Britain. In August of 1918, they travelled to the United States. Though the Strachans had never been to North America, they were not without initial connections. Though the Canadian Council of the EUSA refused to support to Harry's dream, his ideas soon found receptive ears.¹² In the New York City area, the Strachans were able to develop contacts within the vast networks of the evangelical movement that nourished many institutions, including faith missions. Harry participated in the midday interdenominational prayer meetings at the North Reformed Church on Fulton Street and conferences at Hepzibah House,¹³ where he was able to build connections with both pastors and interested Christians. Soon Harry was speaking at Victorious Life Conferences throughout the Northeast.¹⁴ With their connections developing in the United States, the Strachans cut their ties with the EUSA.¹⁵

With support from new friends in the United States for a continent-wide effort focused on evangelization, the Strachans embarked in mid-1920 on a yearlong survey tour that took them to seventeen different countries of Latin America. Undoubtedly, Harry had access to the reports of the Congress on Christian Work in Latin America held in Panama in February of 1916. That conference had produced the most extensive survey of Protestant mission work in the region.¹⁶ However, Harry wanted to see for himself, as well as build the personal relationships necessary to support his vision. The Strachans claimed to have made contact with close to five hundred and fifty missionaries from over thirty different organizations, as well as local congregations. They reported that they found great enthusiasm for their proposed evangelistic

12 Ibid., 57–58.

13 "Our History," Hepzibah House, <https://hhouse.org/our-history/>.

14 The Victorious Life Conferences, focused on encouraging the personal faith experience of young people, began in 1912 in Philadelphia and soon spread to other cities. The conferences, which featured speakers from faith missions, gathered offering for missionary efforts and encouraged young people to commit their lives to missionary service. The Editorial Committee, "The Victorious Life: The Conference and its Message" in *The Victorious Life: Messages from the Summer Conferences*, ed. Robert C. McQuilkin, (Princeton: Board of Managers, Victorious Life Conference, 1918 / Republished: Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2019) 1–6.

15 Strachan and Roberts, *Harry and Susan*, 64–68.

16 CCLA, *Christian Work in Latin America*, Volumes 1, 2, and 3. Harry Strachan's personal copy of the reports, which are in the Enrique Strachan Library of the Latin American Biblical University, have no indication of the date on which Harry acquired them.

work among the missionaries and the congregations, with promises to cooperate in campaigns.¹⁷

Upon their return to the United States, Harry and Susan were ready to take the next steps. At the Stony Brook meeting, a Home Council was organized for the new LAEC. As field directors, the Strachans had complete control over the work of the LAEC and the disposition of funds raised. As the office in the United States was run by volunteers, overhead costs were kept low.¹⁸ The doctrinal statement adopted by the new faith mission clearly expressed a fundamentalist position with emphasis on the verbal inspiration of Scripture, the Virgin birth as well as the deity of Christ, the bodily resurrection, and Christ's vicarious sacrifice as the only path to salvation. The influence of the Keswick movement is clearly seen in "the spiritual doctrine of a life of victory over sin through the power of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit of God." The reference to the "imminency [*sic*] of the pre-millennial coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" pointed to the eschatological urgency of the evangelistic task.¹⁹

The Strachans chose the tiny country of Costa Rica as the headquarters for their new mission endeavor, even though they had only spent 24 hours there during their survey trip. The city of San José offered some strategic advantages as a launching ground for an evangelistic effort that included all of South and Central America. The lack of a consistent evangelical missionary presence in the country also motivated the Strachans in their considerations. The Central America Mission had been working in Costa Rica for 30 years by the time the Strachans visited, but their two remaining missionaries were making plans to leave. The Methodists from the United States, who begun work in Costa Rica in 1917, were focused on running in a school. The Strachan family, together with Mary France arrived in Costa Rica in October of 1921.²⁰

The mission leaders who gathered at Lake Mohonk to found an international council through which mission societies could function jointly understood interdenominational as a coming together of mission boards and societies.²¹ The faith mission movement also thought of itself as interdenominational, but the movement used the term in a different way. As Klaus Fiedler points out, the concept of Christian unity in the faith mission movement

17 "An Attempt to Meet the Need," *The Latin American Evangelist* 1:1 (October 1921), 4–5.

18 Roberts, *One Step Ahead*, 70–71.

19 *The Latin America Evangelist* 1:1 (Oct. 1921), 1.

20 Roberts, *One Step Ahead*, 67–68; Strachan and Roberts, *Harry and Susan*, 103–105.

21 William Richey Hogg, *Ecumenical Foundations: A History of the International Missionary Council and Its Nineteenth Century Background* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1952), 161.

meant the coming together of individuals from different churches in a common task.²² Like many of the founders of interdenominational faith missions cited by Fiedler,²³ Harry Strachan and Susan Beamish had each had experience in churches of different denominations. Harry was raised in a Scottish Presbyterian home. After a conversion experience when he was a young man working in London, he found his way to a Free Church. Susan Beamish grew up in an enclave of the Church of England in Cork, Ireland. She found serious religious commitment in a local Methodist chapel.²⁴ Fiedler suggests that this combination of personal experience and change in religious allegiance led those in the faith mission movement not to take denominational affiliation too seriously.²⁵ The Strachans related to people from many different churches as they spread the message about the need for evangelization in Latin America.

In keeping with this faith mission understanding of cooperation, the LAEC sought contributions primarily from individuals. The Strachans did not directly solicit support, at least not in the pages of *The Latin America Evangelist*, the magazine they published monthly in San José and sent to thousands of supporters in the United States. Instead, the Strachans listed the needs as they saw them, with dollar amounts attached, and encouraged supporters to pray for these needs to be met. To maintain and grow this network of support without the framework of a denominational structure required tremendous effort. On a deputation trip in 1924, Harry visited 30 states as well as Canada. He gave more than 240 talks to groups and churches from many different denominations.²⁶

The Strachans took this initial understanding of an interdenominational movement and developed it much further as they elaborated their proposal for continent-wide evangelization. In their view, the existing denominational efforts in Latin America, focused as they were on founding churches and other institutions such as schools and hospitals, were good as far as they went. However, they were insufficient for meeting the need to bring the message of Christ to the population. Harry Strachan proposed to work “with missionaries of all denominations working in the field”²⁷ in an aggressive and

22 Fiedler, *The Story of Faith Missions*, 177.

23 *Ibid.*, 172–83.

24 Strachan and Roberts, *Harry and Susan*, 12–20A.

25 Fiedler, *The Story of Faith Missions*, 172.

26 *The Latin America Evangelist* 3:6 (January 1924), 10.

27 *The Latin America Evangelist* 1:2 (November 1921), 2.

systematic programme of evangelization carried out in campaigns organized country by country. These efforts would help all of the churches grow.

Harry Strachan immediately set about implementing his interdenominational vision for evangelization. Four days after the family arrived in San José, Harry set out for Guatemala, the country in Central America with the largest Protestant missionary force, to launch the first national evangelistic campaign. The Strachans had laid the groundwork for the Guatemala campaign during their survey trip. After their visit, Presbyterian missionary Paul Burgess had written, “We are greatly interested in (your) plan for a more extensive campaign to reach the multitudes whom we scarcely touch in the Missions already established . . . I am sure that it will be met with a hearty response on the part of the missionaries on the field, many of whom have long been longing and praying for just such help as these brethren are ready and willing to bring.”²⁸

The Guatemala campaign embodied several features the LAEC repeated in subsequent campaigns. First, the effort was coordinated with a local group of missionaries and pastors. In the case of the Guatemala campaign, Strachan worked primarily with men from the Presbyterian Mission and CAM. Secondly, though the campaign did not confront Roman Catholicism beliefs or clergy directly, the evangelistic events stirred up opposition from local priests who urged people not to attend. Thirdly, as the campaign depended on the cooperation of local missions, it proved impossible to hold campaign events in communities where missions were not willing to work together, as happened in Chichicastenango.²⁹

The Strachans were convinced that Latin Americans would most effectively be reached by other Latin Americans. To the extent possible, Harry Strachan involved Latin American preachers as evangelists for the campaigns he organized in different countries. As Dayton Roberts writes, “He aimed always to have the best possible preachers who could really communicate with all social classes. As long as the preachers had an evangelical stance and intellectual credibility he would invite them to cooperate with his mission without any regard for the denominational or ecclesiastical boundary lines.”³⁰ The invited evangelist for the first campaign in Guatemala was a Southern Baptist whom

28 *The Latin America Evangelist* 1:1 (October 1921), 15.

29 The second and third issues of *The Latin America Evangelist* carried extensive coverage of the Guatemala campaign. Also see Randal David Smith, “Rethinking the Latin America Mission: Utilizing Organizational History to Inform the Future” (PhD diss., Asbury Theological Seminary, 2001), 80–89.

30 Roberts, *One Step Ahead*, 8–9.

the Strachans knew from their work in Argentina, Juan Varetto.³¹ For the fifth campaign, carried out in Venezuela in 1923, Strachan recruited Angel Archilla of Puerto Rico, who was seconded to this evangelistic work by the Presbyterian Board of Home Missions.³²

Education for Mission

A key component of the Strachans' plan for continent-wide evangelization focused on the training of Latin American Christians. When they arrived in Costa Rica, they noted that there was not a single missionary training school in Central America for either men or women.³³ Within a year of her arrival in San José, Susan Strachan had founded a Women's Bible Training College. In October of 1922, the five students from El Salvador and Costa Rica had their first class. Though the idea of Bible women had been developed in a variety of mission fields, the concept was virtually unheard of in Latin America. Susan Strachan wrote in 1923 that "the training of Bible women of the right kind will be a unique contribution to the solution of the problem of evangelization of these countries."³⁴ The curriculum followed the pattern established at Harvey College. Over the course of two years, the young women received courses in "Old and New Testament, Christian doctrine, Bible history, Church history, Dispensational Truth, organ and singing, sewing and housework, as well as practical evangelistic work."³⁵

Harry Strachan's original vision called for young men from local churches and missions to be trained as evangelists within the context of the evangelistic campaigns. This proved to be impractical, especially in rural areas. During the campaign in Nicaragua in early 1924, Strachan identified ten potential students, five Baptists and five from the Central American Mission. When eight of these young men arrived in Costa Rica in August of 1924, they became the first male students.³⁶

The Women's Bible Training School, renamed the Bible Institute of Costa Rica in 1924, was an interdenominational institution dedicated to preparing leaders for the churches and missions of Latin America. Students had

31 "Rev. Juan Varetto," *The Latin America Evangelist* 1:1 (October 1921), 11.

32 *The Latin America Evangelist* 2:6 (1923), 14.

33 *The Latin America Evangelist* 1:1 (October 1921), 4–5.

34 *The Latin America Evangelist* 2:8 (1923), 7.

35 *Ibid.*, 8.

36 *The Latin America Evangelist* 3:11 (1924), 14.

to be recommended by a missionary or by the leadership of their churches. For women students, there was an additional requirement. The sponsoring church or mission had to guarantee in writing that they would accept the female graduate as a worker upon her graduation. Susan Strachan made it clear that it would be a waste of the young woman's time as well as of mission resources if she were not going to be employed to do the work for which she had been trained.³⁷ As with other aspects of the LAEC's work, donations from supporters in the United States covered the cost of room, board and tuition for the students. A working woman who pledged five dollars a month for the support of one of the students of the Women's Bible Training School was held up as a model donor.³⁸

As director of the Bible Institute of Costa Rica, Susan Strachan corresponded with a wide variety of missionaries, missions, churches, and mission institutions. The archives from the 1920s and the 1930s contain letters from the following, among others: the English College of Monjas pasta in Cuzco, Perú; the Dragones y Zulueta Baptist Church of Habana, Cuba; the American Bible Society in Cuba; the English College of Iquique, Chile; the Honduras Mission of the Evangelical Synod of North America; the Free Church of Scotland Mission in Peru; the Bolivian Indian Mission: the Cumberland Presbyterian Mission in Cali, Colombia; the Gospel Missionary Union in Palmira, Colombia; the American Institute in Cochabamba, Bolivia; the Christian Church of San Luis Potosi, Mexico; the Sala Evangelica in La Libertad, Ecuador; the Baptist Church of San Salvador, El Salvador; and the First Evangelical Peruvian Church of Arequipa, Perú.³⁹ The evangelistic campaigns served as an important tool for recruiting students. In 1926, the Bible Institute of Costa Rica began publishing *El Mensajero Bíblico*, a monthly evangelistic magazine that promoted the courses of study offered by the Bible Institute to a circulation of thousands throughout Latin America.⁴⁰

By the end of the 1920s, the Strachans had come to the realization that they would not be able to evangelize the entire continent. The expanding work in Costa Rica, which now included a church and a hospital, occupied the Strachans, eight additional missionaries, five national workers and four nurses. Though the evangelistic campaigns would continue, the LAEC increasingly understood the Bible Institute to be the key to reaching more Latin Americans

37 For example, letter from Susan Strachan to Angelica Gallo, 15 January 1932.

38 *The Latin America Evangelist* 1:8 (1922), 10–12.

39 Files of correspondence for the Bible Institute of Costa Rica, 1923–39, Archivo Histórico Wilton M. Nelson.

40 Smith, "Rethinking the Latin America Mission," 98.

with the gospel.⁴¹ In the classrooms in Costa Rica, young people from different churches and different countries built relationships with one another that would bear fruit in subsequent years in cooperative mission efforts.

Early Contacts with the Ecumenical Movement

The model of interdenominational cooperation in mission that the Strachans had built in the 1920s would continue to expand and consolidated over the following decades. Through deputation trips to England and Scotland in the mid-1930s, Harry expanded the support base. In addition to the church and the hospital, the LAEC also started a children's home in Costa Rica. While the evangelistic campaigns continued in various countries, the LAEC also established a second base of operations in Colombia. At the end of the 1930s, the LAEC changed its name to the Latin America Mission (LAM) to be more reflective of the diverse nature of its ministries.⁴²

The Bible Institute also grew stronger in the 1930s. The offering of correspondence courses beginning in 1934 brought more people in contact with the institute's teachings. In 1936, the Bible Institute celebrated its first Evangelical Congress. Among the 150 attendees were graduates as well as supporters from the United States. At the end of the 1930s, the Bible Institute had 68 students.⁴³ In 1941, the Bible Institute of Costa Rica became the Latin American Biblical Seminary (*Seminario Bíblico Latinoamericano*—SBL). With a growing number of churches and missions in Latin America running their own Bible institutes and seminaries, the LAM sought to raise the level of academic instruction the institution in Costa Rica offered.

The 1940s was the decade of the first formal contacts with the ecumenical movement. As the Strachans worked on encouraging cooperation in evangelism in various Latin American countries, they appear to have paid scant attention to the efforts of denominational mission boards to work together at continental level. The LAEC did not participate in the conferences held by the CCLA in Montevideo in 1925 and in Havana in 1929. LAM did send three people to participate in the Central American Evangelical Congress held in Guatemala on the occasion of the visit by the IMC Chair John R. Mott in 1941.⁴⁴

41 *Ibid.*, 98–104.

42 *Ibid.*, 105–12.

43 *Ibid.*

44 Álvaro Pérez, *Un bosquejo de una institución en tres momentos* (libro inédito, 2015), 56.

Princeton Theological Seminary under President John A. Mackay played an important role in bringing people connected with LAM into contact with the ecumenical movement, especially the International Missionary Council. Founded in 1812 as an institution separate from Princeton University to train pastors, Princeton Theological Seminary was the flagship seminary of the Presbyterian Church in the USA. During the 19th century, Princeton was a bastion of conservative theological thought. Princeton theology sought to combine rigorous academic defense of Biblical truths with the Scottish philosophy of Common Sense within the framework of the Presbyterian confessions.⁴⁵ In the late 1920s, however, fundamentalists failed at their attempt to take control of the seminary and the church. The seminary and the denomination opted for a more moderate theological stance that allowed for some theological diversity while affirming the traditional tenets of Reformed theology.⁴⁶

When John Alexander Mackay became president of Princeton Theological Seminary in 1936, he brought with him to the post his deep love of Latin America, his missionary experience, and his evangelical piety. Originally from Scotland, Mackay went to Peru in 1916 with the Free Church Mission. There Mackay directed the Colegio Anglo-Peruano and served as superintendent of the mission until 1926. At that time, he left the Free Church Mission to work full-time as an evangelist for the Young Men's Christian Association based in Montevideo, Uruguay. Mackay formed part of the South American delegation to the Jerusalem conference of the IMC in 1928. After a brief time in Mexico, Mackay accepted an appointment as the secretary for Latin America of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the USA, a post he held from 1932 to 1936.⁴⁷

Horace Fenton appears to have been the first LAM missionary connected with the SBL to study at Princeton. He graduated from Princeton in 1939 and served on the faculty of the SBL for much of the 1950s. W. Dayton Roberts, who began teaching at the SBL in 1950 and who served as rector for the period from 1954 to 1955, graduated from Princeton in 1941. The most important connection between LAM and Princeton was R. Kenneth

Sínodo Evangélico de Guatemala, *Informe oficial del Congreso Evangélico Centro-americano* (Guatemala: El Mensajero, 1941).

45 Mark Noll, *The Princeton Theology, 1812–1921: Scripture, Science, and Theological Method from Archibald Alexander to Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001).

46 James H. Moorhead, *Princeton Seminary in American Religion and Culture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 340–69.

47 John Mackay Metzger, *The Hand and the Plow: The Life and Times of John A. Mackay* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2010), 91–231.

Strachan, the son of Harry and Susan. After studies at Wheaton College and Dallas Theological Seminary, Kenneth joined the missionary ranks of the LAEC in 1936. He began teaching at the SBL in the 1937 academic year. In 1942, Kenneth went to Princeton, where he wrote a master's thesis directed by Mackay on the Protestant Reformation in Spain. Upon his father's death in 1945, Kenneth became co-director of LAM with his mother, a post that also included directing the SBL off and on.⁴⁸ In 1946, Kenneth Strachan invited Mackay to Costa Rica, where he lectured both at the SBL and area churches.⁴⁹ In 1953, Wilton M. Nelson, the church history professor of the SBL, began doctoral work at Princeton. His dissertation, completed in 1957, was published as *The History of Protestantism in Costa Rica* in 1963.⁵⁰

In 1957, the CCLA invited Kenneth Strachan to present a paper on "The Missionary Movement of the Non-Historical Groups in Latin America" to their annual fall study conference. Strachan began with a brief historical sketch of the work of groups often labelled non-historical, evangelical or fundamentalist. The explosive growth of these groups in the period following World War II meant they were becoming "one of the determining influences affecting the spiritual future of Latin America."⁵¹ Strachan estimated that about 75 percent of the approximately six thousand Protestant missionaries working in Latin America and the Caribbean at the time were from groups outside of traditional Protestant denominations and their mission boards, that is to say, unrelated to the CCLA. These groups were demonstrating extraordinary evangelistic zeal, yet the movement had serious weaknesses. The emphasis on evangelism often led to a neglect of education as well as the establishment of strong churches. For Strachan, the greatest weakness was the tendency of these groups to work in isolation from other groups. Cooperation with historical Protestant denominations was especially difficult given deeply held doctrinal beliefs and past tensions. Non-historical groups were particularly wary of joining groups affiliated with international bodies, but were much more open to "a less formal, more fluid form of cooperation at a local grass-roots level."⁵² Strachan ended his paper with a call to the newer groups and the older bodies

48 Pérez, *Un bosquejo histórico*, 68–70, 76.

49 "El Dr. Juan A. Mackay visita a Costa Rica," *Mensajero bíblico* 20:4 (September–October 1946), 6.

50 Wilton M. Nelson, *The History of Protestantism in Costa Rica* (Lucknow: Lucknow Publishing House, 1963).

51 R. Kenneth Strachan, "The Missionary Movement of the Non-Historical Groups in Latin America," Part III, Study Conference of the Committee on Cooperation in Latin America, 10–12 November 1957, 1.

52 *Ibid.*, 15.

to work together a new stepped-up programme of evangelism “to meet the challenge of an exploding population in the valley of revolutionary change.”⁵³ Gone was the eschatological urgency of his parents’ generation; the context was coming to the fore. At the time, Kenneth Strachan was developing plans to implement just such a movement. Evangelism-in-Depth carried out its first campaign in Nicaragua in 1960.⁵⁴

Latinization and the Theological Education Fund

As the 1960s began, the field of mission was changing. As movements in Africa and Asia pushed for national independence, churches in many places sought to gain independence from the missions that had founded them. After the experiences of World War II and due to a growing recognition of their past paternalism, denominational mission boards reorganized their structures and mission theology to focus on being in mission together with churches in other countries. Change was coming to LAM as well. Under the leadership of Kenneth Strachan, who was named director upon his mother’s death in 1950, the watchword was Latinization. The incorporation of more Latin Americans on the staff and faculty posed particular challenges for the SBL and the model of cooperation in mission that had served the LAM since its founding. The Theological Education Fund (TEF) became an important partner in this process and a connection into the ecumenical movement.

The delegates at the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh had expressed concern over the lack of adequate theological education in many mission fields. As early as the Jerusalem meeting in 1928, the IMC pointed to the need for cooperative efforts to meet the need for ministerial training in Asia, Africa and Latin America.⁵⁵ John Mackay, president of Princeton Theological Seminary, became chair of the IMC in 1948. At the Ghana assembly in December of 1957, with Mackay as the outgoing chair, the delegates approved the integration of the IMC into the World Council of Churches (WCC).⁵⁶ At that meeting, the IMC also established the Theological Education Fund

⁵³ Ibid., 15–16.

⁵⁴ W. Dayton Roberts, *Revolution in Evangelism: The Story of Evangelism-in-Depth in Latin America* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1967).

⁵⁵ David Esterline, “From Western Church to World Christianity: Developments in Theological Education in the Ecumenical Movement,” in *The Handbook of Theological Education in World Christianity*, ed. Dietrich Werner et al., Regnum Studies in Global Christianity (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2010), 13–16.

⁵⁶ Metzger, *The Hand and the Road*, 315–29.

(TEF). The Rockefeller Foundation donated the initial two million dollars. Eight Protestant mission boards agreed to provide another two million dollars over five years, which allowed the TEF to become operational in 1958.⁵⁷ After integration of the IMC into the WCC, the TEF became a service of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME).

For LAM under Kenneth Strachan, Latinization touched various aspects of the mission's organization and work. The younger Strachan was concerned that Latin Americans should be incorporated into LAM's ranks on equal footing with people from the United States and Canada. He also hoped Latin Americans would lead the various ministries founded by the mission. Evangelism-in-Depth, like the earlier LAEC, was structured as a series of national campaigns. However, unlike the efforts under his father's leadership, the new programme did not network among missionaries and mission societies working in the countries where the campaigns were held. Instead, the focus was on organizing and mobilizing the local churches of different Protestant traditions and theological persuasions.⁵⁸ The emphasis on Latin American leadership highlighted the importance of the SBL, as such leaders would need theological training.

The first contact the SBL had with the Theological Education Fund appears to have been instigated by John Mackay, who served on the board of the TEF. In July of 1960, the seminary library was awarded a grant of \$1,000 US dollars for the purchase of books from the list provided by the fund. This offer provoked quite a debate among the faculty as to whether this gift should be accepted. Mackay returned to the SBL in August of 1961 to offer the Strachan lectures. In November of 1961, the faculty approved the gift. According to library records, the 1698 books donated by the TEF received little use by the faculty who could read English. However, this initial donation marks a turning point in the openness of the SBL to new theological ideas and to connections with the ecumenical movement. During this period, Lesslie Newbigin, the Anglican bishop from South India who served as the secretary of the IMC, also visited the SBL.⁵⁹

Like many other evangelical mission agencies, LAM expanded rapidly in the years following World War II. By the time of Kenneth Strachan's premature death in 1965, LAM had grown to 170 missionaries. The management of this large mission force spread over two mission fields, Costa Rica and Colombia, and required a large administrative apparatus in the United States. The rapid

57 Esterline, "From Western Church to World Christianity," 16–17.

58 Smith, "Rethinking the Latin America Mission," 156–65.

59 Perez, *Un bosquejo histórico*, 91–94.

growth of LAM, plus the cost of the campaigns, was straining the model of collaboration in mission that depended on ongoing donations from interested individuals and congregations. Missionaries had to spend significant time on deputation in the United States to raise funds, yet many mission families were underfunded.⁶⁰ How would LAM fund the incorporation of Latin Americans?

As the TEF entered its second mandate period (1965–70), the SBL reached out to ask if the Fund would be able to help with the process of incorporating more Latin Americans into the faculty. Though Latin Americans had taught off and on at the institution since its founding, North American missionaries from LAM made up the majority of the faculty. James Hopewell, the director of the TEF, had visited the SBL earlier and become acquainted with the needs. The initial proposal requested support for a one-year teaching fellowship for a recent graduate. In recognition of the need to offer Latin Americans more advanced training than they could receive in the Bible institutes that were proliferating in the region, the SBL started offering bachelor's degrees in theology and in Christian education in 1963. The institution was in the process of instituting a licentiate program. At the request of the SBL, the TEF extended the initial teaching fellowship grant for another three years, which allowed the student in question, Costa Rican Victorio Araya, to complete both his licentiate in theology from the SBL as well as a degree in philosophy at the University of Costa Rica. Araya, the first person to receive a licentiate degree from the SBL, joined the faculty upon his graduation in 1969.⁶¹

The SBL also sought more support for the library from the Fund. In particular, the SBL requested books on Roman Catholicism. In light of changes brought about by the Second Vatican Council, the faculty began to reconsider its traditional evangelical rejection of Roman Catholicism. In 1967, José Míguez Bonino delivered the Strachan lectures. Míguez Bonino, a Methodist from Argentina and dean of the Evangelical Institute for Higher Theological Studies (ISEDET) in Buenos Aires, had been the only Protestant observer from Latin America at Vatican II.⁶² Míguez Bonino was also a member of the Faith and Order Commission of the WCC.

During this period, the TEF also provided grants for Latin American faculty members to pursue advanced studies in the United States. In October of 1967, SBL rector Wilton M. Nelson wrote to James Hopewell, "I am quite

60 Smith, "Rethinking the Latin America Mission," 167–68.

61 Summary prepared from correspondence in Folio 388 RCT, Fondo de Educación Teológica 1965–1978, Archivo Histórico Wilton M. Nelson.

62 The lectures were published in José Míguez Bonino, *Concilio abierto: Una interpretación protestante del Concilio Vaticano II* (Buenos Aires: La Aurora, 1967).

pleased with the progress we are making in the ‘Latinamericanization’ of our Seminary. Much of this progress is due to the help we are receiving from TEF.”⁶³ During this time as well the SBL was heavily involved in the Latin American Association of Theological Schools (*Asociación Latinoamericana de Escuelas Teológicas*—ALET), one of four associations of theological institutions that the TEF supported in Latin America.

For the SBL, the question of Latinization also meant becoming more aware of and drawing closer to the life of people in the different countries from which the SBL was drawing students. In 1969, the SBL requested help from TEF to strengthen the library collection in three areas. The preparation of church leaders to confront the social problems in Latin America required works in sociology. Latin American literature offered another way to understand the social and political situation. Here the existing library collection was particularly poor. Above all, the SBL requested books in the theology of mission and evangelism, including all of the WCC materials on mission and evangelism. “Furthermore,” wrote Rector Plutarco Bonilla, “since the subject of ecumenism is so crucial to cooperative evangelism in Latin America, we need to acquire a broad selection of the basic WCC materials (especially on the ecclesiology of ecumenism and of cooperative evangelism), other basic works related to the subject, and the best works produced from the more conservative viewpoint.”⁶⁴

Both the TEF and the SBL were concerned about ongoing support for Latin American faculty members. In 1969, the SBL appointed a Secretary for Public Relations for the first time charged with soliciting support for the SBL during deputation trips to the United States.⁶⁵ The pattern of cooperation in mission was evolving.

Autonomy: Toward a Latin American and Ecumenical Seminary

As the 1970s began, LAM went a step further in the Latinization process. Each of the ministries the LAM had founded, including the SBL, became an autonomous institution with its own leadership. The various institutions came together in the Latin American Community of Evangelical Ministries (*Comunidad Latinoamericana de Ministerios Evangélicos*—CLAME). LAM,

⁶³ Wilton M. Nelson, letter to James Hopewell, 16 October 1967 in Folio 388 RCT.

⁶⁴ Plutarco Bonilla, letter to James Hopewell, July 1969 in Folio 388 RCT.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

reorganized as LAM-USA, was also a member of CLAME, charged with raising funds and seconding personnel for the other institutions.⁶⁶ CLAME was to serve, in the words of Dayton Roberts, as a “missionary bridge over the gap between Old World resources and Third World opportunities.”⁶⁷

Autonomy brought new challenges to the SBL. On one hand, the fiscal situation of the institution became more complicated, as fewer funds were available from LAM-USA. In 1970, the SBL had nine Latin American faculty members, not all of whom were LAM missionaries. On the other hand, the now autonomous seminary could now develop its own cooperative relations without seeking the approval of LAM-USA.

