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Editorial

This issue of SMT is introduced by a thematic block of articles on Muslim-Christian Studies, which are dedicated to the memory of David Kerr. Before his death in mid-April David Kerr was Professor of Missiology and Ecumenics in the Centre of Theology and Religious Studies at Lund University and one of the consultant editors of this journal.[1]

From the time of his undergraduate studies David Kerr had a vivid interest in Arabic language and literature. His doctoral dissertation, defended in 1973, was written in St Anthony's College, Oxford under Albert Hourani's guidance and devoted to 20th century Lebanese church history, specifically the Maronite Patriarchate. However, most of his more recent research was focused on Christian-Muslim relations and Christian interpretations of Islam. After a period of work with the BBC World Service, he became a lecturer in Islamic Studies and Christian-Muslim Relations in the Selly Oak Colleges, Birmingham. There he later became Director of the Centre for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations. In the late 1980s Kerr left for Hartford Seminary, Connecticut, in the United States where he was Director of the Duncan Black Macdonald Center for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations. During this time he also was the editor of the leading scholarly journal *The Muslim World*. In 1995 David Kerr returned to Great Britain, where he became the Director of the Centre for the Study of Christianity in the Non-Western World and held a Chair in World Christianity at Edinburgh University for ten years. Finally in 2005, he came to Lund University to be appointed to the Chair in Missiology and Ecumenics. Shortly after his appointment he was diagnosed with a terminal disease. However, his students, friends and colleagues could witness his deep commitment until the very end of his life.

The SMT journal has wanted to make a contribution to honour the memory of our friend and colleague David Kerr. Therefore we have invited four of his colleagues and friends to reflect on issues pertaining to Muslim-Christian studies and Muslim Christian Relations. We are also aware that both in Great Britain and the United States several volumes with studies dedicated to David Kerr's memory have been or will soon be published.

[1] In the last issue of SMT, vol. 96:2 (2008), the chairman of NIME, Professor Viggo Mortensen published an obituary of David Kerr.

Apart from the collection of Muslim-Christian Studies this issue also includes a general section comprised of two articles. One is Anita Suneson's article on two Indian Pentecostal congregations which is based on a field study Bangalore. The other is a contribution by Tompson Makahamadze and Fortune Sibanda on the responses to the AIDS pandemic in Zimbabwe by the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

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Compiled by Gustaf Björck and Magnus Lundberg

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The selection

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How do we see, experience and react to what happens in the world? Of all the stimuli that hit our senses only a small portion, a selection, actually form our perceptions, perceptions giving meaning. We feel that we understand the world around us. The perceptions have *significance* for us. Our brain obviously contains some kind of a filter making that choice of what is significant among all the stimuli: light coming to our eyes, noise hitting our ears, chemical substances in contact with our nose and tongue and all that touches our skin. That filter has been called the individual's *cognitive universe*. A good term, a term which indicates what it is all about: a comprehensive, although most of the time quite subconscious, worldview forming our perceptions and our spontaneous interpretation of the flow of information, but – most important – also blocks and often enough takes away from our consciousness that which does not fit into its patterns. Our very perception is a spontaneous *choice* performed by our brain.

The newborn child has no perceptions. New stimuli hit its eyes, ears, nose, tongue and skin. And a totally new sensation comes after the severing of the umbilical cord: hunger. What to do of it all? A "significant other" now plays a role: the mother, breastfeeding her child. After only a couple of weeks the child smiles when its mother is leaning over the cradle. The child *perceives* its mother and can distinguish between her face and the pattern of the wallpaper behind her. The oval form or the face and the eyes, nose and mouth of the mother is a *sign*. It has significance. Hunger will disappear. And so it goes on. Being with family members, playmates, friends (friends in flesh and friends on the Web) the child develops a cognitive universe of its own. It makes the distinction between the significant and that which has no meaning and thus will not be perceived. The worldview is a creation of the social environment, perception is a consequence of group belonging. These are well-known facts in the psychology of perception.

A considerable part in the individual's cognitive universe (his or her filter of perception and interpretation of the events met both daily and on special occasions) is formed by narratives. There are the stories told in the family,

in the circle of friends, in the lessons of history in class, legends, myths, and the historiography of the group. There are the stories told as interpreting patterns in the nation, in the social class, in the religious community, in whatever circle of significant persons constitute each of the individual's many belongings. Many belongings: we do not belong to only *one* but to many communities, even if some of those (in extreme cases all) are intertwined in one way or other.

We must be aware of the fact that our perceptions and spontaneous interpretation of events are created with the help of a cognitive universe programmed by our personal experiences and knowledge, in its turn very much related to our group belongings: the persons of significance for us. There are narratives, stories and "history".

"Historical facts" – that is something tricky. Most events in the past are not recorded at all. History is only a small portion of what has actually happened. Simultaneously, of all recorded events only a very small part are collected, analysed and compiled into meaningful stories, narratives, and historiography. History is always a *selection*, a selection of what is significant. And thus, historiography is never an innocent endeavour. Why are some facts regarded as important and other facts not? It has to do with belonging, identity, the "us" and "them". We can see this in the very heated debates over what "has really happened" and the demand to punish those who distort the established history.

As a historian of religions, I call this phenomenon "the mythological function of history". In the same way as religious narratives function as patterns of interpretation of human conditions in life and of what happens in the world, so also "profane" history functions as patterns of perception and interpretation of the events of today. The stories are true in that they contain actual historical facts, although selected, but nevertheless, their *function* is mythological in the sense that they are regarded as "living history", that it happened to "us" – even if we were not yet born at that time. "We will never let it happen to us (sic!) again". "They" – people in the past – have become "us", those who live now. *In illo tempore*, "at that time", becomes "now".

I have just read a small book (in Arabic) of Palestinian history, written for Palestinian children and youth. All that is said in the booklet are historical facts, but its purpose is to create at feeling of belonging. It's *our* history.

Lacking are the narratives of "the other": that is the stories seen as significant in Jewish and especially in Israeli history – which are likewise based on historical facts and equally disregarding of the story of "the other", in this case Palestinian historiography. We know the immense importance of the Holocaust in contemporary Jewish history and the horror evoked when someone tries to deny it or deny its significance. The feeling of "us" is strengthened by ritual commemoration. Young people born decades after 1945 visiting the *places*, the concentration camps, experience a sense of belonging. They feel that it happened to "us". In Palestinian history the *nakda*, "the catastrophe", has a similar function: the trauma constituting the meaning of belonging is found in those who were driven away. We can compare this with the mythological (that is interpreting) role of history for the European Union: What happened during the Nazi era in Europe must never happen again. The ritual commemoration of D-day underlines this aspect very much. We know likewise the enormous role played by the commemoration of the Karbala tragedy (680 O. E.) for Shii Islam. The story of the martyrdom of the Prophet's grandson Husayn, and the rituals connected with it and performed every year, strengthens the feeling of group belonging and it functions as interpretation of the actual tragedies in Iraq today.

What can we learn from this? First of all: In order to promote peace and good relations, it is necessary to be aware of the narratives of "the other"; learn about them, be interested in them. In a functioning dialogue one must try to see one's own perception patterns and try to detect how events can be seen with other interpretative patterns. There is also the task of searching for common narratives. We can see that in the Barcelona process started by the European Union – the cooperation between all 26 countries around the Mediterranean – the stories about *al-Andalus* play a role (underlining those times and places in history when there was a peaceful Muslim-Jewish-Christian coexistence). And perhaps most important: creating new narratives not through dialogue but *diapraxis* – cooperation in praxis and in working together: practical work, activities, common arrangement, and mutual help. The stories about such endeavours, that which has been achieved together, create new patterns of perception and interpretation. We know of such narratives functioning today. For instance, the story of the conductor Daniel Barenboim and his friendship with Edward Said, and his work with the orchestra of young Arab and Jewish musicians in Seville: the *West-Eastern Divan Orchestra*. The point is not the actual function of the orchestra,

whether its members become more understanding towards each other or not, but the very narrative about its existence.

One trait of modernity is our simultaneous belonging to several communities not necessarily connected with each other. The individual has a family and relatives, probably belongs to a professional entity and has a professional identity, lives in a neighbourhood, is perhaps engaged in a political party, a sporting club, has a circle of friends, and belongs perhaps to a religious community, and probably also to a "cult". The cult is the actual (spontaneous) community where he/she performs rituals and has religious experiences. The "cult" is not necessarily connected with the formal membership in an organized religious community, even if this is most often the case. All these belongings, "identities", have their narratives, rituals and normative systems and the individual, so to speak, oscillates between them in different situations. Sometimes they are in conflict with each other. One example: physicians in Saudi Arabia who refuse to assist at corporal punishments (mutilation) or capital punishments because they see it as contrary to the Hippocratic Oath.

But our different identities also mean that in our cognitive universe there are different "compartments", patterns of perception and interpretation, actualized in different situations. Sometimes we perceive the world and the events as professionals, sometimes as family members, sometimes in the patterns and stories belonging to our social or political abode and so on. So the relevant question to ask in modernity when *religious* patterns are actualized instead of profane ones is;:When does the spontaneous choice of religious patterns come up?

First we can notice that religious motives, rituals and patterns are more frequently in use, are more in demand so to speak, in critical situations. When the individual meets suffering, anxiety, sickness, death and sorrow, wars or disasters he/she is more prompt to use religious categories, rituals and prayers. We can call this use of religious tradition its *palliative* function. We can see that it works. Religion is able to diminish the feeling of hopelessness, of meaninglessness, even to the most meaningless of all: death. My tutor in psychology of religion, Hjalmar Sundén, once suggested that the difference between a profane and a religious experience (or perception) is that the latter included that the individual felt a sense of meaning, a *significance* in what has happened. The event is not "naked", not seen as

a coincidence or a hazard, but is perceived as a sign. The event has got a kind of moral significance.

I find this characterisation of religious experience interesting as it also includes atheist religious feelings and the sensation of meaningfulness; suffering and death as meaningful in for instance a national or political struggle. We can see a difference between "Eastern" religions (such as Hinduism and Buddhism) and "Western" religions (Judaism, Christianity, Islam) in the ways in which this meaning of events in one's life are perceived and interpreted. Events, accidents and adversity are, as a general rule, seen in Indian religion as resulting from bad *karma*, which you have shaped in a previous existence, combined with the hope for a better existence in a future rebirth due to good karma resulting from your behaviour in the present existence. The Western religions are *theistic*: the events are perceived (in a religious perspective) as according to God's will. Very frequently used phrases in Muslim tradition are that "God knows best" (*Allâhu a'lam*) and "whatever God wills" (*Mâ shâ'a llâh*). That message can very often be seen on signs, placards, posters and stickers in Muslim environments on cars and walls, both indoors and outdoors. And nothing should be said about plans for the future without adding "God willing". This is said not only in Sura 18:23 f. (*in shâ'a llâh*) but in the Epistle of James (4:15) in the New Testament. "Thy will be done" is not only a part of the most used prayer in Christianity, Our Father/The Lord's Prayer, but a pattern of perception and interpretation in the religious individual's cognitive universe, actualized in critical situations. Even death can be vanquished: there is life after death, compensation for the suffering of the good and punishment for the evil. The senseless iniquities of life will be rectified in the hereafter. From the enormous amount of material in the religious tradition, these phrases and concepts are chosen as they do have this palliative function in the psychology of the individual: religion as consolation. This is a common trait in the function of religion in general.

In one of our seminar sessions in Islamology it happened that we analysed a Malaysian film having a rather marked religious character. In one of the scenes we saw an old woman ailing in her bed. The family, neighbours and friends assembled around her. When all were present she lifted her head from her pillow and said: "Read *Yâ Sîn*!" – and all the present began to cry. Why? The Sura Yâ Sîn (Sura 36) is traditionally read at a deathbed. By her appeal to those present to read it she signalled that she was going

to die. Then the text was recited, very emotionally. One point here is that it was a Malaysian film and the recitation was in Arabic. Very few of those present understood the actual meaning of the words. The emotion was *not* connected with the doctrine, the teaching or the "theology", but with the emotionally loaded situation. What will happen next time when one listen to that text in the Mosque, in the media or in any other situation? Probably tears will come to the eyes again: so it was when father died, when mother died, when uncle Hasan died: Yâ Sîn was recited.

This means that the texts, rituals and all those materials in religious tradition that have been used in one's life become emotionally loaded, often with positive emotions, but sometimes (when connected with "black pedagogy", violence or suppression) with negative emotions. It does not to do with doctrine or theology but with one's personal experiences: positive ones or negative ones. There is no difference here between religions, the phenomenon is the same.

Rather close to the palliative function is the one that we can label the *quietist* function, the search for assurance and safety. The search for security and hope.

If we look at the walls in Muslim homes, and at the shops and stalls for "*devotionalia*" in market-places, we can see the popularity of devotional pictures (pictures of Mecca and Medina, Jerusalem) and especially of pious quotations. There are the 99 names of God, *hadiths*, devotional prayers, the *shahâda* (profession of faith) and the *mâ shâ'a llâh*. But most of the texts in calligraphy are quotations from the Qur'ân. Those are to be found everywhere, but especially in homes (and in cars and other vehicles). One observation that can be made is that the number of quotations is rather limited. For the most part we find the same half a dozen or so quotations. Of the roughly 5.000-6.000 verses in the Qur'ân, one per mille are in reality chosen for daily use. These are the texts which people actually select to have at home or at their work place to see daily. We can call this the selection by the heart, the texts most loved by people.

Then we can make another observation: all these texts have to do with the search for assurance and safety in an insecure world, and the point is that God is the source of just that. Which texts? We find *al-mu'awwidhatân*,

"the two taking-refuge-Suras (113 and 114), also to be found rather often on amulets:

> Say: I seek refuge in the Lord of Daybreak
> From the evil of that which He created;
> From the evil of the darkness when it is intense,
> And from the evil of malignant witchcraft,
> And from the evil of the envier when he envieth.
>
> Say: I seek refuge in the Lord of mankind,
> The King of mankind,
> The God of mankind,
> From the evil of the sneaking whisperer,
> Who whispereth in the hearts of mankind,
> Of the jinn and of mankind.
> *(Transl. M. M. Pickthall)*

Another of these frequently found texts is *al-ikhlâs*, "Sincerity" (Sura 112):

> Say: He is Allah, the One!
> Allah, the eternally Besought of all!
> He begettith not nor was begotten.
> And there is non comparable unto Him.
> *(Transl. M. M. Pickthall)*

The role and ritual function of this text places it in the same category: the search for help and security. It has a popular use being recited as a means to recover from illness. The most popular of all Qur'anic verses often found on walls and especially in rooms intended for worship is the *âyât al-kursî*, "the verse of the Throne" (Sura 2:255/256):

> Allah! There is no God save Him, the Alive, the Eternal. Neither slumber nor sleep overtaketh Him. Unto Him belongeth whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth. Who is he that intercedeth with Him save by His leave? He knoweth that which is in front of them and that which is behind them, while they encompass nothing of His knowledge save what He will. His throne includeth the heavens and the earth, and He is never weary of preserving them. He is the Sublime, the Tremendous.
> *(Transl. M. M. Pickthall)*

Should we try to summarize this most loved verse of the Qur'ân we can perhaps do it with a quotation from a similarly very popular Christian spiritual: "He has got the whole world in his hand."

More often earlier than now we could find similar messages on tablets on the walls in Christian homes. It is interesting to see that the point in these texts, most of them from the Bible, is very often the same: the search and hope for assurance and security. The most used text in this regard was and still is the 23rd Psalm, "The Lord is my shepherd". The *metaphor* is different, but the message is the same: protection and help from God who is able to procure security and support.

Another Bible text rather often found in pious homes was (and perhaps still is) Isaiah 54:10: "For the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." We can notice that the characterisation of God in the last sentence, the Hebrew participle *merahem*, etymologically has the same root as the most common appellation of God in the Quran, *ar-rahmân ar-rahîm*, "the Benificent, the Merciful".

In Sufi circles especially, but not only there, in mosques and homes too we very often find the *âyat an-nûr*, "the verse of Light" (24:35):

> Allah is *the* Light of the heavens and the earth. The similitude of His light is as a niche wherein is a lamp. The lamp is in a glass. The glass is as it were a shining star. [This lamp is] kindled from a blessed tree, an olive neither of the East nor of the West, whose oil would almost glow forth [of itself] though no fire touched it. Light upon light, Allah guideth unto His light whom He will. And Allah speaketh to mankind in allegories, for Allah is Knower of all things.
> *(Transl. M. M. Pickthall)*

The light metaphor is a common feature for the mystical experience, regardless of what religious tradition one is connected with. We can assume that its source is in the human being, within the brain and its function. Thus this very experience can explain the choice, the selection of this verse from the thousands of verses in the Qur'ân, and the predilection for similar expressions in other religious traditions.

A note in the margin: During recent years I have seen a considerable and sudden increase of the number of *hilyas* in Muslim environments, first of all in mosques but also in other places and in the shops and market-stalls for devotional items. This is obviously a result of the affair with the Muhammad-

caricatures in the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* in the autumn 2005 and onwards, with repercussions all over the world. A *hilya* is a calligraphic text containing a description in words of the Prophet, his traits and his character. The most common *hilya* has a description of him ascribed to his cousin Ali ibn Abi Talib. The text describes and characterises him in a way which contradicts in every respect the traits given to him in the two most disparaging pictures in the Danish rag.

We can make another observation as to the actual use of religion. When there are special occasions, special celebrations and commemorations, religious festivals often have many times larger numbers of participants than in the weekly ordinary worship, regardless of what religion we are looking at. We can call this phenomenon the function of religion as *entertainment*. We connect religion with beautiful buildings, engaging music, rhythm, mobilising eloquence, emotionally loaded rituals, togetherness with others doing the same, popular customs with good food, merry family gatherings and so on. This again has nothing to do with doctrine or theology, but with experience, feelings. People *select* in actual practice from the religious tradition that which is amusing and pleasant, but reject (in general) that which is dull, repulsive, too exacting or against the interest of the individual or group. Why do Christians celebrate Christmas? Is it to commemorate the birth of Christ or is it because it is fun, beautiful and emotionally pleasant? We can pose the same question as to the celebration of the Fast in Ramadan. We know that even those many who do not fast at all (or only occasionally) still celebrate the *'îd al-fitr*, "the festival of breaking the fast", and enjoy the special food and family traditions – and also visit the mosque where they are not found on other occasions. The very survival of religious institutions can be seen as a result of their role as upholders of that in religious tradition which is experienced as pleasant and emotionally engaging. This is not necessarily connected with any concern about doctrine or any special care about verbalized and written norms. This we can see from statistics in regard to whatever religion we choose to study. The picture of a religion is very different if we see it in this way. Not from a theological, doctrinal and institutional angle, but from an anthropological perspective in search of the actual practices performed by human beings.

Up to now we have looked at what we can call the "religious" use and function of religious tradition more connected with the individual, and with religiosity and personal piety. There are also all the *profane* functions

of religious tradition, communities and institutions. Let me here point out one factor of relevance for the conditions in the world today: the fact that the state and its institutions in so many of the conflict ridden regions today are dysfunctional or even non-existent, as is the case for instance in Somalia, Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Palestine, Iraq, Nigeria and so on. *Somalia* is an evident example: a country whose borders are not possible to define without protests from one or another of those involved, a government dependent on foreign troops but unable to effectively administrate the country, non-existing or non-functioning state institutions, an insecure life for the people and no real functioning police or judiciary. This means that the individual is dependent in order even to survive on *other* networks, communities, and group belongings. What networks? Most often the extended family, the clan, the ethnic subgroup (the tribe), the religious community, the professional community (the tribal or group militia) or varying combinations of these. We call that kind of society a *tribal* one. The religious institutions can provide social help, some education, some kind of judiciary and even some kind of police. These social functions influence selections from the religious tradition.

Let us visit a mosque in Somalia or some of the other dysfunctional country in the world and listen to what the *khatîb*, the preacher, says in his Friday sermon:

> Remember what the Prophet said: The Paradise is under the mother's feet. It is your religious duty to help your old mother when she can't take care of herself any more. The family values are an important part of our religion.

The preacher in the Christian church will have a similar message:

> Remember God's Commandment: Honour thy father and thy mother that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee. It is your religious duty to help your old mother when she can't take care of herself any more. Family values are an important part of our religion.

But in a welfare state this message will very seldom be heard from the pulpit, as the mother has her monthly pension. This does not mean that the commandment disappears, but it will not be selected as a topic very frequently – or it will get another application: "visit your mother in her old folk's home, read for her, and be kind to her."

Likewise, if there is no welfare system the lot of the one without a family and without resources will be to depend on religious institutions. We find beggars outside the mosque (as well as outside the church or the temple). Let us listen to the preacher in the mosque again: "Remember that the wealthy person's wealth is not *halâl* (permitted) for him if he does not share it with the poor ones. His wealth is *harâm* (forbidden) for him as long as he has not paid his *zakât* to the poor. The *zakât* is due now when Ramadan is approaching its end…" The Christian preacher has a similar message to his audience.

During Ramadan in 2006 I happened to be in Turkey, where there is a social security system of some importance. There I saw posters with the message that Ramadan was coming to its end, it was time to pay one's zakât and it indicated the postal current account number to help the victims of the war in Lebanon that summer.

Social and political conditions will influence the selection from the religious tradition, what will be chosen and what will be seen and taken into account as legitimizing and mobilising for social and political actions (sometimes including violence). The examples of this are many in the world today. But here to it is a selection, a choice for special purposes. Let us see *one* of these functions: religion as a marker of belonging to a specific entity: ethnically, culturally and politically.

When the affair of the derogatory pictures in *Jyllands-Posten* was at its peak in 2006 one problem became actualised: what do we mean by "people". The word "people", in most of our languages, can have two very distinctly different meanings; it stands for two different concepts. To distinguish between them we can use the two Greek words, *demos* and *ethnos*. *Demos* stands for "people" in the sense of *all* those human beings which we find in a place, a region or a country, regardless of descent or origin, language, race, social status, "culture" or religious affiliation. All those who are there constitute the *demos*. If everyone in the *demos* of a country or state has equal rights and duties, we call it a *democracy*. With *ethnos* we mean something else: a "people" constituted by some markers that the individuals are supposed to have in common, be it descent or origin, language and cultural tradition, a common history (that is: an ethnic or national mythology), religious tradition or a combination of these. When political rights and citizenship in a state are combined with a demand for one or several of these common markers,

we can not call it a democracy but the adequate term is *ethnocracy*. For instance, in the name of the political party in Denmark called the Dansk Folkeparti (Danish People's Party), with a very pronounced Islamophobic agenda, the word "folk" (people) means ethnos not demos. The party is not a democratic party but an ethnocratic one. Likewise its Swedish counterpart, misleadingly called "Sverigedemokraterna", should more rightly be called "Sverige-etnokraterna" as by "the Swedish people" they mean those with Swedish ethnicity and not the actual inhabitants or citizens of the country.

What markers are in use? We can see that it varies from one country to another. We can for instance observe what the requirements are for citizenship. It can be a demand for a special test of ability in the "national language" (as is the case in Estonia and Latvia, directed against the Russian speaking inhabitants), a priority for those of the right ethnic origin/descent (Germany, Israel – to be a Jew is defined as having a Jewish mother), or the demand for tests of both language and knowledge of the "national history and culture" (as in Denmark; the same is discussed and put forward by some of the parties in the political debate in Sweden). It can be religious affiliation too. (I prefer in this context not to speak about "belief", but of affiliation to a religion, as it has nothing to do with religiosity or creed.)

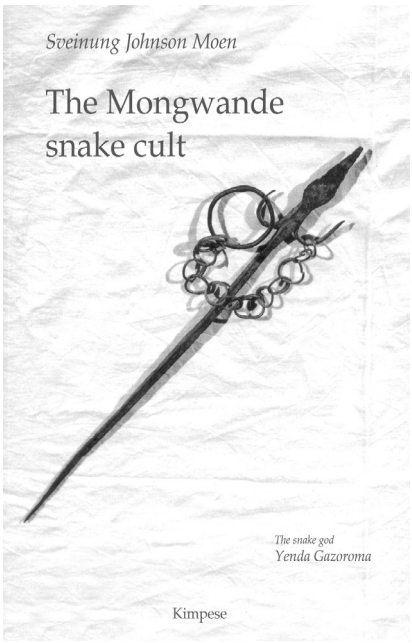
We find this problematic in several parts of the world. Often the religious affiliation is seen as an ethnic marker combined with special conditions for political rights. We see it very clearly in the recent communalistic clashes in India. Hindu extremist groups and parties regard Hindus and Muslims as different "peoples" and demand that *hindutva* should be a condition for full citizenship in India. Already the idea of the division of the Subcontinent and the creation (at that time) of Pakistan was due to the idea that "Muslim" and "Hindu" were a kind of ethnic designation. We can see that "Buddhist" and "Muslim" is used in a similar way in the "ethnic" conflict in Thailand legitimating the violence in the southern parts of the country.

In these cases religious affiliation has a clearly profane function, a selection not connected with personal piety or religious experiences, but to the political use and perception of religious tradition. Hence in that use and as the criteria of selections in that context, participation in religious rituals and the verbal adherence to doctrines and religious institutions can be seen and analysed as profane functions of religion.

The actual function of religious tradition, regardless of the religion, is a question of selections from an immense mass of material. We can try to distinguish the factors which decide the choice of what is actually taken from the tradition (psychological factors, sociological factors and politically ideological factors) in order to see similarities and differences not between religions but in the functions of religious tradition in general.

The Mongwande snake cult

Sveinung Johnson Moen



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Us vs Them Syndrome in Christian-Muslim Conflicts

Lissi Rasmussen

The prime focus of this essay is the indigene-settler and the Us vs Them dichotomy which has been one of the main causes of tensions and conflicts between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria, Denmark and Indonesia.[1] How can this syndrome be overcome?

Three conflicts - three countries

Distinct demographics and histories have given rise to various patterns in Christian-Muslim relations in the three countries, different types of conflict and resolution of such. Nonetheless, the similarities between the conflicts – especially between Nigeria and Indonesia with regard to their origin, course and what was required for their resolution—are striking.[2] In all three countries, conflicts have escalated over the past twenty-five years, especially since the mid-1990s. The escalation has been partly due to various forms of political transition and the cumulative effect of many years of cultivated grievances.

Since the 1970s there have been over seventy major eruptions in Nigeria, mostly in urban centres in the North.[3] In Indonesia, the conflicts have been more localized and have not been on the same scale or had the same significance as in Nigeria. The immediate cause of the conflicts in both countries varies from place to place. Nonetheless, the remote causes are

[1] The article is mainly based on reflections primarily made by the author of this essay in the book, *Bridges instead of Walls*: Rasmussen 2007. A study team from Denmark, Indonesia and Nigeria, each consisting of Christians and Muslims, travelled together for 10-16 days in each country over a period of two years (2003-5) in order to study situations of conflict and peace building and to analyze the role of religion.

[2] The three countries have been selected for a number of reasons. The countries in three different continents reflect certain numerical symmetries: Indonesia has an overwhelming majority of Muslims whereas the Christians constitute a maximum of 10%. Denmark constitutes the opposite situation, namely 83% members of the Lutheran church and only 3, 8% Muslims. Nigeria has approximately an equal number of Christians and Muslims. However, in Northern Nigeria, Muslims constitute the majority in most areas.

[3] On the conflicts, see for instance Fwatshak 2006, 259-280.

in many cases similar as is their course. Often minor incidents, fuelled by rumors, sparked off the riots. Several stages of escalation followed during which each side claimed that the atrocities were committed in retaliation or as self-defense.

In Denmark there have been no actual major outbreaks of physical two-way violence. Like in most other European societies, one-way violence and threats have taken the form of racially motivated harassment, threats via SMS or emails, violence against taxi drivers, vandalism against shops and desecration of Muslim graveyards. The conflicts took the shape of verbal abuse and aggression, sweeping generalizations, hate speeches, extremism, etc.

It has to be remembered, however, that relations between Christians and Muslims in the three countries have not only been problematic and negative, but that good relationships have been maintained and are still a part of daily reality. The study takes its starting point in three conflict stories:

The Danish cartoon row

On 30 September, 2005 Denmark's largest newspaper, *Jyllands-Posten,* published twelve caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad. One showed the Prophet wearing a turban in the shape of a bomb with a burning fuse, another depicted him wielding a cutlass and a third had him saying that paradise was running short of virgins for suicide bombers.The images, considered blasphemous under Islam, drew intense criticism from across the Muslim minority in Denmark and the Muslim world at large.[4] Also in Nigeria and Indonesia there were strong critique of the drawings, and in the North of Nigeria it came to violent riots and actual killings. The reprint of the cartoons in 2008 again caused reactions in the two countries.

The cycle of violence in Plateau State, Nigeria

The 7 September, 2001 riots in Jos, Nigeria, the capital of Plateau State,[5] were triggered when a young Christian woman crossed a roadblock in

[4] On the cartoon affair see Rasmussen 2007, 27-46 and Seidenfaden & Larsen 2006.

[5] The city of Jos was founded in 1915 and has today about 800.000 (greater Jos) predominately Christian inhabitants. It is located in what can be referred to as the "Middle Belt" of Northern Nigeria.

front of a mosque in downtown Jos.[6] However, the real causes were much deeper, largely related to ownership of land and access to public office of the socalled indigenous people, the predominantly Christian Birom, Anaguta and Afizere, and their relationship with Muslim Hausa-Fulani who are still seen as settlers.

By early 2002, the previously contained violent conflict spread from Jos city across the state, resulting in loss of life and material resources on a scale never before experienced in Plateau State. Fighting became very intense, especially in Yelwa-Shendam in 2002 and 2004,[7] and on 18 May, 2004 President Olusegun Obasanjo declared a state of emergency in Plateau State which was lifted after six months. The conflict had become not only a threat to the state's social fabric but also had implications for the entire nation.

Intercommunal fighting in Sulawesi, Indonesia

Between December 1998 and 2001 Muslims and Christians in Poso, a town in Central Sulawesi,[8] were pitted against each other in one of the most violent and persistent conflicts the nation has ever witnessed. The violence started on the eve of Christmas and Ramadan with a street brawl involving two young men, a Protestant and a Muslim.[9] The arrival in 2001 of the radical Muslim group Laskar Jihad in the area escalated the violence.[10]

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[6] On the Jos conflict see for instance Danfulani & Fwatshak 2002 and Bagudu 2004. The government in Jos initiated a six-month program comprising different committees, including one consisting of religious leaders, to restore peace in the area. Documents from these committees were the basis for a peace conference in August 2004 which included dialogue between religious, ethnic and community leaders. The report from this conference contains detailed and valuable insight into the 2001 crisis and its causes. "Plateau Resolves" 2004.

[7] Yelwa is a market town located 200 kilometers southeast of Jos. Yelwa is administered by the Shendam Local Government Area headquartered in the town of Shendam, twenty kilometers away. Shendam is a predominantly Christian town, and residents in the surrounding villages are also predominantly Christian. Hundreds of Christians and Muslims lost there lives, thousands were displaced, and large amounts of property was destroyed.

[8] Poso is located about 220 km south of Central Sulawesi's provincial capital, Palu. The town's approximately 420,000 residents are divided more or less equally between Christians and Muslims.

[9] The International Crisis Group has published a great number of reports on the conflicts in Sulawesi and Maluku Islands. These can be found at http://www.crisisgroup.org

[10] See "Context, Causes, and Laskar Jihâd," in *Human Rights Watch*, *III*, part 1 at http://www.hrw.org/reports/2002/indonesia/indonesia1102-03.htm.P119_15133.

What initially was a private conflict transformed into communal violence involving hundreds of Muslims and Christians and resulting in death and the destruction of homes, villages, schools and houses of worship on both sides. The conflict in Poso calmed down after four years but recently started to erupt again. All in all, the fighting has cost more than 7,000 lives and displaced a total of 1.3 million people.[11]

Certain parallels were noticeable in these three stories; namely that it was not religion as such but economic inequalities, political ambition, feelings of neglect and exclusion, as well as ethnic, cultural or social envy that fuelled the conflicts. These became framed in religious terms and religion was used as a tool in the struggle. In this way, especially in Nigeria and Indonesia, religion came to widen the conflicts. Nonetheless, to think of religion as the root cause would be to oversimplify the many ways in which religion works and has worked in practice.

The socio-economic dimension of Us vs Them

In all three stories of conflict, the dichotomy between indigenes and settlers, hosts and foreigners, has played a crucial role. Whereas in Nigeria and Indonesia this relates primarily to the prevalent socioeconomic conditions, in Denmark it reflects questions of identity and recognition at the psychological and symbolic levels. The perceptions of the difference between Us and Them constitute the problem rather than the diversity itself. In all three conflicts, discussions have focused on the questions of who belongs, who fits the description of a "true" citizen and how allegiance is expressed. Moreover, both in Nigeria and Denmark, the dichotomy and the associated images of enemy have been used by political leaders for populist purposes.

In Jos area, the economy has been largely dominated by commercial trading activities which are mainly in the hands of "newcomers" such as the Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa-Fulani. The "indigenous" groups were afraid of being excluded from ancestral land, offices and economic resources. Most of the indigene-settler disputes, therefore, revolved around economic issues such as access to farmland, fishing ponds, markets and the opportunity to engage in economic activities. The indigenes insisted that the Hausa-Fulani had no claim to land in their community, while the Hausa-Fulani argued that since

[11] "What Happened in Poso?," in the *Jakarta Post*, 14 October (2003).

they were born in this community and had lived there all their lives they had equal rights.

Also various conflicts in Sulawesi, the Maluku Islands and other parts of Indonesia, for instance Central Java and Sumatra, grew out of economic issues such as unemployment, poverty and economic inequality. Social and economic frustration and jealousy on the part of those who are economically disadvantaged have resulted in making a scapegoat of others and a lack of confidence in what the future might hold. This has created mutual suspicion and communal discord, sometimes falling in line with ethnic and/or religious divides.

Disputed land ownership has often been at the heart of conflict. When no efficient action was taken to resolve these disputes they escalated into violent conflicts and sometimes the parties involved ended up identifying themselves and their opponents as Muslims and Christians.

Economic conditions have not been a decisive factor in the development of tensions in Denmark. There are, however, some economic inequalities between ethnic minorities and the majority population caused by a difference in job opportunities.[12] Research has shown that people from ethnic minorities experience direct or indirect forms of discriminatory treatment on the labor market.

There is no doubt, however, that economic jealousy on the side of ethnic Danes plays an important role in the development of xenophobic sentiments. For instance, a considerable number of ethnic Danes believe that the majority of those who are granted asylum are not real refugees but have come to exploit the Danish public welfare system.[13]

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[12] According to 2003 statistics, the employment rate among citizens of non-Western origin is 47 percent, whereas the corresponding figure for long-term Danes is 77 percent. The Danish Ministry of Refugees, Immigration and Integration, *Årbog om Udlændinge i Danmark* [Foreigners in Denmark Yearbook] 2004.

[13] This transpired when thousands of Danish citizens, predominantly of Lebanese-Palestinian background, were evacuated from Lebanon in July 2006 during the Israeli attack on the country. The Danish People's Party suggested that the social authorities took advantage of the opportunity to check these people–many of them having undergone traumatic experiences–whether they had been cheating the social service system by having traveled to Lebanon without having informed the social authorities. The party claimed that a great number of Danes had contacted them wondering how so many people were able to go on vacation to Lebanon, since many of them are unemployed.

Indigenous-ness and settler-ship in Nigeria

The indigenous-settler dichotomy is at the root of most intercommunal conflicts and political quarrels in Nigeria, particularly in the North. It has diluted the real meaning of Nigerian citizenship. One is not really seen as a citizen in Nigeria but only as a citizen of the place to which one is indigenous. And there is no real way for the non-indigenous to become indigenous, regardless of how hard or how long they have struggled to integrate and identify with the community they live in.

The clashes between indigenous and settlers developed especially violently in Plateau State, where historically the segregation between indigenes and settlers has been upheld, especially during the colonial system of indirect rule where "natives" and "immigrants" (in mining camps) were not treated as one entity. Hausa settlements were dealt with separately and maintained separate identities with a different religion and culture.[14] They have been denied opportunities for educational advancement and civil service jobs. This is why the appointment of a Hausa politician to a statewide post in a federal poverty eradication program sparked such clashes as was the case in 2001.