The autonomy of the SBL coincided with the start of the third mandate of the TEF (1970–77) and the focus on contextualization of theological education around the world.⁶⁸ The extensive correspondence from this period, as well as visits by Aharon Sapsezian, Associate Director for Latin America of the TEF, and the participation of people related to the SBL in different meetings of the TEF and the CWME, testify to the growing relationship of the SBL to the ecumenical movement. The TEF continued to provide scholarship aid for members of the SBL faculty during this period, though the primary focus of the TEF shifted to offering scholarships to faculty members from Bible institutes and seminaries throughout Latin America to further their training in the new licentiate programme of the SBL. Two different programmes, one for theology professors and one for faculty members involved in theological education by extension programmes, allowed at least 14 Latin American theologians to complete degrees. The TEF also provided some funding for a center the SBL opened in New York City to reach Hispanic pastors in the United States. With support of the TEF, the SBL held workshops on new educational methods in theological education to strengthen the SBL’s distance education programme and support the expansion of theological education by extension.⁶⁹ The TEF also served to connect the SBL with other church agencies. The TEF referred a request for aid for the library of the SBL to the *Entraide Protestante Suisse* based in Zürich. The Swiss agency responded with a grant of 9,400 Swiss francs, one of the first direct donations the SBL received from Europe.⁷⁰

66 For an analysis of this process, see Smith, “Rethinking the Latin America Mission,” 197–211.

67 W. Dayton Roberts, “Mission to Community-Instant Decapitation,” *International Review of Mission* 62:247 (July 1973), 338–45, at 345.

68 Esterline, “From Western Church to World Christianity,” 18–19.

69 Summary prepared from correspondence in Folio 388 RCT.

70 Aharon Sapsezian, letter to Rubén Lores, 18 December 1972 in Folio RCT.

Autonomy also freed the SBL to determine the direction of its theological reflection. The faculty sought to respond to the context of Latin America and the emerging currents of theology. The SBL offered its first class on liberation theology in 1972. To encourage the development of Latin American theological thought, the SBL launched a journal, *Vida y pensamiento*, in 1973. The first issue carried a copy of the graduation speech delivered by Rector Rubén Lores at the end of the 1972 in which he calls for the liberation of theology from its cultural colonization.⁷¹ No longer bound by the Declaration of Faith of the Latin America Mission, which had remained unchanged since 1921, the SBL charged a committee of faculty, students and board members with the task of developing a new statement of faith. The Affirmation of Faith and Commitment, adopted by the faculty in December of 1974, seeks to respond to the realities of poverty and injustice in the Latin American context. The framers sought to model the declaration after the texts of Medellín, the meeting of the Conference of Latin American Catholic Bishops held in 1968. Each section begins with a description of the context to which Christians motivated by their faith must respond. The first section, entitled “Jesus Christ the Liberator,” ends with this paragraph:

As followers of Jesus Christ, we also pledge to become incarnate in Latin American society, conscious of the fact that this society suffers and agonizes in its struggle against evil. In dependence on God, we would manifest the love of Christ toward our neighbors, work for their well-being, liberate those we can from their chains, and share with everyone the good news of the fullness of life which is available in Christ Jesus and which is a reality for those who repent and recognize his Lordship.⁷²

Many in LAM were not willing to accompany the SBL in its efforts to contextualize its theological thinking. Already the SBL had established connections with the ecumenical movement through the TEF. Who would cooperate in mission with the SBL in the future?

Autonomy for the SBL came at a time when denominational mission boards in North America were looking for new mission partners. Earlier these boards had turned over control of the churches and institutions they had founded around the world to national leaders. In several cases, this happened at least a decade before LAM organized CLAME. Though these boards continued to support the institutions they had founded, they also opened themselves to the

71 J. Rubén Lores, “La liberación de la teología,” *Vida y pensamiento* 1:1 (1973), 25–33.

72 Latin America Biblical Seminary, “Affirmation of Faith and Commitment,” 1974, Archivo Histórico Wilton M. Nelson.

possibility of collaborating in mission with other institutions that shared their understanding of mission.⁷³ Alan Hamilton, a Presbyterian from the United States who joined the SBL in 1975, became the first faculty member sent by a historical denomination. The United Methodist Church of the United States provided partial support for one of the professor that same year.⁷⁴ The budget prepared for 1977 shows the SBL expected support to come for salaries, in addition to the funding provided by LAM-USA, from the Disciples of Christ, the Mennonites, the American Baptists Churches and Church Women United. The United Methodist Church and the United Church of Christ were slated to provide funds for other uses.⁷⁵

The election of Carmelo Alvarez, a Disciples of Christ theologian from Puerto Rico, as rector of the SBL in late 1977 marks another step in the institution's transition to an ecumenical seminary. Previously, Latin Americans had led the SBL. Puerto Rican Rogelio Archilla, a member of LAM, served as rector from 1948 to 1950. Plutarco Bonilla came from the Canary Islands to study at the SBL as a young man in 1955. Though Bonilla worked in several LAM institutions, he chose not to become a LAM missionary. He joined the staff of the SBL in 1960. He served as rector in two important periods in the autonomy process, 1969–70 and 1975–78. LAM missionary Ruben Lores, who was originally from Cuba, was rector from 1971 to 1973. George Taylor from Panama, a member of LAM and one of the faculty members who had received scholarship help from the TEF for his doctoral work, led the SBL in 1974. Carmelo Alvarez was the first rector who had never had a relationship with the Latin America Mission.⁷⁶

In 1977, the WCC central committee created the Programme on Theological Education (PTE) as a subunit of the Faith and Witness unit. As the successor to the TEF, the new programme continued the work of fomenting ecumenical theological education around the world.⁷⁷ Concern for theological education in Latin America took on new urgency as the end of the 1970s approached. In many countries, military regimes actively repressed movements for human rights and social justice. In the Central American countries

73 For an example of these changes in mission policy in the case of Presbyterians in the United States in reference to Central America, see Karla Ann Koll, "Presbyterians, the United States, and Central America: Background of the 1980s Debate," *The Journal of Presbyterian History* 78:1 (Spring 2000), 87–102.

74 Plutarco Bonilla, "Informe del Rector," October 1975, 2.

75 Budgets for 1976 to 1985 are found in Folio 398 RCT, Archivo Histórico Wilton M. Nelson.

76 Perez, *Un bosquejo histórico*, 133–37.

77 Esterline, "From Western Church to World Christianity," 20.

of Nicaragua, Guatemala and El Salvador, armed revolutionary movements sought to take power from governments backed by the United States. Beyond the political crises, the region experienced increasing economic instability due to structural adjustment measures imposed by international financial agencies to secure payments on the foreign debt. The resulting inflation and controls on foreign currency eroded the ability of institutions that depended on international funds to operate. In 1979, the PTE, in a meeting with the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA (NCCCUSA) and some theological institutions, decided to create the Special Fund for Ecumenical Theological Education in Latin America (FEPETAL). Donations came from *Evangelisches Missionswerk* (EMW) of Germany, *Zending* (Mission of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands), the Basilea Mission of Switzerland, the NCCCUSA and the Methodist Church of the United Kingdom. The theological institutions in Latin America, rather than the funders, made the decisions about the disposition of the available \$595,000 US dollars. Each of the seven participating ecumenical institutions received support during the life of the special fund. FEPETAL provided a grant of \$50,000 US dollars in 1983 to the SBL and a similar grant the following year. Historian Amilcar Ulloa notes that in the context of FEPETAL, “ecumenical” was defined both in reference to unity among Protestants as well as in reference to a commitment to human rights and the needs of the impoverished majorities of the continent. In 1988, FEPETAL transformed into the Latin American and Caribbean Community of Ecumenical Theological Education (CETELA).⁷⁸

As the decade of the 1970s closed, two events drew the attention of the world to Central America. On 19 July 1979, the Sandinista Front for National Liberation (FSLN) overthrew the dictatorship of the Somoza dynasty and established a revolutionary government in Nicaragua with the active participation of many Christians, both Catholics and Protestants. On 24 March 1980, Oscar Romero, the archbishop of San Salvador, was gunned down by a death squad as he was saying mass. Soon the government of the United States, in addition to providing military aid to the governments of El Salvador and Guatemala, was arming counterrevolutionary groups to attack communities in Nicaragua. As revolutionary movements continued in El Salvador and Guatemala, ideological polarization increased in Costa Rica, the only country in the isthmus without a standing army. Public discourse of the time often equated liberation theology with Marxism and support for revolutionary

78 Amilcar Ulloa, “The Origins of Ecumenical Theological Education in Latin America and the Caribbean,” in *The Handbook of Theological Education in World Christianity*, ed. Dietrich Werner et al., Regnum Studies in Global Christianity (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2010), 476–88.

movements. In the opinion of many evangelicals, including people connected with ministries in CLAME and supporters of LAM in the United States, the SBL had abandoned orthodox evangelical faith. Though the faculty held diverse opinions about liberation theology, all agreed that theological education needed to respond to the critical social issues of the region.

As tensions mounted, the SBL chose to withdraw from CLAME in late 1982. In less than two years, CLAME itself would be dissolved as its model of collaboration in mission proved unsustainable.⁷⁹ In October 1984, the SBL was expelled from the Costa Rican Evangelical Alliance. When LAM-USA withdrew their support from the SBL, professors Irene and Richard Foulkes, the last remaining LAM missionaries on the faculty, chose to remain with the SBL. They became mission co-workers of the Presbyterian Church (USA).⁸⁰

Despite the tensions in Costa Rica, the SBL continued to draw students from a variety of churches throughout Latin America. The SBL also continued to develop relationships with and receive support from churches and agencies within the ecumenical movement. Anibal Guzman, a Methodist pastor from Bolivia and former bishop, served as rector from 1983 to 1985. Mortimer Arias, a Uruguayan theologian who had served as bishop of the Methodist Church of Bolivia from 1969 to 1976, joined the faculty as professor of evangelism in 1985. In addition to being active in struggles for human rights in Bolivia, Arias was a member of the CWME from 1973 to 1983. Arias became rector of the SBL in 1986. During the 1980s, the SBL developed relationships with institutions throughout Latin America and the Caribbean to facilitate the administration of its expanding distance program. As the SBL entered the 1990s, the residency and the distance programmes were merged in a decentralized model that allowed students to combine studies in their own countries with short periods of study in Costa Rica.⁸¹

In early 1995, biblical scholar Elsa Tamez became the rector of the SBL. For the first time in its history, the institution founded to train Latin American women study the Bible was led by a Latin American woman. Elsa had come to Costa Rica from Mexico to study at the SBL in 1969. She received her bachelor's degree in 1973. Six years later, she became the first woman to receive a licentiate degree from the SBL. In her doctoral work at the University of Lausanne, she focused on a reinterpretation of Paul's concept of justification

79 Smith, "Rethinking the Latin America Mission," 213–17, 233.

80 For an analysis of the conflicts around the SBL in the mid-1980s, see Karla Ann Koll, "*Por Cristo y América Latina: A Case Study of Ideological Constraints Operating on Theological Practice*" (MDiv thesis, Union Theological Seminary of New York City, 1985).

81 Perez, *Un bosquejo histórico*, 120–26, 137–38.

by faith in light of the demands for justice coming from excluded social groups in Latin America.

Tamez came into office with a dream. On International Women's Day of 1995, the SBL launched the One Million Women campaign. People around the world were invited to send in the names of women who had been important in their faith communities and accompany each name with a donation of one dollar. The funds raised were used to construct buildings on a new university campus. By moving to a new campus, funds from the sale of the old building in downtown San José could be invested to provide ongoing income for the institution. The campaign sought to build upon and strengthen the relationships the SBL had with churches and academic institutions around the world who were committed to preparing women and men for ministry through contextualized theological education. Just as in the early days of the LAEC, individuals were asked to join together in mission to meet the needs of the continent. Ecumenical church agencies also became involved in the campaign. The United Methodist Church (USA) provided missionary personnel to administer the campaign. Other church agencies in North America and Europe provided grants and/or created channels through which their constituents could contribute. Short-term mission teams came from the United States to help with some of the construction.⁸²

On 21 April 1997, the Latin American Biblical University (*Universidad Bíblica Latinoamericana*—UBL) received official recognition from the Costa Rican government. Now the institution would be able to grant university degrees. Four days later, faculty and students laid the first stone for the construction of the new buildings. Students moved into the new residence hall, the last of the four buildings to be built, in May 2000. A liturgy celebrated on 27 October 2000 marked the close of the campaign. The campus built by cooperation in mission was ready to train women and men from various churches and countries to respond to the missional needs of Latin America and the Caribbean in the new century.

Conclusion

The IMC, established at Lake Mohonk in 1921, represented a model of cooperation in mission that brought together mission societies and denominational structures. The Latin America Evangelization Campaign, founded in 1921 by Harry and Susan Strachan, sought cooperation in mission from

⁸² The correspondence related to the One Million Women campaign is held in several bound volumes the Archivo Histórico Wilton M. Nelson.

individuals interested in spreading an evangelical version of the gospel in Latin America. The training institution founded by the LAEC, today the Latin American Biblical University, brought people together from different countries and churches. As the institution began to engage more fully with the social needs of its context in the 1960s, it also opened up to other forms of cooperation in mission. In a context where the institutions of historic Protestantism remained weak and where churches related to the ecumenical movement represented only a small portion of Christians outside of the Roman Catholic Church, the relationship with the SBL allowed the IMC and later the CWME to connect with and support people from many churches in their efforts to develop relevant contextual theologies. Other contributions to cooperation in mission are harder to document, but they are no less real. From the first class in 1922, people have come together in classrooms in Costa Rica to learn to respond theologically and pastorally to the needs of their context. The One Million Women Campaign that financed the new buildings of the UBL showed that the dream of cooperation in mission in Latin America and the Caribbean still has the power to attract the collaboration of individuals from around the world as well as the accompaniment of church mission agencies and ecumenical institutions.

CHAPTER 14

CEMAA, Evangelical Center for Andean and Amazonian Mission, Lima, Peru

Tito Paredes

with the assistance of Marcos Paredes Sadler

What Is CEMAA?

Centro Evangélico de Misiología Andino–Amazónica (CEMAA) is an evangelical centre that promotes the holistic mission of the church in the countries and churches of the Andean-Amazon zone of South America. CEMAA seeks to promote reflection, training, and action for holistic mission, accompanying the church in and from Latin America in its religious, socio-economic, and political context.

CEMAA originated under the stimulus of the Latin American Theological Fraternity through a working commission on the cross-cultural communication of the gospel. This commission organized a consultation on gospel and culture in Huampani, Peru, in November 1977, where the Andean missiological centre was born. CEMAA has been a member of the National Council of Evangelical Churches of Peru since 1983. CEMAA's vision is to see a significant number of local churches incarnating and living out the whole gospel for all peoples in and from Latin America.

Introduction to CEMAA's contribution to the IMC Study Process

We identified and counted on the contribution of six scholars on their respective research topics. Some of the articles are finished, others in progress, and others yet to come. Themes we are working on include the following:

1. Tomas Gutiérrez Sánchez: "El rol y papel de Juan A. MacKay y Samuel Guy Inman en la conferencia de Jerusalén en 1928" ("The role and paper of Juan A. Mackay and Samuel Guy Inman at the Jerusalem conference in 1928")

2. Marcos Paredes Sadler: “América Latina: el continente abandonado” (“Latin America: The abandoned continent”)
3. Sidney Rooy: “Profetas del sur: el impacto de Luis Odell y otros en el movimiento ecuménico en Latinoamérica” (“The prophets of the South: the impact of Luis Odell and others on the ecumenical movement in Latin America”)
4. Carlos Mondragon: “El rol y papel de Baez Camargo en el movimiento ecuménico” (“The role and paper of Báez Camargo in the ecumenical movement”)
5. Ulrike Sallandt: “Teología y Liberación: Una reflexión desde el contexto de América Latina” (“Theology and liberation: A reflexion from the Latin American Context”)
6. Pablo Deiros: “Dos modelos de misión: Misión Bidimensional (Edingburgo y Panamá) y Misión Poliédrica Hoy” (“Two models of mission: Bidimensional mission (Edinburgh and Panama) and multifaceted mission today”)

Once we convened the group, we shared with them the objectives of International Missionary Council (IMC) centenary study process. In light of the 100-year commemoration, we gave our participants freedom to explore and choose the topics of their interests. Some of them have been working on their subjects in the past and others chose a relatively new subject for them.

From our contextual and historical perspective, we trace the IMC back to the 1910 World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh. For Protestant missionaries working in Latin America, the Edinburgh conference was a point of exclusion and division, the opposite of its intended purposes of unity and cooperation in mission. Eventually, after the conference in Jerusalem in 1928, Latin America was considered a mission field in need of evangelism and Christian witness. This was part of the healing process and the beginnings of cooperation with the ecumenical movement.

The official exclusion and informal participation of missionaries and Latin Americans at the Edinburgh conference led them to meet and dialogue about what to do. The conversations and reactions to this exclusion resulted in the creation of the committee of cooperation for Latin America, which sponsored the Panama 1916 congress, which became the equivalent of Edinburgh 1910 for missionaries and Latin American evangelicals. This significant movement became what Arturo Piedra calls the dawn of the ecumenical movement in Latin America.

The great majority of Latin American evangelicals have not been a part of the IMC or the WCC. However, historical churches have some early connections with IMC, for example, the Methodist, Lutheran and Anglican churches, as well as some Pentecostal, most of them from the southern cone: Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay.

Three Studies from Latin America

Latin America was recognized by the IMC as a mission field at the 1928 missionary conference in Jerusalem, sponsored by the IMC. John A Mackay and Samuel Guy Inman played an important role in this change. In summary, we have found three major points we want to highlight through extracts from three articles.

Latin America has been the abandoned continent

This point of view is displayed by Marcos Paredes Sadler in his article, “América del sur: del continente abandonado a la organización del comité de cooperación en América Latina” (“South America: From an abandoned continent to the creation of cooperation committee in Latin America”)

Abstract

In this paper, Marcos Paredes Sadler explores some perceptions of what was termed by some as the “neglected continent” in reference to the lack of Protestant missionary work in South America at the end of the 19th century. He reviews some of the important missionary works of the time and look for references to South America with regard to Protestant missionary work. By that time, Protestant missionary work in South America was very limited compared to the rest of the world. Then, he briefly reviews the World Missionary Conference of Edinburgh in 1910 and considers how it acted or failed to act with regard the evangelism of South America. For many at the conference, South America was already a Christian continent. Finally, he traces the Mission Conference on Latin America held in New York by some members, spearheaded by Robert Speer, who were present at Edinburgh. This conference would lead the way to the development of the Committee on Cooperation in Latin America, which had such widespread influence in the region.

Latin America has been recognized as a mission field

This development is described by Tomas Gutiérrez Sánchez in his article, “Voces desde América Latina en el Concilio Misionero Internacional de Jerusalén 1928: Samuel Guy Inman y John A. Mackay” (“Voices from Latin America at the International Missionary Conference in Jerusalem 1928: Samuel Guy Inman and John A. Mackay”)

Abstract

This paper deals with the participation of two distinguished missionaries (John A. Mackay and Samuel Guy Inman) who worked in Latin America during the first three decades of the 20th century. They were influential at the meeting of the IMC at Jerusalem in 1928. Thanks to their presentations at the council and their work in Latin America, the IMC changed its perspective from that of the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference of 1910, where Latin America was excluded and not considered a mission field. The Jerusalem conference included and accepted Latin America as a legitimate mission field. Their presentations on the challenges for missionary work in the new continent marked a milestone and legitimized the work of the many missionary societies that were already working in Latin America. Their presentations dealt with economic, social, and political perspectives as well as the evangelism of the continent. A paradigm shift from exclusion to inclusion within IMC circles took place at the Jerusalem meeting in 1928.

Latin American missionary participation and presence in the ecumenical movement/IMC

This phenomenon is shown by Dr Sidney Rooy in his article, “Profetas del sur: el impacto de Luis Odell y otros en el movimiento ecuménico en Latinoamérica” (“The prophets of the South: the impact of Luis Odell and others on the ecumenical movement in Latin America”). (To be published in the IMC Regional Report volume no. 2.)

Abstract

The Latin American churches that entered the IMC did so for the most part in the 1930s and 1940s. However, their number was limited. The Layman’s Movement also took place during this period, which opened the door to lay participation in church leadership positions. This paper follows the role of one outstanding layperson, Luis Eugene Odell from Argentina, as a promoter and vital participant in the nascent ecumenical movement and in the IMC. Odell participated in the organization of the World Youth Movement led by Willem Visser ’t Hooft in Amsterdam in 1939. For over 40 years, Luis Odell

participated in, organized, and served as a leader in Latin American youth organizations. These activities made him a key instrument in the incorporation of the IMC into the WCC. His presence and role in the Ghana assembly of the IMC in 1957-58, and in its Administrative Committee and Joint Committee with the WCC, are presented in this study. The study concludes with a brief section showing how, through this process, Luis Odell was instrumental in the post–New Delhi integration of the IMC and the WCC for the Church and Society Movement in Latin America. This culminated in his serving as representative president from Latin America in the worldwide Church and Society meeting in Geneva in 1965. The contribution of the Latin delegates at that meeting earned the tribute given by a French news agency and from Harvey Cox: “Now the prophets are coming from Latin America.”

Themes for the Second Phase of the IMC Centenary Study Process

We have noticed four developments that affect the mission situation in Latin America. The first is the phenomenal growth of the Pentecostal movement, which is a challenge for the evangelical and the ecumenical movement. (“El crecimiento fenomenal de los movimientos pentecostales y los desafíos para los evangélicos y para el movimiento ecuménico en América Latina”). The second is the role of the Latin American Theological Fellowship (FTL) in the expansion of the vision of holistic mission in the evangelical pentecostal movement in Latin America. (“Rol y papel de la FTL en la expansión de la visión y misión integral de las iglesias en América Latina”). These two topics are pending for the second stage of study process. The third development is the importance of the evangelical movement, FTL, and Indigenous communities in Latin America, with emphasis on the Andean-Amazonian area. These developments need to be further researched. And fourthly, theology, liberation, and holistic mission need to be reflected in the context of Latin America (“Teología, Liberación y misión integral: Una reflexión desde el contexto de América Latina”).

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América del sur: del continente abandonado a la organización del comité de cooperación en América latina (“South America: from an abandoned continent to the creation of cooperation committee in Latin America”)

Marcos Paredes Sadler

Introducción

La siguiente monografía tiene como propósito investigar el lugar que ocupó América Latina, en especial América del Sur, en los planes y estrategias misioneras de las grandes juntas misioneras de América del Norte y Europa. El período investigado es de los inicios de 1890 hasta 1915, un poco antes del conocido Congreso de Panamá de 1916. Comenzaremos con la dura crítica que hace Lucy Guinness a las agencias misioneras protestantes de Europa y Norteamérica por su “abandono” de América Latina. Seguiremos revisando el lugar de América Latina en los grandes congresos de Nueva York en 1900 y de Edimburgo en 1910. A esto le seguirá la etapa de la conformación del Comité de Cooperación en América Latina donde nos detendremos justo antes del Congreso de Panamá de 1916. Por último, daremos una breve reflexión sobre todo el tema tratado. En esta monografía intentaremos comprender cómo veían a América Latina las agencias misioneras de occidente y las reacciones de algunos personajes y misioneros a estas juntas misioneras. Buscaremos enfocarnos mayormente en documentos de la época y en la perspectiva de los actores foráneos que participaron en el debate sobre el correcto lugar de América Latina en los planes de la evangelización del mundo. Es decir, no nos enfocaremos en las percepciones de los propios latinoamericanos, que de por sí hay pocas fuentes; sino en los textos de los personajes foráneos pertinentes de la época.

América del Sur fue llamada, por algunos círculos protestantes, el continente abandonado. Con esta designación se referían al abandono espiritual del continente por parte de las iglesias y misiones occidentales. Sobre esto, Arturo Piedra nos dice (Piedra, 2000) que SAMS (*South American Missionary Society* – Sociedad Misionera de América del Sur) fue una de las primeras entidades misioneras en utilizar este apelativo. Además, también utilizaron este apelativo otras sociedades misioneras que de manera fiel y solitaria trabajaban en el continente sudamericano. Entre estas otras sociedades misioneras

encontramos a *Regions Beyond Missionary Union* y la *Evangelical Union of South America* (Unión Evangélica de América del Sur) (Sinclair & Piedra, 1999, p. 1).

El uso de este apelativo, “el continente abandonado”, se hizo muy común en aquella época. Si observamos algunos libros de misiones de la época podemos verificar esto. Por ejemplo, en el libro de Andrew Smith (Smith, 1844), *Brief history of evangelical missions*, encontramos en la página 59 un párrafo sobre América del Sur dedicado al establecimiento de una misión en Belice. Es todo lo que nos dice el libro sobre América del Sur en un libro de 202 páginas.

Lucy Guinness y el continente abandonado

En este libro, *América del Sur, el continente abandonado*, Lucy Guinness escribe con la intención de llamar la atención de sus lectores a la profunda negligencia con la que se estaba tratando a Sudamérica. Su intención era persuadir a las diferentes agencias misioneras y al público protestante a que tomen a Sudamérica en serio y no solo como un continente que no necesita el Evangelio. Por ejemplo, nos reclama que el mapa mundial de misiones foráneas de la Iglesia libre de Escocia sencillamente omite al hemisferio occidental, incluyendo América Latina; que la enciclopedia de Misiones no posee ni una sola entrada sobre América del Sur; que el libro de Roberto Young, *Modern missions: their trials and triumphs... With map and illustrations*, no menciona Sudamérica.

Edimburgo

A diferencia de los congresos sobre misiones antes de Edimburgo, en esta conferencia se decidió que sólo podrían participar aquellos delegados que fueran oficialmente designados por sus respectivas juntas misioneras.

El 15 de junio de 1910 se presentó el reporte de la Comisión número uno sobre “Llevando el Evangelio a todo el mundo no cristiano”. En el documento oficial de reporte de esta Comisión encontramos una breve sección sobre América del Sur con un total de cinco páginas escritas. Esta sección describe el estado de la población indígena, no mestiza, de Sudamérica. Además, incluye a algunos grupos foráneos de Asia que no son cristianos. El reporte repasa muy brevemente lo que históricamente ya se ha hecho en cuanto a la evangelización de los indígenas de Sudamérica y exalta el trabajo que han realizado los anglicanos, wesleyanos, moravos, y que la iglesia de los amigos ha realizado entre la comunidad china en Guyana. Curiosamente, este informe declara que, “comparado con otros campos de misiones cristianas, América del Sur todavía puede ser llamado acertadamente el continente abandonado” (Conference, 1910, p. 249). Sin embargo, afirma que la razón principal de

esta situación se encuentra en los “obstáculos” que pone la Iglesia oficial de la mayoría de los países sudamericanos. Es decir, los obstáculos que erige la Iglesia Católica Romana.

El documento nos dice que los misioneros enviados por las iglesias en los Estados Unidos se enfocan en su mayoría en evangelizar a católicos romanos nominales, blancos y mestizos. Sin embargo, declara que estas iglesias de Estados Unidos tienen una “fuerte obligación... Para hacer más para alcanzar a la población no cristiana” (Conference, 1910, p. 250). Además, el documento también desalienta a aquellas misiones independientes, que son pequeñas y no poseen una gran estrategia de misión lógica y no conocen el contexto, a ingresar a este campo misionero. Se recomienda que ya no ingresen agencias misioneras independientes a América del Sur, sino que se fortalezcan las agencias misioneras que ya están ahí trabajando.

Es ampliamente conocido que la conferencia mundial de misiones de Edimburgo en 1910 excluyó de su programa a América Latina. Sin embargo ¿por qué ocurrió esta exclusión? Para la mayoría de las agencias misioneras europeas la idea de evangelizar y hacer misiones en la América Latina católica romana no era bien visto. Estas agencias misioneras consideraban que América Latina ya era un continente cristiano gracias a los siglos de trabajo misionero realizado por la Iglesia Católica Romana. Por lo tanto, para estas misiones no estaba bien intentar evangelizar a católicos romanos, que ya eran considerados cristianos. Sin embargo, para muchas agencias misioneras norteamericanas el realizar trabajo misionero y evangelizar a América Latina era sumamente necesario, pues para ellos América Latina no era un continente cristiano. Además, consideraban que siglos de imposición religiosa de España no había logrado más que crear un catolicismo nominal y un catolicismo caracterizado por ser una religión sin ética y por haberse transformado en paganismo religioso. Es decir, la versión Católica Romana del cristianismo en América Latina no era el verdadero cristianismo para algunas de las agencias misioneras protestantes de Norteamérica.

Dicho esto, durante los preparativos para el Congreso de Edimburgo algunos delegados de las agencias misioneras de los Estados Unidos querían incorporar en el programa a América Latina. Sin embargo, al otro lado del Atlántico algunos elementos de la Iglesia Anglicana estaban en total desacuerdo. Por eso, cuando integrantes estadounidenses de la Comisión número uno, cuyos datos sobre América Latina acabamos de resaltar brevemente, quisieron utilizar estadísticas del campo de misión en América Latina que incluía el trabajo misionero entre los católicos romanos nominales, el obispo de Birmingham de la Iglesia Anglicana y otros elementos de esta facción se opusieron tajantemente. Incluso al punto de amenazar con retirarse

de la conferencia. El problema escaló hasta el punto de que toda la Iglesia Anglicana amenazó con retirarse del Congreso si es que no se modificaba las estadísticas para no incluir el trabajo misionero entre católicos romanos nominales en América Latina (Piedra, 2000). Al final de todo, los estadounidenses cedieron en aras de la unidad y la realización del Congreso.

Sin embargo, no todo estaba perdido para la causa protestante en América Latina. Robert Speer, de la junta Presbiteriana de Misiones, y otros organizaron un par de reuniones informales para tratar el tema de América Latina (Piper, 2000, p. 209). En estas reuniones fueron invitados delegados, que estaban presentes en la conferencia, de juntas misioneras que llevaban a cabo trabajo misionero en América Latina. Esto fue posible porque si bien es cierto que el trabajo y el propósito de la conferencia de Edimburgo se limitó al trabajo misionero en tierras no cristianas, no se excluyó a aquellos delegados enviados al Congreso que hubieran trabajado en América Latina. Este fue el caso porque algunas de las juntas misioneras, especialmente en Norteamérica, realizaron trabajo misionero en tierras no cristianas y también en América Latina. Por lo tanto, algunos de los delegados que fueron enviados al Congreso de Edimburgo habían trabajado en América Latina. En otras palabras, el Congreso de Edimburgo limitó los temas e informes a discutir al mundo no cristiano, pero no prohibió a los delegados de las juntas norteamericanas que habían trabajado o trabajaban en América Latina (Latin, 1917, p. 6).

Inicios del comité de cooperación en América Latina

Sinclair y Piedra (1999) nos relatan sobre la importancia de Roberto Speer en intentar reivindicar a América Latina y en la realización de estas reuniones informales. En 1909, Speer realizó un viaje exploratorio de América del Sur para observar la condición espiritual de estos pueblos. Como guías tuvo a misioneros de la talla de Francisco Penzotti y Harriet Taylor. En este viaje, Speer se dio cuenta de que la condición espiritual de muchos de los países sudamericanos dejaba mucho que desear. Pudo observar que gran parte de la religión Católica Romana era de tipo nominal. Además, pudo verificar que para muchas personas en esos países la religión no tenía nada que ver con la ética. Se podía ser un gran religioso y al mismo tiempo ser una persona sumamente inmoral. Robert Speer escribió un informe sobre sus observaciones de este viaje por América del Sur. En este informe el autor escribió una crítica a los gobiernos de estos países y a la condición de la Iglesia Católica Romana en América del Sur. Y abogó y recomendó la introducción de las misiones y la presencia protestante en América Latina. Por último, estos autores nos dicen

que Robert Speer fue el que organizó estas dos reuniones informales (Sinclair & Piedra, 1999, p. 3).

El resultado de estas reuniones informales fue que se decidió que América Latina también necesitaba la organización de un Congreso como el de Edimburgo y aquellos delegados presentes prometieron brindar todo el apoyo posible para la realización de este futuro Congreso. Además, se eligió a un comité para la redacción de un comunicado dirigido a las iglesias de América del Norte animando y exhortando la necesidad de la organización de un Congreso misionero para América Latina. Este comité se conformó de la siguiente manera: el moderador o Presidente del Comité, el Dr. H. K. Carroll; secretario, el reverendo Samuel Guy Inman; el reverendo J. W. Butler; el reverendo William Wallace; el reverendo H. C. Tucker; el reverendo Álvaro Reis y el reverendo G. I. Babcock.

Como ya dijimos este comité redactó una carta para las iglesias en Norteamérica de la cual presentamos los siguientes extractos:

Los delegados abajo firmantes del Congreso Misionero Mundial, regocijándonos del éxito de ese gran cónclave y del impulso que dará a la evangelización del mundo no cristiano, nos sentimos obligados a decir unas palabras para aquellas misiones en países nominalmente cristianos que no fueron acogidos en el alcance del Congreso de Edimburgo. No nos detenemos a inquirir sobre si las iglesias dominantes en esas tierras son o no son iglesias cristianas, o si son o no son fieles a su deber; solamente afirmamos que millones y millones de personas se encuentran prácticamente sin la palabra de Dios y que en realidad no conocen que es el Evangelio... La Iglesia no puede olvidar que la misión en los países cristianos latinos y del oriente por mucho tiempo ha sido una parte legítima de la empresa misionera de las sociedades misioneras foráneas líderes de los Estados Unidos y Canadá. Como tal ellos podrían reclamar el derecho a ser considerados en cualquier Congreso misionero mundial. Las sociedades norteamericanas, al no exigir este derecho no admitieron que aquellas misiones a personas nominalmente cristianas no son propiamente el objeto de misiones foráneas y por lo tanto que no se deberían llevar a cabo; pero cedieron esta preferencia en vista de que "misiones foráneas" en Gran Bretaña y en Europa continental significa misiones a pueblos "no cristianos," y que las sociedades británicas y continentales están organizadas en base a esta visión más estrecha. Éste y otros hechos hicieron notar claramente al comité ejecutivo norteamericano que si el Congreso iba a unir a todas las iglesias protestantes no podría que ser bajo su base; y que el Congreso mundial estaba restringido por la adición de las palabras "para considerar los problemas misioneros con relación al mundo no cristiano". El Comité se vio justificado en tomar esta concesión. El Congreso fue una demostración gloriosa de la lealtad del cristianismo

protestante a Cristo, de su unidad espíritu, y de su propósito de cooperación activa en la evangelización del mundo (Latin, 1917, pp. 7-8).

Robert Speer fue una persona clave en el surgimiento del Comité de Cooperación en América Latina. Después del Congreso de Edimburgo volvió a los Estados Unidos y “presentó la cuestión a sus colegas en la Conferencia de Misiones Foráneas [de Norteamérica] y ellos lo nombraron el presidente de un comité sobre misiones en América Latina” (Piper, 2000, p. 209). También, Sinclair y Piedra (1999, p. 4) nos dicen que Speer trabajó con John R. Mott para que se incluyera una conferencia regional para América Latina dentro de las conferencias regionales que se planearían en todo el mundo bajo la sugerencia del Congreso de Edimburgo y la supervisión del Comité de continuación, que se formó en el Congreso para darle seguimiento y continuidad al mismo.

Por tanto, Speer y el Comité se pusieron a trabajar y organizaron la Conferencia sobre Misiones en América Latina. Esta conferencia se llevó a cabo el 12 y el 13 de marzo de 1913 en Nueva York bajo los auspicios del Comité de Referencia y Consejo de la Conferencia de Misiones Foráneas de América del Norte. De esta conferencia surgiría lo que poco después llegó a llamarse el Comité de Cooperación en América Latina. Más aún, Sinclair y Piedra (1999, p. 4) nos dicen que este Comité se autodenominaba como “El comité de cooperación para América Latina”.

La conferencia sobre misiones en América Latina

La Conferencia sobre Misiones en América Latina, llevada a cabo el 12 y 13 de marzo de 1913 en Nueva York, se organizó por medio de un comité especial conformado por: el Presidente o moderador, Dr. Robert Speer; los reverendos, Dr. S. H. Chester; Dr. W. I. Haven; Dr. W. F. Oldham; Dr. W. W. Pinson; Dr. R. J. Willingham; y el señor John W. Wood.

En la conferencia estuvieron presentes: de la Sociedad Bíblica Americana, seis delegados; del *American Tract Society*, un delegado; de la asociación misionera americana, un delegado; de la Junta Americana de Comisionados para las Misiones Foráneas, dos delegados; de la *Baptist Home Missionary Society*, 13 delegados; de los bautistas del sur, dos delegados, de la junta de misiones de la Iglesia Protestante Episcopal, dos delegados; de la Alianza Cristiana y Misionera, incluyendo su fundador A. B. Simpson, cinco delegados; de la *China Inland Mission*, un delegado; la junta de misiones de mujeres cristianas, un delegado, de la *City Mission Training School*, un delegado, de la *Congregational Home Missionary Society*, un delegado; de la Iglesia Evangélica Luterana, cuatro delegados; de la junta misionera de Puerto Rico de la Iglesia

Luterana, un delegado; de la unión evangélica América del Sur, dos delegados; de la sociedad misionera del Evangelio, tres delegados; de la Sociedad Misionera Evangélica de los Amigos, cuatro delegados; del *Hartford School of Missions, International Sunday School Association*, cinco delegados; del movimiento misionero educativo, cinco delegados; de la Iglesia Metodista Episcopal (norte), siete delegados; de la junta de mujeres, 10 delegados; de la Iglesia Metodista Episcopal (sur), dos delegados, de la Iglesia Presbiteriana (norte), 29 delegados; de la Iglesia Presbiteriana (sur), dos delegados incluyendo al reverendo Juan Orts Gonzales; de la Iglesia Reformada, 11 delegados; de la reseña misionera, un delegado; del Iglesia Presbiteriana Unida, un delegado; de la Y. M. C. A., tres delegados; de la Y. W. C. A., dos delegados. En total estuvieron presentes 31 sociedades misioneras con un total de 129 delegados.

¿Cuál es la relación entre esta conferencia y el Congreso de Edimburgo? ¿Quiénes asistieron a ambos eventos? Como ya hemos visto, Sinclair y Piedra (Vol. 77, No. 1 (SPRING 1999), p. 3) nos dicen que Speer organizó ambos almuerzos en el Congreso de Edimburgo para discutir la situación de América Latina. Además, los autores nos dicen que al primer almuerzo asistieron unos 60 delegados. Los documentos que hemos revisado no nos indican exactamente quiénes fueron los que asistieron, sino sólo los nombres de unas cuatro personas. Sin embargo, comparando las listas oficiales de delegados del Congreso de Edimburgo y de la Conferencia sobre Misiones en América Latina encontramos que 24 personas atendieron ambos congresos. Creemos que estamos justificados en especular que probablemente estas 24 personas estuvieron en ambas reuniones. A continuación presentaremos los nombres de estos delegados que creemos estuvieron presentes en ambas reuniones: De la Sociedad Bíblica Británica y Foránea, James Wood y W. I. Haven; de la *American Tract Society*, Judson Swift; de la Junta Americana de Comisionados para las Misiones Foráneas, E. L. Smith; de la junta de misiones de la Iglesia Episcopal, John W. Wood; del Iglesia Evangélica Luterana, George Drach; de la Escuela de Misiones Hartford, E. W. Capen; del Movimiento Misionero de Educación, H. W. Hicks; del Iglesia de los Moravos, Paul de Schweinitz; del Iglesia Metodista Episcopal (norte), F. M. North, W. F. Oldham, H. K. Carroll; la junta de misiones de mujeres de la Metodista Episcopal (norte), C. J. Carnahan, J. H. Knowles; de la junta de misiones de la Iglesia Episcopal (sur); E. R. Hendrix; del Iglesia Presbiteriana (norte), Arthur J. Brown, Dwight H. Day, Robert E. Speer, George Alexander, W. H. Grant, Charles L. Thompson; de la Iglesia Reformada, E. E. Olcott; de la Reseña Misionera, D. L. Pierson; del Iglesia Presbiteriana Unida, C. R. Watson; de la W. M. C. A., C. D. Hurrey. Estos son los delegados que encontramos en ambos congresos. Por otro lado, sabemos con certeza que también estuvieron en las

reuniones informales en Edimburgo John W. Hamilton de la Iglesia Metodista Episcopal, John W. Butler de México y H. C. Tucker de Brazil (Wheeler, 1956, p. 190). Más aún, también sabemos que estuvieron presentes Álvaro Reis de la Primera Iglesia Presbiteriana de Rio de Janeiro en Brasil y William Wallace, misionero presbiteriano en México (Sinclair & Piedra, 1999, p. 3).

La primera ponencia de la conferencia la presentó Robert Speer, siendo el título: “La condición y el alcance presente del trabajo misionero en las tierras latinoamericanas. Una evaluación de lo que se está haciendo”. Speer comenzó su ponencia aludiendo a la importancia del trabajo misionero en América Latina a pesar de que fuera excluido por el Congreso de Edimburgo. Más aún, muy diplomáticamente afirmó que la causa y el fervor misionero en las tierras latinoamericanas no se había visto afectada por la decisión de Edimburgo de excluirla sino re potencializa gracias a esta exclusión. El autor prosiguió a brindar una serie de estadísticas generales sobre América Latina. A continuación, presentaremos un breve resumen de su ponencia. Después de presentar algunas otras estadísticas compara América del Sur con el trabajo misionero en Japón, el autor afirma que “estamos justificados en llamar América Latina un campo de misión abandonado” (Counsel, 1913, p. 17).

De manera sorprendente, justo unos pocos minutos antes de que se diera la conferencia por concluida, se acordó que Robert Speer y otras dos personas más formaran una junta que considerara los diferentes temas relacionados a América Latina con la facultad de presentar a las diferentes juntas misioneras de los Estados Unidos y Canadá temas pertinentes a la misión en el subcontinente. Piedra (2000, p. 219) cita a Speer diciendo, “...nadie tenía claro lo que podía salir de esa conferencia. Con absoluta espontaneidad, en los 15 minutos finales de la conferencia, cuando parecía claro que se estaba llegando el final sin provisión alguna para la continuidad de su trabajo, se nombró un comité que pudiera incrementar su número para representar la mayoría de las agencias misioneras interesadas en este campo de misiones”. El nombramiento de este comité fue fundamental para el subsiguiente trabajo del Comité de Cooperación en América Latina. De lo contrario, quizás el Comité de Cooperación para América Latina hubiera dejado de existir al concluir esta conferencia en 1913.

El Comité sería conformado por las siguientes personas: el presidente o moderador, Robert Speer; y los Drs. L. C. Barnes, Ed F. Cook, W. F. Oldham y John W. Wood. Como nos dice el documento oficial del Congreso de Panamá en 1916, la primera acción del Comité de Cooperación en América Latina fue la organización de una reunión aprovechando la reunión de la Conferencia Norteamericana de Misiones Foráneas en 1914 para dialogar sobre los acontecimientos y la misión en México, país que se encontraba en

una revolución. Además, se acordó que el Comité se extendería al invitar a las diferentes juntas misioneras que tenían personal en América Latina a elegir un representante para que sea parte del Comité. Por otro lado, se acordó organizar una reunión para los secretarios de las juntas misioneras, y sus misioneros, que realizan trabajo misionero en México. La reunión se llevó a cabo del 30 de junio al 1 de julio de 1914 en Cincinnati (Latin, 1917, p. 9).

Después de esta conferencia sobre México, el Comité de Cooperación para América Latina decidió redactar una carta para ser distribuida entre los diferentes misioneros trabajando en América Latina. Esta carta explicaba el propósito y los objetivos del Comité de Cooperación para América Latina. Además, era una carta inquisitoria que preguntaba a los misioneros sobre la factibilidad y la fecha apropiada para la organización de un Congreso similar al de Edimburgo pero que fuera llevada a cabo en y para América Latina.

Conclusión

Hemos revisado un período de historia muy importante para América Latina. Comenzamos el ensayo resaltando el estatus de América del Sur como el “continente abandonado” por las grandes misiones occidentales protestantes. Seguidamente vimos que América del Sur estuvo presente en el Congreso de Nueva York en 1900, pero de manera muy limitada. Para el año 1910, en el Congreso de Edimburgo, vimos cómo América Latina quedó excluido del Congreso. Algunos delegados, especialmente los de los Estados Unidos, no aceptaron la derrota y organizaron un par de reuniones informales para discutir el rol de América Latina en el mundo de las misiones. En estas reuniones se decidió redactar una carta para ser circulada en las diferentes denominaciones de los Estados Unidos con el fin de que éstas tomen conciencia de la necesidad que tiene América Latina de recibir el Evangelio. Gracias a Robert Speer y otros se logró organizar una conferencia sobre misiones en América Latina en la ciudad de Nueva York en 1913. El Comité de Cooperación en América Latina surge de este proceso.

Sólo nos queda destacar la importancia de personajes como Lucy Guinness y Robert Speer. La primera por su rol en popularizar la labor negligente de las misiones occidentales protestantes en América del Sur. El segundo, por su rol fundamental de revivir el valor de América Latina para las misiones protestantes después de que el Congreso de Edimburgo le había finado. Si no hubiera sido por la labor de estos personajes y muchísimos más quizás el protestantismo se hubiera demorado mucho más en establecerse en América Latina.

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**Voces desde América Latina en el Concilio
Misionero Internacional de Jerusalén:
Samuel Guy Inman y John A. Mackay (1928)
("Voices from Latin America at the International
Missionary Conference in Jerusalem 1928:
Samuel Guy Inman and John A. Mackay")**

Tomás Gutiérrez Sánchez

Introducción

La llegada de las distintas sociedades misioneras a América Latina se debe a la coyuntura que vivió el continente después de las gestas de la independencia y el rompimiento con el Antiguo Régimen que implantó el Imperio Español desde el siglo XVI y que tuvo una duración de más de tres siglos. Durante ese tiempo la cultura ibérica y el catolicismo romano se asentaron en todo el continente y el proceso de evangelización por parte de la Iglesia Católica se realizó abiertamente y con todo el apoyo de la corona española.

La cruz y la espada fueron los símbolos de la llamada "conquista", que no solamente fue el sojuzgar a los imperios que se encontraban en nuestra América sino también lograr la "conquista espiritual". La llegada de las distintas Órdenes Religiosas, así como la implantación del Santo Oficio de la Inquisición tanto en Lima, México y luego en Cartagena de Indias, fue el mecanismo más claro y preciso para controlar las buenas costumbres, la ética de sus sacerdotes y rechazar cualquier intento de presencia de otros grupos religiosos, a los que tituló herejías, siendo el luteranismo perseguido y prohibido en toda América Latina.

El nacimiento de las nuevas repúblicas (1810-1824), trajo consigo la apertura para la llegada de otros grupos religiosos no católicos, pese a que la Constitución de Cádiz de 1812, manifestaba al catolicismo romano como la religión oficial en el continente. Sin embargo, el deseo de contar con una Constitución propia en cada país permitió el debate sobre la tolerancia religiosa y la libertad de cultos. Si bien algunos países lograron en sus congresos permitir la llegada de inmigrantes, sobre todo de países protestantes, bajo leyes de tolerancia religiosa, no sería sino hasta las primeras décadas del siglo XX, que se lograría la plena libertad de cultos en todo el continente.

La llegada del célebre colportor y pedagogo bautista James Thomson (1788-1854), más conocido como Diego Thomson para los latinoamericanos,

a Buenos Aires en 1818, marca el inicio de la presencia de las distintas sociedades misioneras anglosajonas que se inicia con la Sociedad Bíblica Británica y Extranjera y más adelante la Sociedad Bíblica Americana.

La apertura de la tolerancia religiosa fue la base para que los países del sur del continente recibieran en su seno a los distintos inmigrantes que llegaron de países protestantes con sus familias, posesiones, cultura y su propio credo protestante. A mediados del siglo XIX, países como Brasil, Argentina, Uruguay y Chile acogieron a los que se les denominó protestantismo de inmigración. Por otro lado, el espíritu misionero que marco Guillermo Carey en 1792 y su presencia en la India fue el empuje para la creación de distintas Sociedades Misioneras, con una perspectiva denominacional y también interdenominacional.

En Edimburgo 1910 hubo mucho debate sobre la evangelización, la unidad y cooperación de las distintas sociedades misioneras que trabajaban con fuerza tanto en Asia, África y Medio Oriente, los informes fueron de gran desafío para las próximas décadas de trabajo misionero, lamentablemente América Latina no fue considerada como campo de misión.

Esta premisa de no considerar a América Latina dentro de los planes misioneros de Edimburgo 1910 trajo consigo una serie de rechazos sobre todo por las denominaciones y misiones que ya estaban presentes, por esta razón se crea en New York en 1913 el Comité de Cooperación para América Latina (CCLA), cuyo propósito consistía en reunir a las fuerzas misioneras de Estados Unidos y Canadá para un trabajo en conjunto en América Latina.

Las recomendaciones de Edimburgo 1910, dejaron de lado el apoyo masivo económico y financiero a las misiones en América Latina, pasaron 18 años para que nuevamente se reunieran a fin de evaluar las perspectivas misionera que se estaban realizando a nivel mundial, por esta razón se convocó la asamblea del denominado Conferencia Misionera Internacional en la ciudad de Jerusalén (Jerusalén 1928), siendo la primera conferencia misionera que se realizó desde la formación del Consejo Misionero Internacional, que fue a su vez fruto de Edimburgo 1910 (Nelson, 1989).

Entre los principales temas que se vieron en Jerusalén 1928 fueron: la urbanización e industrialización en Asia, África y Medio Oriente; los problemas rurales, las relaciones raciales, la guerra, la labor médica, la educación religiosa, la relación entre iglesias antiguas y nuevas.

Por otro lado, el secularismo era uno de los problemas que se manifestaban en Jerusalén 1928, por esta razón uno de sus invitados a desarrollar y discutir esos temas fue el teólogo reformado suizo Emil Brunner (1889-1966), también se debe de destacar que algunas misiones que se encontraban en Jerusalén 1928 manifestaban su temor con respecto al Evangelio Social, como

nos afirma W. Nelson: “Algunos, especialmente los representantes europeos, expresaron el tema que esta agenda significará el triunfo del Evangelio Social y que pudiera conducir a componendas sincretistas” (Nelson, 1989, p. 606).

Esta premisa es básica si se toma en cuenta los discursos con respecto a la promulgación del Evangelio que se encuentra en vol. I de la Conferencia, es más los editores manifestarían lo siguiente:

Este volumen contiene tanto el relato de la discusión en la reunión de Jerusalén del Consejo Misionero Internacional sobre el mensaje cristiano como su relación con los sistemas no cristianos de pensamiento y vida, y el material en el que se basó esa discusión. Los artículos preliminares fueron escritos por hombres ampliamente conocidos por su erudición y experiencia en la relación del cristianismo con las varias religiones no cristianas y al sistema de pensamiento y vida que ha sido designado civilización secular. (IMC, Jerusalén 1928, Vol. I, p. v).

Bajo esta perspectiva se cuenta con la presencia de John A. Mackay y Samuel Guy Inman que se concentraría en dialogar sobre la centralidad de Cristo, dialogando con las diferentes religiones y filosofías imperantes en Asia. Con respecto a ello el editor del volumen de estas conferencias mencionaría lo siguiente:

El espíritu de la investigación a la que se dirigieron estos escritores se puede discernir en dos párrafos de la declaración precedida de sus artículos. La misión de la Iglesia cristiana en el mundo se mantiene o cae con la convicción de que la revelación de Dios en Cristo es algo único, que posee un valor supremo y proporcionar una respuesta real y satisfactoria al problema del significado y propósito de la vida y una respuesta completa a las necesidades de los hombres en todas partes. (IMC, Jerusalén 1928, Vol. I, p. v).

Con estas palabras se mantendría el equilibrio con respecto a la predicación y acción del Evangelio tratando de mantener esta unidad en las diferentes misiones en el mundo.

El Concilio Mundial Internacional de Jerusalén 1928 y las voces desde América Latina: John A. Mackay y Samuel Guy Inman

Como hemos mencionado anteriormente las resoluciones de Edimburgo 1910 no tomaron como campo de misión América Latina, razón por lo cual la revista *International Review of Missions* (IRM), creada en 1912 no dedicó artículo a los trabajos misioneros de América Latina, las distintas ediciones eran dedicadas a la labor misionera en Asia, África y Medio Oriente, en especial

la labores misionera en países como China, India, Japón y los países árabes. El único artículo antes de Jerusalén 1928 es el de Robert E. Speer sobre el Congreso de obra cristiana que se celebró en Montevideo en 1925.¹

La participación de Samuel Guy Inman y John A. Mackay marcan el inicio del cambio de paradigma con respecto a las misiones en América Latina, si bien el Congreso de Edimburgo (1910) había manifestado la no incorporación del continente como campo de misión por parte de las distintas sociedades misioneras, en Jerusalén 1928 esta actitud cambia, y esto se debió a las ponencias que presentaron ambos misioneros.

Con respecto a la importancia de la presencia de John A. Mackay para que se tome en consideración a América Latina como campos de misión, su biógrafo John Mackay Metzger nos dice lo siguiente:

Un resultado significativo de la conferencia fue el reconocimiento de América Latina como un campo misionero, y la presentación de Mackay del caso del esfuerzo evangelístico en América Latina, se enteró más tarde, que fue un factor que animo a la conferencia a adoptar una moción por unanimidad para que los representantes del movimiento evangélico en América Latina fueron elegidos miembros regulares del Consejo Misionero Internacional (Metzger, 2010, p. 173).

Ahora bien, como veremos más adelante la ponencia de Mackay estaba dirigida a manifestar el mensaje “Cristo-céntrico” que debe ser el punto principal de las misiones este debe de estar en diálogo con las expresiones religiosas asiáticas como africanas, pero también sería Inman a través de su ponencia que los lleva a entender los problemas políticos, económicos y sociales que vive el continente y los desafíos que tienen las misiones frente a esta situación.

También debemos de mencionar que existe una relación muy estrecha entre Mackay e Inman. Desde el Congreso Evangélico de Panamá en 1916, Inman visitó en varias oportunidades el Perú, y para 1917 hizo una gira por todo América Latina para ver los campos misioneros y ver el apoyo de las distintas misiones norteamericanas que trabajaban en el país.

En noviembre de 1920, Samuel Guy Inman envía una carta a John A. Mackay y le invita a escribir en la revista *La Nueva Democracia* manifestándole lo siguiente:

¿Qué te parece La Nueva Democracia? ¿Por qué no nos escribes algo? ¿Aconsejaría la publicación del panfleto que me envió en La Nueva Democracia? ¿O su publicación allí bajo su firma lo avergonzaría o perjudicaría la obra en el Perú? Por favor,

1 El artículo se titula, El Congreso de obra cristiana en Sud-América, Montevideo 1925.

hágamelo saber. Si tiene algo que prefiere, envíelo. Estamos planeando publicar algo como el folleto del Dr. Javier Prado sobre los Estados Unidos.²

La preocupación de Inman era que la revista si bien era publicada bajo los auspicios del CCLA, tenía más un corte político-social más que religioso y denominacional. Mackay aceptaría el reto de escribir y lo haría durante los años venideros, inclusive cuando era director de la revista el pensador evangélico mexicano Alberto Rembao (1895-1962), quien dirigió la revista desde 1939 hasta su muerte. Mackay mantendría una relación más estrecha con la revista, inclusive siendo rector del Seminario Teológico de Princeton (1936-1959).

Por otro lado, ambos están presentes en el Congreso de Obra Cristiana desarrollada en la ciudad de Montevideo en 1925 y entre los años sucesivos mantendrían una relación de apoyo al fundador de la Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana (APRA), Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre (Gutiérrez, 2016).

Si bien la ponencia de Inman titulada, *Mission and Economics in Latin America*, trata sobre la situación en la que se encuentra el continente en especial en relación con los latifundios y la dependencia del capital extranjero, así como los problemas sociales que existen, manifiesta frente a esas circunstancias la responsabilidad cristiana y la perspectiva de misión que se tiene que realizar, me parece que esta ponencia incide también en las decisiones de la Conferencia.

Mientras tanto en la ponencia de Mackay, *The Evangelistic Duty of Christianity*, se preguntaba ¿si el mensaje cristiano es lo que el mundo necesita?, si es así ¿cuáles son los elementos que son imperativos en la proclamación del Evangelio a toda la humanidad?, para contestar, Mackay muestra la importancia de volver a la centralidad de Cristo, las riquezas de Cristo, la revelación encargada de Dios, así como también el hecho de presentar adecuadamente el mensaje.

Como podemos observar ambos tienen perspectivas que se complementan en torno a América Latina, y lo hacen el primero desde las ciencias sociales y el segundo desde la teología, y ambos están imbuidos por el pensamiento evangélico latinoamericano que no es otra cosa que el cristianismo social.

Inman culmina su ponencia haciendo un llamado a las iglesias cristianas a no sólo llevar mensajeros del Evangelio sino aplicando el Evangelio a la situación que vive el continente frente a los desafíos económicos y sociales:

2 Seminario Teológico de Princeton, Archivo de John A. Mackay. Correspondencia con Samuel Guy Inman, 1920.

Ciertamente, está claro que la tarea de las iglesias cristianas en los países que están enviando sus fuerzas económicas a estas tierras no es solo enviar mensajeros del Evangelio a los pueblos, sino para ayudar a trabajar una vía de aplicación del Evangelio en la solución de las grandes inquietudes económicas y sociales provocadas por la nueva situación. También parece claro que la Iglesia cristiana en América Latina debe preparar a sus ciudadanos para enfrentar estos abrumadores problemas de manera inteligente y con un espíritu cristiano de honestidad, justicia y fraternidad. (Inman, 1928, 140).