Today Plateau State government and other state governments all over Nigeria issue "certificates of indigenousness" which serve as documentary proof that the bearer is a "native" of the area concerned. Those who are not granted a certificate are treated as non-indigenous in their formal interaction with all levels of government. They experience discrimination in terms of higher school fees, lack of access to positions in the federal civil service, military or police force, less employment opportunities and limited access to resources such as land. As a result of these ever more stringent discriminatory policies, levels of poverty and unemployment have increased.

Locals and Settlers in Indonesia

In Indonesia the Us vs Them rhetoric between different groups has not been as explicit at a national level. There is a stronger awareness of being a nation than in Nigeria and there are not the same kinds of cultural and religious blocks. While Indonesian culture has been able to absorb various imported

[14] The settler economy among the Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa-Fulani was dominated largely by commercial/tracking activities whereas indigenes were preoccupied with farming on outskirts of the city in Birom, Afizere, Basa and Anaguta.

cultures, there is nonetheless an imbalance of resources and an indigene-settler dichotomy has developed in certain areas such as Sumatra, Sulawesi and Central Java.[15] Tensions between locals and settlers has sometimes even led to fighting, because the locals envy the economically more successful migrants who often have fared better than the local farmers and were better informed about new types of crops and methods of cultivation.

The main reason for the indigene-settler conflicts in Indonesia has been a transformation in the demographic composition in certain provinces due to the government's huge transmigration program. Between 1969 and 1995 eight million people were resettled, for which the World Bank paid over half a billion dollars. In these areas, the local communities were often predominantly Christian. During the 1990s this was the case in Ambon, Sampit, Poso and Mamasa, where with the arrival of immigrants the composition changed and the confessional balance was tipped in favor of the Muslims. This shift was accompanied by a rise in the political and economic fortunes of individual Muslims. Power and bureaucratic weight shifted from Christians to Muslims, as did money and opportunity.[16]

In some of these situations, the decentralization process added to the tensions, or created new ones, between indigenes and migrants. This happened partly because of a new influx of migrants and partly because of new opportunities for some communities to gain access to political power provided under the program. Furthermore, extremist groups connected to Saudi Arabia who came from outside and had no interest in local areas contributed to the maintenance of this dichotomy between Us vs Them.

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[15] Tensions have developed between local Javanese and the Chinese élite. The Chinese middle-class entrepreneurs have been made scapegoats for the economic and political troubles in the area. They are mostly Christians in this area, more advantaged and members of relatively affluent churches. It must be added that there has always been a power struggle between Java and the outer islands. Over all, there is a feeling that Java dominates and receives most of the resources.

[16] "Indonesia: Overcoming Murder and Chaos in Maluku," in *Asia Report*, no. 10 (2000). The 2001 conflicts between the local Dayak community (mainly Christians) and the newcomers, the Madurese (mainly Muslims) in Sampit in Central Kalimantan (Borneo) are an example of this development. After a massacre of about 500 Madurese, almost the entire Madurese community fled. The main reason for this was the dislocation of the Dayak community. Due to immigration from other provinces many Dayaks were forced to leave land that they had previously used. Consequently they felt marginalized in the province, looked down upon by other communities as backward and uncivilized. See "Communal Violence in Indonesia: Lessons from Kalimantan," in *Asia Report,* no. 18, 27 June (2001), 4ff.

Us vs Them in Denmark

In Denmark, a rhetoric of a protective and positively defined "We" versus a threatening and negatively defined "Them" has become more and more common among ethnic minorities as well as long-term Danes. This became manifest during the cartoon affair. Since 2001, leading politicians have emphasized that Danes have to lead a culture war against those who still "adhere to medieval values". They argue as follows: "We" (Danes) have to defend our values, our freedom of speech and our civilization's achievements against "Them", (Muslims) who do not understand us. We have to stand firm in this struggle and not surrender.

In 2001, members of parliament such as the former Minister of Integration (currently Minister of Education and Ecclesiastic Affairs), Bertel Haarder (Liberal Party), and Søren Krarup (Danish People's Party, have gone as far as to say that Denmark must be defended against those who come from outside. They draw a parallel between the Danish resistance movement against the German soldiers during World War II and today's fight against Muslims.[17]

In Denmark, public and parliamentary debate repeatedly revolves around such issues as forced marriage, parallel societies, repression of women, punishment laws and "failed integration". In these discussions, the Us vs Them rhetoric has been dominating and the the "guests" often are pressurized to tone down their visible cultural and religious differences and to become like their "hosts." According to many Danes, integration is incompatible with Islamic values. Therefore the minorities have to choose sides, to be Muslim with or without Islam.

Enemy Images and Mutual Fear

In all three countries the Us vs Them syndrome has been associated with mutual images of enemy and fear. Even in the majority populations, such as in the predominantly Christian Denmark, Muslim Indonesia and Muslim Northern Nigeria, a substantial percentage of the majority feel discriminated against by those they see as a threatening enemy.

[17] *Jyllands-Posten,* 27 May (2001).

Thus in certain areas of Indonesia, Christians have increasingly been associated with the imperialist West in recent year, and a fear of "creeping Christianization" has developed among many Muslims. In Poso and Maluku, members of *jihadist* organizations such as *Jemaah Islamiyah* (JI), descendants of *Darul Islam* and *Mujahidin Kompak* regard Christians as infidels and "enemies of Islam" who pose a threat to the local Muslim community.

Some church members regard the willingness of provincial heads and governors to implement parts of Sharî'a as attempts to strengthen their political standing. In their eyes, this could divide the nation and lead to a loss of its local cultural roots and traditions due to Islamic-Arab cultural imperialism.[18]

Some Christians in Nigeria share this fear of Muslim dominance while some Muslims see Christianity as part and parcel of Western imperialism and aggression. They fear being excluded from national power and control and therefore many in the North have seen Sharî'a as a solution guaranteeing that this will not happen. In general, ethnic self-assertion has become a threat to national coherence and created mistrust and fear among people. When one party gains more influence, the other worries about losing control. In some areas of Nigeria it has resulted in confrontation over access to local power and economic resources, whereas in Denmark the consequences have often been polarization, verbal abuse, negative self-image and despair.

In Denmark, some political leaders and other opinion makers have expressed the fear that Muslims will grow in numbers and take over the country, introducing an Islamic state. This rings true for many Danes who look at the future with great anxiety. Yet on the side of the minorities, images have developed of the West as an enemy and Danish society as decadent and some feel that all Danes are against them.

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[18] Rev. Andreas Yewangoe in "Sharî'a Complaints," interviewed by Patung, 26 October (2006), at http://www.indonesiamatters.com/772/Sharî'a-complaints/ In Manokwari, a Christian-majority district in West Irian Jaya and the West Papuan capital, politicians have been working toward the introduction of a kind of "Christian Sharî'a," an ordinance based on the Bible. This has been interpreted by some Indonesians as an attempt to counteract the introduction of Muslim Sharî'a based bylaws in for instance Aceh and West Sumatra ("Right on cue, Bible-based ordinances appear", *Jakarta Post* 2 June (2007). The act, however, must be seen in relation to West-Papua's struggle to strengthen its autonomy vis-à-vis Jakarta. Jakarta's massive exploitation of their precious natural resources gives them a sense of being colonized.

The consequence has been that many immigrants or descendants of immigrants have found it difficult to be recognized as Danes and feel that they "belong". This was highlighted by the cartoon incident.

A Vicious Cycle of Us vs Them

The Us vs Them syndrome in Denmark must be seen against the background of a vicious cycle that has developed and consolidated itself over the last decade between the media, political leaders, majority population and the Muslim minorities.The fact that almost on a daily basis the media portray one-sided, negative stories about immigrants in general and Muslims in particular (reproduced by the public opinion and politicians), affects the Muslim minorities who feel unwanted, insecure and unconfident. This has for many Muslims resulted in an ingrained mistrust of the media and political processes and taken away the energy to reflect critically and contextually on Islam.

Subsequently these reactions are exploited by populist politicians and other opinion makers through harsh rhetoric and restrictive laws. All of this contributes to an atmosphere of fear and mistrust among the majority population who are then attracted to negative stories in the media in order to have their prejudices confirmed. The cycle is complete and starts all over again.

The situation is rather more complex in Nigeria and Indonesia. In Nigeria, the national and local levels are very much interconnected. Although media and society effect each other, the media have not had an impact on Christian-Muslim relations worth mentioning. The dichotomy between Us vs Them has been exacerbated locally as well as nationally, leading to the demand for Sharî'a to be introduced in order to improve the economic situation. Moreover, in order to garner votes, ambitious politicians have promised to introduce and implement parts of Sharî'a if they are elected.

In Indonesia, a cyclical pattern has manifested itself locally in situations of social inequality and economic instability. Local conflicts had economic and political roots, but the parties identified themselves and their opponents as Muslims and Christians. The question is whether this cyclical pattern is moving toward the national level and would mean that the main threat to

peaceful coexistence and unity are not scattered violent conflicts, but political vacuum and economic crisis.

Furthermore, the conflicts in all three countries, especially in Denmark, were stimulated by the Us vs Them frustrations on a global level with an asymmetry and lack of democracy in coexisting at a global level. The anger of Christians and Muslims was fueled by incidents and fears at a global level, made possible by the internet, radio and television. Ironically, along with the increasing movement and mixing of people, globalization has contributed to an ideology of fear based on the unequal distribution of wealth and power. This has exacerbated the Us vs Them syndrome.[19]

The Us vs Them Frustration and Citizenship

The main issue in Nigeria today is the question of national unity, how to hold Nigeria together as one nation and create loyalty among people to a country marked by cultural, religious and geographical heterogeneity. There is a strong ethno-regionalism with ethnic identity, to the exclusion of others, playing a prominent role in politics while fear of domination by one ethnic/regional/religious group over the other is pervasive. Therefore, constructing a pan-Nigerian identity based on equality of all citizens and common political practice is vital.[20] This must be combined with a more inclusive and participatory form of governance in order to create unity and a sense of belonging among heterogeneous groups in the state.

In Indonesia, the ideology of *Pancasila* has been one of the educating factors contributing to cooperation, unity and dialogue and has in this way promoted a sense of shared citizenship among the population. Added to this is what the study group member Dr M. Abdullah Amin has called a common "cultural capital," a strong integrative force binding people together as Indonesians by helping them to relate to one another and creating basic standards for conduct.[21] "Cultural capital" is here understood as a cultural

[19] On the Us vs Them syndrome at the global level, see Sen 2006 and Benhabib 2002.

[20] The question of national unity has become even more urgent after the election of a Muslim president, Umaru Musa Yar'Ardua, on 24 April, 2007. Before the election many Nigerians claimed that religion and ethnicity of the future president should not matter as long as he is competent, i.e., honest and showing the aptitude to rule. Moreover, people should vote first of all as Nigerian citizens and for democracy for the whole people.

[21] Amin Abdullah is President of the Islamic State University Sunan Kalijaga (UIN, Yogyakarta). During our visits to Denmark and Indonesia he repeatedly came back to this concept

surplus of shared values and ideas. It is seen as cultural frameworks and ways of constructively dealing with very heterogeneous and sometime tense situations nationally as well as locally.[22]

Cultural capital, the sense of shared citizenship, of belonging and being loyal to the nation, however, has been challenged by regional problems and struggles for political autonomy. Furthermore, a certain Islamic radicalism connected to power relationships outside the country and the socioeconomic inequality among people make emphasis on inclusive citizenship crucial.[23] The debates on citizenship in Indonesia, therefore, have less frequently focused on whether citizen rights should be differentiated by ethnicity (like in Nigeria) but instead whether they should be differentiated by religion.[24]

Although there is formally democracy in Denmark and ethnic minorities have in many ways equal juridical rights with the rest of the population exclusive of citizenship, lack of social recognition and solidarity with minorities are among the main problems. For instance, political leaders are still not regarding and addressing all citizens as equal actors in society--as citizens first of all. As a result, certain symptoms (like the cartoon affair) show us that minorities do not possess the civic awareness of being and having value as human beings. In many ways Denmark is marked by a national self-sufficiency which does not recognize the value of diversity and multiple citizenship or the necessity of international accountability and ethical conduct.

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of cultural capital as a foundation of coexistence in Indonesia. This was in many ways confirmed during our stay in the country.

[22] The term "cultural capital" was first articulated by the French sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu, as one of three types of capital: economic, social and cultural capital. Capital acts, according to Bourdieu, as a "social relation within a system of exchange." It comprises three subtypes: embodied, objectified and institutionalized cultural capital. In the context of our studies in Indonesia, cultural capital is used in the sense of embodied cultural capital – knowledge and attitudes, a way of thinking, speaking, relating that which is inherited and acquired by the individual Indonesian. Pierre Bourdieu and Jean Claude Passeron, "Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction," in Richard K.Brown (ed.), *Knowledge, Education and Cultural Change*. London: Tavistock, 1973; Pierre Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," in J. G. Richardson, *Handbook for Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*. New York: Greenwood, 1986, 241-258; Pierre Bourdieu*, The State Nobility. Elite Schools in the Field of Power*. Chicago: Stanford University Press, 1996. Reference can also be made to Robert W. Hefner's use of the term "cultural quality" and "social capital." Hefner 2001, 10.

[23] On citizenship in Indonesia, see Hefner 2001.

[24] Hefner 2001:34.

Overcoming the Gap between Us and Them Nationally and Internationally

Traditionally there have been at least four main categories of Christian-Muslim relation building:

Discursive dialogue:[25] exponents of different faith communities meet to discuss the theological, philosophical and ethical bases of their faith traditions or faith issues. The purpose is to learn about each other's religious tradition and faith by listening to one another's views on a certain topic. This may help to break down preconceived ideas and misconceptions about the other, to understand and appreciate the background and context of the other religious tradition, and to establish mutual trust.

Discursive-cooperative dialogue: representatives of different groups come together to discuss subjects relevant to the communities concerned and common challenges in society – with the purpose of defining areas of coopetation. These may be religious leaders and academics.

Experience-oriented discursive dialogue: partners expose themselves to one another's spiritual and worship life. They may participate in prayer or meditation of the other, or find a form in which both partiess can participate. This is based on the belief that it is a continual endeavor to bring out the best potential in every person or society. This model is rather controversial in circles that are concerned about not compromising their own faith by entering into common spiritual activities.

Diapraxis (or dialogue in practice): [26] cooperation between people of different faiths. From working together in relation to common challenges discursive dialogue may follow as a reflection on common practice.

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[25] Discursive dialogue means the argumentative and reasoning interlocution about faith issues.

[26] In 1988, I began to use the concept diapraxis (interreligious cooperation) as a tool not only as a topic in Christian-Muslim dialogue. See my article, "From Diapraxis to Dialogue: Christian-Muslim Relations," in Lars Thunberg *et al.* (eds), *Dialogue in Action*. New Delhi: Prajna Publications, 1988, 277-93 and my doctoral thesis, Rasmussen 1997.

Diapraxis for the Common Good

A paradigm shift in relation to dialogue activities has been taking place over the past few years. There has been an increasing awareness that it is time to move beyond purely discursive dialogue towards more cooperative and practical involvement on the basis of our common faith and ethics. Inter-religious dialogue and cooperation must be more proactive and not merely reactive. Although dialogue often follows tensions or clashes where mistrust and hostility have been created, the long-term proactive work of creating possibilities for lasting cooperation is also needed.

Furthermore, there is a growing conviction that we should not limit our cooperation to other religious people and groups, but also, as in Nigeria and Indonesia, to work with with secular NGOS – human rights movements, trades unions, etc.

The challenge of working together toward a more authentic and just international and national social order has increased and become more urgent. Unequal economic and political power relations and the exclusion and oppression of certain groups have resulted in reactions such as terrorist attacks. In addition, climate change, due most likely to human activity, contributes to natural disasters.

A recent example of this shift on an international level has been an open letter from 138 Muslim scholars and leaders (13 October 2007) to the Pope and other church leaders around the world.[27] The letter invites Christian leaders to dialogue and for concrete cooperation towards peace in the world. The authors warned that "our future is at stake, indeed the survival of the world is at stake, if Christian and Muslims cannot come together to find a way to live in peace with each other." The letter was met by positive responses from many churches.

Furthermore, a number of international conferences have taken place with focus on cooperation between Chrsitians and Muslims, arranged by Christian and/or Muslim international organisations.[28] The main challenges that have

[27]The document can be downloaded at the website: www.acommonword.com. Here further information about the letter and reactions to it by Christian leaders can be found.

[28] Recently, in July 2008, a World Conference on Dialogue took place in Madrid, organized by the Muslim World League under the patronage of King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia. There were 300 participants in the conference representing all major religions in the world.

been dealt with in these and other dialogue-initiatives have been climate change, the prevention of violence and the promotion of justice and peace, work for equal rights and recognition, improvement of socioeconomic conditions and the role of mass media.

Inclusive citizenship – a main challenge

In most countries, the harassment of one or more minorities seems to be an inevitable reality. Many human beings feel uneasy with, and perhaps are even intolerant of, people who are not like themselves in terms of appearance, values, behavior, religion, etc. Victimization and scapegoatism are human phenomena. The question, therefore, is not whether these kinds of mechanisms, tensions or conflicts between various groups exist, but rather how these problems are to be handled. If they are not dealt with in a constructive way, it may turn into a growing gap, a polarization that may lead to mistrust and even hate between Us and Them, as we have seen in the conflicts mentioned.

Lack of citizenship rights has been one of the root causes of the conflicts in all three countries mentioned.[29] The three stories show how important it is to include especially young people in the communities and to take their needs, wishes and contributions seriously – and to focus on what can constitute the foundation of the community.

Thus, citizenship as an inclusive discourse is a key ingredient for eliminating or limiting the categories of "indigene vs settler" and "Us vs Them," and counteracting socioeconomic conflicts and power struggles. To work for an inclusive and pluralist citizenship[30] and equal recognition is there-

[29] On the concept of citizenship see Korsgaard, Sigurdsson and Skovmand 2007, especially 123-160. A number of social scientists have dealt with the concept, for instance the French sociologist Dominique Schnapper, *Community of Citizens, On the Modern Idea of Nationality*. N.Y.: TransActions Publishers 1998; Stephen Castles and Alastair Davidson, Citizenship *and Migration: Globalization and the Politics of Belonging*. London: Macmillan, 2000.

[30] Inclusive citizenship refers to the extent to which people can claim rights and whether these rights are equal for all people regardless of their background, including rights to equal participation in society. Exclusive citizenship refers to the extent to which some citizens are denied rights and benefits, possibilities for contributing to the development of society, and sense of belonging. On exclusive citizenship, see Faulks 2000, 3.

fore a major challenge for Christian-Muslim cooperation nationally and internationally.