La ponencia de Inman para muchos asistentes estaba en la perspectiva del Evangelio Social, sin embargo, la perspectiva puede denominarse el cristianismo social, como se definió en Panamá de no solo atender las necesidades sociales de la población (escuelas, centros de salud, clínicas, orfanatos, hospicios), sino también apoyar participando como ciudadanos y cristianos comprometidos con los grandes cambios que demandaban las sociedades contemporáneas y que se situaban en los movimientos sociales de aquella época. El cristianismo social era la concatenación entre el Evangelio Social y la Misión Integral de la iglesia, era la perspectiva de Inman, Mackay y todos aquellos que formaban parte del CCLA y que se manifestaban en los Congresos Evangélicos de Panamá (1916), Montevideo (1925), Jerusalén (1928) y La Habana (1929).

En Jerusalén 1928, Mackay presenta su ponencia cuyo título denominó: *El deber evangelístico del cristianismo*, donde manifiesta su formación teológica y de análisis contextual, tomando su experiencia en el trabajo misionero en América Latina. Divide la ponencia en tres ejes importantes: la centralidad de Cristo, las riquezas de Cristo y qué presenta el mensaje cristiano. Para John A. Mackay el mensaje cristiano debe tener como base la “Centralidad de Cristo”, identificando el Evangelio con la personalidad del señor Jesucristo y manifestando en todas las culturas, donde *Cristo es el valor religioso de valor intrínseco y absoluto que tiene el cristianismo y que el mundo necesita*. (Mackay, 1928).

En otro aspecto, Mackay desarrolla lo que denominó: “Las riquezas de Cristo”, presentando a Jesucristo como un modelo perfecto para la vida y para el mundo en general, siendo esta visión parte del mensaje misionero: “El evangelista moderno, ya sea en casa o en el extranjero, no puede exagerar las implicaciones éticas y sociales de su visión de Cristo...” (Mackay, 1928, p. 447). Pero no solamente se debe de considerar el modelo de vida que nos da Jesús sino también la transformación del carácter como lo menciona a continuación: “Sin embargo, Cristo es mucho más que el Hombre arquetípico; la experiencia prueba que Él es el todopoderoso transformador del carácter. Su personalidad no es meramente normativa: también es redentora. Es y señala el

camino; es curativo y cura las quejas del caminante.” (Mackay, 1928, pp. 447-448).

Con respecto a la transformación del carácter esta descripción ya Mackay la había descrito al mencionar en el prospecto del Colegio Anglo-Peruano en 1921, al manifestar que lo que se necesita son personas de carácter cristiano: “El ideal que inspira a los fundadores el colegio es el de formar hombres cultos y prácticos que sean también hombres de carácter, pues el hombre de carácter es el único que hoy día puede considerarse completamente educado.” (Colegio Anglo-Peruano, 1921, p. 5).

La transformación social o la llamada por mucho como la redención social la podemos sintetizar, como los cambios de estructuras sociales que trae consigo el cristianismo, Mackay lo sintetiza de la siguiente manera:

Hasta ahora, hemos considerado que el cristianismo ofrece a la humanidad un estándar de perfección ética y una experiencia vitalizadora. Este estándar se reconoce intuitivamente como absoluto, mientras que la validez universal de la experiencia puede demostrarse por el hecho de que ha sido compartido por hombres y mujeres de todas las edades, de todas las razas y de todas las clases sociales. A este respecto, el cristianismo puede considerarse como algo que debe realizarse tanto en la vida exterior como en la interior de los hombres. Pero es aún más que eso: es revelación nada menos que realización. Relaciona nuestra búsqueda de un ideal y nuestra experiencia de renovación con lo más último: Dios y su plan universal (Mackay, 1928, p. 449).

Mackay estaba muy preocupado en que mensaje cristiano se encasille en los aspectos rituales, entendiéndolos como los aspectos que involucran el culto cristiano como son: la lectura de las Escrituras, las oraciones, los cantos. Para Mackay la predicación del mensaje de Cristo se puede dar sin la necesidad de tener los elementos que caracterizan al culto, ya que lo principal debe recaer en el mensaje de Cristo, y este puede ser predicado en cualquier momento y lugar.

A manera de conclusión

El Congreso Misionero Internacional realizado en la ciudad de Jerusalén en 1928 marca un hito en la historia de las misiones, si bien el Congreso Misionero de Edimburgo no vio América Latina como campo de misión, esa actitud cambia en Jerusalén 1928, los factores que contribuyeron a ese cambio de paradigma fueron las propias sociedades misioneras que aumentaron en forma progresiva la llegada de misioneros y misioneras a Latinoamérica, pero también la influencia de dos personalidades que fueron pilares de la obra evangélica en América Latina en las primeras tres décadas del siglo XX.

Si bien John A. Mackay de tradición presbiteriana y Samuel Guy Inman de la congregación Discípulos de Cristo, así como las obras misioneras que emprendieron fueron perspectivas distintas, los unió Latinoamérica al contemplar sus necesidades, luchas y sueños quisieron manifestar la importancia de tener cristianismo capaz de transformar no solo al hombre sino a la sociedad, dando el mensaje de la llamada redención social.

La perspectiva de la ponencia de Mackay más evangelística y teológica frente a la perspectiva de Inman más social y coyuntural de la realidad tanto del continente como de las iglesias fueron complementarias para entender que América Latina se constituía en un verdadero campo de misión, pese a la presencia del catolicismo romano, de cerca de tres siglos de hegemonía religiosa, la llegada del protestantismo al continente daba buenas nuevas de un cristianismo puro y de grandes transformaciones.

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CHAPTER 15

Report of the Regional Center for Central and Eastern Europe

*Cristian Sonea, Dorottya Nagy, Wojciech Kluj,
Doru Marcu, and Pavol Bargar*

At the invitation of the Commission for World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in collaboration with different associations involved in mission and ecumenical studies, the Regional Center for Central and Eastern Europe convened at the Faculty of Orthodox Theology of the Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania, through its Center for Mission and Nomocanonical Studies (CMNS¹, in collaboration with the Central and Eastern European Association for Mission Studies (CEEAMS). Its aim was to reflect on how the International Missionary Council (IMC) has influenced mission theology and practice in Central and Eastern Europe, taking into account different contextual realities.

The CMNS is organized as a scientific research unit within the Babeş-Bolyai University and is established within the Faculty of Orthodox Theology from Cluj. CMNS is an autonomous structure, without legal personality, with a professional, scientific and educational profile. The headquarters of the Center for Mission and Nomocanonical Studies is located within the Faculty of Orthodox Theology, Cluj-Napoca, Romania. At the present time, the centre comprises two research departments: the Department of Mission Studies and the Department of Nomocanonical Studies.

CEEAMS is an international and interdenominational platform for reflection on missiological issues and practice established in 2002 as an informal network and facilitates a variety of initiatives in missiology in the region. In 2015, CEEAMS became a legal entity as an association under Hungarian law with missiologists from ten countries (Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Kyrgyzstan, Moldavia, Romania, Russia, the United Kingdom and Ukraine) serving as founding members. The majority of them are young missiologists under the age of 40, with various church affiliations

1 For more details, see “Statut de Organizare și Funcționare a Centrului de Studii Misionare și Nomocanonice,” Center for Mission and Nomocanonical Studies, <https://cmns.ro/statute-of-the-center/>.

such as Methodist, Pentecostal, Orthodox, the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren, Baptist, Reformed, and Lutheran. Through its members, the association functions as a network organization actively stimulating the study of missiology, initiating research projects, and disseminating knowledge on the praxis of mission in Central and Eastern Europe.

Our centre's team and working group include the following people: Fr. Prof. Cristian Sonea, the current director of CMNS; Prof. Dorottya Nagy, CEEAMS President; PhD Pavol Bargár CEEAMS Vice-President; and PhD Doru Marcu. Together we identified other scholars from the region to work on the report and on the study process itself. We tried to select scholars from different countries and belonging to different denominations. Moreover, we organized an international meeting 27–29 September 2021, in a hybrid form, online and on site.² It is important to mention the presence with us in Cluj-Napoca of two special guests, Marina Ngursangzeli Behera and Michael Biehl, members of the steering committee of the IMC centenary study process.

According to the general framework of this study, our report is focused largely on historical details. Central and Eastern Europe, as defined by the United Nations Statistics Division, includes the countries of Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Russia, Slovenia, and Slovakia, as well as the republics of Belarus, Moldova, and Ukraine.³

The Edinburgh World Missionary Conference of 1910 took place at a time when missionary enthusiasm had reached its peak, and the missionary responsibility of the Christians was a clear axiom that had to be fulfilled.⁴

David Bosch pointed out that two events “shattered the confidence that Edinburgh would be a sure victory”⁵: World War I (1914–18) and the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. The First World War, provoked by “Christian” countries, called into question the ideal of Western civilization as the embodiment of the gospel. The communist revolution of 1918 led to the unravelling of the dream of evangelizing the entire world in one generation.

2 The people who participated were as follows: Bishop Benedict Vesa (Romania), Daniel Buda (Romania), Dimitrios Keramidis (Greece), Evi Vulgarakis-Pissina (Greece), Klara Csiszar (Romania), Olga Zaprometova (Russia), Parush Parushev, Paul Siladi (Romania), Teofil Stanciu (Romania), Wojcek Kluj (Poland), Cristian Sonea (Romania), Pavol Bargar (Czech Republic), and Doru Marcu (Romania). Also contributing to the final research are Tim Noble (Czech Republic), Laszlo Gonda (Hungary), and Roman Soloviy (Ukraine).

3 “Eastern Europe,” *New World Encyclopedia*, https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Eastern_Europe.

4 Brian Stanley, *The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 11.

5 David J. Bosch, *Witness to the World: The Christian Mission in Theological Perspective* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1980), 161.

Despite its shortcomings, the conference at Edinburgh set in motion something extraordinary: the dynamic principle of joint missionary efforts. As a result, the IMC was organized in 1921 at a meeting in Lake Mohonk, New York State, as an organic development of the standing committee established by the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference.

The establishment of a standing committee at the 1910 Edinburgh conference was hailed by many participants as one of the most important events in the history of the mission. With John R. Mott as chair and J. H. Oldham as secretary, a communication and consultation structure of the missionary societies was established.⁶ The Continuation Committee met four times between 1910 and 1914. But in 1914, when the work of setting up an international missionary committee was in full swing, war broke out throughout Europe and brought international cooperation to a standstill.

During the war, suspicions between Anglo-American leaders and German societies became so severe that in the spring of 1918, the Continuation Committee was dissolved and an emergency committee formed among the missionary societies, excluding the German ones. Mott and Oldham remained the leaders of the new committee.

After the war, some preliminary meetings took place between the directors of the German missions and the leaders of the emergency committee. In June 1920, in Crans, Switzerland, with four Germans participating as informal observers, the decision was made to replace the emergency committee with a permanent IMC.⁷ The first meeting of the council was held in October 1921 in Lake Mohonk, New York, where its organization was completed. Mott was re-elected chair, Oldham was chosen for London, and A. L. Warnshuis for New York. Although the Germans were not present at Lake Mohonk, the German Protestant Committee (*Ausschuss*) was listed among the founding members.⁸

By 1921, even with the aftermath of the war crisis, the Edinburgh directive to form an international missionary committee was finalized. Once German participation was restored and a permanent organization was established,

6 See World Missionary Conference 1910, *Report of Commission I–VIII* (1910) (Edinburgh and London: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier and New York, Chicago and Toronto: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1910), 134–38.

7 Jan van Lin, *Shaking the Fundamentals: Religious Plurality and Ecumenical Movement* (Amsterdam–New York: Rodopi B.V., 2002), 64–65.

8 James L. Cox, “Jerusalem 1928: Its Message for Today,” *Missiology* 9:2 (1 April 1981), 141, <https://doi.org/10.1177/009182968100900202>.

the missionary movement once again began to consider the central issues involved in presenting the Christian gospel to non-Christian religions.⁹

In October 1921, at Lake Mohonk in New York, 61 representatives from 14 different countries came for the meeting at which IMC was formed. In the council it was expressly declared that members were to be the national missionary organizations, all of them belonging to the Protestant tradition, not individual churches, as in the later WCC. At the outset, these national organizations were 17 in number.

The functions of the IMC were defined as follows:

1. To stimulate thinking and investigation on missionary questions.
2. To make the results available for all missionary societies and missions.
3. To help coordinate the activities of the national missionary organizations of the different countries and of the societies they represent.
4. To bring about united actions wherever necessary in missionary matters.
5. To help unite Christian public opinion in support of freedom of conscience and religion and of missionary liberty.
6. To help unite the Christian forces of the world in seeking justice in international and inter-racial relations.
7. To be responsible for the publication of *The International Review of Mission* and other such publications, that may contribute to the study of missionary questions.
8. To call a world missionary conference if and when this should be deemed desirable.¹⁰

Having in mind the fact that the Orthodox churches, as a majority Christian community in Eastern Europe, the Roman Catholic Church, and the Protestant communities from this region did not participate in the conference, our report will present the missiological development between 1921–2021 in three different countries and three different traditions, trying to evaluate if the missionary dynamic corresponds to the functions of the IMC. Before doing that, we consider relevant to briefly present the specificities of the religious situation in Central and Eastern Europe.

9 James L. Cox, *The Development of A. G. Hogg's Theology in Relation to Non-Christian Faith: Its Significance for the Tambaram Meeting of the International Missionary Council, 1938* (PhD Thesis, University of Aberdeen, 1977), 227–31. Cox, *Jerusalem 1928: Its Message for Today*, 141.

10 William Richey Hogg, *Ecumenical Foundations* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1952), 204.

Old Christian Roots But a Painful History

According to the observation of Gerhard Linn, the region that we are referring to is one whose past and culture have been moulded over a period of almost two millennia by the Christian gospel and holy tradition. Therefore, missionary efforts in these countries cannot be focused on enabling their peoples to come into contact with the word of God, as if they had never heard of it before.¹¹ They encountered and engaged with the gospel in different stages of their formation, in some cases, the local identity being defined in Christian terms. Even the historical background from our region is common in many parts, but it also has a lot of particularities. There are countries with Orthodox churches, under communism (Russia, Romania, Serbia) or under democratic rule (Greece), Catholic churches, also under communism (Poland, Croatia, Hungary), with Reformed churches (Hungary), but in all these countries there are Christians from other denominations, too. In Albania, for example, the church was outlawed. It can be easy to understand that in most countries from this region the missionary work was very hard to do, if not impossible (in Albania, when religious freedom was restored, only 22 Orthodox priests remained alive).

In the period we are discussing, the history of Christianity in those states has been aggressively “interrupted”: on the one hand, when the Russian empire became the Soviet Union after the revolution of 1917 and the subsequent years of civil war, and, on the other hand, when the states bordering the Soviet Union came under the Soviet sphere of influence in 1945 after World War II.

The Christians in the Soviet Union were viciously persecuted. Thousands of practising Christians and particularly priests and bishops were incarcerated, tortured, and murdered. The active persecution of the Christians and the annihilation of the church’s normative, axiological, and cultural role were made final by the systematic and well-orchestrated attempts to replace Christianity with the ruling party’s atheistic ideology. The youth were indoctrinated from the very beginning by an unequivocally anti-Christian ideology that condemned Christianity for its “unscientific” and reactionary worldview.

The churches in the socialist states outside of the Soviet Union were not subjected to the same extensive persecution, with the sole exception of Albania, where Christianity was completely outlawed. The persecution took on different forms, depending on the country, but overall, every ruling

11 Gerhard Linn, “Some Reflections on Mission in Central and Eastern Europe,” *International Review of Mission* 80:319–320 (July 1991): 407–408, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lsdar&AN=ATLA0000846656&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

communist party attempted to enforce their atheistic ideology and to further the secularization, that in some cases had begun well before World War II. Their efforts to silence the Christian message of hope were never entirely successful, because even though preaching the gospel was confined to the premises of the church, there would always be some fortuitous moments to bear witness to the faith in public.¹²

The missionary work of the church was excluded from public life and only tolerated in ecclesiastical environments, whilst the official state program was that in five decades socialist society would become an atheistic one. Under these circumstances, the mission of the church became almost impossible to carry out. We call this kind of mission a *mission for survival*.

Even so, there is an ambiguity to the relationship between Christianity and communist systems. In almost all communist countries, there had some official contacts between the communist system and clergy/church. This makes the question of mission even more complicated, because in many cases a Western understanding of missionary movements or missionary work went underground. Yet, almost all these countries, through their churches being members of the WCC, officially participated in shaping mission theology through and within the context of the WCC.

The year 1989 brought the fall of the Berlin wall, the fall of the Soviet empire, and the end of an era. According to Ioan Ică Jr, 1989 is the contemporary equivalent of 1453. It marks the beginning of a new world, of a new “empire.” For the Eastern European countries, it was not just the end of the Communist regime or the return to 1917 or 1948, but the beginning of a new world, dominated by values and paradigms different from the traditional or modern ones that they had historically known before. Soon after becoming free from communism, Central and Eastern Europe were plunged into a post-modern civilization which it they have not been able to understand and digest even after three decades. The global economy and scientific and technological development caused profound change in society, culture, and, implicitly, religion. For Eastern Europe, post-communism is increasingly identified with post-Christianity and post-humanism.¹³ Following the dissolution of communism, the countries of Central and Eastern Europe went through radical social changes as they tried to replace their former centralized economies with the market economy. This led to high unemployment rates and living costs, which translated to widespread social insecurity for many people who were

¹² Ibid., 407–408.

¹³ Ioan Ică Jr, “The Modern and Contemporary Orthodox Theology. Moments, Figures, Development, Interpretation”, in *Orthodox Theology in the 20th Century and Early 21st Century: A Romanian Orthodox Perspective*, ed. Viorel Ioniță (Basilica, 2013), 92–93.

either unprepared for or simply could not grapple with the new social, economic, and political circumstances of their countries.¹⁴

In this context, the churches had to adapt and rapidly find a new way of doing mission. On the one hand, they had to recover what had been lost under the communist regime, while on the other hand, they had to offer answers to all the new contemporary challenges.

Another challenge came with the European integration of a large number of the countries from the region, in the form of labour migration. Migration as a phenomenon can be looked at from different perspectives. We must first consider the emigrant, the ones who leaves their country, city, or village, thus leaving a mark on their families, but also on society in general. The families are separated, the cities and villages are depopulated, and some countries from Central and Eastern Europe are subject to a constant demographic decline. In such circumstances, especially in the rural area, the pastoral work of the church consists simply in offering assistance to the elderly or in performing funerals. A second perspective is the one regarding the immigrant, the person who enters a country for a longer or indefinite period of time. Entering a brand-new world, such a person is forced to go through a stage of adaptation that is often very painful. Based on Charles Hirschman's three Rs system of defining immigrants' needs—refuge, respect, resources¹⁵—Berit Thorbjørnsrud offers an interesting analysis of the new wave of Orthodox immigrants in Norway.¹⁶ Alienation, lack of recognition, and stereotypes about some ethnic groups make immigrants feel vulnerable. Because of this, they tend to stay close to their national communities, as that is where they feel they belong or they feel safe. Consequently, the national consciousness is cultivated and the integration process becomes difficult. They feel they are Romanian, Bulgarian, Serbian or Russian and they often think of their situation as being temporary and they plan to return to their home countries sooner or later. This situation can be a reason for the resurrection of the nationalistic attitudes and the rejection of foreigners.

So, looking back at the past 100 years in the Central and Eastern Europe, we become aware of the roots of Christianity in the region, but also of its history.

14 Linn, "Some Reflections on Mission in Central and Eastern Europe," 408.

15 Charles Hirschman, "The Role of Religion in the Origins and Adaptation of Immigrant Groups in the United States," *International Migration Review*, 24 July 2018, 1228.

16 Berit Thorbjørnsrud, "'The Problem of the Orthodox Diaspora': The Orthodox Church between Nationalism, Transnationalism, and Universality," *Numen* 62, no. 5–6 (7 September 2015): 642, https://brill.com/view/journals/nu/62/5-6/article-p568_4.xml.

Three Case Studies

In the historical context mentioned above, the churches passed through a process of missionary revival, then missionary survival, and finally, missionary re-adaptation, all being marked by the political and social changes that had happened over time in the region. In order to have a general idea about those developments, we selected as hallmarks three case studies: the Hungarian Reformed Church, the Roman Catholic Church in Poland, and the Romanian Orthodox Church.

The Hungarian Reformed Church

According to the official minutes of the first meeting of the IMC in 1921, there were no Christian representatives from Hungary, Poland, or Romania present. Most probably, none were invited. At least, from Europe, representatives were present from the following countries: Sweden, Switzerland, Norway, the Netherlands, Great Britain, France, and Finland.¹⁷

Between 1910 and 1948, the most important Hungarian theologians involved in missiology or foreign mission included Gyula Forgács (in 1917 he published *The Theory of Mission*), Pál Podmaniczky (in 1926 he published *An Outline of the Discipline of Mission*), László Ravasz (1882–1967), Jenő Sebestyén (1884–1950), Sándor Virágh (in 1938 he published *Foreign Mission Handbook*), Sándor Makkai (1890–1951),¹⁸ János Victor (in 1941 he published the article “What Is Mission Work?”), and Lajos Jakos. The most important forum for mission was the Hungarian Reformed Foreign Mission Society.

At the same time, two important personalities who marked the missionary path in Hungary must also be noted: John R. Mott, Chair of the IMC, and Johannes C. Hoekendijk, Secretary of the Netherlands Missionary Council.

In April 1927, in Hungary there was a worldwide conference on Jewish Mission, in the presence of Mott. He had visited this country in May 1925. Even so, at the second meeting of IMC in Jerusalem in 1928, Hungary was not represented. The following countries from Europe were represented:

17 *The Minutes of the Committee of the International Missionary Council, Lake Mohonk, NY, USA, October 1-6, 1921, 1921, 4–8*, <http://archive.org/details/wccmissionconf027>; International Missionary Conference, *The Missionary Situation After the War: Notes Prepared for the International Missionary Meeting at Crans, Near Geneva, June 22-28, 1920* (Forgotten Books, 2018), 13–14.

18 Dr. Sándor Makkai was Reformed Bishop of Transylvania, Romania (1926–36), then a professor of Practical Theology at the Reformed Theological Faculty of the István Tisza University of Debrecen (1936–51).

Belgium, Denmark, England, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Scotland, and Switzerland.¹⁹

According to Anne-Marie Kool, Hungarian theologian Andor Enyedi was invited to participate at the next meeting of IMC, in Tambaram, in 1938, through the intervention of John R. Mott,²⁰ but in the end he did not take part.²¹ Regarding the religious situation in Hungary, there was a mention about the wave of anti-semitism of that time:

There are sixteen million Jews in the world. They are scattered to the ends of the earth and there must be very few countries in which at least one Jewish family is not to be found. Today virtually one-half of the world Jewry is the victim of more or less severe persecution. A great tidal wave of anti-Semitism is sweeping the world. It has already over-run Poland, Romania and Germany. It is spreading extensively in Italy, Hungary and the new Czechoslovakia, and there are now very few lands where its influence is not to be felt.²²

The second important figure for the relationship between IMC and the Reformed Church in Hungary was Dutch Reformed missiologist Johannes C. Hoekendijk. The first initiative to visit Hungary was around 1947, when Hoekendijk was invited by Benő Békefi. They met in Bossey, at the Ecumenical Centre.²³ In the end, with the intervention of László Makkai, who also took two courses in Bossey, Hoekendijk arrived in Hungary on 10 October 1947, as the secretary of the Netherlands Missionary Council (Nederlandse Zendingsraad). He informed the Hungarian churches about the state of the foreign mission cause throughout the world. He pointed to the key role of missions in the renewal of the church. Following World War II some change could be observed: “The issue of the training of missionary candidates stood in the center of the attention of the Mission Association after the Second World War. The increasing number of young people interested in

19 International Missionary Council, *The World Mission of Christianity: Messages and Recommendations of the Enlarged Meeting of the International Missionary Council Held at Jerusalem, March 24-April 8, 1928* (Jerusalem: International Missionary Council, 1928), 87–95.

20 Dr A. M. Kool, *God Moves in a Mysterious Way: The Hungarian Protestant Foreign Mission Movement (1756–1951)* (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 1993), 552.

21 See the list of participants: *Addresses and Other Records, International Missionary Council Meeting at Tambaram, Madras, December 12th to 29th, 1938* (Oxford, London: University Press, Humphrey Milford, 1939), 181–202.

22 *Ibid.*, 100.

23 See Rev. Laszlo Gonda, “Hoekendijk, Bossey, Hungary,” in *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe* 25:3 (2005), 38–47.

missionary service and the (mainly financial) difficulties related to sending them to mission schools elsewhere, gave a significant impetus to this matter.”²⁴

Hoekendijk paid a second visit to Hungary on 25 October 1948, also on behalf of the WCC/IMC, to discuss the possibility of the Hungarian Reformed Church joining the IMC. In general, Hoekendijk sensed a great upcoming revival in the Hungarian Reformed congregations for the foreign mission cause. An important aspect of Hoekendijk’s visit was therefore to seek together with the Hungarian church a way to initiate the Indonesian Mission.²⁵ After the memorable visit of J. C. Hoekendijk on 14 November a subcommittee for foreign missions was established within the mission committee. But the real shift came with the establishment of the National Reformed Missionary Working team in July 1948. In a letter of 10 November 1947 to the Netherlands Missionary Council, the General Assembly underlined the importance of the visit of Hoekendijk for developing the interest in foreign missions but thanked him for what he had done in the revival of the church self-consciousness. In other words, the visits of Johannes C. Hoekendijk saw a considerable growth in the interest in foreign missions. A first group of missionary candidates was ready to go to Holland for their training in preparation for Indonesia. But the missionary candidates on their way to Indonesia were not granted permission. For the next years, Hungary would be completely isolated behind the Iron Curtain. It seemed that this time external, political factors had brought a decisive halt to the Hungarian foreign mission cause. The Hungarian foreign mission movement continued, at grassroots level, even behind the Iron Curtain, despite the external hindrances. The internal factors, the commitment of a number of friends of the foreign mission cause, proved to be stronger.

In 1947, between 5 and 24 July, there was another meeting of IMC, in Whitby, Ontario, Canada. No official representative from Hungary, Poland, or Romania was present.²⁶ This was also the situation with the next meetings of IMC in Willingen (1952) and Ghana (1958).²⁷

24 Kool, *God Moves in a Mysterious Way*, 829.

25 According to Rev. Gonda, László Makkai “mediated between Hoekendijk and his father about the issue of sending Hungarian Reformed missionaries to Indonesia in cooperation with the Dutch Reformed churches and he translated several lectures of Hoekendijk into Hungarian” (Gonda, “Hoekendijk, Bossey, Hungary,” 41).

26 International Missionary Council, *Minutes of the Enlarged Meeting of the International Missionary Council and of the Committee of the Council: Whitby, Ontario, Canada, July 5-24, 1947* (London; New York: International Missionary Council, 1947), 3–6.

27 *Minutes of the Assembly of the International Missionary Council, Ghana, December 28th, 1957 to January 8th, 1958* (London, New York, Eaton Gate, Fifth Avenue), 10-14.

The relationship with WCC was different. In this case, at the 1st Assembly of WCC in 1948, Hungary was represented by the Lutheran Church (Radvánszky Anton, Vajta Wilmos) and Reformed Church (Nagy Barnabás, Pap Laszlo Istvan, Ravasz Ladislav, Vasady Bela).²⁸ Also, Poland was represented by the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession.²⁹ Of course, these churches were represented at all the next WCC assemblies.

The Catholic Church in Poland

In Poland, the new missionary era came in the period between the First and Second World Wars. Even though this period lasted only 20 years, the range of activity of the missionaries from Poland grew considerably wider. Some new missionary congregations came to Poland at that time and soon sent their members abroad. The Verbists (SVD) went to Papua New Guinea and the Oblates (OMI) to Canada and Ceylon. Certain missionary regions were entrusted to Polish missionaries, for instance, Brokenhill (Rhodesia) to Polish Jesuits (SJ), Szunthefu (China) to Polish Lazarists (CM), Karafuto (Japanese Sakhalin) to Polish Franciscans (OFM). Among better-known missionaries of that time is St. Maximilian Maria Kolbe, the Franciscan missionary in Japan. A Polish Verbist, Fr. Franciszek Białas, founded the Catholic University Fu-Yen and the institute Monumenta Serica in Beijing. Among missionary women, the Służebniczki Sisters, with the special permission of the Holy See in 1928, were allowed to go as the first Polish Missionary Sisters to Africa. Altogether, about 500 Poles were sent to missions in this short period.

In this period, we have also the beginnings of Polish academic missiological reflection. The special active centre at that time was Poznań. A big International Missionary Congress took place there in 1927. Among 27 main presentations, 8 were given by speakers from France, Austria, Italy, Belgium, and Germany (among others, Schmidlin, Charles, Freitag, and Bertini). There were also some national missionary congresses. Besides Poznań, some centres of academic reflection on missions started in Lublin, Kraków, Warszawa, and Wrocław (now in Poland, although not at that time). The first Polish missiological magazine started in Poznań: the *Annales Missiologicae*. Two important figures of Catholic Missiology, Karl Müller SVD and Robert Streit OMI, although usually considered as Germans, were born in the territory that now belongs to Poland. The first Polish textbook of missiology was published in 1938, written by Hugo Król CM.