To have a sense of belonging, dignity and value as a citizen is important for everyone. Recognition is a condition for every human being to develop a socially well functioning identity. Everyone must be subject to equal conditions in order to become an active participant in society and to be aware of being a moral person. Absence of recognition can lead to a loss of personality. [31] Therefore, when Muslim citizens in Denmark are seen as foreign or as problems in society, or are met with social exclusiveness because of their religion, they may look for alternative cultures or means of recognition and acceptance. In order to regain self-confidence they must be brought out of this pattern and integrated into the social community on an equal footing with the rest of society.

This requires a new inclusive rhetoric in the public debate and among political leaders. Political authorities and the media should begin to treat all individuals in terms of citizenship and not on the basis of their religious or cultural identities.

We are challenged to educate each other to be citizens so that we can make room for each other and each other's freedom and rights in our common political and social communities. One of the methods is "civic education" or "citizenship training" to strengthen the universal values of the individual and in conjunction with others to take the future into our own hands. Citizenship training should strengthen active citizenship in organizations, institutions and businesses.

Inclusive Citizenship and Globalization

The Us vs Them syndrome on the national, regional and international level is today intimately interrelated. As we saw during the cartoon crisis and also from Muslim reactions to the controversial speech given by the Pope on 15 September, 2006,[32] remote events become local problems and are used as

[31] *Cf.* Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition–the Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996. See also Amy Gutmann (ed.), *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*. Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994.

[32] Pope Benedict XVI's Regensburg lecture on "Faith, Reason and the University. Memories and Reflection" in which the Pope quoted a 14th Century Christian emperor who said

an excuse to protest against those who have caused these problems. There is no doubt that the disproportion in control, influence and human welfare on all levels is the root cause of many of the problems we are facing in the world today, including the problem of terrorism. Therefore a new and more inclusive concept of citizenship is needed on all levels.

Globalization and citizenship are closely related. Therefore global ethics of care and a consensus on human rights is needed that can be accepted across cultures and religions.[33] That means, for example, an Islamic language of human rights that is consonant with the universal discourse. Questions such as what it means to be a human being and how religion can promote human rights and strengthen the position of ethics should be addressed and discussed within Muslim circles. Thus the validity of human rights is not at issue as such, but rather how to base them on an international morality compatible with the norms and values of non-Western civilizations.

In the last few decades Muslims have increasingly discussed the compatibility of Islam with universal concepts such as democracy, human rights and citizenship. The discussions have not only been related to Muslims living as minorities in non-Muslim surroundings but have also taken place in countries of Muslim majority. For instance in Egypt, many Islamists argue that not only are citizenship and Islam compatible but citizenship they are also part of the Islamic discourse, an expression of the very essence of Islam.[34]

These Muslims would agree with most Christians that exercising one's citizenship should not be dictated by religion but could be inspired by religious convictions. However, if religion were to be discredited or disqualified, pushed out of society and also out of ethical debates, political life would be impoverished.

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the Prophet Muhammad had brought the world only "evil and inhuman" things.

[33] On global moral, see Sen 2006.

[34] Scott 2007, 5. See also March 2005. A number of modern Muslim thinkers such as Abdolkarim Soroush (Iran), Ahmad Mousalli (Lebanon); Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im (Sudan-USA), Tariq Ramadan (Europe) have made attempts to articulate the concept of citizenship, most of them on the basis of Islamic principles. For them citizenship means equal political and social participation in a pluralist democracy. They emphasize the contextuality of citizenship which they see as a process. Tariq Ramadan even speaks about Sharî'a as an "ethics of citizenship". Ramadan 2004, 165-71.

It is important that we deal with these fundamental questions about inclusion and exclusion, especially if we are to get to the roots of terrorism. The election campaign in the United States has been an illustration of the difference between an inclusive and exclusive rhetoric. Hillary Clinton and John McCain were speaking in a classical Us vs Them rhetoric about "fighting the enemy till the end", "USA against the world", etc. They focused on their own principal character – *her* historical candidature and *his* long experience: "I will be ready from day one", "Clinton for President", were some of Hillary Clinton's slogans.

Barack Obama, on the contrary, was speaking much more in line with communication in the modern networked society of the 21st Century. The virtue for him was to connect rather than divide people. He rarely spoke about himself as candidate, about an "I" but about the "movement", a "WE": "*We* are the change *we* see", the "Change *we* can believe in". In this way he involved the listeners in his movement.

It is promising for the future that we now not only have a president in the United States who is thinking and speaking more in terms of the whole, of connection and community across boundaries, but that this way of thinking seems to appeal worldwide. One can hope that this will have a positive effect on international relations and on our struggles in interfaith work to find wise ways of achieving more democratic types of national and global citizenship.

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Martyrdom and Identity: Reflections on a Coptic Martyrdom under Muslim Rule

Samuel Rubenson

Martyrdom is an important but also problematic concept in both Christianity and Islam. The Greek word *marturein* means to witness, and a *martys* is a witness, primarily at a trial. The Arabic equivalent is *shahada,* to witness, and a *shahîd* is a witness. The testimony or confession uttered is in Arabic *shahâda,* which is also the term for the confession of faith, the statement that there is no god except Allâh and that Muhammad is his prophet, the *Lâ ilâ ill-allâh*…. Martyrdom is thus strongly connected with a truth claim and confession of identity in a trial situation. In early Christian martyrdoms the final declaration of the martyr is most often *Christianus sum,* "I am a Christian". A martyr identifies him or herself; confesses where he or she belongs. Martyrdom is thus generally understood as in essence divisive, it draws a line. A *martyrium*, a *shahâda* is seen as a declaration against another position, a statement against an accuser, a prosecutor, or itself part of an accusation, a prosecution.

In Western Christianity martyrdom is generally thought of as something belonging to the first centuries of the Christian era and related to the persecutions of Christians in the Roman Empire, and not readily connected with Christian-Muslim relations. In Eastern Christianity this is different and the so called neo-martyrs are mostly Christians killed on account of their faith by Muslim rulers. In Islam martyrdom is a historical, but also very much a contemporary, concept being used to designate Muslims who are killed while defending their rights or their lands against non-Muslims, primarily in Palestine, but increasingly all over the world.

In this contribution I will look at the concept of martyrdom on the basis of a very interesting medieval martyrdom in order to search for an understanding of the idea of *marturion/shahâda* that does not divide people but potentially unites people for a common cause. By this I want to honour Prof. David Kerr, who was my colleague during his last years, and offer a tribute to his

search for better Christian-Muslim relations and for a common understanding of the task of God's people.

The Coptic Martyrdom of John of Phanijôit

On Thursday, April 29, in the year 1210 the Coptic merchant John from the village Phanijôit, was executed on the order of Sultan al-Mâlik al-Kâmil, the same sultan who was a few years later visited by Francis of Assisi during the fourth crusade. We happen to know about John's fate thanks to a unique source, the Coptic martyrdom of John of Phanijoit, preserved in a single manuscript written within a year of the execution.[1]

The text is of great importance for several reasons. Firstly, it is clear that it was written by a contemporary, and probably an eye-witness, to the execution. Not only does the author state that he was present when John was beheaded, but the details of his description supports the claim. The text is clearly written by someone commissioned to produce a text for the commemoration of John when celebrating the anniversary of his martyrdom. Secondly, the text was written in Coptic, a language which not only the Copts in general had abandoned centuries earlier. The official Church no longer used Coptic for its records, but only for the liturgical tradition, and therefore by the early thirteenth century the language was generally treated as a dead language by Coptic scholars, who all wrote in Arabic.[2] Thirdly, the text gives us a unique insight into a reaction among Copts to the official policy of the Church and its leading members towards the increasing assimilation of Christians into Egyptian Muslim culture in the wake of the Crusades and the cultural regeneration of Egypt in the time of the Abbasids.

The strange fact that the text is only preserved in Coptic and that no Arabic version seems to have existed until modern times has given rise to some debate and a variety of explanations. The most common explanation is that the text was written in Coptic as a kind of secret language in order that it would not to be understood by the Muslim rulers.[3] From reports in the official account of the Coptic patriarchate, the so-called *History of the*

[1] MS Copticus 69, ff 40r-55v. For the codex see Hebbelynk and Lantschoot (1937), p. xix. The text is most recently edited with English translation and extensive commentary in Zaborowski (2005), p. 38–131.
[2] Rubenson (1996), p. 4–14 and more sharply MacCoull (1989), p. 35-45.
[3] Takla (1999), p. 206.

Patriarchs of Alexandria, we know that Muslim rulers used converts from Christianity when they needed to translate Coptic inscriptions.[4] But Coptic was not only unintelligible to the Muslim rulers but also to most Copts and no longer the language of the Church administration. The tacit critique of the leading ecclesiastical and political leaders of the Copts of the time suggests that the use of Coptic could be a protest against the Church's acceptance of Arabization. As we will see the story actually does contain elements critical of the leadership of the Church.

The Story

First let us listen to the story about why and how John ended up being executed on this Thursday at the end of April in 1210. John was a young deacon of the Church who moved to Cairo sometime around 1180 to establish himself as a merchant. According to the story he was fairly successful not only in his trade but also in integrating into the Muslim trading community, and, alas, falling in love with a beautiful Muslim girl. In order to be able to marry her he renounced his Christian faith by uttering the *shahâda*, the testimony that he had become a Muslim. As a Muslim merchant he was even more successful and raised a large family. One day, however, when he visited the region of his birth, an area where Christians were still a majority of the population, he began to long for the tradition and faith of his family background, feeling guilty for his apostasy and close relations with Muslims. He decided to renounce his Muslim confession and deny his previous testimony, something that according to Muslim law is strictly forbidden and even impossible, and this resulted in a death sentence. He was, according to our story, told that in Biblaw, a town in Upper Egypt, near ancient Hierapolis Magna, today Ashmunayn, there was a governor who is very favourable towards Christians and even protects those who secretly return to the Church after having confessed Islam. John travelled to Biblaw with his family. Through fasting, praying and repenting he returned to the Church and began a life of poverty as an unknown stranger. But he did not find peace in his soul. Not willing to die unknown and unrecognized, and feeling guilty for not standing up for his faith, he finally decided to travel back to Cairo, reveal himself and his apostasy from Islam and reclaim his possessions forcing the Sultan to either accept his return to Christianity or execute him.

[4] *The History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church*, vol. III, part II (1970), p. 199-201

Having arrived in Cairo he reveals his thoughts to a monk who strongly advises him to talk to the patriarch of the Church before revealing his identity and claiming the right to renounce his *shahâda,* the confession that once made him a Muslim. John is unwilling to do this, thinking that the patriarch will instil in him fear of the execution and thus convince him to abstain from his *martyrion,* his martyrdom. He decided instead to ask the private physician of the Sultan, a highly respected Christian named Abû Shâkir, a person known to us also from Muslim sources as a prominent Christian at the court.[5] The encounter with John created a serious dilemma for Abû Shâkir. On the hand he wanted to live up to his faith, support his fellow-Christian ridden by guilt, and instil courage and faithfulness in his wavering heart, on the other he wanted to avoid a confrontation with the Sultan which might result in worsened relations between Christians, like himself, and the Muslim rulers. Abû Shâkir told John that he should not feel guilty for his Muslim confession, his *shahâda,* and not regard it as a truth worthy of being renounced, but simply as a lie given to strangers not worthy of the truth. He should not waste his Christian resolve and willingness to repent by asking the Muslim ruler to accept that his *shahada* was a lie, but leave the city and in accordance with the words of Jesus move from town to town fleeing from those who do not listen to the message. But John wanted to be cleared officially from what he regarded as pollution and was not willing to leave Cairo. Instead he decided to send a secret message to the Sultan and praising his grace and magnanimity he asked to be pardoned and relieved officially from his Muslim confession. But no reply came and John was deeply distressed.

On the day of the great martyr St. George, April 23, John took part in the pilgrimage to the Church of St. George. Encouraged by the stories about the martyr saint, hearing about how he had been steadfast although tortured and killed, John decided to risk his life by asking the Sultan publicly for the right to renounce his *shahâda* and return to Christianity. Two days later, on the day of the martyr and apostle of Egypt, St. Mark, he went to confront the Sultan. Outside the citadel he met him and his military retinue, and was allowed to speak to the Sultan. Praising the great favour and justice of the ruler, he told how he once was a Christian but was deceived to confess Islam and now wanted to be granted the right to renounce his confession and be recognized as a Christian. The Sultan, who did not want a confrontation,

[5] Zaborowski (2005), p. 184-185 refering to the Muslim thirteenth century biographer Ibn Abî 'Usaybi'a.

decided to have him arrested and gave him three days to change his mind. The Christians of Cairo were greatly troubled by this news and the possible outcome and asked Abû Shâkir to intervene. The physician visited John in prison and being alone with him tried to persuade him to accept an offer to be released on the condition of promising to secretly leave for Syria. But John refused. As a last resort the Sultan, who did not want a public execution and the risk of religious violence, personally visited John and promised him to pay all his debts, give him full immunity and the right to be a Christian in secret, if he would drop his request to publicly renounce his Muslim confession. But John refused to discuss the matter.

After three days John was brought to the harbour where the Sultan was preparing the fleet for an attack on the Crusaders in Palestine. All attempts to avoid a clash were in vain and at noon, after John had turned to the East and publicly renounced Islam, he was beheaded in front of a huge crowd. The date was then given by a variety of chronological references. A postscript describes how Christians hid in great fear, but how some captive Romans, that is Crusaders, claimed John's body. They were ill treated by the Muslims, who instead hung his body on the walls of Cairo. After reporting that many saw light coming down from heaven the story tells how John himself appeared in the dreams of the Sultan forcing him to take down the corpse, which he did, only to order that it be thrown into the sea. The martyrdom finally ends with a short theological confession by the author.

The Fear of Assimilation

There is no reason to doubt that the story about John's martyrdom is based on a historical event. In the historical context there is nothing that makes it unlikely that a Christian merchant became a Muslim in order to marry and make profit and that he later felt guilty about this and decided to return to his Christian identity by renouncing his previous Muslim confession. Nor is it implausible that the authorities, both Christian and Muslim, wanted to avoid a conflict and preferred a solution where John either left the country or lived privately as a Christian, although officially remaining a Muslim. The martyrdom of John is not the only source that tell us about capital punishment of Christian converts to Islam who decided to renounce their Muslim confessions. The details of the story, including names of places and persons as well as the lack of miracles, except for the events after the martyrdom,

give a trustworthy impression. On the other hand it is evident that the author is not primarily interested in historical detail. What he writes down is not a report, but a sermon to be read on the anniversary of John's death.

But how are we to interpret the account? What is the perspective and understanding of religious identity, confession and apostasy that governs the story? For whom and against whom was it written? In the panegyric introducing the martyrdom the author refers to Christ who invites all who labour and are troubled, all who have gone astray and even those who committed grave crimes. John is then introduced to us in a series of Biblical images as the worker of the eleventh hour, the prodigal son, the lost sheep, but also as the good servant, the merchant seeking the pearl, etcetera,[6] and the listeners are called upon to sing praise to Christ and to his martyr. John is thus already at the outset identified as representing the ideal Christian who turns back, who seeks and finds.

His story thus begins with his apostasy, which is described as a result of his "mingling" with the "Ishmaelite people", who are described as morally inferior. John's conversion to Islam is not a matter of conviction or belief. It has nothing to do with intellectual commitment or truth. Neither is it a matter of external pressure or force. It is the enticement of a woman that makes him abandon his own people and join another people. It is, however, not their sexual relation that is highlighted as a sin. The woman is rather depicted as representing her people. His fornication is with the people. It is John's assimilation into the Muslim community that is his apostasy. His Muslim confession, his *shahâda*, is never mentioned, but presupposed since he marries the Muslim woman and raises a family with her. Using the language of the Psalms John's failure is to "mix with the nations".[7] What is at stake is John's purity and his "mixing" with Muslims is repeatedly described as a kind of pollution or contamination from which he has to be cleansed. John's refusal to accept the solutions suggested by Abû Shâkir and the Sultan, and implicitly also by the patriarch, makes it clear that the martyrdom is not only intended to commemorate John, but also to protest against any acceptance of assimilation of Christians into the medieval Muslim culture of Ayyubid Egypt.

[6] Matthew 20:6–9; Luke 15:11–20; Luke 15:4–7; Matthew 13:45–46.
[7] Psalms 105:35

This perspective fits the historical situation. Under the Fatimids the Christians in Egypt, the Copts, had lost much of their social and economic status as a separate and important body in Egyptian society. Coptic language had been replaced by Arabic among the Copts and many Christians, Copts as well as Armenians and others, had individually gained important positions as commercial agents and loyal servants of the Muslim rulers. The Crusades had increased cultural exchange and as a consequence the previous sharp cultural, religious and linguistic barriers broke down. The alliance of the Christian Crusaders with the Shi'ite Fatimid rulers of Egypt against the Sunnite Ayyubids had blurred the sharp dividing line between Christians and Muslims, and when Oriental Christians then sided with the Ayyubids against the Crusaders the risk of a complete assimilation of Christians into Muslim culture seemed imminent. Under Ayyubid rule Cairo had, moreover, become a strongly cosmopolitan city in which a wide variety of peoples and religious confessions mixed.[8] In the *History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria* we read about a Christian who became a Muslim, but returns to Christianity after he had lost his political position, but became a Muslim again when the situation changed, only to secretly return to Christianity at the time of his death.[9]

Although the process of increased exchange and interrelations gave new opportunities it also destroyed the barrier that, although discriminatory, protected the Christians. The report that there was a Muslim governor in the south who protected Christians who had confessed the *shahâda* but later retracted their Muslim confessions, is not at all implausible. He might well, as many others in the south, have originally belonged to a Christian family, but confessed Islam to be able to become governor. In this position he would be able to support his Christian family. There is no doubt that the late twelfth and early thirteenth century was a period when religious identities were becoming less stable and as a consequence a period in which there was a massive assimilation of Christians into Islam.

In this situation the description of how John became a Muslim in order to marry and bring up Muslim children, but then as an older man regretted his *shahâda* is highly symbolic. His martyrdom represents a strong protest against the process of assimilation. The fact that the text never speaks about Islam or Muslims, but always describes the non-Christians as Ishmaelites,

[8] For the historical background, see Zaborowski (2005), p. 155–169.
[9] *The History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church*, vol. III, part II (1970), p. 197–198.