28 W. A. Visser 't Hooft, ed., *The First Assembly of the World Council of Churches, held at Amsterdam, August 22nd to September 4th, 1948* (London: SCM Press, 1949), 240.

29 *Ibid.*, 232.

Unfortunately, in 1939 the Second World War started. There was no way to develop academic reflection on missions. The true stagnation of the missionary animation, however, came after 1945, being forced by the Soviet Union. There was no possibility of sending new missionaries abroad. All missionary press and academic missiological activity were stopped. The communists dissolved even the Pontifical Missionary Works.

The dawn of the new missionary and missiological era came in the middle of the 1960s. The year 1965 was a providential one for Polish missions and missiology. On the one hand, the Second Vatican Council was coming to an end, with a reflection on missions in the form of the *Ad gentes* decree. On the other hand, Polish communist authorities finally allowed the departure of the first missionaries to Oceania. Even though missionaries were gradually being allowed to work outside of Poland, publications were still very limited through censorship. It was only in 1983 that the first four missionary magazines were permitted to be published (and still with a limited number of copies). The general opening of Polish missiology was still limited. We were behind the “Iron Curtain.” Some influence came also out of the teaching of John Paul II.

The official lectures of missiology in the contemporary era began in 1969. Feliks Zapłata SVD was their *spiritus movens*. Famous guests from abroad were invited, especially in the first years. Fr. Joseph Masson SJ visited Poland in May 1970. The biggest work of the first period of missiology in Warsaw was a series of books called *Zeszyty Misjologiczne* (Missiological notebooks), which appeared from 1974 to 1986 (12 volumes). Another important publication was a two-volume collection called *Breviarium Missionum*. The core of this first group of leading persons, besides Feliks Zapłata, included such professors as Władysław Kowalak SVD, Antoni Kurek OMI, and Tadeusz Dajczer. The bibliographies of their publications are impressive, especially when we remember that the possibilities of publications at that time were always limited by the state.

After the first group retired, Jarosław Różański OMI became the *spiritus movens* of the new missiological wave in Warsaw. Now we formed a group of the three closest co-workers, together with Tomasz Szyszka SVD and Wojciech Kluj OMI. We managed to create the frame programme of studies of missiology. We decided to base our program generally on the study of theology (not culture, as some wanted). We decided to take a closer look at given continents from theological and cultural perspectives. We organized many conferences. Some of them were dedicated to local issues, but some had international reach and were given in different languages.

Poland now has published many missiological books and even whole series, as well as articles. Book series include *Studia i Materiały Misjologiczne, John Paul II in ...* (in different mission countries), and *European Mission Studies* (in English), and periodicals include *Lumen Gentium, Annales Missiologici Posnanienses*, and *Nurt SVD*.

Missiology in Poland is taught not only in Warsaw. Missiology chairs also exist in some universities, such as Lublin, Katowice, Opole, Kraków, Tarnów, Olsztyn. Generally, all theological faculties in Poland offer courses in missiology. Poland also hosts the Association of Polish Missiologists. Some Polish Missiologists also belong to IAMS or IACM. Wojciech Kluj is currently the president of the International Association of Catholic Missiologists.

At the moment, unfortunately there are no Orthodox or evangelical centres of missiological reflection in Poland, but it is worth recalling that there are already Polish editions of some famous books, such as Bosch's *Transforming Mission*, Archbishop Anastasios Yannoulatos' *Mission in Christ's Way*, and the *Ecumenical Dictionary of Missions* of Ion Bria. Other books also are available about the missions of Orthodox and evangelical Christians.

The Romanian Orthodox Church

Some historical landmarks in Romania over the past hundred years have influenced the way of understanding mission. In 1918, following the "great union" of Transylvania uniting with the Kingdom of Romania, a national idea had to be developed, especially in the new Romanian territory. Therefore, in the 1920s, the old Orthodox bishopric of Cluj (1921) and the Orthodox Theological Academy of Cluj (1923) were reestablished. The status of the Catholics was rediscussed (1920, 1927, 1929), and the coming of the evangelicals (called "Repenters") in the Western part of Romania was strongly opposed, facilitating the foundation of a defensive missiology, understood as "Sectology."

At the same time, some centrifugal movements were identified within the Orthodox Church (e.g., the Inochentists³⁰ and the Old Calendarists³¹) as well as some tentative renewal movements (e.g., the Lord's Army, and the movement animated by Orthodox priest Teodor Popescu, at St Stefan's Church in Bucharest, known as the Stork's Nest). The first, the Lord's Army, is still part of the orthodox community, meanwhile the second known today as the Romanian Evangelical Church, was cast out from the church after 1924 when Teodor Popescu was defrocked.

30 J. Eugene Clay, "Apocalypticism in the Russian Borderlands: Inochentie Levizor and His Moldovan Followers," *Religion, State and Society* 26:3-4 (1 September 1998), 251-63, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09637499808431829>.

31 Radu Petre Mureșan, *Stilismul în România: 1924-2011* (Sibiu: Agnos, 2012).

The interwar period created conditions for the emergence on the political scene of a fascist party founded in 1927 by Corneliu Zelea Codreanu as the Legion of the Archangel Michael (*Legiunea Arhanghelului Mihail*) or the Legionnaire Movement (*Mișcarea legionară*). Its ideology was ultra-nationalistic, anti-semitic, anti-Hungarian, anti-Roma, and opposed to both communism and capitalism; it also promoted Eastern Orthodox Christianity. Although some researchers considered this movement a kind of clericalist fascism, most researchers consider it a typical fascist movement that tried to subordinate the church. They had an anti-sectarian attitude, and they called the church hierarchy the “Satanic Generation.” They had an open conflict with Vasile Ispir, the first Romanian professor of Missiology from Bucharest, who criticized in the Romanian Parliament Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, the leader of the movement, for using Christian arguments for supporting the Legionnaire ideology.

After the Second World War, the Orthodox Church became involved in the ecumenical movement from the beginning of its institutional organization. When the WCC was established in 1948, some of the Orthodox churches were among the founding members. Even before this date, in 1920, the ecumenical patriarchate invited all the Orthodox churches to be part of what would become the League of the Churches.

Because of the political situation of the Orthodox churches within the Soviet area of influence, they did not join WCC in 1948. If those interested in the history of the ecumenism in the Orthodox churches from Eastern Europe read the theological journals of the time, they would easily notice a reluctance toward the ecumenical movement and its theology.

The situation changed in 1961, when the Orthodox churches from Eastern Europe joined WCC. The ecumenical theology after 1961 is quite different from the previous one. The most important theologian showing true ecumenical thinking in his work was Dumitru Stăniloae. His theology has influenced the Romanian ecumenical theology ever since.

Tendencies in Romanian Orthodox Missiology (1921–2021)

The process of development of something implies a growth or a change, or becoming more advanced, adapting to the new challenges, or simple being different from a previous stage. The tendencies of Mission Studies in Romania can be traced back to the 1920s when the first chair of missiology called Missionary Guidance and Sectology was open at the Faculty of Orthodox Theology in Bucharest, and Vasile Ispir was appointed its first professor of Missiology. Since then, Mission Studies has had an interesting dynamic. Vasile Ispir’s outstanding work, the *Missionary Guidance Course* (Bucharest, 1929),

was the first missiology handbook in the Romanian Orthodox Church. The author professes his creed and his missionary motivation in the preface of the book. The course is structured in three major parts: “Theory of Mission,” “History of Mission,” and “Christian Mission in the Light of Social Issues.” The seventh chapter of the first part is dedicated entirely to “International Missionary Movements,” where one subchapter is dedicated to the IMC.

The attitude of the Romanian Orthodox Church toward the missionary activity was deeply influenced by the sectarian phenomenon, and this led to missiology becoming a theological discipline. The focus of pastoral and sectological interest was the multireligious province of Transylvania. Bishop Grigorie Comșa must be mentioned when discussing issues of the sectological literature: in 1925–35 he was a beloved preacher who wrote and published several collections of anti-sectarian sermons, as well as brochures and articles defending the Orthodox faith in *Telegraful Român* (Romanian telegraph) and *Revista Teologică* (Theological review) from Sibiu, and *Biserica și școala* (Church and school) of Arad.

In 1926 he began to organize “religious missions” in the parishes where the sectarian movements were active in order to counteract their proselytization efforts and influence. This mission lasted for one year, involved two or three priests, and was planned by the dean during the Great Lent, following the guidelines set in Bishop Grigorie Comșa’s book *Mission for the People*, which had just been published. Furthermore, he instituted the post of “eparchial missionary priest,” whose occupant had to take on at least two missionary activities each month and had to prove he was knowledgeable in all matters relevant to his job. In order to make the Orthodox mission more dynamic, he also tried to give impetus to the “lay apostolate in order to prepare the land of the pastoral apostolate.” This initiative materialized in the creation of parish missionary committees and in the setting up of the Religious Propaganda Fund.

The anti-sectarian attitude of the Romanian Orthodox missiology in the inter-bellum era was presented and analyzed by Professor Petru Deheleanu in his exhaustive *Sectology Manual*. Deheleanu taught at the Theological Academy of Arad (1938–49) and was the director of the Missionary Guidance Center of the clergy in Arad (1949–52).³²

In 1949 and 1975, Orthodox Missiology was reduced to the Missionary Guidelines that students received in the courses where they were integrated, respectively Exegesis or Patristics. In 1975, the course “Missionary Guidance” became autonomous within the Systematic Theology Department and was

32 Valentin Moșoiu, “The Contribution of Father Professor Ion Bria to the Development of the Romanian Missionary Theology in the 20th Century,” *Teologia* 3 (2019), 154–55.

taught together with Dogmatics in the form of a course on “Dogmatics and Missionary Guidance” by professor Dumitru Radu. At this stage, we should mention Prof. Dumitru Stăniloae, whose theology has influenced Romanian ecumenical theology ever since. Stăniloae developed the concept of “open sobornicity,” which might be a point to focus on as a key term that synthesizes the openness of the Orthodox to the others (members of the other denominations).

In 1977, the discipline became “Missionary Guidance and Ecumenism.” Animated by a vivid desire to give a Christian response to the existential problems of the contemporary world, Professor Ion Bria succeeded in consolidating a missionary theology. The following are a few of his contributions to the field:

- 1) The triadological nature of all ecclesial and human existence.
- 2) The Christological character of humanity and the mission of the Church, for this is nothing more than a confession of the Logos’s centrality in all creation. The understanding of Christ as God’s Logos was doubled by the rediscovery of the doctrine of the “cosmic” Logos.
- 3) The liturgical orientation of the Orthodox mission. This represents Bria’s most important contributions to the development of the missionary theology of the 20th century. He strongly emphasized the indissoluble relationship between the church, mission, and the holy sacraments, especially the holy eucharist. In this respect, he paid great attention to the phrase “Liturgy after Liturgy,” which brings together charity, spirituality, theological education, social ethics, and Christian political discipline.
- 4) The optimistic view of today’s socio-cultural realities. This is emphasized in Bria’s command for the realization of a “Christian culture.”³³

When Bria was co-opted in WCC, the discipline was entrusted to the substitute lecturer Dr Petre I. David. He would devote himself with all his conscientiousness and dedication to the studies of sectology and to the preparation of students in this regard. He remains the dominant figure in the sphere of Romanian Orthodox Sectology, both before and after 1989. He is

33 *Ibid.*, 165–67.

the author of the famous *Christian Guide* published in a first edition in 1987 and re-edited several times (see, for example, the 1994 edition).

Present situation in Romanian Orthodox Church

According to Cristian Sonea, the missionary formation in the Romanian Orthodox Church has been shaped by the historical context. Mission was sequentially one of resistance, recognition, survival, then defense, the latter being understood as sectology. As a result, the present missionary formation vacillates between a modern paradigm and an antiquated one—and this perfectly reflects contemporary Romanian society, caught between tradition and postmodernism. The Basilica Publishing House Basilica of the Romanian Patriarchy published an *Orthodox Missiology Handbook* in 2021 that comprises texts signed by almost all Romanian Orthodox missiologists. The missiology curriculum may seem peculiar at a cursory glance: innovative topics (such as the trinitarian foundation of mission, the mission as Christian witness, and gospel and cultures) stand side by side with defensive and conservative themes (such as the principle of proselytism or the sectarian movements). Furthermore, wider topics such as interreligious or interfaith dialogues might appear to a non-Orthodox missiologist as completely foreign to the theology of mission or practice. However, all these different aspects are relevant to the theological understanding of mission. They are deeply connected to the realities of Romanian parishes and are necessary in the missionary formation of the future priests.

The aim of this curriculum is to make people aware of the role Christian mission plays in our current society, to help them acquire the skills necessary for the theological understanding and the interpretation of reality, to develop the capacity to engage in missionary efforts in various socio-cultural settings, and to be open to a dialogue with culture, science, and other Christian denominations and religions.³⁴

The task of Romanian missiology is to analyze and interpret in a theological key the connection the church has with contemporary society and the role Orthodox theology still has to play in Romanian culture, all while bearing in mind the Byzantine heritage and its particular relation between Church and state. Romanian Orthodoxy can be seen as a bridge spanning the distance between East and West, by virtue of its geography and its unique Latin roots; in the present socio-political context, the Romanian Orthodox Church can

34 Cristian Sonea, “The Missionary Formation in the Eastern Orthodox Theological Education in Present Day Romania,” *Transformation* 35:3 (2018), 150–53, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/90026383>.

redefine the relation between secular and ecclesiastical powers from a missionary angle.³⁵

Conclusion

The period considered by the IMC centenary study process (1921–2021) is characterized by successive changes of perspective in the Christian mission. If after the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh 1910 there was a dominant concern for the evangelization of the world, seen as a missionary imperative, after the crisis caused by the First World War, the foundations were laid for a mission with a sociological dimension, denouncing secular ideologies as the greatest enemy of the Christian mission. Then, after the integration of the IMC into the WCC structures in 1961, the emphasis fell on the relationship between the mission and the church. This period is also characterized by the shift of the Christological dimension of the Christian mission toward a trinitarian dimension (seen at the Willingen conference in 1952).

Although the churches of Central and Eastern Europe, especially the Orthodox ones, were not part of the IMC until after its integration into the WCC (New Delhi, 1961), the reports of the World Missionary Conferences nevertheless provoked in the region the beginning of a complex process of reflection on the mission in the modern world, as we have seen. This process of reflection then represented the starting point for expanding and elaborating missionary theologies in the second half of the 20th century. The missionary theologies from Central and Eastern Europe have tried to connect with the global missionary directions, while at the same time, rising to the local missionary challenges.

The Regional Center for Central and Eastern Europe involved in the IMC centenary study process is in itself a proof of the diversity of the missionary challenges present in the region. It brought together Eastern, Central and Western theologies of mission and provided a place and a space for missiological encounters. During this working together, we found out that there is still much to be learned from each other in terms of terminology (Latin versus Greek), sources (historiographies of mission), and practices.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 152.

CHAPTER 16

Report from the Study Centre in Germany on the Occasion of Celebrating the Foundation of International Missionary Council in 1921

*Anton Knuth (Missionsakademie) and
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“In all history there has not been a period when such vast multitudes of people were in the midst of such stupendous changes, economic, social, educational, and religious. Among innumerable multitudes of the inhabitants of the non-Christian world the forces of youth and age, of radicalism and conservatism, of growth and decay are seething and struggling for the mastery. As we survey the unparalleled situation in these lands, the question is forced upon us, What is to be the issue of it all?”¹

Short Introduction

The German Society for Missiology (DGMW) and the Missionsakademie (MA) at the University of Hamburg have jointly formed the German “Study Centre” on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the International Missionary Council (IMC). The DGMW has existed since 1918 as an academic association of all German-speaking missiologists. It was the first society for mission studies worldwide, and remained so for more than 50 years. The MA traces its roots of missionary education as well as its institutional founding as a centre for theological doctoral students and ecumenical conferences back to 1911. It was inaugurated in 1957 by Lesslie Newbigin, then moderator of IMC. Both institutions were from the beginning closely connected to the umbrella organization of the German Mission Societies, the *Deutsche Evangelischer Missionsrat* (DEMR). The DEMR was succeeded by the Association of Protestant Missions in the GDR (AGEM) in 1965 and then by the Association of Missions and Churches in the FRG (EMW) in 1975, which both united in 1991 to become the Association of Protestant Churches and Missions in Germany (EMW). DEMR was a member of IMC, and EMW is currently an affiliated body of the WCC Conference on World

1 John R. Mott, *The Decisive Hour of Christian Missions* (New York: SVMFM, 1911), 12.

Mission and Evangelism (CWME). The involved institutions share a commitment to an intercultural understanding of mission and closely follow the global debates on mission, ecumenism, and interreligious dialogue of the World Council of Churches (WCC).

In the 1920s, the German missions were still attached to a rather paternalistic way of thinking and had little understanding for the attempts by the Christianity of the global South to overcome the dominance of the missionaries. Being deeply impressed by the “brotherly spirit” of the mission conference in Jerusalem in 1928, German missions still criticized the “Anglican dominance” and emphasized the special importance of their understanding of mission for the promotion of “Volkskirchen” (people’s churches). To overcome both pietistic individualism and cultural imperialism, many referred to “intact orders of creation” and thought they found a “special way” appropriate to Lutheran theology through an ethnic homogeneous missionary method. In those early years, the focus in relations with the IMC was primarily on practical cooperation for financial and personnel support, which the IMC provided through its Emergency Fund, the Orphaned Mission Fund, and the mediation of Inter-Church Aid programmes.

Despite the initial mistrust that had grown of the defeat of World War I and the following comprehensive social crisis in Germany, a theological reconsideration of mission slowly paved its way through involvement at the different World Mission Conferences. However, generally it can be stated that after 1918 there was no radical break with the pre-war theology of mission as it happened through Karl Barth or Dietrich Bonhoeffer in the field of Church Dogmatics.

The IMC network was appreciated as helping to restore the position of the German missions to their former “mission fields.” But despite all fractions and enmities, friendships were made even in times of totalitarianism. It was only after World War II that a new theology of mission was found in the *missio Dei* concept developed at the IMC conference in Willingen in 1952.

We conceive the contribution of IMC in the German context as a learning history in the context of nationalism, racism, and colonialism toward a new ecumenical understanding of mission. We ask ourselves how we can strengthen an ecumenically minded mission faced with declining ecumenical commitment in general and dwindling resources in particular. How are practical negotiations for mission and theoretical reflections intertwined in terms of mission theology? In what ways can we understand the entanglements and disentanglements of practice and theology of mission?

This study process wants to understand how the IMC made a lasting contribution to the shaping of the newer ecumenical movement in Germany.

How were topics such as racism, criticism of capitalism, secularization, interreligious dialogue, and interculturality taken up from the early IMC conference history? What was the ecumenically relevant “educational function” of the IMC? Such a detailed view of IMC history will be possible only if the research horizon is widened to include non-European, non-Anglo-American Christianity.

Summary of the Main Findings, Insights, and New Questions that Emerged out of the Studies and Discussion

Our study centre has reflected on conceptions of mission and efforts to raise awareness of issues concerning mission as inspired, enabled and fostered by the IMC in the German contexts and those connected with Germany. Our study group is analyzing the ambiguity of mission policies and theologies in the period 1921–1961 in the context of a contested history.

Two papers focus on outspoken theoretical questions. Ulrich Dehn’s article, “Mission Theology as Mirror of Constructions,” links general perceptions of the world viewed from Europe before and after World War I to paradigms of mission theology. He argues that mission theology mirrors worldviews as they are constructed over time. Over and over again, the IMC and its successor within the WCC, the CWME, provided times for encounter and spaces for reflection, which made for timely developments in conceptualizing mission. A second paper, authored by Moritz Fischer, promotes an understanding of mission history that goes beyond the notion of mission as a project of individual European mission societies. Fischer instead highlights mission as a history of interconnections between globally networked actors, institutions, objects, and bodies of knowledge during the rise of national independent church movements in Africa and Asia. The paper, titled “‘Secession in Makolokwe’: Navigating through Entanglements and Disentanglements of Mission, Colonialism, and African Initiatives of Christianity in Transvaal (1880–1920),” identifies 11 factors or discursive events interacting with each other in qualitative functional relationships of diverse actors in mission history. The whole matrix, though reflecting a general approach to mission history, refers to events in Africa in times of imperialism.

One common yet outstanding example of contextual mission-theology was German Walter Freytag, who developed his theology through the support of the IMC. His life and work give witness to the ambivalence in which large parts of the church in Germany lived and struggled with during Nazism.

Jörg Zehelein's article "Promises of the Beyond: Walter Freytag's Work and Theology in the Context of Worldwide Mission and the IMC from a Postcolonial Perspective," elaborates on both Freytag's confirmation of the concepts Nazism drew on (such as race, nation, and clan) and the resistant role his eschatological concept of mission played against Nazism. Being himself a high representative of the IMC, Freytag came to live out both his conservative nationalism and his eschatological internationalism. Zehelein employs a postcolonial perspective to look for perspectives that could be important for a contemporary understanding and practice of mission. Here, his interest was caught by the provocative overemphasis of the transcendent and eschatological not-yet of God's reign as the goal of mission. Can the extreme position that Freytag held in his eschatological focus help to highlight particular weaknesses or shortcomings of the present?

In another paper, Eckhard Zemmrich reflects on a different kind of awareness-building for mission work in Germany at the beginning of the 20th century. His work, "The German 'Commission for the Mission-Study Movement,'" investigates the efforts of this little-known informal missionary institution and its links to IMC. This commission was founded in 1911 and dissolved in 1930. It aimed to build interest for the mission movement amongst children and youth and tried to reach people from different educational backgrounds. This clearly shows not only how certain kinds of mission theology operate, but also the wide range of target groups (inspired by the work of the IMC) and the relevance of World War I for the development towards nationalizing missionary efforts in Germany.

Jayabalan Murthy's article is titled, "Remembering First World War and Its Impact on German Christian Mission Societies in India from the Perspective of IMC and NMCI." India has been the pioneer mission field for German mission societies since 1706. But World War I traumatized the German Christian mission societies and their mission work, as all German missionaries were interned and sent back. Murthy examines whether the missionaries were in favour of international cooperation or remained nationalistic. His paper explores the contribution of Mott and Oldham to support the German Lutheran mission societies during the time of Great War with the help of the National Missionary Council of India. Finally, he will examine the role of the National Missionary Council in India.

Michael Biehl is researching the reasons why the representatives of the German Missions *Ausschuss* did not attend the founding meeting of the IMC at Lake Mohonk in 1921 even though six seats were reserved for them in the newly established council. The preparations for the founding meeting were overshadowed by persisting effects of World War I and the post-war situation

in which often enough nationalism, church and mission formed an intricate amalgam. Personal communication between Oldham and members of the German *Ausschuss* and a meeting in the Netherlands in 1920 explain how the German *Ausschuss* could not be present in Lake Mohonk but still be recognized as a member council of the IMC.

Frieder Ludwig investigates the institutional anchoring and positioning of the new theological discipline of Missiology at the Protestant faculties in the Weimar Republic. He introduces the argumentation and plausibility structures that enabled the establishment of the discipline of Missiology in the 1920s. He shows how the number of missiology chairs tripled in the 1920s after World War I, even though missionaries of German nationality had been expelled from Africa and Asia. The leading representatives of missiology oscillated between nationalism and internationalism. Ludwig also indicates the lines that led to the acceptance of the Nazi rule and works out the links of the German mission to Nazi ideology with all its tensions. But he also points out that the international connections and networks could (sometimes) serve as a corrective: The visit of African pastors to Germany during those years, for instance, made it clear that mission and exclusive nationalism were not compatible. The insight that we need critical voices to discover the Western cultural heritage of our Christian tradition is important for intercultural theology, which is crucial for mission today in the time of globalization and migration.

Joachim Wietzke, in his theological history of mission and ecumenism in Northern Germany, “Die Weite des Evangeliums,”² draws attention to the meeting of the German mission agencies in Halle in March 1921, where the decision was taken not to send any delegates to the crucial meeting in Lake Mohonk. He calls the fact that no German was present when the IMC was established in October 1921 “one of the most shameful events” in German Protestant mission history. Wietzke further shows how the Eurocentric view of most mission societies was challenged by the mission conference in Jerusalem in 1928, which was the first international conference to give non-European Christianity the attention it deserved. The churches that had emerged from missionary work were officially regarded as entities in their own right and no longer as appendages of Western churches. The Jerusalem conference no longer thought in terms of “mother churches” and “daughter churches” or sending and receiving churches, but recognized all churches as equal regardless of their denomination or age. It thus laid the foundation for the wider ecumenical movement, in which Protestant churches worked together out of

2 Joachim Wietzke, *Die Weite des Evangeliums, Eine theologiegeschichtliche Regionalstudie zu Mission und Ökumene in Schleswig-Holstein*, Band 2 (Die Weimarer Republik: Matthiesen Verlag, Husum (upcoming)).

the conviction that they were dependent on each other's enrichment and correction in order to remain or become the church of Jesus Christ.

Anton Knuth shows, in "Martin Schlunk between Colonialism and Mission Universalism," how the long-time chair of the German mission association devoted himself to educational and public relations work for the mission since the operational work was dispensed with. He wanted to "rebuild the carrier circle of mission" out of the conviction that "only the church remains alive that drives mission." Schlunk, like his cousin Julius Richter, perceived the Peace Treaty of Versailles as a humiliation but kept up friendly contact with Oldham and Mott. Schlunk, who also held the British citizenship, saw the universal character of Christian mission rooted in the Old Testament but still demarcated the national significance of German mission theology: "The history of missions has in any case proved that every people are amenable to preaching, and the German mission is unanimous in this, that its aim should everywhere be a people's church, that is, not a small select congregation, but a church which in principle seeks to win all the people to its adherents." After 1945, he embraced an ecumenical understanding of mission, but left it to his successor, Walter Freytag, to draw the necessary consequences also in a practical manner. It was Freytag who confessed on 14 November 1945, in a DEMR statement, "to the brothers of other missions" the guilt "of our nation, which is also our guilt" and favoured the integration of the IMC into the WCC. Looking at the Declaration of Guilt at Stuttgart in 1945, which was the basis for the reintegration of the German churches into the ecumenical movement, it should not be overlooked that it was the friendships made through the IMC during the Nazi-period that made it possible after the war for the German mission and churches to be reintegrated so quickly into the ecumenical movement.

Denis Adufuli's paper explores the "Nexus between German Pietism and the Mission, Theology, and Spirituality of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Ghana." He seeks to address how pietism conflicted with indigenous ideals of spirituality and Christianity, thereby leading to syncretism and the spread of Pentecostalism and the Pentecostalization of missionary-founded churches. He asks in what way the theological discourse failed to be sensitive to the spirituality, cultural values, and social needs of the evangelized, which eventually resulted in syncretism.

On a similar line, Chibueze Udeani undertakes "A Historical Analysis of the Rivalry Missionary Enterprise and Religiosity in Present-day Nigeria." The role and place of Christianity during colonial era and in postcolonial Africa was a debate that came on the heels of Africa's political independence and the end of official colonialism. The article aims to show the dynamism

portrayed by Christianity since it was brought to Nigeria as an antagonistically split nationalized-Eurocentric religion and how it passed through different phases. The aim is to consider to how to deal constructively with this anti-ecumenical development.

Stanislau Paulau looks into mission cooperation beyond the inner-Protestant ecumenism. He is interested in the negotiations of Orthodox-Protestant cooperation opportunities in advance of the establishment of the IMC and to clarify the ecumenical understanding on which the IMC was based. The project takes a closer look at the sometimes competing ideas of international mission cooperation that became manifest in the run-up to the establishment of the IMC, and its interdependencies with other contemporary ecumenical initiatives. Of particular interest are the efforts to open up the formats of missionary cooperation that emerged within the framework of inner-Protestant ecumenism to other Christian actors as well. Paulau will examine this on the basis of the negotiation of Orthodox-Protestant cooperation in the period between the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910 and the founding of the International Missionary Council in 1921.

Gert Ruppell explores the “Church’s Travel to Integrated Unity” through the eyes of the missionary experiences gathered in the IMC. He looks at the chance for ecumenical learning, which the process of growing global integration of Christianity, with its effects, and the possibilities a consequent “life-centred” interaction among the churches in mission could have for the self-understanding of Northern/Western Christianity. Thus, he interprets the IMC as an early attempt to give ecumenicity/catholicity a platform in mission, for integral dialogue between global South and North experiences of Christian witness. Given the existing intercontextual, intercultural pluriformity of Christianity, pointed out by missiologists such as Hoekendijk, Hermelink, Friedli, Margull and Hollenweger in the 1960s (intercultural studies/tertiaterranity), the challenging question remains why the integration of socio-ethical learning in mission only slowly became part of the Northern churches agenda. What were the intercultural blockages? In other words, Ruppell’s aim is to show that mission-inspired learning in the ecumenical context only became essential to Northern churches’ self-understanding through the growing integration of Southern Christian churches into the leadership of the early ecumenical movement. The churches in the ecumenical movement at large gradually recognized their agenda within a globalized world (Geneva 1966 /Uppsala 1968).

However, the process of learning among the Western and the Southern partners remained difficult but surely challenging. This showed specifically in dialogues and learning processes with non-denominational, Independent,

and Pentecostal Christianity. Christianity as interreligious dialogue is a call from the early days of missionary encounter that still remains the greatest challenge to mainline Christianity globally. Thus, the IMC/CWME is a still needed platform for dialogue, learning, and programmatic inspiration for the ecumenical movement of Christianity.

However, the IMC, as “influencer” of the ecumenical movement, has reflected diversity—culturally, ethnically, even religiously. Its discourses were central to the identification of the missionary obligation of the churches and the ecclesiastical obligations of mission. It thus formed a base for learning from the catholicity of Christianity and addressing colonial economic exploitation, interreligious awakening in the context of growing critical southern nationalism.

Intercultural, interreligious, but also economically exploitative experiences were voiced by representatives of the Churches which brought the participants to be learning from each other also through conflicts and thus, to change their views and actions. The differing understanding of salvation became a core theological issue (Bangkok, 1972). Missionary internationalism interpreted the world from Western civilizing educational perspectives, which led to conflicts among the agencies and with indigenous Christianity. Thus, the necessity grew to stress the unity of Christianity through unity in mission. But this only could be successful when the dialogue led to common action toward equality in the discourse between missionary experiences and institutional (ecclesial) willingness to learn, that is, to identify with the need to heal the wounds of colonial mission. Thus, learning was demanded not only from the churches in the North, but also within the IMC.

Bernhard Dinkelaker reflects in this regard on “Christian G. Baeta’s Contribution to Mission in Unity” and relates it to Baeta’s role as a host of the last IMC Conference in 1957/58 in Achimota, Ghana, and as the last IMC chairperson who submitted the motion of integration to the WCC assembly in 1961 in New Delhi. In the context of a paradigm shift in the understanding of “church in mission,” —and also with regard to German missionary organizations—Baeta’s contribution is significant. An ecumenical pioneer deeply rooted in his home country Ghana, with a cosmopolitan mind (trained in Ghana, Basel and London), Baeta was familiar with the European scene of missionary societies. As a self-confident African voice, he could serve as a bridge builder between conflicting interests. With his ecumenical vision, however, he was an early protagonist of a contextual theology that takes traditional worldviews and social realities seriously; of a critical assessment of the colonial legacy in mission, church and society; of the need for establishing constructive interfaith relations; and of a theology committed to social justice and human rights. His insights anticipated many developments in the debate

on World Christianity and still represent an unfinished agenda, also in the German context.

Concluding Comments and Questions

The World War I trauma of the Germans had not been overcome by the end of the 1920s and was later instrumentalized by the Nazi movement. The attempt to instrumentalize the idea of the “Volk” often led theologians to embrace the “Völkische Bewegung” to overcome secularization with it. Most Germans welcomed the “National Uprising” in 1933 to overcome the “defeat of Versailles.” They did not realize until much later that the NSDAP was actually anti-Christian. As Wietzke shows, the missionaries who pursued the goal of popular Christianization were also influenced by the national Protestant spirit and confirmed with their experiences the “theology of orders” that was widespread in Germany. In an effort to free themselves from the individualism of the pietistic mission on the one hand and from cultural imperialism on the other, they presented themselves as preservers of the customs of the local population and pointed with pride to their missionary successes among the Bataks in North Sumatra and among the tribal cultures of East Africa and New Guinea. Well-known German mission theologians saw in the “organs” of tribal and ethnic communities God-given orders that were suitable as ideal “points of contact” for the Christianization of entire ethnic groups. In their view, an unbroken relationship with God was preserved in the social community forms, which, although overlaid with pagan ideas, could serve as a basis for missionization. In their opinion, the task of mission was not to detach individual converts from their pagan environment, but to carry the “unadulterated” gospel through Christian instruction into the “pagan world,” where, far from the destructive influences of civilization, it was to take the “people-organic” form of a living popular church.

How theologically questionable such a linkage to the “natural orders” was became apparent when German Christians invoked this mission theology to justify a racially pure “*Arteigenes Christentum*.” Despite the close contact with the IMC, there was no major resistance against the “new order” of 1933. Nevertheless, it was invaluable for the nascent Confessing Church to have reliable ecumenical friends abroad.³

We therefore ask to what extent the German members of the IMC, after the shattering caesura of 1945, realized their global (catholic) responsibility and in what way the churches realized their obligation as *one, holy, catholic, apostolic*

3 See *ibid.*

community. Was the Northern alienation between mission and church overcome through the integration of the IMC and the WCC at New Delhi in 1961? Or was the understanding of “evangelism” according to Western educational standards continued? In what way did the theme of “Partners in obedience” (Whitby, 1947) change their programmatic agenda in mission? Did they become mutually obedient? Interestingly enough, a significant part of Christianity for dialogue, such as Pentecostal and Independent churches, was largely ignored by mainline Christianity and its missionary structures.

Yet, many of the socio-ethical findings in mission remained difficult issues for the ecumenical movement: foremost, the race question addressed by J. H. Oldham, E. C. Blake, and P. A. Potter against fierce opposition by Northern churches, despite Oldham’s study of 1924. Similarly, the issue of interreligious dialogue vividly represented by Southern churches at the IMC meetings in Jerusalem in 1928 and Tambaram in 1938 remained a conflictive issue, as for example the 5th Assembly of the WCC in Nairobi 1975 (Section III) proves. Other unresolved topics were land-grabbing and industrialization through colonialism (Jerusalem, 1928) and the reorientation of the missionary obligation to integral witness in Unity and Service (Tambaram, 1938). All these subjects needed a growing turn to the world in ecclesiology. It was to a large extent the merit of the dialogue global South Christianity led with the West through the IMC /CWME and, after the integration by means of a greater presence of South Christianity, in ecumenical meetings that socio-ethical concerns became focal to the ecumenical discourse and learning.

Contributions from World Christianity more and more challenged the formerly white ecumenical movement. In this context, the need for churches to respond to the search for identity of people in a way reflects the profound changes in the socio-economic and political context. The world is fragmented, but what can’t be overlooked is the call of the marginalized for justice and recognition. In what way can gospel values help in reformulating a new meaning of community versus rampant individualism? The statement by Mott quoted at the beginning of this article seems to be permanently relevant, and yet any ecumenical mission as a learning movement in mutuality would have to ask itself the old programmatic question: “Are we ready to expect, to imagine and to accept as the fruit of mission an ever-new kind of Church in an ever-new kind of fellowship guided by God in God’s Healing Mission?”⁴

On the other hand, the ever-new question has to be raised: “Who speaks as the ‘We’ and for the ‘We?’” No matter whose theological and prophetic

⁴ See H-J Margull, in Thomas Wieser, ed., *Planning for Mission, Working Papers on the New Quest for Missionary Communities* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1966).

voices are raised, those of the global North or of the global South, there is no monophony, but always a polyphony of convictions and concerns of the church believed as one in its manifold manifestations. All need to raise their voices and contribute—and listen to others. In order to bear credible witness to the unity of the church, we need to engage in discussions and remain serious, informed, critical, and benevolent in areas of conflict. Ecumenical fellowship does not absolve us from the struggle for truth; it is the prerequisite for it.

CHAPTER 17

Missional Collaborations 2021: A Report from North America

To commemorate the centennial of the International Missionary Council, the North American region researched contemporary missional collaboration by North American Christians. In the spirit of IMC research, we designed an open process and invited reflection by anyone interested in the state of North American mission today. Numerous insights emerged from a wealth of data uncovered by conversations, focus groups, personal interviews, and surveys.¹

This report is divided into five sections: I. Contemporary context and rationale, II. Preliminary general findings, III. Selected major themes, IV. Conclusions, V. Appendices.

I. Contemporary Context and Rationale

With strong traditions of voluntarism and local initiative, North American Christianity carries a vigorous legacy of missional outreach.² Mission activity can represent ecclesial or theological competition; it can also exemplify practices of convergence or cooperation that move beyond obvious differences. Today North American Christianity is divided by many things. It is also declining relative to the population as a whole, with “nones” making up the second largest religious group. Nevertheless, this project has discovered that there is substantial creative missional collaboration across boundaries

1 Appendices list key researchers, outline the scope of research and methods of investigation, and provide a bibliography. See V. Appendices. The report, appendices, and other supporting materials are found online at the Center for Global Christianity and Mission, Boston University School of Theology. <https://www.bu.edu/cgcm/imc/>.

2 For the purposes of this report, North America refers to the countries of the United States and Canada, including Latinx mission (Hispanic, Latin American, or Caribbean mission originating in the US or Canada). Although Mexico, the Caribbean, and Central America are geographically part of North America, the mission research has been conducted by regional study centres. Study centres located in Costa Rica and Cuba have handled research into majority Hispanic cultural regions in North America. This report will not give citations except for direct quotations from published data. In the future, subject to grant funding, we hope to stabilize the data through transcription, cataloguing, and placement in archives. Up to this point, costs have been borne by individual researchers or by the Center for Global Christianity and Mission at the Boston University School of Theology.

involving North American Christians locally, regionally, and globally. Because much of this activity does not fit into neat theological or organizational boxes, it can be invisible to researchers. The purpose of this project, therefore, is to gather data on collaborative mission. What are commonalities or trends that cut across different theological, missiological, and sociological frameworks? What motivates it? What does collaboration tell us about being a Christian in North America today?

Several important contexts for the practices of collaborative mission were identified by participants in the research. First is what the late Robert Schreiter called Third Wave Mission.³ The “third wave” of globalization, including the revolution in digital media, has facilitated local organization and individualization of mission to a degree that was impossible just 40 years ago. Collaborations have become fluid and multidirectional. Short-term missions, parish twinning, and thousands of local mission projects by interested citizens are all part of the third wave. A second context to consider is the self-awareness by some groups of the third millennium of Christianity. Groups are reflecting on what it means to be in mission approaching the third millennium since Jesus’ death, especially with Christianity declining in North America. What issues, practices, and commitments ought to characterize collaborative North American mission in this historical moment? Third is the widely shared commitment to holistic, integral, and transformational mission that characterizes most mission theology, whether Protestant, Roman Catholic, evangelical, Pentecostal, Orthodox, indigenous, or independent. Holistic mission theology requires that we ask how theologies of holistic mission are lived out in practice, through collaborating with each other, for the *missio Dei*. Fourth, this research took place in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, we solicited feedback on how technology amidst the pandemic is changing the nature of collaboration in mission. Finally, a central part of the current context is the domination in North America of what one informant calls “cultural secularism.” With religious faith pushed into the private sphere, people suspicious of religious authority, and declining numbers of Christians relative to the religiously unaffiliated, the public ecumenical witness of churches has shrivelled and declined. What does the challenge of the public square mean for North American mission going forward?

Just as the centennial of the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference in 2010 provided the occasion for deep and substantive missiological reflection and publications, so the centennial of the founding of the International

3 Robert J. Schreiter, “Third Wave Mission: Cultural, Missiological, and Theological Dimensions,” *Missiology* 43:1 (2015), 5–16.

Missionary Council presents the opportunity to investigate shared mission practices.⁴ For the foreseeable future, North Americans will continue to play important roles in the context of Christianity as a worldwide religion. However, unlike a century ago, when North American mission typically represented “the west to the rest,” mission today is multidirectional. What are the parameters of missional collaboration, cooperation, ecumenism, and partnership in the context of the global body of Christ? What needs to be discarded as a relic from the past? And what is the new wine in new wineskins? From the perspective of its participants, collaboration represents common witness that, despite challenges, crises, and differences, brings hope for the future.

II. Preliminary General Findings

The following reflections are sorted into three sections: (A) Beyond centres and margins: missional collaboration in the borderlands; (B) From cross-cultural to intercultural: redefined relationships through collaborative practices; and (C) Decolonizing North American mission. Although rich material on spirituality, mission theology, and other pertinent matters is found in the data, this section of the report is limited to teasing out major themes directly related to practices of missional collaboration by North Americans.

A. Beyond centres and margins: Missional collaboration in the borderlands

As Christianity enters its third millennium, many North American Christians are experiencing the shifting and dissolving of what had seemed to be stable boundaries. Instead of mission being a matter of crossing borders from one nation to another, or from established churches to the non-churched, collaboration in mission reveals a terrain of shifting boundaries, multidirectional partnerships, spontaneous missional leadership, and creative synergies bubbling up from the grassroots. The borders and boundaries of churches, denominations, nations, or ethnicities no longer constrain people’s involvement in mission.

A famous article on the settlement of North America is suggestive for the context of North American mission today. It named the open and

⁴ Important missiological reflection produced by the 2010 process includes the “Common Call” of the 2010 ecumenical gathering in Edinburgh, http://www.edinburgh2010.org/fileadmin/Edinburgh_2010_Common_Call_with_explanation.pdf; the Cape Town Commitment of the Lausanne Movement <https://lausanne.org/content/ctc/ctcommitment>; and the Edinburgh series published by Regnum Press, <https://www.regnumbooks.net/collections/edinburgh-centenary>.

intersecting terrain caught between 18th-century empires' "borderlands."⁵ Borderlands were places of shifting alliances—"contact zones" with space for multiple intersections of varied peoples. But with the establishment of national boundaries, people on different sides of borders became the "other," frozen into national and ethnic identities. First Nations peoples and enslaved Africans found themselves trapped inside borders not of their own making. The turning of borderlands into fixed boundaries reflected the merging of mission with concepts of "civilizing" nationhood. "Foreign" missions crossed national borders, while "home" missions stayed within them. Missions that began in the fluid contact zones of borderlands morphed into institutions, projects, and programmes marked by crossing boundaries from centres to margins, or from the West to the rest.

In North America today, collaboration in mission is rejecting traditional borders and embracing the liminality and fluidity common to borderlands. As Christianity declines in North America among established denominations and mission has become multidirectional to and from everywhere, the notions of centres and margins have become fluid. Mission historians often describe missional vitality as a donut: the established middle hollows out while continuing growth occurs on the margins. In an era of global Christianity, the borderland terrain of North America looks like lots of overlapping donuts, with hollowed-out centres surrounded by new initiatives. Missional vitality occurs where the circles overlap each other, activating alliances and partnerships through the convergence of old and new. Fresh commitments surge forth from unexpected locations. Yesterday's centre provokes today's margins, and today's margins are tomorrow's centres.

Thinking about missional collaboration at the borderlands of a postmodern North America sharpens insights gleaned from our research.

1. Missional collaboration reduces the distance between local and global

What in the past was primarily the crossing of oceans and borders to establish foreign missions has become a panoply of overlapping contact zones that blur the distinctions among foreign, national, and local mission. One evangelical informant stated boldly that geography doesn't matter to mission supporters anymore. While this statement does not apply across the board, it reflects our complicated globalized context of multidirectional outreach. Relational mission networks by and among Latinx Americans, for example, move across national and ethnic borders connected by flows of people and

5 Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron, "From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States, and the Peoples in between in North American History," *The American Historical Review* 104:3 (June 1999), 814–41.

assisted by digital technologies. Central Americans living in North America are wrestling with issues of race and culture between different nationalities in the same Latinx congregations. By mixing and blending and challenging boundaries, Latinx Christians create something new. Another example of the blurring of geographic distance comes from C.O.P.E. (Congregations Organized for Prophetic Engagement), a group of African-American congregations working in Los Angeles that collaborates with community organizations to improve life in their communities. Working under the motto “no permanent friends, no permanent enemies, just permanent interests,” C.O.P.E.’s work in the neighbourhoods bridges outreach in Ghana, with similar concerns and methods.

The commitment of many mission networks to collaborative outreach among diaspora and migrant peoples involves turning borders into borderlands by accompanying migrants, helping them set up homes, and cultivating a global consciousness toward the movement of peoples. Global awareness shapes local mission, and vice versa.

2. Missional collaboration challenges distances between centres and margins

Even the well-known missiological adage that mission flows from the margins to the centres cannot capture the complexity of missional collaboration today, because the centres and the margins are entangled: they shape each other. Although the concept of “mission from the margins” is still helpful for challenging the mindset of dominant groups, in the context of Christianity as a worldwide religion, it does not capture the give and take of multicultural missional networks entering the third millennium. The ebb and flow of multigenerational partnership, for example, becomes clear in discussions of long-term missional relationships. The United Church of Christ in New England has partnered for several decades with the Pentecostal Church of Chile. The partnership involves sending people back and forth, shifting configurations of hosts and guests, and cultivating the partnership among next generations. Theological differences between the partners are large, and the relationships vary depending on who is participating at any given time. Yet participants resist any formulation of centre and periphery: both North Americans and Chileans are in the centre. The collaboration among short-term mission teams, fulltime missionaries, and local church leaders also defies distinctions between “foreign” and “home” mission, as the spiritual and material benefits of the partnership flow in multiple directions.

3. North American cities are major sites for missional collaboration

Cities have long been borderlands—places in which people from diverse backgrounds mix together in shifting networks and where churches are confronted with common problems in shared spaces. Our researchers have identified up to 100 North American cities with networks of urban gospel movements. Seeing themselves as “backbone” organizations, Christians from different traditions collaborate to seek the welfare, peace, and prosperity of North American cities. Given the general decline of Christianity, Christian collaboration is important to gospel networks because they strongly feel the scandal of disunity. John 17 is the core text for urban gospel networks, along with theologies of locality and place in which “church” is seen as citywide. Intensive research into collaborative urban gospel networks has taken place in Portland, OR; San Francisco, CA; and Boston, MA. Other researchers have investigated collaborative movements in Chicago, Vancouver, Los Angeles, Providence, and Philadelphia. Although these movements are primarily evangelical and/or Pentecostal in orientation, their participants come from across the theological and denominational spectrum.

Local problems also stimulate collaboration on shared concerns among churches within a given locale. Throughout North America, older city mission societies and more recent collaborations serve in the cities. Montreal City Mission, for example, was founded in 1910 and continues a vigorous multi-ethnic, intercultural ministry among migrants, seniors, and youth. In 2018, it adopted the mission model of “Service, Advocacy, Gathering, Eunoia (planting the seeds of friendship)” (SAGE).⁶ Starting at the turn of the 20th century, southern Methodist women began founding interracial “Bethlehem Centers” in southern cities, to serve poor migrant and African-American families including children and seniors. These groundbreaking social centres defied racial, gender, and economic boundaries. Urban ministries continue as products of missional collaboration. For example, the “Miracle mile ministry” in Boston represents collaboration by four Latinx, Asian-American, and Anglo churches to drug addicts in the area called “Mass and Cass.” The boundaries between church members and the homeless are porous, as those helped by the ministry sometimes become members of and lead Bible studies in the primary host, the Latinx congregation. The Outdoor Church in Cambridge, MA, involves over 40 churches, educational institutions, and local businesses who minister to the homeless. Volunteers from the different churches on a rotating basis hold worship services outdoors and offer

6 “Montreal City Mission: Historical Highlights over the Last Eleven Decades since 1910,” A United Church of Canada Community Ministry, <https://www.montrealcitymission.org/history>.

“spiritual and material support.”⁷ Clergy anchor rituals beyond church walls by holding outdoor communion services, visiting the homeless in hospitals, and conducting their memorial services.

4. *Missional collaboration has moved from structures to covenants*

The collapse of old borders is nowhere more painful than in the loss of older denominational infrastructures for mission and the hollowing out of established ecumenical organizations. Many informants for the study lamented the loss of traditional support structures for mission, especially the decline of ecumenical agencies and denominational mission boards. One denominational bishop noted that “big E” ecumenism has been replaced by “small e” ecumenism: structures collapse, but collaboration nevertheless grows from local initiatives. It took three years, for example, to get a quorum to dissolve the Connecticut Council of Churches. And yet, in the last couple of years, new collaborations have begun between Episcopal and African-American Pentecostal pastors in Connecticut over common problems caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Leaders in the United Church of Canada and the National Council of Churches, USA, lament that salaried denominational officials have been forced to take on multiple roles or have been replaced by volunteers, whose limited time shrinks capacities for national and regional mission priorities. Speaking of collaboration between Roman Catholic and Pentecostal groups, a Catholic mission leader notes, “Well, a lot of ecumenism is local.”

Being in mission no longer primarily means drawing a salary from a denomination-based mission agency, but in covenanting with like-minded people for dedication to the *missio Dei*, God’s mission in the world. Voluntarism has deep roots in American culture, and the centres are not holding partly because of theological and political fragmentation. A striking example of this reality are changes in official denominational mission by the Presbyterian Church, USA, formerly a leading global mission-sending church with educational and social work in South Asia and the Near East. As the PC-USA declined in numbers and shrank its structures for mission support, a cluster of covenant groups has filled some of the gaps. Drawing support directly from Presbyterian congregations, the Antioch Partners send more missionaries than the PC-USA.⁸ The traditional structures of mission in the PC-USA

7 “Street Outreach,” The Outdoor Church, <https://theoutdoorchurch.org/outreach/>.

8 An October 2021 report on PC-USA mission appears to reach similar conclusions that covenant and relationships should take precedence over mission structures. See *CounterStories Consulting Report and Appendices*, Presbyterian Mission Agency Board, 6–7 October 2021, <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/P.201-CounterStories-Consulting-Report-and-Appendices.pdf>.

are supplemented in overseas missional engagement by para-Presbyterian covenant groups that exist in pockets of the denomination, such as Presbyterian Frontier Fellowship and the New Wilmington Mission Conference of the former United Presbyterian Church. These groups intersect the centres and the margins of Presbyterian mission and forge multiple partnerships based on common goals rather than on historic structures.

In St Paul, the Seeds Project of Luther Seminary illustrates how covenant rather than structure connects urban church planters, change agents, and transformational leaders, assisted through collaboration with educational institutions. To help connect people with Jesus in a post-Christian context and to join God's work in the world, the seminary networked with seventy innovative Christian leaders, two-thirds from established denominations and one-third independent. Nearly half were persons of colour. The group affirmed holistic approaches toward mission and identified a number of experiments for reaching people, including use of digital technologies. Then a group of 24 fellows worked in two cohorts for a year to engage "the challenge of forming Christian identity in contemporary culture."⁹

5. In collaborative mission, old structures feed new movements of missional vitality

One finding of the project research is the large extent to which, despite their decline, older mission structures provide infrastructure support for launching new collaborative networks. Rather than a binary of dying old structures versus surging new movements, conversations and interviews reveal that collaboration occurs in unexpected and hidden places. New mission emphases often piggyback on existing structures, and churches undergird parachurch movements. The image of overlapping donuts of missional vitality comes to mind. This kind of collaboration occurs across a range of theological and ecclesial perspectives. For example, among evangelical movements, the group EveryCampus pivots off local churches to try to reach every college campus for revival. It equips local church people to engage with faculty and students on nearby campuses. The group All America seeks to fulfill the Great Commission by mobilizing and leveraging what churches, organizations, and individuals are already doing in this regard. Among the mainline, in Rhode Island, a partnership between pre-existing Episcopal and Lutheran churches reaches out to provide church homes and support for immigrants from Latin America. As the church partners have moved deeper into forming multicultural congregations, they have needed to engage with cultural competency and antiracism curricula. Collaboration in mission thus stimulates spiritual

9 Luther Seminary's Innovation Team, "The Seeds Project, Phase 1 Summary," 10.

growth among older churches who dare to share their resources for new initiatives. Urban gospel networks typically begin by connecting with pre-existing church structures and growing from there.

One fascinating finding from this research is that launching one collaborative mission project can spin off growing networks that lead to further spiritual growth and missional vitality. Collaborative mission has a multiplier effect that may not be obvious at first glance, but that has become visible through our shared research. Sister Parish is a 40-year-old partnership for mutual understanding, peace, and justice between churches in the Midwest and churches in Central America. North American participants have been inspired to reach out to Central American immigrants in Iowa, as well as to link with Black Lives Matter. One returning participant started a local Habitat for Humanity chapter that has built over 30 houses and has a linkage to Guatemala. Others launched Justice for Our Neighbors to provide free legal counsel to immigrants. Response to immigration raids in Iowa, and relationships with Central American congregations, were shaped by participation in Sister Parish. The *Abriendo fronteras/Opening Borders* organization at the US/Mexico Border came directly out of Sister Parish. Youth who went to Central America remain deeply engaged in these issues, including reaching out to local First Nations persons and advocating for people with HIV/AIDS. Through Sister Parish and its spin-offs, active relationships between Central Americans and Midwesterners are not bound or restricted by national borders.

6. Collaboration across generations is an urgent priority for mission

One of the most consistent themes in all the research was the desire to communicate across generations and to collaborate with them. This longing was felt acutely, perhaps because of the shrinkage of North American Christianity. While “going into all the world” has long been the hallmark of mission, the self-conscious need to reach younger generations characterizes collaborative mission today. Globalization has made distant geography feel closer than ever, but the sense of losing connections with youth is palpable. Missional collaboration today should focus on linking generations. The continued importance of multigenerational experience rang throughout the data, perhaps especially among the experienced missionaries, pastors, and activists who participated in the research. Connected to these desires was concern for short-term missions and theological education, both of which rely upon cross-generational communication. Miscommunication between generations of different ethnicities also was identified as a problem that animates Latinx theological educators. An interesting wrinkle in the need to reach North American youth was the concern by some Pentecostal educators that

mission leaders in the West are much older than their partners in Asia. North American mission agencies need to pass down leadership more quickly, as the age differences tend to silence Asian partners who defer to elders.

Generational differences need to be bridged also because the insights and issues of the young need to shape mission in the future. One of the gifts of Latinx mission lies in the connections between geography and generations. With a foot in both North America and Latin America, and with a strong sense of communal connections, Latinx mission facilitates a strong sense of missional responsibility that seeks to encompass both geography and generations. At the same time, informants noted considerable theological and cultural strain between younger and older generations. Some participants stressed that theological formation needs to be framed missionally and should ask new questions relevant to youth of different cultures and ethnicities.

B. From cross-cultural to intercultural: Redefined relationships through collaborative practices

The strongest common finding across the data is commitment to relationships in mission. Relationality is expressed using many different terms, including partnership, ecumenism, accompaniment, mutuality, and friendship. For North Americans collaborating in mission, yearning for authentic relationships across boundaries describes both the hope of mission and how it frames partnerships with others. Whether involved in church planting, social justice work, local outreach, urban networking, or foreign missions, North Americans value relationships as core to mission practice. The data collected is extremely rich and valuable in discussing the importance of relationships, the shape of relationships, the nature of multiple types of collaboration, and their spiritual and theological dimensions. Obviously only a few findings can be highlighted in this brief report.

1. Mutual relationships require that interculturality be prioritized

Traditionally, mission across boundaries has been described as cross-cultural. In the data for this project, we discern a shift to the stance of interculturality. Although cross-cultural mission remains central, especially for church planters and short-term mission teams, the attitude toward others even in evangelistic missions is better described as intercultural. Definitions of interculturality are diverse and complex, but they have in common the desire to be in ministry with rather than ministry to. Instead of a unidirectional crossing of cultural barriers, interculturality requires ministering alongside others in all aspects and at all stages of mission work. For example, Pentecostal missionary educators in Southeast Asia are working with their

partners to fulfill the Great Commission, to train leaders, and to publish theological materials for partner churches. An intercultural stance means that “equal partnership,” personal relationships, and coming together as servants are crucial at all levels. One of the most inspiring examples of interculturality in the data is the bilingual zoom conversation among participants in the Campaign for Children’s Health in La Oroya, Peru, a successful ecojustice initiative. The partnership between PC-USA and Peruvian church activists involved accompaniment of local actors that encouraged them to speak for themselves rather than be spoken for by technical advisors or the more powerful elites involved in the project. Pragmatic accompaniment meant walking alongside even those who did not share the same perspectives. Those working together came to understand that evangelization meant sharing “through human relationships the good news of God’s love in Christ.”

One group actively pursuing deeper understanding of interculturality is FILL (Forum for Intercultural Leadership and Learning: A Reference Group of the Canadian Council of Churches). Instead of forcing others to conform to the dominant culture, FILL adopted “an intercultural framework for relationships, ministry, and service.” FILL—which represents 85 percent of Canadian Christians—and its First Nations partners worked jointly on a document defining interculturality.¹⁰ The challenging process of mutually defining interculturality showed the participants that “through intercultural living in a colonial society, the world will know that we are disciples of Christ.” KAIROS, the ecumenical social justice advocacy network of ten Canadian denominations, opened its mission statement to criticism by Indigenous rights groups, who required it to be reworked. In defiance of racism and white privilege, “friendship” has become the hallmark of intercultural justice mission.

2. Relational practices in mission deepen shared spirituality and bring participants closer to God

Practicing relational mission deepens participants’ walk with God as well as with each other. A number of the focus groups discussed methods and best practices in mutual collaboration. Many mission groups seek to be bridges between communities, and mutual collaboration grounds that work. Partnership is a lifetime commitment not dependent on funding. “Relational networks and friendships” anchor missional collaborations, such as that of the Association for Hispanic Theological Education. Working together develops

10 “Interculturality Framework and Guiding Principles: An Invitation to Conversation and Dialogue,” Forum for Intercultural Leadership and Learning (<https://www.interculturalleadership.ca/wp-content/uploads/Interculturality-Framework-and-Guiding-Principles-FILL-TR-group-April-29-2021.pdf>).

trust. Relationships with others also means being willing to be changed by them. One mission leader in the ELCA notes that “we are connected to each other.” The actions of individuals and communities impact each other, and “everyone is an expert in their own context and has an important perspective and insight to share to the process. Because of that, collaboration in mission becomes not only a good idea, but a necessary one in order to live out the fullness of a shared ministry together.”