Hagarenes, or Arabs indicates that the protest is as much an ethnic reaction to assimilation as a defence for religious beliefs. That the text was written in Coptic is perhaps not only the result of a wish to keep it secret, but rather part of the protest against Arabic, a last attempt to defy the already almost complete Arabization of the Coptic population. But in contrast to earlier Coptic texts, such as the ninth/tenth century martyrdom of Samuel of Qalamun or the writings of the late tenth century author Sawirus ibn al-Muqaffa', in which the authors complain that Copts use Arabic and give their children Arabic names, it is for the author of the martyrdom of John not only ethnicity and language that are threatened by assimilation, but also Christian identity itself.

For John it was not enough to separate from his Muslim connection and accept a life as a hidden Christian in Upper Egypt, protected by the governor. It was not enough that in his heart he returned to Christ and personally renounced his previous Muslim confession. When John returned to the Christian fold he was not satisfied with fasting, praying and repenting, leading to forgiveness and being accepted. In order to be purified and totally liberated from assimilation he needed an official act, a public testimony. What is at stake was his witness and trustworthiness. John was, as is shown in the debate with Abû Shâkir, unsatisfied with regarding his witness, his *shahâda*, as a lie that he could privately retract. What was needed was a new official and public testimony, a new witness, a *martyrion.*

The story of John's martyrdom is in my opinion not simply a sermon against the threat that Christianity is disappearing through assimilation, but a sermon propagating a certain reaction to assimilation, a reaction demanding a public recognition of ethnic purity and ethnic division. It is a defence for an understanding of the Church as an ethnic category. The Church is the true people of God and should be kept apart from other nations.

Martyrdom and Identity

The story about John of Phanijôit is thus governed by a specific understanding of religious identity and how such an identity is identified and upheld. For the author the "mixing" of nations results in contamination and loss of purity. The person who accepts assimilation becomes polluted and needs to be purified. In a society in which previous linguistic, social and political

boundaries are breaking down, the martyrdom advocates clear divisions. By using an established tradition about martyrdom as a marker of identity it argues against a policy in which cultural assimilation is accepted and faith is reduced to a private sphere. In doing so the Coptic Martyrdom of John combines Islamic teaching on the Muslim confession, the *shahâda,* and its function as an irretractable identity marker linked to the early Christian martyr traditions and their emphasis on the public proclamation of the identity of the martyr. Over against any acceptance of ambiguity and "mixing" the story argues for purity and sharp ethnic distinction.

In its presentation of martyrdom as an act of identification by separation from the other, the Coptic Martyrdom of John of Phanijôit fits the interpretation of the Christian and Jewish martyr accounts in the first centuries C.E. by Daniel Boyarin. It is precisely as acts of ethnic identification that Daniel Boyarin interprets within the emergence of the Jewish and Christian martyr tradition in Late Antiquity in his study *Dying for God*.[10] Against earlier interpretations of martyrdom by W.H.C. Frend and Glenn Bowersock, Boyarin argues that martyrdom must be understood as a new discourse that develops as a result of, as well as an instrument for, the gradual separation of Jewish and Christian identities in the second to fourth centuries C.E. To Boyarin martyrdom is neither an old Jewish category developed over against Greco-Roman cultural hegemony and taken up by Christians, as argued by Frend, nor a new Christian category developed out of Roman ideas of heroic death, as argued by Bowersock, but a common new Jewish-Christian category created to manifest the difference in identity between the Jew and the Christian in a situation in which Jewish and Christian identities were not yet easily distinguished.[11]

In his study, Boyarin identifies three characteristics of this new discourse: the public solemn testimony, the *martyrion,* identifying the martyr: the emphasis on this testimony as a religious mandate: and, the emphasis on death as a sacrificial act of love, the :dying for God".[12] The first is clearly manifested in the prominent position in the martyr stories of short testimonies of identity, either the *Shema Israel* of the Jew or the *Christianus sum* of the Christian, and the fact that it is these that identify the story as a *martyrion*, a testimony. That this testimony is a duty is, according to Boyarin, strongly promoted by

[10] Boyarin (1999).
[11] Boyarin, p. 93–95, 109.
[12] Boyarin, p. 95–96.

the use of an erotic language primarily from the Song of Songs, in which the martyr confesses his love and proves to be the beloved of God, echoing ideas of a special and exclusive relationship between God and his people and an understanding of involvement with other cults as an act of adultery. In Christian martyr stories this is also emphasized by contrasting sacrifices to the gods or the emperor with martyrdom as a sacrifice to the only true God. The belonging to God excludes the relation to any other power.[13]

A closer look at the Coptic Martyrdom of John of Phaijôit, however, reveals significant differences in how martyrdoms proclaim identity and this helps us to understand developments and nuances not discussed by Boyarin. In early martyr accounts the focus is, as noted by Boyarin in his references to the Song of Songs, primarily about belonging not separation. It is more about the One than about the 'Other'. In the martyrdom of John the main point is, however, not John's proclamation of his Christian identity, his Christian *martyrion*, but the eradication of his Muslim proclamation, his *shahâda.* The emphasis is not on what he is, but rather on what he is not. His problem is that he has already made a testimony, thus he is a renegade and he has betrayed his identity. The Biblical material is thus not the Song of Songs, but the parable of the prodigal son.[14] John's martyrdom is an act of atonement for his own apostasy, not an act of love. His martyrdom points to what he had done and how to eradicate it, not to what is waiting for him. Comparing the martyrdom of John with early Christian martyrdoms it is easy to see how the focus has shifted from a testimony by the martyr of God's acts and the heavenly reward waiting for him, to a testimony of the resolve of the martyr to manifest his Christian identity over against the other.

The Coptic Martyrdom of John of Phanijôit promotes an understanding of religious testimony or confession, *martyrion* and *shahâda*, as divisive and demarcations of separate and exclusive identities. Both the *lâ ilâ ill-allâh* and the *christianus sum* are proclamations that identify the person within specific ethnic, political, social, and legal entities. They are thus primarily addressed to the political leader, in this case the Sultan not to God. An alternative perspective is in the story presented by Abû Shâkir, albeit as a temptation to be dismissed. For Abû Shâkir, John's life and his calling as a Christian is more truly realized in a life of preaching and service than in

[13] Boyarin, p. 108–109.
[14] Luke 15:11–32, which is alluded to both in the pangeryical prologue (Zaborowski p. 42-43) and when John decides ro return to Cairo (Zaborowski p. 64–65).

a heroic death. That such a life in John's case has to be lived as a fugitive wanderer retreating from those who do not listen instead of challenging them is acknowledged as an opportunity rather than as an obstacle. In this Abû Shâkir is depicted as promoting the same transformation of martyrdom from a moment of violent death to a life of a daily surrender to hardship and service for the sake of God that we also find in early monastic literature, for example in the *Life of Antony.*[15]

Concluding Reflections

In a world of globalization, where the "mixing of nations" is an increasing phenomenon and all of us are in one way or other "assimilated" into cultures and traditions that not our own, we have to ask the question about how we understand martyrdom and our confessions of religious identities. Are we stuck in the perspective strongly advocated by the Coptic Martyrdom of John of Phanijôit, where martyrdom is the quintessential story about separation and division, of marking one's identity over against the identity of others? Or are there elements in the traditions of martyrdom and confession in early Christianity that open up for a positive view of assimilation which give directions for a life in shared, not divided communities?

It is certainly true that early Christian martyr stories are about the formation of a people and thus about differentiation. But, and here I disagree with Boyarin, I do not think it is primarily a question of keeping a strict boundary over against an ethnically defined other. The new people created are understood as an eschatological people composed of all peoples of the world. There is a universalism in the early martyr accounts completely lacking in the Coptic martyrdom of John. The testimony: "I am a Christian" represents an identification with Christ as the one who reconciles those who were divided, who draws all people together into unity with God. In this it is actually similar to the Muslim *shahâda* in that it confesses something about God and the call for people of all nations to accept his Word. What is confessed is not something that distinguishes one person from another, but rather the opposite. It is something that intends to manifest that there is actually only one God, the ruler of the universe and that this God has spoken to us.

[15] On Antony's daily martyrion see *Athanasius*, *Life of Antony,* p. 66 (chapter 47).

In spite of being a medieval account, the martyrdom of John actually represents a perspective that is very prominent today, both among Christians and Muslims, each fearing the processes of "mixing" and cultural assimilation. Copts in Egypt as well as Evangelical Christians in Europe advocate clear demarcations of the boundaries, readily identify Christianity with their ethnic and cultural identity, and identify Islam as the other. To many Christians and Muslims alike martyrs are those who publicly and politically denounce assimilation and manifest the rights of their specific tradition, be it to land, history, language, dress or something else. An unequivocal confession, a *martyrion* or a *shahâda* ,is moreover, regarded as an absolute truth claim understood as a total rejection of any alternative, and thus excluding of the other.

But is it really necessary to regard a confession of identity, a *martyrion* or a *shahâda*, as a negation of the other? Is it really true that the essence of the development of early martyr stories is about the formation of separate identities as suggested by Boyarin? Is the proclamation "I am a Christian" of a Christian martyr necessarily a statement about not being a Jew or a Muslim? Looking back at the first Christian martyr account, the story of Stephen in the book of Acts, not even mentioned by Boyarin, this is certainly not the case.[16] There is no question about Stephen being both a Jew and a Christian. In his long speech there is no denial of the identity of the other and the words for which he is sentenced are not about any rejection, only about a vision. Also in many later Christian martyr stories the testimony of being a Christian is directly related to visions about an open heavenly realm and the reception of the martyr by the heavenly hosts. The battle fought by the martyr is a battle of cosmological significance, a battle between the forces of death and the forces of life. Their testimonies are testimonies about the resurrection.[17] Although the martyrdoms do create identity the victory is not a victory over assimilation, but a victory over death.

The emphasis, also observed by Boyarin, on love in early martyr accounts, as well as the strong expressions in these for the conviction that it is actually at God's trial of the world that the martyr gives his testimony, seem to me to indicate that the main focus is not on any identification with a specific faith community, but on a rejection of fear and subjugation to the powers of this world. In the early martyr stories the martyrs are confessing the power

[16] Acts 6:8–7:59.

[17] For a detailed discussion about the understanding of the motives of battle and of resurrection in aealy Christian martyr accounts, see Rubenson (2001), p. 134–154.

of God and the heavenly reward for their sufferings in this world, not their own purity. They are confessing their faith in God and in the truth of what is revealed by the prophets. Is there any reason that such a confession must be understood as the negation of another confession of the same kind?

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Abrahamic Faiths – Transcending Borderlines?

Aasulv Lande

An educational programme called Abrahams Barn (Children of Abraham) started in 1991 in Rinkeby, Stockholm. During the course of a decade it had found a widespread and meaningful function in the elementary school-system in multicultural Sweden. Partly inspired by the Rinkeby experience in 2003 I initiated a graduate course on "Children of Abraham" within the field of mission studies, that was taught at the Centre for Theology and Religious Studies (CTR) at Lund University. The course was based upon interfaith studies, focusing on the history of interaction and contemporary dialogue between the three Abrahamic religions. An excursion to the Swedish Theological Institute in Jerusalem, subsidized by the Lund Mission Society, had a special significance for the study. The course was well received by the students. When I resigned from my university position in 2005, my successor professor David Kerr developed the course further. The following article is written with our particular "Abrahamic" connection in mind.

The Catholic Scholar Louis Massignon (1883-1962) is considered a significant person behind the rapprochement between the three monotheistic faiths in our generation. Converting to Christianity during his younger days, he retained openness to Islam which became a scholarly acumen during his academic carrier. His religious pilgrimage further led him to embrace Catholicism in Melkite Greek form. The Arab Catholic spirituality opened up new possibilities for him, allowing for a closer relationship to Arab Christians as well as Muslims.

He was one of the dialogue-theologians who promoted the aggiornamento of Vatican II, developing a spirituality of sacred hospitality and mystical substitution. The concept of "sacred hospitality" emerged from the Muslim commandment of hospitality which envisaged a wide attitude of acceptance. He found a similar hospitality in Jesus Christ, "who asked for hospitality and died on a cross", thereby accepting even the violence of his executors. This concept also formed basis for his belief in peaceful coexistence among

different ethnicities, which made him speak out against the displacement of the Arabs from Palestine as well as the decolonization of Algeria that implied the emigration of French Algerians and Algerian Jews – a process which ended multi-religious Algeria. His way of thought led him to an inclusive appreciation of Muslims and Jews, however, he was particularly concerned with Christian-Muslim relationships. "Given their common origin in Abraham, Christians should always approach Muslims as brothers in Abraham, united by the same spirit of faith and sacrifice, and offer up their lives for the Muslims in mystical substitution, giving to Jesus Christ, in the name of their brothers, the faith, adoration and love that an imperfect knowledge of the Gospel does not permit them to give".

Possibly we might summarize the main position of Massignon as holding a mystic unity between the three Abrahamic faiths. Finding a historical and religious commonality he reaches out for more. The unity between Judaism, Christianity and Islam transcended doctrinal oneness and was revealed by outgoing love. By an outgoing and active hospitality, by loving the "other", the unity between the three faiths were envisioned and fulfilled.

Relating to an essay by Sidney Griffiths (Griffiths 1997), the rabbi Alon Goshen-Gottstein relates his challenging analysis of Abrahamic religions to the pioneering thought of Louis Massignon (Goshen-Gottstein 2002: 173-175). He agrees with Griffiths that Massignon was a deeply interreligious personality. From the inclusive thought of Massignon he infers two possibilities for the three religions to qualify as Abrahamic beyond their common monotheism. The first one is that the three religions share a common story. The second is that all three religious traditions believe in the God of Abraham (Goshen-Gottstein 2002:171-177).

In principle, Goshen-Gottstein finds it problematic from a Jewish point of view to accept Christians as heirs of Abraham. "Judaism's self-definition as a people bound by the covenant with God, the roots of which go back to Abraham, is at odds with a Christian understanding that Abraham is a figure whose spiritual heritage is available to all who are willing to profess the proper faith, even outside the boundaries of Israel and its covenant" (Goshen-Gottstein 2002:174). The situation with Islam is problematic as well, "it assumes that, from a Jewish perspective, Yishma'el is indeed the father of the Arab people, a fact that is supported by the typological thinking of the Jewish Middle Ages, regardless of what historical research may

have to say on the matter." But even if one accepts that the Arabs descend from Yishma'el, he questions whether it implies that Islam as such qualifies as a child of Abraham. Inferring an Abrahamic heritage from the Qur'an does not imply that the Jews look at it that way as Jews are not bound by the Qur'an.

Even the claim by Massignon that the three religions share a common story is contested by Goshen-Gottstein. They tell the story of Abraham quite differently. "The biblical Abraham is the recipient of Gods exclusive covenant with Israel. The Qur'anic Abraham visits Mecca on several occasions and together with his son Ishmael consecrates the Kaba ... In this instance the similarity ultimately boils down to the presence of a common ancestral figure" (Goshen-Gottstein 2002: 175). Also as to the second claim offered by Massignon, that they all profess a faith in the same God, the God of Abraham, Goshen-Gottstein is sceptical. Although he finds a common position of monotheism positively arguable, he does not find the Christian image of a triune God in the Abrahamic faith. How can Christians, believing in a triune God, talk of adhering to the faith of Abraham? Goshen-Gottstein does not even see the *Jewish* faith in terms of Abraham. Jewish faith is rather a faith in the God of Moses.

In conclusion, Goshen-Gottstein finds that there is little to commend the description of Judaism, Christianity and Islam as 'Abrahamic' from a Jewish perspective. Dismissing the term "Religions of the Book" as a valid designation due to its Islamic background, he suggests the term "Elective monotheism" as a better shorthand designation of the three faiths. This term, coined by Martin Jaffee in the *Journal of the American Academy of Religion in* 2001, displays several prerogatives, according to Goshen-Gottstein. Jaffee suggests that along with the belief in one God, there is also the belief in God's unique message or self-disclosure revealed to a particular community of the faithful. This community enjoys a special relationship and a special task in the account of the divine disclosure revealed to it (Goshen-Gottstein 2002: 178).

Alon Goshen-Gottstein, emphasizing the exclusiveness of the three religions, thus rejects the designation of the three religions as Abrahamic. He sees, however, possibilities for interreligious rapprochement by means of mystical texts on Abraham. He points at three Jewish writers who come up with visions on Abraham. One of them, Yehuda Liebes, differentiates in his work on *Sefer Yetsira* between an axis of idolatrous monotheism and

an axis of plurality-unity. The hero of Sefer Yetsira (and of Yehuda Liebes) is Abraham. Liebes argues that Abraham in the work of Sefer Yetsira represents the paradigm of monotheism, but also the move from phenomenological multiplicity to metaphysical unity. Goshen-Gottstein takes on this idea, suggesting that all religions are themselves a part of the multiplicity of the phenomenal world. They do, however, point to a unified reality that transcends the manifestations of the religions themselves. Following Sefer Yetsira it is Abraham who inspires us to transcend the multiplicity of reality and discover the unified ground of being.

Goshen-Gottstein finds a similar interpretation of Abraham by Philo of Alexandria. Philo interprets Abraham's migration from Chaldea to Haran and furthermore to the land of Israel. "When God shows Abraham as leaving Chaldea for Haran, which is rendered by Philo as the place of the senses, which is also the house of the mind, he is bidding us to discard astrological speculations (Chaldea) for the Socratic study of ourselves, symbolized by Haran. And we may furthermore leave Haran for Israel in order to contemplate God himself" (Philo 176-89, referred to by Goshen-Gottstein 220: 180-81). We come, in other words, by Philo up with the same vision of Abraham as by Liebes: Abraham exemplifies a journey transcending the reality of religious diversity to the ultimate destination: God.

A third example provided by the Jewish mystical tradition is found by Goshen-Gottstein in the works of Rabbi R. Nahman of Breslav, the 18th century Hassidic master. Nahman does not like Philo and Liebes' search for what is "beyond" religious plurality, but strives for what is "prior" to it: "therefore Abraham, who was the first of converts and had no one to learn from, had only the heart that had great desire for the service of God … And for this reason converts are named after him and are called (Ps. 47) the generous of the nations, the people of the God of Abraham in the aspect of (Ex. 35) generous of heart. Because all they have is their hearts' desire for God, like Abraham" (Likutey Moharan 142, quoted by Goshen Gottstein 2002: 181). In other words, where there is no Torah, there is only the heart's desire, according to Goshen-Gottstein. What can unite Jews, Christians and Muslims is thus not their concrete religions, but rather "an aspiration that precedes the particularity of Torah" (Goshen-Gottstein 2002: 182).

We thus find an understanding of Abrahamic unity by Alon Goshen-Gottstein which substantially differs from that of Louis Massignon. Feeling that the

Abrahamic commonality largely is based on Christian presuppositions, Goshen-Gottstein is reluctant to accept that an understanding of the three religions as Abrahamic has any vital and significant meaning. Referring to Jewish mystical traditions, however, he sees an Abraham transcending the Jewish Torah, as well as Christian and Muslim identities. This Abraham is a pointer towards a divine reality beyond the concrete religions or to a pre-denominational human existence pointing towards God. In none of these types does Abraham offer anything in particular for the three "Abrahamic" faiths; visions of Abraham rather open up for interreligious dialogue in a worldwide conception.

I will go on to contrast Alon Goshen-Gottstein with the Roman Catholic scholar Karl-Josef Kuschel. The latter holds a chair of Theology of Culture and Inter-religious Dialogue at the Faculty of Catholic Theology at the University of Tübingen. He is a biblically oriented scholar who has authored numerous books on intercultural and interreligious studies. Kuschel is also involved in inter-religious projects for peace. By writing a book with the title *Streit um Abraham. Was Juden, Christen und Muslime trennt – und was sie eint* (Kuschel 1990/ 1996), he actually continues, but also renews the tradition from Louis Massignon and Vatican II, transcending the exclusive thought which Alon Goshen-Gottstein has expressed.

The book focuses on "the oikumene between Christians, Jews and Muslims" (p. 11). The reality is however, different, he says. Rather than finding an ecumenicity of mutual understanding and cooperation, one is exposed to a struggle between brothers, "*Bruderzwist in Hause Abrahams*". Situations of conflict are clearly seen e.g. in Bosnia, Palestine and the Caucasus. (p. 11). The book admits innumerable hindrances to establishment of an Abrahamic oikumene. But a positive possibility exists as well: the three religions have not so far made full use of their resources for peace. Such a potent, communal source for peace might be named Abraham, Hagar and Sara, ethnic parents of the three groups of Jews, Christians and Muslims (p. 12). As a first step towards Abrahamic oikumene, Kuschel engages himself in "applied research on fundamentals" (*angewandte Grundtlagenforschung*), where the Bible offers a key position. Although the religions have different concerns, Kuschel sees possibilities and hopes by means of such fundamental research applied to the sources of revelation in all three religions. Somewhat carefully expressed: "Without this critical basic research on the sources of revelation

in these three religions, there will be no peace between the religions, worthy of its name" (p. 14).

A key term for understanding Kuschel's perspectives on Abrahamic ecumenism might be seen in an open hermeneutics. Firstly, this hermeneutics is based on *criticism*. Abraham is no substitute (*Ersätz*) for Moses, Jesus, or Muhammed. He is, however, a persistent critical figure. This means above all that one must interpret Abraham in accordance with the scriptural basis in Genesis (p. 250). It implies "*radikale Kritik der Abraham-Idolatrie*", which appears in all three religious milieus. He here appeals to the research of the Old Testament theologian Claus Westermann (p. 250).

Secondly, Kuschel raises the issue of *freedom* illustrated by Abraham. Together with criticism, freedom is the central theme in his approach to an Abrahamic oikumene. In the section from page 277 to 287, Kuschel underlines the need for trust in God beyond intolerance and idolatry. With reference to the Catholic Old Testament scholar Walter Gross he claims that "the early Christian story of Abraham lives after all out of the experience of freedom over and against purely legalist thinking. Christians break the chains of an ethnic identity of Abraham" (p. 278). This is further stressed by a quotation from the Catholic New Testament scholar Michael Theobald, who refers to the concept of grace as the ground of life for Abraham (p. 279).

Kuschel proceeds to point out the need for human rights and criticises several Islamic countries which do not offer freedom of religion. For instance, according to the 1979 constitution of Iran religious minorities such as Bahai are, practically spoken, outside legal defence. Furthermore, he refers to religious limitations on marriages, the problem of "apostasy" which is threatened with the death penalty, and to the fatwa declaring a death-sentence over Salman Rushdie (p. 279f).

Abrahamic critique, freedom and social concern in other words mediate an open, Abrahamic ecumenical unity. Pleading for such an open ecumenicity Kuschel lifts up one particular exclusivist hindrance: it is of vital importance that Jews, Christians and Muslims are prepared to cancel such terms as "unbelievers", "defectors" or "surpassed" (*Überholte*) (p. 14). In a later article "The Open Covenant" (Kuschel 2005) he takes this concern a bit further. He questions whether the three religions are willing to establish a theological space for "the other":

> Can Jews who seek to be true to the Torah be indifferent to the conviction of Christians and Muslims that God wills that they be free of halakah?
> And can Christians be indifferent to the fact that in the seventh century a new prophet arose who once again confronted humanity with the very word of God and challenged them to hear with new ears what God had earlier revealed, and to reform their lives accordingly?
> And can Muslims look indifferently upon Jews and Christians whose scriptures Muslims believe to be transcended in the Qur'an but who continue to hold to the very concrete truth claims of their Bible? Does not this reality place in a kind of twofold jeopardy the coherence of what Muslims believe (p. 66)?

Goshen-Gottstein and Kuschel apparently approach the options of Abrahamic religions from very different perspectives. They share, however, an interesting common concern on the relevance of Abraham for general interreligious dialogue. Whereas Goshen-Gottstein from the basis of Jewish mystics indicates a divinity beyond religious plurality, Kuschel follows another path in the same direction by indicating there should be "no discarding [of] non-Abrahamic religions" (p. 281ff). He follows here the Protestant missiologist Theo Sundermeier who claims that one has to see the story of Abraham in the wider *context of religious plurality*. He refers with Sundermeier to the fact that Abraham was a wanderer, he was on the way, and thus cannot be seen as a person who rules. In addition, settling with his tent in Sichem by the Oak on the Plain of Moreh, actually means that he established his dwelling by a Canaanite oracle-tree. He does not condemn it, nor does he pray to the divinity honoured there.

This pluralistic attitude of Abraham also appears in his meeting with Abimelech, the king of Gerar and with Melchisedech. Abimelech actually appears more god-fearing than Abraham, when out of fear Abraham covered up his marriage to Sara and hands her over to the harem of the king (Gen. 20:1-18). When understanding the situation, the misled Abimelech solemnly declares his respect for the divine law of matrimony and returns Sara to her husband.

In the meeting with Melchisedech, Abraham reveals a deep respect for pagan faith (Gen. 14:18-20). Abraham accepts the blessing and the bread and wine of this "idol-worshipper", and even abstains from accepting any property (*Krigsbeute*) from him. According to the Old Testament scholar Von Rad, such respect of a Canaanite cult is unique in the Old Testament (p. 283).

Kuschel expresses a conviction of prospects for a vital threefold cooperation by Jews, Christians and Muslims. Finding support in Jewish voices such as Rosenzweig and Martin Buber, he concludes that "according to Reformed Judaism, Christians and Muslims can serve Jews as a challenge to appropriate more creatively their own tradition and so escape the danger of being imprisoned in one's own viewpoint. And according to contemporary Orthodox Judaism, Christians and Muslims can be seen as living witnesses to the living covenant of God with Abraham" (Kuschel 2005:72).

As for Islam, Kuschel works himself through a number of cases concluding with the statement of Abdoldjavad Falaturi of the Cologne Islamic Academy. His Qur'an based hermeneutic of interreligious dialogue is summarized by Kuschel (p. 75):

1. One must give up all claims to possess the exclusive truth.
2. One must be ready to look at one's own religion critically and carefully. One must also have the courage to admit the weaknesses and failings in the history of one's own religion.
3. One must affirm a partnership of equality among the participants in dialogue, which leads to mutual respect and readiness, indeed even the curiosity to learn from the other participants.

As for the Christian theology of the Other, Kuschel refers to Christian faith experiences. After remember Lessing's story about Nathan der Weise, he comes up with the following recommendation: I do want to strongly suggest that by drawing on their own religious traditions, Jews, Christians and Muslims will be able to affirm and develop what Lessing left as his abiding legacy:

> Let all pursue their own love
> Without blight, without bias.
> Let all compete in mutual striving
> To show to the other the power of the jewel
> In one's own ring.
> But let this power shine with gentleness,
> With heartfelt forbearance and good will,
> And with inner surrender to God
> So help us!" (p. 85)

Experiencing and Applying Abrahamic Oikumene

An objective description of inter-Abrahamic relationships is provided by Christer Hedin in his Swedish book *Abrahams barn. Vad skiljer och förenar judendom, kristendom och islam?* Several writings on the Abrahamic faiths reveal, however, a rather unique common methodological structure. A typical example is illustrated by the book and project of American Jew Bruce Feiler, *Abraham. A Journey to the Heart of Three Faiths* (Feiler 2002/2004). Feiler first combines a study of historical places, transmitted texts and the contemporary social situation. In the opening chapter called "Home" (pp 3-14) he combines a presentation of the Rock on Haram-al-Sharif, a description of the life surrounding this central Jerusalem area now, and a brief narrative on Abraham's relation to this "Rock" which tradition sees as the spot of the aborted offering of his son. Such combination of historical sites, texts and contemporary context is a feature which other writers also follow. The study of Oddbjørn Leirvik, *Children of Abraham* (Leirvik 2000) follows basically a related methodology with emphasis on historical processes. His perspective spans Europe and the Middle East through two millenia. Chittister, et al., *The Tent of Abraham* (Chittister 2006) offers two versions of Abraham's journey, one from the Torah and Jewish Midrash, and the other as presented in Qur'an and Muslim Hadith. Although not expressly "Abrahamic", Colin Chapmans, *Whose Holy City?* (Chapman 2004) and Dr Mahdi Abdul Hadi, *Dialogue on Jerusalem* (Hadi 1998) contain the same elements. These two books are, however, focused on burning contemporary questions but remain closely attached to history and geography.

All the books mentioned in the section above turn, to a larger or lesser degree, to action. Feiler's book displays a strong concern for action. In the wake of its publication, Feiler started *Abraham Salons* as groups to discuss matters of common concern among the three faiths. He reports a great success for these study groups. Within six months more than 5,000 people had downloaded materials from his website: www.brucefeiler.com (p. 223). He concludes: "Abraham may be a flawed vessel for reconciliation, but he's the best vessel we've got. The reason, above all else, is that despite the violence, the misunderstanding, and the history of reinterpretation that attends his name, Abraham is still the root of our common heritage and the example for reunion among his children … Abraham is the seed of hope" (p. 226). *Children of Abraham* concludes by projecting concrete processes of libera-

tion theology to achieve justice and reconciliation in the conflict-ridden land of Israel/Palestine. *The Tent of Abraham: Stories of Hope and Peace for Jews*, *Christians and Muslims* also aims at inspiring practical peacemaking. Several documents have emerged from recent efforts to give living form to new understandings of the Abrahamic family (p xvii). Among these is one entitled "Resources for practical use in Abrahamic peacemaking". The section suggests networking, fellowship, liturgies and group meetings with the purpose of working for peace.

Let me return to the Swedish educational programme which was started in Rinkeby, Stockholm in 1991 and which I mentioned in the beginning of the article. It is not directly like the works referred to immediately above which are connected with the geography of Israel/Palestinian. Its scope is multi-religious Sweden. Starting as an experiment, the educational programme developed into a comprehensive, cross disciplinary pedagogy offering teaching programmes for Swedish schools. The organization *Abrahams barn* (Children of Abraham) is centred in the Sigtunastiftelsen (The Sigtuna Foundation), a progressive Swedish Institute for social and religious dialogues situated near Stockholm. The educationally orientated organization works basically with interreligious and intercultural encounters and relates to the UN Children's Convention. Dorothea Rosenblad's *Samma rötter: Abrahams barn i tre religioner: lärarhandledning* (2004) serves as a teacher's manual. Related to the Children of Abraham programme is an artistic inspired programme introduced in a book edited by Per-Inge Planefors in 2004: *Dialoger – islam, judendom, kristendom och samhälle. Röster och reflexioner – Kent Gustafssons ljudskulptur.*

Prospects of an Abrahamic Oikumene

Although Judaism, Christianity and Islam historically and structurally are closely related and might deserve a common denominator, they are frequently at odds. It has indeed appeared problematic to translate their structural parallelism and common historical legacy into mutual understanding, creative interaction and fruitful cooperation. In this article I have shown the uneasiness of Alon Goshen-Gottstein about an insensitive, Abrahamic unity. Nevertheless, two approaches seem promising for a developing oikumene. The ideas of an "open covenant", which in this article is particularly voiced by Karl-Josef Kuschel, seem to contain seeds of a transforming ecumeni-

cal spirit. Moreover, ideas of mystical thought offer a special contribution whereby denominational identities are transcended. I especially refer to the Jewish mystical thinkers quoted by Alon Goshen-Gottstein. Promising methods and perspectives of Abrahamic dialogue and peace work have also emerged, spanning educational and political dimensions. It is of special significance that such activity with an intrinsic logic and dynamism transcends denominational borders and Abrahamic identities.

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"Everybody His Own People": Pentecostalism and Religious Plurality in Bangalore

Anita Suneson

This text is the result of a minor field study among two Pentecostal churches, the Full Gospel Assembly of God (FGAG) and a branch of The Pentecostal Mission (TPM), in Bangalore, capital of the South Indian state Karnataka, in February-March 2008. At first glance the two churches may seem very different. The first being very world-renouncing while the latter in many ways embraces modernity. A striking illustration of this is how to TPM television is a "satanic family altar", while to the FGAG it is a very useful missionary tool. However, they also have much in common, as I hope this text will show.

The aim of my explorative study was to gain understanding of what attitudes Pentecostal Christians from these two churches take to the religious diversity that surrounds them. This can help illustrate how a position as a minority group in a pluralistic society can influence thoughts and/or actions of a religious group. The fact that Pentecostalism in only about a century has established itself as the second largest Christian category in the world and grows faster than any other type of Christianity makes it especially interesting and important to know more about. This becomes even more vital as Pentecostalism may very well come to dominate Christianity in the future. The fact that exclusivism and emphasis on mission is relatively common in Pentecostal churches also makes the movement very interesting in combination with the highly pluralistic context that Bangalore provides.

The main question for the study was: How do Pentecostal Christians from two churches in Bangalore think and act in relation to the religious plurality in their society? To help answer this I had a number of other questions:

- What is said about other religions and what attitude do they take to them on a rhetorical level – exclusivist, inclusivist or pluralist?

- What are the main reasons for the standpoint(s) taken?
- How are the churches' relations to other churches and religious groups?
- What strategies are used to reach new people?
- How do people from these churches act when they meet followers of other religions on a practical level?
- What differences can be seen between the rhetorical and practical levels?
- What differences can be seen between the two churches?

The main sources for answering these questions are semi-structured interviews with people on different levels of involvement in the churches.[1] The majority of the interviews were recorded on tape and later transcribed word by word. To refer to the interviewees I use the term "hosts", which in a suitable way describes how they have welcomed me into their ways of thinking. According to my estimations the atmosphere during the interviews was generally positive and relaxed. My hosts could all express their thoughts well in English. Since some of the issues dealt with might be regarded as sensitive, I have let them be anonymous, except for the cases of Pastor Samodhanam and Brother Joshua in TPM, where I do not consider this possible. Although all fictional names are biblical English names, this is only for practical reasons. Several hosts have Indian names, and not all English names are biblical. I have not attempted to make a selection representative for Pentecostals in Bangalore. Their socio-economical positions are unusually good. A middle class life with a couple of children per family is the most common lifestyle among them. But even though the hosts are not representative, they are an interesting group, not least since they belong to a growing class.

My method has also consisted of attending services and other activities in the churches, in which extensive notes were taken. I have also spent time with some people from these churches outside the church.

To categorise Christian attitudes to other religions the terminology of exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism developed by Alan Race will be used.[2]

[1] For the interviews I have tried to follow the advice given by Steinar Kvale in "Den kvalitativa forskningsintervjun".

[2] In "Christians and Religious Pluralism – Patterns in the Christian Theology of Religions" from 1983

The biblical quotations are from the King James' Version for TPM and the New International Version for the FGAG, since those are the translations mostly used there.

The title of this article is taken from one of my hosts, who expressed her faith in God's plan for all humanity. "He knows which is good for His own people, and everybody His own people", not only "those who accepted God".[3]

Full Gospel Assembly of God

The Full Gospel Assembly of God (FGAG) belongs to one of the world's largest Pentecostal denominations, the Assemblies of God, founded in Hot Springs, Arkansas in 1914. From the very beginning mission to other countries was a prioritised issue within the AG. It has been focused on planting indigenous churches rather than supervising them from the American Assemblies of God.

The FGAG is a large church in Indiranagar, a prosperous area in the eastern part of Bangalore. Its senior pastor Paul Thangiah, a man who is famous at least among Christians in Bangalore and idolised by his congregation, founded the church in 1982. According to FGAG's own webpage it now has over 14,500 members and around 300 newcomers each Sunday.[4] It is the largest AG church in Bangalore. Apart from Sunday services in Tamil, English, Kannada, Hindi and Telugu the church has numerous other services including Children's church, "Eagles" youth service, Widow's church, non-stop praise in Tamil and English and a Women's church service led by Pastor Paul's wife, Pastor Sheba. They also have their own TV channels. Another important activity are the Care Cells, small prayer and Bible study groups that meet every week in homes throughout the city. Special Fasting Prayers are a common element on the program. An orphanage was started in 2004. The congregation has many international contacts. Pastor Paul often travels abroad to preach, as does his wife. The church has missions to other countries, and also receives missionaries from abroad as well as visiting preachers.

The English services that I attended attracted many, especially people whose economic circumstances appeared to be good, many of them young.

[3] Interview with Rachel 2008-03-04
[4] http://www.fgag.tv/aboutfgag.htm 2008-03-19

Modern hymns are sung, and the atmosphere can be described as lively and enthusiastic, if variably so among the visitors. It is more anonymous than The Pentecostal Mission in Frazer Town, which probably makes the Care Cells very important as forums for closer fellowship.