Survey data is especially rich on the connections between practices and spirituality. Although not an easy path, consistent commitment to others grounds spirituality and closeness to God. Multiple informants speak movingly of collaboration and willingness to learn from others as the work of the Holy Spirit. For missionaries, being “supportive partners” is the work of the Holy Spirit. Participants in the UCC/Chilean Pentecostal partnership note that the Holy Spirit is what keeps people committed to remaining together in covenant as a “big family.” The presence of God deepens in the process. A Roman Catholic ecumenist indicates that *theosis*, sanctification, and mission work together. An urban gospel networker discusses how prayer, service, and evangelism cohere: practices are grounded in relationships, and the Holy Spirit guides what practices are needed at any given time. The body of Christ began at Pentecost, and the Holy Spirit helps us to see its continuing reality.

A hallmark of relational mission is the joy and celebration it brings. Multiple participants speak of the deep joy, satisfaction, and celebration that comes from collaborating in mission with others, and of joining the work God is doing in the world. Relationships anchor the happiness of sharing in the body of Christ, and working for Christ’s kingdom, and of faith in its hope for earth as well as heaven. Collaboration is a gift. It is one that North Americans can share with the rest of the body of Christ and beyond.

3. Reflecting on the use of communications technology is an important priority for missional collaboration

Because of the pandemic, the use of internet technology and social media was a major issue for collaborative mission in 2021. With the restriction of overseas travel and personal visitation, mission partners have been forced to rely on Zoom, Skype, WhatsApp, and other platforms in order to communicate. Informants contributed very thoughtful reflections on the use of technologies, including the good, the bad, and the ugly. On the good side, Zoom and similar technologies have strengthened accountability between overseas partners by allowing mission partners to interact with their North American sponsors in real time, and to have a say in collaborative projects at a level previously impossible to achieve. Another positive dimension of IT is

that for those who are connected, it is something of an equalizer. While in the past the North Americans may have spoken longest and loudest in actual meetings, the Zoom format gives permission to others to speak more. People lose their inhibitions and so greater input by all collaborators becomes possible. On the bad side, Zoom is no substitute for the hard work of in-person engagement. One informant likens use of Zoom to “cheap grace.” It is easy to use Zoom and think that communication is taking place, when in fact deeper issues are being sidestepped. Christians need to distinguish themselves from others by being willing to show up and connect with people in person. On the ugly side, use of IT is deepening the gap between the haves and the have nots. The haves find it convenient to use Zoom, while the have nots are cut out of the communication loop. One Canadian informant gives as example the sending of laptops to a remote group of Indigenous persons, presumably to enable them to communicate with partners, only to recognize after the fact that the group did not have the finances or infrastructure to afford internet connections. The same technologies that allow mission groups to stay in touch with refugees and partners across borders allow criminal gangs to track and exploit them. Over time, over-reliance on internet technologies could exacerbate economic inequalities.

The consensus seems to be that internet technologies are a useful new tool for greater accountability, in-time decision making, and allowing missional collaborators to see each other. On a domestic level, Zoom has helped to connect health professionals with underserved minority church populations in Los Angeles. Thus, technology has allowed the forming of new kinds of collaborations. On the other hand, the loss of personal contact contributes to the withering and dying of other collaborations. Most informants acknowledge that Zoom and WhatsApp work best when partners already know each other. Some North American mission groups find themselves needing to assist their partners to gain access to technologies they take for granted. In churches that rely on “passing the plate” and personal testimonies to raise money for mission projects, many of them minority communities with congregational polities, the loss of in-person gatherings has proved detrimental to mission and indeed to survival.

The pandemic has revealed the ubiquitous reliance on cell phones and platforms like WhatsApp. For some years, mission educators in Africa and Southeast Asia have been designing curricular materials for cell phone. The shift from in-person meetings to virtual engagements will only speed up this process and thus may have a good impact in the long run on missional collaboration and accessibility issues. Missional collaboration—and its attention

to multiple kinds of diversity—can play a valuable part in bringing kingdom values to the accelerated use of technology in third millennium Christianity.

C. Decolonizing North American mission

Discussions among mission leaders show that the decolonization of North American mission is a pressing issue at this historical moment, both within churches and in response to criticisms from the secular public. Although the decolonization of “foreign” mission has been an important issue for mainline denominations since the 1960s, developments over the past few years have put the decolonization of mission within North America on the front burner. The subject of decolonization has different meanings for different groups, but discussions have in common a sense that collaborative mission among North Americans today requires reflection on mission relations and grappling with racism and abuse of power in order to strengthen mission and make it more accountable to God’s work in the world. Partnership, dialogue, and listening to others are foundational for the process of self-examination and the future of North American mission. That North American Christianity is declining relative to the growing world church means that North Americans must repudiate their own ethnocentrism in relation to the world’s Christians. Thus, decolonization requires that North American Christians work collaboratively and listen carefully to the voices of mission partners, whether they be around the world or in nearby neighbourhoods.

The issue of decolonizing North American mission is too complex a topic for this brief report. But a few major lines of discussion have repeatedly arisen in focus group conversations among experienced mission personnel and activists. Issues such as migration, climate change, and anti-racism movements all demand responses from North Americans in mission. Christian collaboration across differences presents itself as a necessary approach to issues of justice and power.

1. As North American evangelicalism and pentecostalism become more culturally, ethnically, and racially diverse, missional collaboration presses for greater self-criticism

As evangelicalism and pentecostalism have become more diverse both worldwide and in North America, self-criticism surfaces within evangelical mission conversations. For example, problems of racism and repudiation of the “doctrine of discovery” are being pressed strongly by missiologists. The need to listen to one’s partners across ethnic differences and to respect the wisdom coming from communities of colour is essential, especially given the political divisions within evangelical churches today. From an African-American

perspective, to affirm that mission is not a “white colonial” project requires working holistically as African-Americans for God’s purposes for the world. Latinx informants note that the tendency of North American mission organizations to see Latin American mission organizations as competitors rather than as partners remains a problem for collaboration. The problem of non-listening by North Americans undertaking mission trips is also raised as an ongoing issue. Among white evangelicals, another complicated issue is the reduction of collaboration to what one Pentecostal informant calls “co-belligerency.” Co-belligerents collaborate on shared issues such as opposing abortion. But this is not a deep enough approach to missional collaboration. Connecting across boundaries requires moving beyond hot button political issues to a deeper level of acceptance that “others” are fellow Christians. In other words, the decolonization of mission relationships among North Americans requires accepting as Christians those with whom we might not agree politically or theologically.

One important angle on the issue of decolonization among evangelicals is the chasm between domestic divisions and the long-term overseas mission work supported by evangelical missionaries. The linkage of the religious right with evangelicalism in North America is not equivalent to the holistic missional collaborations occurring in overseas missions. Overseas mission partnerships are a vital source of global knowledge and wisdom for evangelicals in North America. Mission pastors in North American churches are facilitating missional collaborations across racial, ethnic, and national lines, including much of it aimed toward justice (e.g., anti-trafficking, poverty alleviation, health issues). “Kingdom partnerships” based on listening and mutuality are key to evangelical collaborations abroad. The corrupting influence of American money is an ongoing issue for evangelical missions and requires wisdom to negotiate. Experienced evangelical leaders in global mission are highly aware of the problems of North American provincialism, racism, and “neo-imperialism.” Pentecostal missionaries note that racism is a chief problem for the North American church, which does not wish to accept criticism from its overseas partners. Having the “heart of a servant” is essential in global church-planting today. Thus, global mission, especially among mature mission partners, is an essential resource and an inspiration for the decolonization of North American evangelical mission.

2. Canadian Christians are reckoning with their own mission history

The discovery of thousands of unmarked graves of First Nations children outside historic mission boarding schools has made the issue of decolonization extremely urgent within Canadian missiology. Canadian churches,

ranging from the United Church of Canada to the Presbyterian Church in Canada, the Roman Catholic Church, and Mennonite “settler” communities, have already been engaged in reconciliation movements with First Nations peoples for some time. The discovery of the graves has amplified the issue of decolonization, as the anger toward Christian mission has exploded among the Canadian population, which is itself largely post-Christian and pluralistic. Zoom meetings for this project among Canadians included First Nations participants and Canadians from different ethnic groups, united in their desire for reconciliation and justice. Canadian Christians are realizing that the myth of a multicultural Canada has in fact been a cover for domination.

As Canadian churches struggle with the legacy of colonization and racism in North American mission history, they find hope through pursuing intercultural mutuality and action. They have turned to partners and friends in the world church for prayer, support, accompaniment, and wisdom with regard to their own guilt and pain. To grapple with decolonization has changed people’s perspective on the meaning of mission: seeing everyone as made in the image of God is the foundation of mission as transformation and of intercultural ministry and service. Decolonization requires deep listening. Paradoxically, the suffering and struggle of Canadian collaboration can also serve world Christianity through linking the immigrant experience, anti-racism movements, and “the Canadian indigenous experience.” The decolonization of North America, therefore, cannot be separated from the experiences of the world’s peoples with colonialism in Africa and elsewhere. To pursue the decolonization of North America forges links with the rest of the world.

3. Eco-mission is a major venue for collaboration today and in the future

Reference to eco-mission is a common theme throughout the data. The urgency of action on climate change—and its connection to vulnerable communities—is being pressed strongly by younger generations and cuts across all the churches. Roman Catholic mission leaders, inspired by Pope Francis’s encyclical *Laudato si’*, see eco-mission as a major way forward for missional collaboration across denominational and theological differences. Even though Roman Catholic diocesan ecumenical offices are moribund and teaching about ecumenism has all but disappeared in Catholic seminaries, social concerns—including eco-mission—unite Roman Catholics in collaboration with each other and with other churches. Catholic Charities USA, for example, have been collaborating interdenominationally and interreligiously on a wide range of grassroots ministries for several decades already. The Ecumenical Patriarch has called for common participation in ecological mission. Many mission agencies have integrated earth care into missionary training.

“Protecting the earth as our common home,” as a leader from Catholic Relief Services notes, requires collaborating beyond one’s own ecclesial group. Eco-mission is an essential dimension of the decolonization of North American mission because it reunites concern for God’s creation with the salvation and well-being of humanity. Because of the well-known impact of ecological degradation on poor communities and environmental crisis as a major source of migration now and in the future, mission leaders across the theological spectrum are concerned with climate justice as a cutting-edge issue that requires collaboration both with other Christians and with persons of other faiths or no faith. United Methodists are conducting “mission round tables” around creation care issues, so that marginalized communities have a voice in this crucial area of missional collaboration. Evangelical creation care movements are expanding rapidly across the region.

III. Selected Major Themes

This section of the report introduces some of the major nodes of research conducted by participants in the mission study.

A. Urban Centres as anchors for missional collaboration—by *Dustin D. Benac*

Missional collaborators across North America are turning to the city to explore the forms of partnership and connection that will guide their work into the coming decades. While renewed interest in urban centres as a site for Christian mission has been building for nearly two decades, these experiments have remained largely siloed, small-scale, and regional in scope. This particular moment of missional renewal, however, is marked by cities and other forms of locality (e.g., neighbourhoods) serving as anchors for missional collaboration. This turn to collaborative mission within the city reflects the diversity of experiences that call these places home: evangelicals and mainliners, millennials and baby boomers, paid clergy and lay leaders, megachurches and neighbourhood churches. Leaders are uniting across traditions and historic divisions around the particularities of their place in order to pursue and reimagine the mission that organizes their shared work and ministry. Three features elucidate this theme: the role of urban areas in missional collaboration, six conditions for these collaborations, and the significance of urban centres for future missional collaboration.

1. *The role of urban centres in missional collaboration*

The turn to urban centres for missional collaboration fulfills three purposes for leaders who are engaged in this work. First, it draws upon an extensive scriptural and theological tradition that prioritizes the city as a centre of God's activity and the church's missional witness. James 1:27, the Pauline epistles addressed to churches in *particular* cities, Jesus's prayer for unity in John 17, Jeremiah 29, Revelation 21, and Isaiah 65 provide a consistent scriptural rationale for this work. Even in instances where leaders do not explicitly cite these texts, their work draws upon a broader scriptural imagination that prioritizes the city as a key site for Christian mission.

The priority of cities as a forum for missional collaboration, however, serves a second purpose: it provides a particular site for connection and collaboration across convictional difference. Even in instances where individuals do not share a common theological conviction or biblical hermeneutic, they can occupy, serve, and care for the same place in the name of Jesus. "We love our neighbour, we love our global neighbour as we love God; it's still such an important anchor for all of us," one leader notes. This form of neighbour-love provides a shared convictional basis to explore the values and challenges leaders have in common that can then animate collaborative work. As one leader observes, "There's a commitment to serve the neighbourhood, wherever that is. And, so, it's natural, I think, for us to say, 'This is where God has placed us.'"

Third, the city also provides a forum to convene community leaders around the concerns they share, both within their city and across different cities. This feature enables missional collaborators to work at two different levels. At a local level, missional collaborators actively convene church leaders, nonprofit leaders, business leaders, political leaders, and funders to address the challenges they encounter in their local communities. At a regional or national level, missional collaborators also work to convene and connect leaders who are trying to pursue mission by placing their city at the centre of their vision. Such connecting and convening work has given rise to a global network around a conversation about the relationship among the church, city, and God's mission.

2. *Conditions for urban missional collaborations*

While the particular contextual features of each city shape these missional collaborations, six conditions support the rise of urban missional collaborations in North America. Each is briefly introduced and summarized below.

(1) *A post-Christian era.* The leaders who actively advance missional collaboration in North America identify the consequence of a post-Christian era. Even as leaders may parse this era differently, interviewees identify the

marginal position of Christian thought and practice as a defining feature. “We’re a minority,” one leader states. Or, as another leader observes, “Being a Christian is not the norm.” Leaders serving in post-Christian global cities (e.g., Boston, San Francisco, Portland, New York) unequivocally identified the rise and growth of their work as a consequence of a post-Christian society. As one missional collaborator observes, “You have to band together.” For those churches with a commitment to an evangelistic mission, this perception of losing ground has served as a catalyst for collaboration and partnership around a shared mission.

(2) *Crisis*. Leaders’ acute encounter with crisis also motivates the turn to urban centres as an anchor for missional collaboration. While COVID-19 represents a recent and widespread crisis for many faith communities, collaborative mission efforts should not be viewed as an outcome of this single crisis. Leaders identified the way fires, school closures, shootings, and injustice all represent crises that had catalyzed collective activity. As one leader who supports a network of city leaders observes, “I would say things that provoke churches toward a greater sense of unity and coordination are crises.” Crisis has the capacity to catalyze collaborative mission.

(3) *Trust*. Nevertheless, leaders must also trust one another in order to envision and pursue the various collaborative efforts that are arising in cities across North America. Trust is the essential condition for collaborative mission; without trust leaders cannot start and sustain the collaborations their work now requires. Guided by this fundamental insight, local and national leaders work to connect and convene individuals in order to build and strengthen the bonds of trust collaborative mission requires. “Trust is the central theme, the central need of any collaborative effort in a network of ministry people,” one leader shares. To this end, some individuals are working to build trust, others recognize the need to rebuild it, and still others are drawing upon this trust to engage in collaborative projects that serve their city.

(4) *Shifting organizational structures*. Leaders also acknowledge how the organizational structures that support religious life in North America are shifting. Rather than grieving this shifting landscape, however, leaders engaged in missional collaborations are working to build alternatives. “Folks are seeing their denominational structures being less relevant for helping figure out how to minister locally,” one missional leader observes. In the vacuum created by this change, leaders are at once rediscovering their shared connection across denominational boundaries and are crafting the accompanying convening organizations that can resource future work.

(5) *Increasing polarization*. If unity is one of the chief goals of city-wide collaborative church efforts, polarization is the primary obstacle these

collaborative efforts aim to overcome. Polarizations presents in a variety of forms, but the consequence of heightened political and ideological division is the same: division, isolation, competition, and loneliness. “I think that one of the things we’re trying to do in the cities . . . is to not allow that polarization to divide the church unnecessarily,” one leader notes. In the place of polarization, leaders are working to unify their community around a call to serve the city.

(6) *The work of God.* Leaders are also quick to acknowledge the work of God in the rise of urban centres as anchors for missional collaboration and their participation in city-wide partnership. For many, this common work is a “movement” of the Spirit of God to refound the church in locality. For some, God called them to this work in surprising ways. “The Lord called me to it . . . He just started highlighting the value of connection within prayer.” For others, they can only bear witness to what God is doing by connecting people in and calling them to their city. “I think God is bubbling up now . . . I think there is a move of God to stir people’s hearts for their city.” Still others note how they are simply joining in God’s ongoing work in time and history. “We like to say we’re joining what God is doing.” In each case, God’s connecting, convening, catalyzing activity remains one unmistakable condition for urban missional collaborations.

3. The significance for future missional collaboration

The prominence of urban areas as anchors for ecumenical missional collaboration is a consequential finding of this research marking the centennial of the IMC. For the local ministry leaders who are (re)turning to place, the city and the neighbourhood represent something more than an attempt to salvage Christian mission during the dusk of Christendom; they provide spaces of belonging. The network structure of these local, collaborative efforts across cities also entails that the rise and growth of these missional collaborations will mark North American Christianity for some time to come. One local leader aptly summarizes the potential significance for missional collaboration: “I see more and more the emergence of the city church as the way that Christians will identify.”

B. Latinx Protestant Mission in the United States—by Britta Meiers Carlson with Carlos Cardoza-Orlandi

The report draws from interviews with affiliates of the *Asociación para la Educación Teológica Hispana* (AETH), a network supporting and equipping Latinx educators, pastors, and mission leaders, and from a focus group interview with Lutheran and Episcopal lay leaders, pastors, judicatory staff

members, and bishops working together to plant churches and provide education for lay and pastoral leaders in Rhode Island.

1. *Who are Latinx?*

Although many people associate “Latinx” with immigration, only about 35 percent of Hispanics living in the United States were born elsewhere.¹¹ The remaining 65 percent include Caribbeans from within the US colonial empire who have migrated to the United States, the progeny of previous generations of immigrants, and residents of present-day Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California whose ancestors were citizens of *la Nueva España*, then Mexico, and then the United States. Because of their diverse national and ethnic heritage, and the generational shifting that is always underway, Latinx identity cannot be easily categorized, challenging the structures, boundaries, and borders that seek to define race, culture, and nationality in the United States. Many Latinx claim varying levels of *mestizaje* and *mulatez* as well as transnational identity. This experience of hybridity is unique to each person. It also helps this diverse, sometimes disparate, demographic group to form a bond.

2. *Networks and collaboration*

Cooperation in Latinx mission occurs organically and is a standard approach to mission. Networks are not merely utilitarian; they are relational. Much of AETH’s work happens in creating networks of theological education institutes and leaders. The goal of these networks is to share information and opportunities as well as to reflect theologically together and support one another emotionally and spiritually.

Relational networks may give rise to covenantal agreements. Formal agreements between bishops’ offices in the Lutheran/Episcopal collaboration came after relational networks had been established organically by local leaders. In the case of AETH, formal agreements and processes allow for expanded impact. For example, AETH works with the Association of Theological Schools to accredit a certificate that qualifies one for admission to master of divinity programmes, waiving the typical requirement of a bachelor’s degree.

Several interviewees mentioned that shared pastoral concern allows them to see past theological differences. We wonder how long these collaborations, especially such a diverse group as AETH, will be able to continue sidelining

11 US Census Bureau, “Nativity and Citizenship Status by Sex, Hispanic Origin, and Race: 2019,” Hispanic Origin Tables, Table 7, <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2019/demo/hispanic-origin/2019-cps.html> (accessed 16 December 2021). The US Census survey only considers Hispanic origin as a category. Thus, this statistic would not include any immigrant groups from countries in Latin America that do not speak Spanish.

contentious issues as new generations of leaders begin asking questions about concerns like sexuality and social activism.

3. *Teología en conjunto*

AETH has cultivated intentional spaces for theology to emerge from daily practices and conversations within communities and among theologians. One participant noted that doing and living theology with people of different backgrounds has helped her to understand herself more fully as a member of the body of Christ. Members of the Lutheran/Episcopal collaboration expressed appreciation for the opportunity that the collaboration gave them to articulate their theological traditions clearly. As one participant states, “if we were just Lutherans trying to figure out Latino ministry, we would do what Lutherans in Lutheran seminaries do, which is they all think we agree on the same language and we say the same thing, but nobody sits back and defines the term.” Another participant notes that clarifying and simplifying language in order to communicate across denominations also leads to clearer communication across cultures. Anglo participants note that working with their Latinx siblings has helped them develop a more communal perspective on who God is and who the church is.

4. *Race, racism, and decolonization*

Some participants identify an ongoing need to emphasize *misión holística* in response to racism, economic injustice, and the immigration system. They call on church leaders to step out of their comfort zones in response to these urgent issues. Cultural competence, an intentional antiracism curriculum, and attention to distribution of power in organizational governance contributed to the success of multicultural mission.

Funding challenges also highlight racial disparities. When foundations provide grants, most funds are allocated for particular projects. When a grant ends, AETH must seek new funding, requiring them to initiate new projects while still trying to sustain vibrant programmes that are no longer funded. The Rhode Island ministries are supported almost entirely by the Episcopal diocese and/or by white congregations rather than by Latinx communities, which can lead to a system of dependency. These challenges may, at times, destabilize the “multidirectional mission” trend we see so much in North American mission.

Some participants, especially young adults, emphasize the need to challenge colonialism in the church. One participant previously worked for an Anglo-led international mission organization as a Director of Latino Engagement. He left because of a culture that saw locally rooted organizations as competition,

refusing to collaborate with them in a way that might lead to sustainability and growth. He is now a co-founder of an organization that works with congregations and nonprofits to train leaders and plan for sustainability. Another challenge that our interviewees note was the “top-down” theological education paradigms in seminaries and Bible institutes. One response has been to introduce the *teología en conjunto* approach to Bible institutes. Others provide alternative channels for theological education such as trainings, blogs, and podcasts. Yet the younger generation’s theological formation seems to be limited and/or theologically conservative. We wonder what kind of theological underpinnings will inform the transformation these leaders are calling for, especially regarding such issues as decoloniality, ecotheology, interreligious dialogue, and sexuality.

5. Latinx mission and the US mission field

Our interviews reveal that Latinx mission must be regarded along generational lines. One organizational leader works to bridge the gaps between immigrant congregations, Anglo congregations, and Latinx-led congregations that intentionally contextualize their ministries for younger generations through intercultural competence, expanded historical knowledge, and greater emotional capacity for dialogue across difference. Another interviewee notes that the growth of ministries reaching out to younger generations is a positive trend because otherwise the church will lose this generation of Latinx. Says another, “this generation’s vital faith must not be lost,” stating that young people are excellent missionaries, to Latinx and others, because the postmodern/postcolonial realities that the church is grappling with in the United States is reflected in the faith lives of young Latinx.

Among the generational gaps noted, justice issues are primary. One young adult notices that many concerns important to second and third generation immigrants, such as immigration and systemic racism, are often noted in national conversations, but rarely rooted in local churches. His organization works with a variety of denominations to support young leaders and their pastors developing local justice networks. Another participant indicates hope that the generation gap could be filled due to a growing sense among Latinx pastors that evangelism and justice must be more deeply integrated. These pastors do not always feel equipped to organize their communities because of the type of theological education they received in their home countries or at Bible institutes in the United States. AETH and its network seek to meet their needs for theological education, social justice training, and networking.

Another important role for Latinx mission is helping immigrants to cultivate faith in a new land. One focus group participant notes that the

Rhode Island collaboration has helped her community to understand that the United States is not only a “sending” country. It is also a mission field with a deep need for the proclamation of the Gospel. Lutheran and Episcopal parishes provide a church home for Latin American immigrants who come from other Christian traditions. Leaders engage in adult instruction on the basics of faith to lifelong Christians such as discussions about the nature of baptism, especially in Lutheran or Episcopal traditions. Therefore, mission is not only about sharing the gospel with people who have never heard it; it is also about communicating a new ecclesial and theological perspective. As one participant says, because the whole world is represented in the United States [via immigration], mission is indispensable here.

C. Patterns and Perspectives in US Catholic Collaborative Mission—by William P. Gregory

Catholic collaborative mission in the US today is informed by the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) which called all the baptized both to active engagement in mission¹² and active participation in working for Christian unity, including in cooperative activities with other Christians in service to the common good.¹³ Reaffirming this teaching a generation later, Pope John Paul II in *Ut unum sint* (1995) called for “every possible form of practical cooperation at all levels: pastoral, cultural and social, as well as that of witnessing to the gospel message.” Noting with appreciation the existence of an “already vast network of ecumenical cooperation,” he praised cooperative activity as “a true school of ecumenism, a dynamic road to unity.”¹⁴

A half century after the council, how are US Catholics advancing along this path of collaboration and what concerns, hopes, and perspectives inform their current efforts? In terms of institutional commitments, the evidence is clear: ecumenical collaboration is extremely common across many areas of the church’s social outreach. Numerous examples can be provided in illustration, but for representative purposes it will suffice simply to consider five prominent examples:

(1) In every diocese of the United States, Catholic Charities serve the poor and needy through vibrant partnerships with local interchurch,

12 Vatican Council II, *Decree Ad Gentes on the Mission Activity of the Church* (Vatican Press, 1965), 2, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651207_ad-gentes_en.html (accessed 6 January 2022).

13 Vatican Council II, *Decree On Ecumenism Unitatis Redintegratio* (Vatican Press, 1964), , 4, 12, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19641121_unitatis-redintegratio_en.html (accessed 6 January 2022).

14 John Paul II, *Ut Unum Sint*, 1995, 40, 43.

interreligious, secular, and civil partners. In domestic disaster relief, the national office works closely with the Methodists, the Mennonites, the Church of the Brethren, Church World Service, and the Latter Day Saints alongside other interfaith partners.

(2) Catholic Relief Services, the church's international humanitarian and development agency, operates in 90 countries worldwide in the same manner. It has long viewed partnering across denominational and religious divides as best practice.

(3) The bishops' Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD) promotes structural change for justice and strong ecumenical and interfaith relationships by awarding \$11 million in annual grants to hundreds of diversely constituted faith-based community organizations.

(4) Together with Catholic Charities, the US bishops also help staff Circle of Protection, an ecumenical advocacy coalition that daily brings the voices of the poor and hungry to Congressional decisions on budget and appropriations.

(5) In pro-life affairs, the church supports hundreds of ecumenically run pregnancy help centres, abortion healing ministries, and programmes to accompany young mothers. On the national level, the Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities has also recently begun coordinating pro-life prayer initiatives with the Orthodox, the Missouri Synod Lutherans, the Southern Baptist Convention, the Assemblies of God, and the Church of God in Christ, among other partners.

Ecumenical cooperation, of course, does not appear in every area and instance of the church's outreach, but it is a common and well-established practice. That is the good news.

From another perspective, though, it is important to note that there are limits to the church's current commitments in this sphere, especially when one takes the church to be the entire people of God and not simply its major institutions. First, a great many Catholics are not involved in any form of missional outreach, much less collaborative mission, and sadly many parish communities too are inward looking. Second, the intentional commitment to ecumenism that informs the magisterium's exhortation to collaborate appears to be almost completely lacking from the consciousness of most American Catholics today. Even many priests and bishops seem unaware of the magnitude of the church's official commitment to Christian unity. Consequently, collaboration, where it does appear, is often pragmatically motivated. Third, poor reception of Catholic social teaching has left the church wide open to the polarizing influences of American politics and in recent years has fueled a great deal of disunity and intra-Catholic animosity. Especially because of the

distortions of certain Catholic media outlets, many have become conditioned to see mission more as a combative task of ecclesial defense than a joyful venturing forth across lines of human difference. That is the bad news.

Good and bad together form part of the complex ecclesial landscape examined by the Catholics consulted in this study process. Representing the ministries mentioned above as well as others dedicated specifically to ecumenism, study participants spoke with joy of their efforts in unity and mission and of the experiences and insights that guide them. Of the many observations and perspectives they reported, four are of particular importance.

First, the grassroots need nurturing. Echoing both Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis who called all the baptized respectively to better preach the gospel and better live as missionary disciples, participants spoke of the great need to better form and mobilize Catholics on the local level. One ecumenist remarked that if “the work for Christian unity is left to those few appointed by the institutions to advance the cause, that state of affairs is a death sentence... this must be a work of the people and by the people and for the people.” The same applies to mission. The work cannot just be left to the agencies. The faithful themselves must become more engaged. In illustration of this, Catholic Relief Services, the US Catholic Mission Association, and the Catholic Association of Diocesan Ecumenical and Interreligious Officers (CADEIO) are all seeking to build up their networks to spark enhanced activity in parishes and dioceses in the areas of global solidarity, twinning and short-term mission, and ecumenism.

Second, the quest for full Christian unity must be resumed. Multiple participants remarked that collaborative witness is a powerful means to deeper inter-Christian ties and that it must be encouraged and pursued at every opportunity. But many also noted that it cannot serve as a substitute for that complete unity Christ desires of his church “so that the world may believe” (John 17:21). The current ecumenical slowdown affecting all branches of Christianity must be forthrightly faced, despondency and indifference set aside, and new instruments for moving toward unity crafted. Ultimately, there can be no fidelity to Christ’s mission without fidelity to advancing Christian unity. A new bishops’ sponsored initiative seeking to help Catholics, evangelicals, and Pentecostals on the grassroots level to acknowledge each other as fellow Christians is a promising sign in this direction.

Third, be open to conversion. Alongside better reception of church teaching, the need for Catholics and other Christians to experience a change of heart was a common theme. This partly came out as intrinsic to the ecumenical enterprise. But it also was described as a common fruit of collaborative mission and as an urgent necessity for addressing internal church divisions.

In this regard the political zeitgeist currently animating much Christian belligerence was identified by multiple participants as a matter for soul searching. Speaking to this issue, one representative of the US bishops said, “We need to try to always remember whether it’s what we say in statements or what we do... that we speak for Christ and we should always have Christ in our hearts.”

Fourth, vitality springs forth across the church. One observation made in common by representatives of Catholic Charities, the CCHD, and CADEIO is that greater local involvement in mission and ecumenism often is attributable to single individuals—inspired bishops, priests, and lay people—who mobilize others and lead the church forward outside of the predictable routines. Similarly, a loose coalition of institutions and movements including the Franciscans, the Paulists, the Benedictines, Glenmary, CADEIO, and Focolare have carried the ecumenical ball in recent decades as the commitment of the US bishops in this area waned. It is a reminder that the charism of leadership and renewal resides among all the faithful.

D. Canadian trends in mission—by Allison Kach

Missional collaboration in Canada both crosses and upholds boundaries. Lines of historic theological, missiological, and political divisions continue to influence the mission of denominational, confessional, and ethnolinguistic churches. Differing visions of social transformation and the means of accomplishing this goal lead churches to unite with others who hold similar beliefs and resist those who do not. Evangelically oriented denominations often oppose mainline denominations’ political and social mission work, and vice versa. Despite these genuine gaps in cooperation, in practice many Canadian mission groups choose to unite on pressing social issues of agreement, the shared realities of a post-Christian Canadian culture, and the relentless reckoning with the sins of colonial missions. Canadian mission groups in this study agree that while historical divisions remain, there is an increased practical and spiritual need to work together and expand partnerships beyond traditional boundaries.

1. A socially engaged church

Across Canada, social issues unite and divide Christians in mission. Catholic religious orders have participated in and supported the justice work of the Canadian Council of Churches. Protestant ecumenical initiatives, like KAIROS and the Church Council on Justice and Corrections, are committed to issues including Indigenous rights and Truth and Reconciliation, gender rights and advocacy, humane and restorative justice in federal corrections,

migrant and refugee advocacy, and environmental/climate justice in Canada and around the world. Evangelically oriented Protestants have partnered with Roman Catholic initiatives for food security, pro-life, marriage, gender and sexuality, and religious freedom. Churches in British Columbia united under Mission Central to host over two hundred mission agencies with hopes to mobilize Christians and churches into God's mission. A coalition of churches in southeastern Ontario fundraise, organize, host, and accompany refugee families to transition to life in Canada. United Church groups strongly support aid to northern Indigenous communities organized by independent Pentecostals. In contrast to these examples of supportive collaboration, the social and theological commitments of diverse mission partners can differ significantly and lead to breaks in relationship and even outright opposition. The most recent example in Canada is the differing, or absent, confessional and denominational responses to Residential School Survivors. Regardless of positions on social issues, a strong commitment to social engagement remains a hallmark of Canadian missional collaboration.

2. An (ir)relevant church in post-Christian Canada

Religious affiliation and participation continue to decline in Canada, leading to the loss of the church's social power. Aging membership and shrinking ecclesiastical institutions are pressing issues felt by ecumenical churches across the country and Roman Catholics in French Canada. The decreasing financial base and lack of young people worry the already overworked volunteers who are passionate about the mission but discouraged to think of the future. Ecumenical mission initiatives have adapted to this trend by fostering partnerships outside of the church with like-minded social justice initiatives, educational institutions, and government agencies. On the other hand, evangelically oriented initiatives grapple with the realities of irrelevance by banding together to withstand external cultural pressure to change. Membership and finances remain relatively stable, and competition between churches for survival has mostly faded. Evangelical and Pentecostal groups see post-Christian Canada as a reason for their existence and an opportunity for countercultural witness as they hope and pray for country-wide conversion and church growth as a sign of Christ's return. These groups unite to leverage social and political strength in numbers that have eluded most independent mission and church groups in Canada. Some independent church and mission groups acknowledge their cultural irrelevance as a weakness resulting from a history of social, religious, and political isolation. There are rising calls in evangelical-Pentecostal groups for more socially informed mission

and culturally relevant church and discipleship. Still, the move toward unity within their ranks remains a primary response to cultural change.

3. *An inward-facing church: Coming to terms with the legacy of colonial missions*

Like the traditional denominations to which they belong, ecumenical mission groups are undergoing an internal renovation as they face their compliance with colonial missions and seek to make restitution. The sins of abuse, assimilation, and genocide of First Nation children, people, and communities through church and mission-run Residential Schools weigh heavy on ecumenical initiatives. Groups like KAIROS conscientiously question and adjust their function to be grounded in honor, mutuality, and humble listening to First Nations wisdom and leadership. The Canadian Churches' Forum for Global Ministry, rebranded as the Forum for Intercultural Learning and Leadership (FILL), once trained foreign missionaries for various Protestant denominations. FILL has shifted its focus from foreign fields to the work inside Canada's borders. They now train Canadian Christians to be inclusive peacemakers dedicated to fostering intercultural relationships, hospitality, and reconciliation inside and outside of the church in Canada. Some evangelically oriented mission groups and Roman Catholic religious orders participate with the inward decolonizing work of ecumenical mission initiatives. The majority, however, are navigating, and even resisting, this inward turn on their terms. Many church and mission groups are beginning to acknowledge the realities and legacies of white racism, colonialism, and exclusion in the church and mission, but their response remains largely ambivalent. The outward-facing vision of evangelically oriented initiatives invigorates their mission.

E. Pentecostal trends in mission—by Allison Kach

1. *Global, intercultural relationships*

Pentecostal mission collaboration in North America is a part of a larger set of dynamic global relationships that can express mutuality and intercultural understanding while also reifying racism and exclusion. Pentecostal educators in Cambodia, the United States, the Philippines, and Guatemala unite in shared experience, friendship, and vocation. Their friendship provides mutual support and encouragement and creates a support system that has travelled with them to new countries and institutions. Emerging Canadian charismatic leaders find vibrant relationships and international collaboration through global revival networks, evangelistic events, and international mission outreach organized in the United States and populated by leaders from the global church. Pentecostals in the global South have lasting friendships and mission

partnerships with non-Pentecostal North American denominations. Young Asian leaders, governed by their cultural values of respect and deference, are stifled in their leadership by aged white men who refuse to retire, share their platform, or learn about the cultural values of their disciples. The presence of racism, exclusion, and lack of intercultural understanding leads some Pentecostal groups to develop alliances with churches and missions from similar racial, ethnic, and minority groups both within and beyond North America. Like the Christian Aboriginal Fellowship of Canada, some historically oppressed peoples separate from older denominational bodies to chart a self-determined course for ministry and mission apart from white Pentecostal institutions and its racist legacy. Pentecostal mission collaboration in North America reflects mutual, intercultural relationships and missional partnerships that bridge divides while also mirroring racial and economic inequities and injustices on a global scale.

2. Pneumatic spirituality

The Holy Spirit, eschatological hope, and the spirituality of unity inspire and inform Pentecostal mission collaboration. The Holy Spirit is the leader and motivator for Pentecostal mission and collaboration. The belief that the Spirit is actively pursuing and inviting all people to be reconciled to God, filled with the Spirit, and sent into God's mission relates to the hope of Christ's return after the "end-time harvest of souls." Working and praying toward the return of Christ in the power of the Spirit leads Pentecostals to collaborate in mission with those who share the same faith and salvific goals. It also means that Pentecostals collaborate with whomever they believe the Holy Spirit leads them to partner with regardless of difference. Pentecostals have sought out relationships with Roman Catholics to learn of their faith, deepen their own spiritual lives through spiritual formation, and partner in mission. Inspired by Jesus' words in John 17 and what they describe as a "spiritual grace" given by the Holy Spirit, two Pentecostal denominations in Canada merged after decades of division. Their motivation was rooted in Jesus' vision for the unity of the body of Christ and the witness, conversion, and transformation believed to be a consequence. The spiritual writings and revelations of Pentecostal-charismatic authors and evangelists have inspired leaders of urban gospel movements in the US to pursue unity through prayer and relationship. For North American Pentecostals, the spiritual practice of unity relies on the Holy Spirit's leading and power to accomplish the impossible and extends God's mission towards Christ's return.

F. Evangelical missional collaborations—by Josh Laxton

North American mission engagement, from an evangelical perspective, has seemingly accepted the cultural values of independence and individualism. While evangelicals would agree that mission is too big for one entity to accomplish, many choose to work exclusively within their own tribe. However, since the turn of the millennium, there is a movement of tectonic magnitude comprised of churches, ministries, organizations, networks, and denominations that are increasingly colliding and overlapping. Such a shift from parochialism to partnership creates the atmosphere for a significant mission impact in North America.

This brief report will mention two kinds of missional collaborations taking place among evangelical entities that we pray will make a significant impact in North America. It will then provide an overview of some opportunities and challenges these missional collaborations face.

1. Missional collaboration through convening: The Wheaton College Billy Graham Center and Lausanne North America

When Dr Ed Stetzer became the Executive Director of the Wheaton College Billy Graham Center, WCBGC (founded by Billy Graham in 1980), the Lausanne Movement (founded in 1974 by Billy Graham and John Stott) contacted him about becoming the Regional Director for Lausanne North America. The Lausanne Movement catalyzes collaboration in the body of Christ by connecting influencers and ideas for global mission so the whole church participates in taking the whole gospel to the whole world. Given that the aims of the WCBGC and Lausanne North America were very much in alignment with one another, Stetzer sought to unite both forces. Currently, there are eight institutes housed at the WCBGC with specific areas of focus, each with the aim of convening and collaborating with evangelical leaders in that space for greater gospel impact in North America. Below is a brief description of each institute.

- *Church Evangelism Institute* works with churches and pastors to increase the evangelism temperature in churches. One of the primary ways they do that is through a two-year cohort where pastors learn how to inspire and mobilize their congregation to become conversion communities.
- *African-American Church Evangelism Institute* researches and contextualizes evangelism strategies within predominantly African-American church environments.

- *Global Diaspora Institute* supports church leaders throughout diaspora communities through equipping churches to reach new people groups as they move throughout the world.
- *Rural Matters Institute* works with rural denominational and network leaders to help resource, mentor, and inspire rural pastors and church leaders.
- *Send Institute* was formed through a partnership with the North American Mission Board (a mission arm of Southern Baptists) and serves as a think tank and convener of church planting networks and denominations that focus on church planting.
- *Correctional Ministries Institute* convenes leaders serving in youth detentions, jails, prisons, reentry and reintegration, families and children of the incarcerated, corrections staff, and victims and works to train and resource church leaders desiring to serve in this mission field.
- *Mosaix Institute* was formed through a partnership with Mosaix Global Network and Ambassador Network to help resource the church in the study of cultural intelligence, church economics, and pastoral ministry in diverse churches.
- *Research Institute* exists to conduct rigorous academic research with the aim of making it applicable to local church practitioners. In past research projects, RI has partnered with the Buford Foundation, Leadership Network, Biola University, and Exponential.

The WCBGC sees itself as a uniter, connector, and convener of evangelicalism for resourcing, equipping, and mobilizing denominations, networks, and local churches to be gospel witnesses. Stetzer and the leaders of each institute believe “we” is much better and more impactful than “me.”

2. Missional collaboration through initiative: EveryCampus and All America

EveryCampus is a collaborative initiative that aims to see gospel communities on every college campus. Currently, more than half of the college campuses in the US do not have a known community of Christians sharing the hope of Jesus. This synergistic effort, along with their 70 different ministry and organization partners not including local church partners, desires to see this changed.

Many missiologists and practitioners of mission see college campuses as a strategic mission field. Presently, EveryCampus utilizes three simple strategies: first, to mobilize a prayer movement to have every campus prayer walked, with a constant focus on praying for each campus. A partnership with Gloop created a tracking system to record prayer walked campuses. Second, they offer resources for students and churches to start a gospel movement on their local campus. Third, they seek to identify, connect, equip, and empower local churches near unreached campuses.

While EveryCampus strategically focuses on gospel movements on college campuses, All America is another collaborative initiative with a comprehensive framework to see the church participating in the Great Commission in the US. They have outlined what they call the five finish lines of the Great Commission. They are as follows:

- *Prayer.* All America wants every person in America prayed for by name.
- *Compassion.* All America wants every person shown God's love in action by identifying and meeting practical needs, educating, equipping, and working with specialized services.
- *Evangelism.* All America wants every person to have multiple opportunities to hear the gospel in their heart language.
- *Bible engagement.* All America would like to see biblical illiteracy eradicated.
- *Christian community.* All America would love to see every person who comes to Christ connected in Christian community and engaging in personal discipleship.

The collaborative initiative brings together churches, organizations, ministries, networks, and denominations in states and cities across the US for them not only to be aware of one another but to collaborate and work together on resourcing local churches to participate in the above finish lines.

Kansas and Kansas City have become All America's pilot projects for rolling out this collaborative initiative in other states and cities across the US. They are also in the process of forming launch teams in Wisconsin, Illinois, and California.

3. Challenges of missional collaboration

Participants have identified at least two major challenges and obstacles to missional collaborations. First, it is important to define collaboration. Many words are in use today, such as partnership, co-laboring, and working together, that seem to get at some element of collaboration. Thus, leaders will need to define what they mean by collaboration. In addition, it will be important to outline the various degrees of collaboration. This will help with collaborating with those who they would not necessarily consider as part of their tribe. Defining the term and setting the framework provides the clarity needed for sustainable collaboration on many fronts. Failure to define the term and set the framework will frustrate the kinds of leaders that collaborative initiatives want to bring to the table.

Second, missional collaborations need to have a more local focus. In other words, while there should be missional collaborations on a large scale in reaching the globe, hemisphere, nation, or state, we have to keep pressing our focus toward reaching cities and local communities. Yet, in places like the US, more competitive and territorial attitudes seem to lurk beneath the surface of individuals, churches, and organizations which prohibit localized missional collaborations. But if individuals, churches, and organizations can humble themselves and create a missional collaborative framework for how they will engage a local community or city together, such areas may see micro gospel movements and spiritual, social, and cultural transformation occur.

4. Conclusion

The church, and more specifically the evangelical movement, seems to be deeply divided and fragmented, especially in recent years. Such division and fragmentation means a weakened missional presence given the impetus of Jesus' prayer for unity in John 17. Thus, to witness how almost every leader involved in the organizations and initiatives mentioned above understand the importance of missional collaboration presents a hopeful future for the evangelical church in North America. Future sustained unity through missional collaboration will need to be something intentionally desired, strategically developed, and passionately pursued.

G. Ecumenical mission organizations—by David W. Scott

Ecumenical missional collaboration is characterized by the importance of a middle level of mission organizations that relate to congregations and regional judicatories on the one hand and domestic and international mission partners on the other. These mid-level organizations include denominational mission organizations, such as Lutheran World Relief and the Presbyterian Mission

Agency, and organizations focused on specific ministries or geographic areas, such as National Justice for our Neighbors (immigration), Sister Parish (church pairing), and Niger Mission Network (US/Niger partnership).

While mid-level organizations serve as important nodes for mission partnerships, much of the work of mission happens at the congregational level. Congregational involvement with these partnerships varies, with many relying on individual leaders to drive involvement. Local decision making remains key, however, and much of the creative tension within ecumenical mission collaboration comes from the relationships between local communities on the one hand and mid-level organizations or domestic and international partners on the other.

The range of domestic and international partners includes congregations and local communities in other countries; ecumenical Christian organizations focused on particular areas of work, such as Church World Service and ACT Alliance North America; state and national councils of churches; social justice movements; secular organizations with specialized expertise; and even government organizations. This creates a complex web of overlapping and intersecting collaborative relationships. As one study commentator notes, “We are part of many global networks related to mission.”

This system of mid-level organizations as key network nodes for ecumenical mission collaboration has historically been a powerful system and characterized ecumenical mission collaboration for much of the 20th century. However, changing circumstances in the 21st century present three sets of challenges: maintaining the relationships that characterize these networks, transforming the nature of those relationships, and building new relationships to tackle new areas of missional work. It is important to note the relational nature of this system and the challenges that face it. Missional collaboration is fundamentally about relationships.

1. Maintaining relationships

Relationships require effort to maintain and flexibility to incorporate new members and to adapt to changing circumstances. The need to maintain relationships stems in part from the contingency of this work. Several study participants commented that current collaborative work grew from having the right people in the right places at the right time and is dependent on current personnel without clearly identified succession plans. Concerns about succession are connected to larger concerns about generational transition within mainline mission.

Broader demographic and cultural trends also impact the work of relationship maintenance. Study participants note the impact of decreasing funding

and church membership on mission collaboration. Commentators worry about “the growing distance” between denominational agencies and local congregations and the “increasing distance between the North American church and sister churches in the global south.”

Several commentators also worry that congregations are becoming more locally focused because of the pandemic and recent trends in US politics and culture, with one claiming, “Our local churches are pulling back from that . . . vision of our interconnectedness in this moment when our interconnectedness is . . . so urgent.” Another adds, “Even in the post-Trump era, an ‘America First’ mentality remains. This . . . leads to the ‘in our backyard’ focus of congregational mission.” Such attitudes threaten long-standing international mission collaborations.

2. Transforming relationships

Those involved in ecumenical mission networks are committed to transforming those relationships to better accord to ideals of mission practice. There is widespread agreement among ecumenical study participants that mission should be based on humility, respect, and listening. There is a variety of terms used to describe that nexus of qualities—for example, mutuality, accompaniment, dignity, and covenant—but there is a high degree of agreement on the basic character of what mission practice should look like.

Many participants experience their own engagement with mission as fitting those ideals, but there is concern that others have not yet bought into this model of mission. One participant wonders, “How do we invite conferences, who will then invite local churches, who will then invite individual people to be in relationship in a different way with organizations and institutions, the churches . . . and the people that we have a connection within Latin America?” Another commentator notes, “Some of the challenges that we face in ministry is finding a way to bridge the long standing, and often outdated, expectations of a power imbalance of those who lead ministry and those who receive it—instead of a shared ministry that we engage together. This energy is often internalized both by people who support the ministry with finances and those who are benefactors of the ministries.” Study participants describe that work of addressing power imbalances as a process of de-colonization, thereby reflecting broader conversations within ecumenical missiology.

Money is an important focus in decolonization, as ecumenical Protestants acknowledge the power their financial resources give them in mission relationships with the poor. One study participant explains, “We are rich compared to the communities in Central America, and we have something that they

don't have, and not sharing it doesn't seem okay. But sharing it with strings attached . . . makes the relationship so, so tricky, because it's so weighty."

Along with concerns about money, ecumenical mission is also grappling with concerns around race, especially about the relationships that white Protestants have developed with Black, Indigenous, and people of colour mission partners.

Part of decolonization is a greater appreciation of what mission partners in North America receive from mission, in addition to what they give to others. As one participant says, "Partnership is at the heart of mission engagement, and . . . we in the US church need to grow in becoming more focused on what we are learning and receiving from brothers and sisters in Christ globally." Mutual transformation and learning are already happening; as another commentator says, "If you can walk alongside them, both of you change." Still, there is concern that Christians generally are not open to such a model.

For decades, mainline Protestant mission participants have tried to identify and promote approaches that foster relationships of respect and equality across elements of national, cultural, racial, and economic differences. Several common approaches are referenced in the study process. None of these are unique to conciliar Protestants, but they are distinctive. Various forms of north-south partnerships between communities, churches, or regions focus on relationship building and mutual understanding rather than on doing work together. Other approaches promote shared decision-making on mutual mission projects. Finally, asset-based mission seeks to recognize the gifts all partners bring to mission, including non-economic assets. While these strategies are not new, the work to implement them is on-going.

3. Expanding relationships

Further complicating the work of ecumenical mission networks is the need to develop new relationships, especially around complex topics such as migration, climate change, and mental health. One commentator notes, "The increasing complexity and diversity of global Christianity requires greater learning, collaborating, and prayer." Another calls for "models for collaboration that go beyond the traditional models of ecumenism among Christian denominations. On major mission challenges like global migration, we need to be forging partnerships with organized expressions of the immigrant communities that welcome our accompaniment, regardless of whether they are faith-based or not." This comment highlights that these newly emerging networks are not confined to partners that share a religious outlook. Instead, it shows a recognition that the problems facing the world are far too large for any group to solve on its own and ecumenical Protestants must work collaboratively.

IV. Conclusions

A century after the founding of the IMC, research on missional collaboration shows it taking multiple forms in North America and beyond. The contemporary postmodern and pluralistic context makes unity in mission an ongoing challenge, yet also reveals its urgency for new generations. Old networks and structures decline, but new ones build upon them and extend into fresh directions.

Our study shows that for many North American Christians, missional collaboration is a spiritual, theological, and practical necessity, both to remain faithful to Jesus' commandments, and to live in hope of holistic transformation toward God's reign. Collaboration, in other words, is intrinsic to the nature of mission itself. Collaborative mission is a sign of vitality and faithfulness. It reflects the Trinitarian nature of the *missio Dei*. It critiques the limitations and mistakes of the past. It embodies mutuality. It strengthens the links between spiritual formation and Christian practices. At its best, it brings people closer to God and to each other.

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V. Appendices

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- D. Bibliography (online only: <https://www.bu.edu/cgcm/imc/>)

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Dr Amanda Quantz – Professor of Theology, University of Saint Mary

Dr David Restruck – Academic Dean; Professor, Seminário Nazareno em Moçambique (retired, now at Eastern Nazarene College, Quincy, MA)

Dr Jonathan Schmidt – Associate Secretary, The Canadian Council of Churches; Director, Forum on Intercultural Leadership and Learning

Dr Roger Schroeder – Interim VP and Academic Dean; Louis J. Luzbetak SVD Chair of Mission and Culture; Professor of Intercultural Ministry, Catholic Theological Union

Mr. Philip Woods – Associate Director, Presbyterian Mission Agency, PCUSA

IMC Centenary Conference panelists & contributors

Dr Dana L. Robert – William Fairfield Warren Distinguished Professor, and Director of the Center for Global Christianity and Mission, at the Boston University School of Theology.

Dr Casely Essamuah – Secretary, Global Christian Forum

Dr Benjamin L. Hartley – Associate Professor of Mission and World Christianity; Director of Strategic Initiatives, Seattle Pacific University

Dr Carlos Cardoza-Orlandi – Fredrick E. Roach Professor of World Christianity at Baylor University

Dr David W. Scott – Director of Mission Theology, Global Ministries, The United Methodist Church

Dr Ronald Wallace – Associate Secretary for International Ministries, Presbyterian Church in Canada (retired)

Dr Julie Ma – Professor of Missions and Intercultural Studies, Undergraduate College of Theology and Ministry, Oral Roberts University

Dr Christopher James – Associate Professor of Evangelical and Missional Christianity, University of Dubuque Theological Seminary

Andy Mott – Grandson of the late John R. Mott

Appendix B—Method

The 2021 North American Study Process sought to gather data from a broad cross section of sources ranging from institutions to grassroots mission movements. Existing relational networks of collaboration were of primary importance and informed the methods used for planning, organizing, data collection, and analysis. From the development of the Study Process through the publishing of the North American Report, an ongoing conversation of

reflection, feedback, critique, and consideration among colleagues has guided the process and findings.

Organization: In December 2020, officers of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches invited Dr Dana L. Robert and the Center for Global Christianity and Mission of the Boston University School of Theology to coordinate the North American process. The Steering Committee, gathered by Robert, began meeting in March of 2021 to develop a strategy and tools to facilitate and administer the study process. In the meantime, Robert recruited an Executive Committee consisting of leading missiologists who hold professorial positions or senior ecumenical and mission posts. The Executive held two initial video meetings in early April 2021 to allow two members of the Steering Committee of the WCC-IMC-CWME centenary study process, Michael Biehl and Marina Ngursangzeli Behera, to share the vision for the study, Robert to share the projected plan for the study, and Executive members to discuss groups and networks that they could engage. Email communication and video meetings remained the primary means of planning, sharing of information, and data analysis throughout the study.

Data Collection: Data collection was conducted primarily from June to mid-September, with 31 December 2021, as the end date for submission of materials. The primary collection method was through organized conversation, questionnaires, interviews, and surveys. Digital media, in the form of video conferencing, email communication, online survey tools, and digital transcript generation, were the primary means of engaging as broad-based participation as possible. The Executive and Steering Committees invited participation in the process through missional, institutional, and associational networks, and through online platforms.

Contributors participated by one or more of the following means:

- 1) Reporting an example of missional collaboration.
- 2) Leading or joining formal and informal discussion groups on missional collaboration.
- 3) Completing the online survey.
- 4) Conducting individual research and conversing with others about it.

The Steering Committee received, organized, and housed findings in a digital repository maintained by the Center for Global Christianity and Mission at the Boston University School of Theology. Materials primarily consist of

meeting notes, transcripts, summary reflections, audio/video files, and survey data. Graduate student members of the Steering Committee, sponsored by the CGCM, accompanied approximately two dozen of the Zoom conversations so as to provide timely feedback and regularization of data collection. The data and corresponding summary reports were shared with the Executive Committee for their review in mid-September 2021. Executive Committee members, authors of a projected case study book, and other volunteer consultants examined the materials and began the process of initial analysis.

Data Analysis and Reporting: The Executive Committee and authors of case studies gathered in four separate groups on 21 and 22 October 2021, to discuss what they observed, understood, and interpreted from the data and summary reports. Dana Robert synthesized the collaborative analysis into a draft report with key introductory findings that informed the North American regional presentation at the IMC Centenary Videoconference on 16–18 November 2021. Robert asked for volunteers to draft sections of the report from among the Executive Committee, Steering Committee, and Consultants. Informed by the panel discussion of Executive Committee members at the Centenary Conference, Robert circulated the draft report to co-authors, who drafted sections in late November and December. Authors completed the first full draft of the report at the end of December 2021. After revisions, the report draft was circulated among the Executive Committee for comments and collaboration. Two online discussions by case study authors continued to sharpen the findings of the report. After final edits, the report was completed and submitted to the WCC/CWME in January of 2022.

The recruitment of leading practitioners and mission scholars into collaborative discussions produced compelling and valuable insights into North American missional collaboration. Although the collected data are only a small snapshot of North American missional vitality, the generative reflection process by committed senior mission leaders has already spurred additional reflection on the importance of missional collaboration. The report itself, therefore, is only one piece of a larger process of understanding and supporting missional collaboration by and among North American Christians today.

FURTHER INFORMATION

IMC Centenary Videoconference (three public sessions):

<https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLI22eVXX9FYkg3BmsSCF2ddhJ0d3HnZVs>

IMC/CWME documentation:

<https://archive.org/details/worldmissionaryconferences>

For a display by date of publication: <https://archive.org/details/worldmissionaryconferences?&sort=date>

For a display by alphabetical order of the titles: <https://archive.org/details/worldmissionaryconferences?sort=titleSorter>

Risto Jukko, ed. *Call to Discipleship: Mission in the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace. World Council of Churches Commission on World Mission and Evangelism Documents 2018–2021* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2021).

Risto Jukko, ed. *Together in the Mission of God. Jubilee Reflections on the International Missionary Council* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2022).

“Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes”:
https://www.oikoumene.org/sites/default/files/Document/Together_towards_Life.pdf

With its sister volume, this book is a must for anyone, academic, pastor, or mission practitioner, interested in knowing how Christianity was considerably expanded in the 20th century, through churches' mission and missionary work, and was transformed into World (or Global) Christianity.

For over 30 years now, the majority of Christians have been living in the global south, and Africa is the world's most Christian continent. Many churches in the global south are growing strongly today. One contribution to this phenomenon in the 20th century has been the International Missionary Council, a permanent ecumenical structure founded in 1921 in Lake Mohonk, USA, to foster unity and mission cooperation. The book goes deep in answering two questions: What had happened in mission because of the existence of the IMC and its historical successor, the WCC Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, since 1961—and what might have happened anyway, without a global ecumenical body such as the IMC and the WCC/CWME?

The book is divided into two parts. The first part contains the introduction—background reading for the reports of the study process produced by the IMC Centenary Study process. The second part of the book includes 13 regional reports. Contributions from all over the world analyse and evaluate the impact—or the absence thereof—of the IMC and the CWME from 1921 until our day.



RELIGION/MISSION