The Pentecostal Mission

Unlike the AG churches, The Pentecostal Mission is indigenous to the Indian subcontinent. It was founded as the Ceylon Pentecostal Mission in 1923[5] or 1924[6] on Sri Lanka (then called Ceylon) as a breakaway group from the Pentecostal movement which had first come there in 1919.[7] The church grew and spread first to South India and then beyond the subcontinent.[8] It now exists in many different countries on all continents, for example as "New Testament Church" in the USA and several other countries.[9]

Theologically TPM has a very clear eschatological focus. The congregants can prepare for the Second Coming of Christ by strict adherence to the church's doctrines. Those who reach full perfection are believed to be raptured at the Parousia. The main purpose of the church is seen as what is described in Colossians 1:28: "...we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus". Distancing oneself from the world is seen as an essential part of this perfection. There is a dichotomy between being in the world and being in Christ. Members are encouraged to "put off the world and put on Christ".[10] They are for example not supposed to wear jewellery, which in India is noteworthy, and something TPM seems to be famous (or infamous) for. They also ideally refrain from watching television, going to the cinema or using medicine. The lifestyle of the ministry is ascetic. They wear only white, which is also the preferable colour for congregants to wear in church.

The branch of TPM that I visited is in Frazer Town, a little north-east of Bangalore's city centre. The pastor is a middle-aged man called Samodhanam,

[5] Hedlund 2005, p.77
[6] Pentecosoft 2003, Info "Our Ministry"
[7] Hedlund 2005, pp.76-77
[8] Hedlund 2005, p.78
[9] Pentecosoft 2003, Info, "Our Ministry"
[10] Pentecosoft 2003, Youth, FAQ (question about jewellery).

who lives in a room behind the main church hall. One brother, a young man, also has lived there for the past three years. Pastor Samodhanam explained that it takes 20 years of ministry as a brother to become a pastor. He has undergone this discipleship himself, but has not studied at any Bible school. His theological education occurred between God and him, he explained.[11] There are also a number of sisters, women of different ages who have committed their lives to the church and live in celibacy there. Much of their time is spent in prayer, and they only sleep for two or three hours every night. Pastor Samodhanam told me he also sleeps for only two hours each night, since he has to be constantly available for the congregants, who come to him when they need advice or special prayers.

The Sunday services last for four hours. Hymns are sung in Kannada, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Hindi and English. The preaching is translated from Tamil into Kannada and English. Upstairs it is possible to listen in Telugu and Hindi. The congregation is seated on the floor during the service, the women to the right and the men to the left. The services include prophesy, 'witnessing' when people share stories about God's presence in their lives, and much free worship with glossolalia and repetition of phrases such as "praise the Lord". The worship becomes very loud during the course of the service and there is much enthusiasm in the congregation. Loud hand-clapping and screaming are common and seemingly regarded as a sign of the Holy Spirit's presence and of devotion to God. The church's other activities include Bible studies, Sunday school and tarry meetings, when the participants tarry in prayer waiting for the Holy Spirit's presence. According to my observations the church has a strict hierarchical structure and distinct, traditional gender roles.

Hosts

Full Gospel Assembly of God

Pastor Philip is a man in his fourties, born in a Syrian-Orthodox family, who has been in the church since its inception in 1982. He joined a Bible college in 1985 and started working as a pastor in the FGAG in 1989.

[11] Conversation with pastor Samodhanam 2008-02-22

John is a man in his third year of theological studies in the ecumenical United Theological College (UTC). He is from a Hindu background but converted to Christianity ten years ago. Initially he was a member of the indigenous IPC, but has gone over to the Assemblies of God. He started going to the FGAG when he first came to Bangalore in 2005. He is active there, and leads one of their Care Cells. He is in his early thirties.

Esther is a woman in her late thirties from a Roman-Catholic background who has been going to the FGAG for around six years. She is an active member of the church, frequently visits services and prayer meetings, and is a leader of a Care Cell.

Rachel is a nineteen years old woman who belongs to the CSI but through a friend got to know the FGAG and used to go there. She liked the worships in the FGAG and regrets that for about a year she has been unable to go there because she has no companion to go with.

Matthew is a middle-aged man from a Lutheran background. Together with one other pastor he runs his own small Pentecostal church, but sympathises with the FGAG and goes there when there is a special program, preacher or meeting.

The Pentecostal Mission

Pastor Samodhanam is a middle-aged man, born in a Lutheran family that converted to TPM when he was a child. In 1983 he decided to join the ministry, after experiencing God speaking to him during a court session and telling him to do so.

Rebecca is a 25 years old woman who was born into TPM and fully identifies with it. She lives with her family, who are all devoted members of TPM. She is a teacher in its Sunday school.

Samuel and Joseph are two young men, probably in their early twenties, who are active members of the church. I spoke to them on two occasions. One of these was during the conversation with Pastor Samodhanam, when they and Rebecca were also present.

Apart from these longer interviews or conversations I also had a number of conversations with various members of the two churches, both in church and elsewhere, including one with **Brother Joshua**, a young man of Hindu background who has

now devoted his life to ministry in TPM. I also spoke to several of the sisters there on different occasions.

Rhetorical Exclusivism

The FGAG has a clear and outspoken focus on evangelising, "bringing souls" as they often put it. I did not attend one single service or prayer meeting when the issue was not brought up, and it was often a major subject in the preaching. Pastor Philip told me that "our whole aspect is in terms of sharing the Gospel, bringing somebody to the Lord. So that's our number one focus, is reaching out to the lost."[12] According to the cosmology the church preaches, the world is a battlefield where a struggle for souls goes on between the triune Christian God on the one hand and Satan and the evils in the world on the other. Each individual has to choose sides in this struggle and the one who chooses God's side should do this whole-heartedly. It is considered vital to recognise God's authority as what should direct an individual's life. An important part of this message is that each person who listens to it can contribute. One way for a congregant to show that she or he has chosen God's side and is committed to it is to bring souls, i.e. bring newcomers to church. Another is to financially aid the church and its missionary work. The importance of that is often stressed in the services.

Although the FGAG is far from as world-renouncing as TPM, the view of "worldliness" as something destructive that leads away from salvation is present there too. This showed for instance when Pastor Sheba spoke of a young woman who had been "worldly" and "paving her way to Hell", until God "fished her out of that" and she came to church.[13] In this rhetoric other religions are part of the worldly "other side" that a person who chooses the "right side" says no to. The two "sides" constitute two different ways and one of them leads to salvation. Where the other one leads was made clear in the service quoted above.

The rhetoric of two different ways, the narrow way and the broad way, is very central in TPM. They see helping people walk the narrow way as a calling they are the only church to carry out correctly. Rebecca said that the Lord presents us with two ways and lets us choose between them.

[12] Interview with Pastor Philip 2008-02-29
[13] Women's church 2008-03-15

> And He just teaches us what is the end in either road that you take... So most people choose the broad way, because it's more easy to go that way. But then when you go through the narrow way it's *real* narrow, it's not an easy task at all. But then we always believe that the Lord has already gone that way. So it's easier.[14]

In TPM the outward signs of having chosen the narrow way are central. To wear jewellery for example is a sign that you have not chosen the Lord, or at least do not fully commit yourself to God, which is what walking the narrow way means. It is an example of pleasing people, an effort to be accepted by people around you, which in itself displeases God.

At the bottom of the strict exclusivism that is taught in both churches lies a literal reading of the Bible (especially of certain selected passages in the New Testament). "The Bible clearly says that anybody who has to go to God has to come through Jesus. So there is no other way", Rebecca expressed it.[15] Pastor Philip saw evangelising as a duty that followed his calling to the church. He told me of the "burden" he felt for non-Christians. "They do need to know the Lord. Need to know the love of Jesus Christ. These sorts of things I feel." Bible passages he brought up when speaking about evangelising were Matthew 25:14-30, John 14:6, 2 Peter 3:9 and "the good old great commission, Matthew 28:19-20".[16]

One reason that Rachel gave for the importance of bringing new people to church and to Christ is to not be left at the Second Coming, when it will be a merit to have brought souls. "So that time God will ask me: *Who did you bring, which soul did you bring?* So I shouldn't be empty-handed." Like Pastor Philip, Rachel also spoke about the love that came with Christianity. "Everybody should know God's love and who God is, and they shouldn't live a worthless life", she said.[17] Rebecca also believed that people who do not follow Christ "will definitely be left behind" at the Second Coming.[18]

John said that the liberal theology of UTC has really shaped him, and he is trying to balance that with the evangelical AG faith. During the interview the opposing influences were noticeable. On the one hand he wanted to respect

[14] Interview with Rebecca 2008-02-16
[15] Interview with Rebecca 2008-02-16
[16] Interview with Pastor Philip 2008-02-29
[17] Interview with Rachel 2008-03-04
[18] Interview with Rebecca 2008-02-16

people of other faiths, and understood that they could see things differently from their perspective than he did from his. He said that while belief in Christ was his faith, belief in Vishnu for example could be someone else's. But on the other hand the Bible and his own faith told him that Christ is the saviour of all. "That is my faith... about Jesus, and God. Muslims, they have their own understanding, about their light... But of course as I told you, I fully believe that Christ is the saviour of the world... of the whole world." When asked if this meant that he thought the only way to salvation is through Christ, he said it was a complicated question. "For my case I am sure. For me, He is my saviour." When pressed and asked if salvation without Christ could be possible for other people he answered "If we look at the Bible, then it is written that there's no salvation without Christ." Neither did he find inclusivism in accordance with the Bible, where it is written that you have to accept Christ, have faith in him and confess him with your tongue. Still, "if I look at it from the Bible, I can say that if they (friends from other religions) don't know Christ, then maybe they don't know the truth. But if I'll see it from their perspective, they can say that we know the truth, we have our relationship with God." The question was not settled within him.[19]

To summarise, the exclusivism preached in the churches was shared by my hosts. Some wanted to be diplomatic to adherents of other religions, but in the end no one, with the possible exception of John, believed that there was any other way to salvation than the Christian way.

Personal Experiences

Biblical authority is not the only reason for the importance given to mission in these churches or for their exclusivism. My hosts often did refer to "the Scriptures" or what "the Bible says" when questions of other religions or of evangelising came up, but they also often shared personal stories about spiritual experiences that Pentecostal Christianity had brought. Those who were not born into Pentecostalism often described joining the movement as a turning-point in life. Several people who I talked to (especially in the less ecumenical TPM) stressed that to understand Pentecostalism I needed to experience it, to feel the Holy Spirit's presence. Theoretical studies would not be enough to really understand it, they thought.

[19] Interview with Rebecca 2008-02-16

When I asked Pastor Philip to tell me about himself he started with the story of how he "came to know Jesus" in his youth. He grew up in a family with a pluralist attitude and did not think it was necessary to be Christian in particular, "till when I was confronted with the need of the saviour, our lord Jesus Christ. That made all the difference." He had been struggling with existential questions for a long time and was contemplating suicide when he was given a tract about Christ. The message appealed to Philip, who knelt down and prayed, asking Jesus to come into his life, lead him and be his lord. "For me it was an experience. Something which was so different... that moment when I received the Lord, and the tremendous presence of it. I experienced the joy of the Lord, and I was so happy, jumping up and down." This experience "changed my direction", he said, "after that I could see everything in a different light."[20]

John described his Christian faith as having moved him and touched his life. Although he was a religious person already as a Hindu, he did not have the sort of spiritual experiences that he has as a Christian.[21] Rachel and Esther also described how their faith had increased in the FGAG. Almost all of my hosts spoke about the presence of God that they experienced as Pentecostals or in Pentecostal churches, and about a special relationship with God. Rachel said that in the FGAG she "really could feel the Spirit, the love of God, He's just pouring it on us, and it'll be just like a direct relationship between God and us. I could really feel that anointing in that place."[22] Now that John is a Christian "I always feel that some presence always goes along with me". As a Hindu he used to pray, but did not have "that much intimate relationship what I have now". [23]

"My sustenance comes from the presence of God", Pastor Philip said, and explained that his "day to day relationship" with God made it possible to show compassion and justice, and to do his best despite people or other obstacles being against him.[24] Rebecca said that even from her childhood she "could feel the presence of the Lord coming with me", leading her. Despite this there had been several times when she had turned away from God, done something she knew God would not appreciate, or had deep

[20] Interview with Pastor Philip 2008-02-29
[21] Interview with John 2008-03-03
[22] Interview with Rachel 2008-03-04
[23] Interview with John 2008-03-03
[24] Interview with Pastor Philip 2008-02-29

mental crises. But each instance ended with her being reminded of God and the relationship of mutual love between them, which made her come back to God or comforted her in her depression. She told me about how she "started getting into the world" and

> forsook that kind of love, that kind of care... but the Lord is so gracious. And then He gave me that portion of the Bible (Hosea chapter 2), and He said: *Though you are like this, though you forsook me who really loved you, and went after strange love, yet I will not forsake you, and I still love you with an everlasting love...* That portion really broke my heart. I said: Lord, no matter what, hereafter I will only love you.[25]

Another time that she told me about was when she was anointed in the Holy Spirit following a time of depression. She "could feel one kind of power take control over my body. And my heart was filled with so much of joy, so much of peace. I can't explain how it felt... I can never forget that day, the day He anointed me." Interestingly, it was "when I submitted the Lord anointed me", she said.[26] My conclusion from the experiences with this church is that from the viewpoint of TPM, the love of God is an authoritarian and exclusive love. To have the special relationship with God that the anointing in the Holy Spirit means one has to submit to God, especially through casting off the world.

One of the ways in which my hosts saw the faithfulness of God and God's presence in their lives was through different types of miracles. "Divine healing" was something members from both churches told me took place there. Some had experienced it personally. At one prayer meeting I attended in the FGAG prayers and laying on of hands were used to heal a woman's hand. I also witnessed this at a Care Cell meeting when a child was ill.[27] Not only recovery from diseases and injuries were interpreted as miracles or proofs of the power of God. Economic needs could also be met, for example. This had happened to both Esther and John after they had prayed about it.[28] In the FGAG it was not an unusual subject of preaching that prayers would be answered. John had received testimonies about different sorts of miracles. "These testimonies really made me think that there is a God, a living God, who hears our cries, who hears our prayer, and who

[25] Interview with Rebecca 2008-02-16
[26] Interview with Rebecca 2008-02-16
[27] Fasting prayer 2008-02-14, Care Cell meeting 2008-03-08.
[28] Interviews with Esther 2008-03-15 and John 2008-03-03

listens, really cares about us. He's not far away or He's not idle."[29] Another positive aspect of their Pentecostal faith that I noticed among my hosts is a feeling of purpose in life, that God is using them. This came up in several interviews and is probably encouraged by the rhetoric of spiritual warfare preached in both churches.

All this – powerful spiritual experiences, a reassuring faith in a loving God who is close and who answers prayers, and a feeling of meaning in life that my hosts have only experienced through Pentecostalism – is of course very positive for the person experiencing it and natural to want for others to experience also. Their personal experience suggests that the Christian way is the best to take in life. Rebecca talked about how the knowledge of Christ's presence in her life enabled her to go through anything, and continued:

> But the same time, for a person who has no Christ in his life, everything is his problem... he has to worry about everything... But I don't have to worry about anything, cause I know Christ is there in the centre of my life. So no matter what, He would lead me.

Looking back on his life "when I didn't accept Christ or Christianity", John felt that he had been "in darkness". "I didn't know. The way I am now, and the way I build my relationship with my creator God is more appropriate now than the previous. And that is what I'm thinking for others also." After his spiritual awakening, pastor Philip felt an "assurance, this is it. There's no more to it... Christ is all-inclusive. I don't think I need any more, any other. He can save." He said that "in a multi-cultural society like ours" he did not want to deny other religions' ability to save. But "what is my experience? Christ makes sense to me... for me when I reached the church I found that this is the way."[30] This feeling can be summarised with something Rebecca said: "We always believe that we've received something. Something good. So share it with others. Let them also get to know."[31]

Descriptions of Other Religions

Since Hindus are the dominant majority in the society that surrounds my hosts it is not surprising that Hinduism was what they usually started

[29] Interview with John 2008-03-03
[30] Interview with Pastor Philip 2008-02-29
[31] Interview with Rebecca 2008-02-16

talking about when asked about other religions in Bangalore or in India. Hindus were often described as worshipping idols, something that the Pentecostals take pride in not practising themselves. John said he felt that "idols, that is someone's creation... and how can a man or woman make god and goddesses?" In his church on the other hand "we don't have any cross, any picture, no rosary, nothing". They have Bible quotations, because the "Bible is our source and the Holy Spirit is our source, to link us with God".[32] Rebecca said that when she sees statues of Hindu gods "the verses from the Bible come to my mind, which say: *They have eyes to see, but they cannot see. They have ears to hear, but they do not hear.* (Isa 6:9)*"* She felt "Lord, if I was born as a Hindu I would have definitely fallen for those gods. But thank you God for saving me". For her the difference between Hindu gods and the Christian god is the difference between stone and the true God.[33]

This and other statements from my hosts gave me the picture that they view Hinduism most of all as an essential misunderstanding of the divine and the world in general. According to Esther all religions are trying to teach the truth. But only the Bible tells about things that have really happened, while other religions have "made stories".[34] She was not alone in being of the opinion that the Bible can be used as an historical source. Matthew said that the origins of Hindu faith can be found in the biblical passage where Moses comes down from Mount Sinai and finds the Israelites worshipping "idols" and "the calf".[35] They were worshipping nature as Hindus still do. It is not difficult to see how Hindu statues of cattle can help inspire this view of Hinduism as a continuation of the idolatry of the golden calf that is condemned in Exodus 32. Pastor Samodhanam also referred to the Bible and the commandments of Moses when talking about Hinduism. Hindus worship graven images, so Hinduism is idolatry, which he says the Bible tells us is an abomination.[36]

Among other things, I was also told of the plurality and relativism of Hinduism. Hindus have so many gods that it is impossible even for themselves to remember them all. And there are many different groups

[32] Interview with John 2008-03-03
[33] Interview with Rebecca 2008-02-16
[34] Interview with Esther 2008-03-15
[35] Interview with Matthew 2008-02-18
[36] Interview/conversation with Pastor Samodhanam, Joseph and Samuel 2008-02-22

that worship different deities. "There's no particular thing. Everywhere it's different."[37] Hindu faith was never described as very ethical. John said there is an assumption that once you dip into the Ganga all your sins will vanish. "And the intention is that now all the old sins are vanished, now you can continue to do more sin". This he contrasted to his life after conversion to Christianity, when he started to fear God and understand the difference between bad and good, and that he "should walk on this path according to the Bible".[38] It seems Hinduism is often used as a mirror for the Pentecostals' self-understanding. The Hindu "idolatry" is the clearest symbol of the difference. It can be opposed to the lack of pictures in the Pentecostal churches, and the importance of commitment to the one true God. Hinduism often seems to be regarded as superstitious and shallow, worship of the colourful Hindu gods alluring but failing to fulfil spiritual needs in the way the more direct Pentecostal worship does.

Similarities with Hindu practises made opinions about Roman-Catholicism more negative than opinions about other Protestant churches, for example. It was regarded as suspiciously close to, if not already over, the boundaries of other religions. Catholic practices of offering candles and incense made John suspect they worship their pictures and statues: "they don't worship God, but they more worship then their saints". He said that Catholic churches are popular with Hindus "because they find it according to their own customs, according to their own ritual". He did not find the many saints and pictures appealing to his Christianity.[39] Rachel also found Roman-Catholic rituals similar to Hindu rituals. She had seen Catholics worshipping idols, giving some offering and approach their saints kneeling and carrying candles. In Pentecostalism on the other hand "they really don't accept all that" and that "is very good actually", because "in the Bible it's never said about anything like offering to God".[40] Pastor Philip's opinion was that the church could take up good aspects of other cultures and religions, but has to watch out for religious syncretism. "There has to be a line. See, if it's not there, then I'll say Jesus is Vishnu, Jesus is Allah, Jesus everything... Christianity has got its own identity, which you have to keep to." He took Catholicism in South America as an example where

[37] Interview with Rachel 2008-03-04
[38] Interview with John 2008-03-03
[39] Interview with John 2008-03-03
[40] Interview with Rachel 2008-03-04

that line had been crossed.[41] Looking back at herself as a Roman-Catholic, Esther thought she had been worshipping idols then.[42]

Islam's monotheism and common lack of pictures would suggest that it was viewed more positively than Hinduism, at least with regard to precisely those qualities which were not appreciated in the latter. However, Pastor Samodhanam, Samuel and Joseph of TPM saw Muslims as idol-worshippers too. (Probably because in their way of thinking, all other religions are per definition idolatrous since they do not worship the one true God, the triune Christian God.) Muslims have pictures of light which means they worship the light, they said, and referred to Exodus 20:4. They also said that Muslims worship Mohammed's tomb. Matthew, on the other hand, found Muslim faith attractive because of its closeness to his own Christian faith. There was of course the difference that Muslims deny Christ's divinity, a difference that "cannot be accepted". But he thought that "they (Muslims) also talk very nicely".[43] Rachel had less positive views. "I feel in Muslim life the girl is seen fit only... to do the work, all this household work or that. They just never give you rights."[44] A man from TPM told me that the "Muslim attitude is entirely different from the Christian", more violent. Muslims go to the mosque, but "hatred is there". The majority are not well-educated, he added.[45] Pastor Philip said that Muslims in India are not often radicals or fundamentalists, but they usually keep to themselves in certain "clusters" in the city. And while the ethics that Islam teaches are good, he said that it is problematic many Muslims do not follow them and due to their underprivileged position in society may become criminal.[46]

Mission – How New People are Reached and Received

The FGAG supports pastors and missionaries from different denominations "all over India" and in other South Asian countries.[47] According to Pastor Philip, 65% of the FGAG's income goes to these "missions". In 2007 the FGAG started building churches in South Asia. The FGAG cannot grow

[41] Interview with Pastor Philip 2008-02-29
[42] Interview with Esther 2008-03-15
[43] Interview with Matthew 2008-02-18
[44] Interview with Rachel 2008-03-04
[45] Conversation with anonymous man 2008-02-16
[46] Interview with Pastor Philip 2008-02-29
[47] Interview with Pastor Philip 2008-02-29. Information about the church's international work can be found on its webpage http://www.fgag.tv/home.htm

as fast as Bangalore itself, Pastor Philip said, but added that they do grow and have an average of 300 newcomers every Sunday. In Bangalore the FGAG's missionary efforts have mostly been directed towards Hindus, who "seem to be very open" to the Gospel. Except for some anti-Christian groups, Hindus are considered "the most open people" and willing to go anywhere if they want a miracle. Muslims are less responsive, more firmly set on Islam "until... they are desperate, they have no other way". There are more newcomers from other religions than from other churches, according to the pastor.[48] Other members of the FGAG also said that many of the new people were Hindus.[49]

The FGAG's strategy is that the churchgoers should evangelise among their family and friends, rather than to strangers.[50] Among the hosts there was experience both of having done this and of having themselves been reached in this way. What John saw as the first step to his conversion to Christianity was when a family he knew "shared the Gospel" with him in their home. After his conversion, John began talking with his own family about Christianity. Although this first led to controversy, "now they have accepted it" and all his family members except his father are now Christians. Even the father, who has not converted officially, "has accepted Christ by faith". John and his family had also spread Christianity in the neighbourhood where they lived.[51]

In the spring of 2008 the FGAG had a campaign for "each one to bring one soul to Christ" (often printed on the flyers handed out during services and prayer meetings). Esther told me that everyone had been asked to take someone new to church on Easter Day. She had not done much witnessing before, but since they were asked in church she had prayed for different people until God showed her a particular person. Now she was praying for his family that was Roman-Catholic ("one soul" could be someone from another church). She said that the leaders in FGAG talk about mission "every time" and explain to the congregation how to tell others about Jesus.[52]

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[48] Interview with Pastor Philip 2008-02-29
[49] Interviews with John 2008-03-03 and Esther 2008-03-15
[50] Interview with Pastor Philip 2008-02-29
[51] Interview with John 2008-03-03
[52] Interview with Esther 2008-03-15

The most important way for The Pentecostal Mission to attract new adherents seems to be the annual conventions held in each area. Rebecca said that they evangelised among their neighbours "only during conventions". Then "the church invites people from outside" to a Gospel and divine healing service. The church spreads information about the convention through notices, wall posters and processions—when they walk around Bangalore singing songs. There could be thousands of people gathering, according to Rebecca, who said that "*so* many" are touched in the heart by the Lord, and continue going to the church.[53] There is also an international convention held in Chennai, where TPM's headquarters are. Information about it is published in newspapers. Another way for the church to spread information is through their own magazines, published in twenty-four different languages. New people are also brought to church by friends. Pastor Samodhanam said that his church has newcomers from other religions every week. "Divine healing" and effective prayers are reasons to turn to TPM.[54]

Although the FGAG emphasises mission more in their preaching and activities than TPM does, the latter make greater efforts at getting new people to stay once they do come to church, at least according to my experience. (As a visiting Swedish student I am admittedly not a representative newcomer.) Each time I attended TPM I drew much attention and was welcomed by many people. In the FGAG I was much more anonymous, even though those who spoke to me were very welcoming there too. In TPM intense efforts were made to convert me, something I did not encounter in the FGAG. One reason for this is probably that in the FGAG they are more used to international visitors, and another that in TPM they have less trust in other churches' ability to save.

The FGAG seemed to have a standardised way to welcome newcomers at the Sunday services. The first time I went there I was given a kit with a schedule of the church's activities, a postcard to send if a "follow up" visit in the home was desired, a bottle of "blessed oil" for healing purposes and a tape with a message from Paul Thangiah. If the church has 300 newcomers every Sunday it is not surprising that each one does not get very much attention. At the Eagles youth service and the Women's church it was less anonymous. Newcomers were asked to stand up and were applauded. At Eagles newcomers' contact information was written

[53] Interview with Rebecca 2008-02-16
[54] Interview with Pastor Samodhanam 2008-02-25

down, but in the subsequent two weeks I remained in India after this I did not hear from them.[55]

In TPM, on the other hand, intense efforts were made to lead me to "spiritual growth". Most of the time neither the pastor, Joseph, Samuel nor Brother Joshua were especially interested in my questions, but preferred to teach me about their doctrines and, in the pastor's case, to testify about how God had been at work in his life. Brother Joshua stated the reasons for this when he said that studies would not take me to Heaven and that they were worried about my soul.[56] My conversations with the men in church often felt like examinations where my knowledge about the Bible and other spiritual matters (as agreeing with TPM's doctrines) were tested. Samuel and Joseph wanted me to start a "praying life", and pray for everything I did, and to read "spiritual warfare" literature to develop spiritually.[57] They also wanted me to come back every day so I could learn as much as possible during the little time I had in the country.[58] The pastor repeatedly tried very hard to persuade me to come to the international convention in Chennai. He also gave me a KJV Bible, a calendar, a fountain-pen, the software programme *Pentecosoft 2003*,[59] and some of TPM's publications.[60] The sisters and other women spending much time in the church were less eager to discuss spiritual matters with me. Their behaviour was very kind and welcoming, and they were careful to make sure that I received plenty to eat and drink. Even though I, because of my different background, probably got more attention and time than the average church visitor this shows a way of receiving new people that is probably effective – intense teaching combined with kindness and a warm, welcoming atmosphere.

Relations to Other Groups

It was clear that Pastor Philip felt a need to be diplomatic when speaking about other religions. Otherwise it would be difficult to live side by side with the other religious groups in society. Among other things he told me

[55] Sunday service 2008-02-10, Eagles youth service 2008-03-01, Women's church 2008-03-15
[56] Conversation with Brother Joshua 2008-02-25
[57] Conversation with Samuel and Joseph 2008-02-21
[58] Interview/conversation with Pastor Samodhanam, Joseph and Samuel 2008-02-22
[59] The programme contains information about TPM, messages, songs, magazines, books, Bible studies, a KJV Bible translation, and some information and messages especially for youth.
[60] The books "Forgiveness – A Foretaste of Heaven", "Human Pride and Divine Humility" and "Is TV Harmful", and the magazine "Voice of Pentecost".

that they had stopped using the term "crusade" about large prayer meetings, because some had been offended. He did not like to tell followers of other religions negative things about their religious traditions and did not want to explicitly deny other religions' ability to save.[61]

Still, this diplomacy is contradicted by the aggressive exclusivist discourse in church. That sort of language can also be found on the webpage where "crusades" are actually mentioned together with other examples of the church's intensive work to spread Christianity.[62] About the orphanage "Grace Children home" Paul Thangiah writes on the webpage: "My desire is to give each child an international standard of education and finally launch this army of young warriors into the next generation Pentecostal witness in our great nation INDIA."[63] To prepare to "launch an army of young warriors" is not strikingly diplomatic.

Having said this, I should add that I have never heard direct preaching against other faiths in the FGAG, in terms of "devil-worship" or suchlike. Matthew took up the issue of Christian preachers speaking like this. He did not like it, because "we should not insult them. It's not welcomed. It's aggravating them." Although he did agree with those preachers on the matter itself, he thought for the sake of good relations it did not make sense to point it out. [64] John called it "a big problem in Christianity" that "has created a really unhealthy atmosphere", but added that "I can see a great change in Pentecostalism also, because they have given up all these things, and they really try to reform themselves."

Missionary zeal has also earned Christians a bad reputation among other religious groups, according to some of my hosts. Pastor Philip told me about areas that had been anti-Christian, "scared of anything with Christianity". This fear came from a view of Christians as being "out to change us, convert us, or change our traditions".[65] This picture was confirmed by John, who as a Hindu "was very scared of Christianity and the church", because there were rumours about Christians converting others. Another negative aspect of Christianity in the eyes of some Indians is its association with the West.

[61] Interview with Pastor Philip 2008-02-29
[62] http://www.fgag.tv/aboutfgag.htm http://www.fgag.tv/home.htm 2008-05-16
[63] http://www.fgag.tv/gracechildren.htm 2008-05-16
[64] Interview with Matthew 2008-02-18
[65] Interview with Pastor Philip 2008-02-29

Pastor Philip said that people in the anti-Christian areas thought "we don't want anything extra from outside coming in; it's like a foreign god". Then "we have to kind of explain to them Jesus is not western" but actually from the Middle East.[66] John talked about "British Christianity", which was "not a biblical Christianity." The British found their culture superior to any other and imposed that culture rather than the Gospel and the Bible, he said.[67]

A problem related to this that came up in the interviews was Hindu fundamentalists opposing or even persecuting Christians. John described their intentions: "India belongs to Hindus, not to the Christians or to any other. And they are saying that if you want to continue your Christianity, you come under the umbrella of Hinduism."[68] According to Pastor Philip there is "more persecution now than ever before", but also "more people coming into Christianity or to the Lord as never before".[69] Rachel had also heard about persecutions of Christians in Orissa, but said that they took place only in remote villages and that in Bangalore she did not need to be afraid because she was Christian. "Bangalore is like: you live your life, I live my life... nobody is bothered", she said.[70] John also said that among the majority of the population religious sectarianism is not a problem. "Only some people, a few fundamentalists, they are creating some unhealthy atmosphere in our Indian society. Otherwise there's no problem."[71] Everyday integration with people from other religious traditions was natural to all of my hosts.[72] Like Rebecca said, they meet them as soon as they go out of their own homes.[73] All that were asked about it said that they had friends from other religions.[74] Several had gone to Christian schools or had children who did, but Hindu and Muslim children also went there.[75]

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[66] Interview with Pastor Philip 2008-02-29
[67] Interview with John 2008-03-03
[68] Interview with John 2008-03-03
[69] Interview with Pastor Philip 2008-02-29
[70] Interview with Rachel 2008-03-04
[71] Interview with John 2008-03-03
[72] Except perhaps Pastor Samodhanam and Brother Joshua – I did not speak to them on the matter.
[73] Interview with Rebecca 2008-02-16
[74] Interviews with Rebecca 2008-02-16, Matthew 2008-02-18, Pastor Philip 2008-02-29, John 2008-03-03, Rachel 2008-03-04
[75] Interviews with Matthew 2008-02-18, John 2008-03-03, Rachel 2008-03-04

On an individual level my hosts integrated with adherents of other religions without problems. But not surprisingly, considering their exclusivist theology, neither of the churches had any co-operation with other religious communities. Pastor Samodhanam's comment on the church's relations to Muslims and Hindus was that they can come to church and ask for prayers, and if God makes miracles, they will join the church.[76]

When it comes to ecumenical relationships there is a big difference between the two churches. In the FGAG it is common with visiting pastors, not only from Pentecostal churches. They have a German Lutheran missionary working with them.[77] The Pentecostals I met in Bangalore generally asked about my ecclesiastical affiliation. In the FGAG they were usually satisfied when they heard that I belonged to a Lutheran church. But in TPM they made serious attempts to convert me, as described above. The question of baptism was important, for example. Sprinkle baptism was of little use, and Pastor Samodhanam repeatedly told me that I should go through a proper water baptism and also receive the Holy Spirit before leaving India. He said that TPM does not have any co-operation with other churches because other churches do not like their very rigid principles and added that there was "no need to mingle with them". His answer to the question why he thought that the Pentecostal movement had attracted so many people the last century was: "See, the Pentecostal is the real one".[78]

As mentioned above, interaction with other religious groups as soon as one left the home was normal to my hosts. Integration within the home was another matter. On the question of intermarriage with other religious groups Pastor Samodhanam said that TPM has certain principles. Congregants should not even marry members of other churches, so there could be no question of Hindus or Muslims.[79] When John got married he was still in the indigenous IPC and everyone from the church, including the pastor, were concerned that he should get married with a "believer". His parents had other plans, however. "You have to marry according to our Hindu rituals", they said, and that was "a big problem". The pastor then helped arrange a marriage with a Christian girl and convince the parents to accept it, which

[76] Interview with Pastor Samodhanam 2008-02-25
[77] I met her after the Eagles youth service 2008-03-01.
[78] Interview with Pastor Samodhanam 2008-02-25
[79] Interview with Pastor Samodhanam 2008-02-25

John described as "a miracle".[80] In Rachel's family they have "Christian partners only", and she personally would not like to marry a Hindu or a Muslim. She said she might be denied the right to go to church if she did that. She wanted a husband who could help her grow spiritually.[81] Pastor Philip and his colleagues in FGAG told the congregation clearly that "believers should marry believers" and would be blessed by God if they did. It had happened that congregants had married among other religious groups, which sometimes turned out bad and sometimes good. There was no guarantee that they would bring their spouses to church, he said.

"If Jesus is the Lord, you know how to handle your marriage and everything properly," Pastor Philip said, "because the lordship of Christ is there",. If not, there would be conflicts and disagreements.[82] Rebecca also believed that "there is a third person who is involved (in a marriage). And that is the Lord. As long as the Lord is in the centre of that marriage, no matter what happens in the marriage, they can have a happy life."[83] John also thought that problems were likely to arise if a Christian married someone from another religious tradition, for example, because one might want to go to the temple but the other to church.[84]

Adjustment to the Pluralistic Environment

We have already seen how Pastor Philip and his colleagues felt a need to adjust their language in relation to other religious groups around them and how he felt a need to speak diplomatically about other religions. He did not like "going down to debasement" and trying to "bring down the other people's religion, because I'm living along with that" and it is important to show respect to others, because "if we don't respect, the more people we lose". He "realised it's better to exalt Jesus".[85]

Adjustment to the situation as a minority group in a religiously diverse environment was a general attitude among my hosts. Despite the message preached in church that the masses needed to be saved (not least in their own

[80] Interview with John 2008-03-03
[81] Interview with Rachel 2008-03-04
[82] Interview with Pastor Philip 2008-02-29
[83] Interview with Rebecca 2008-02-16
[84] Interview with John 2008-03-03
[85] Interview with Pastor Philip 2008-02-29

country), evangelising to strangers was very unusual among them. Pastor Philip told me that the FGAG's strategy was that people should witness to their own *oikos*. Their old strategy about witnessing to strangers had not worked so well.[86] Esther said that "we cannot force people" to come to Christianity. To talk to someone about it you need to have a friendship and "talk friendly over a cup of coffee". You cannot just approach an unknown person, she said.[87] Matthew said that though he felt a "concern and burden" for the souls of people who are not Christian "we cannot compel them to listen to our messages".[88] Rebecca was an exception in that she said she had felt prompted to talk to strangers about Jesus "so many times". But previously she "used to hesitate a lot" even to call herself Christian, because of the Christians' bad reputation in India.[89] When I spent time outside church with some of my hosts, "sharing the Gospel" with strangers was not something they seemed to reflect on. Pictures of Hindu gods, for example, seemed not to affect them in the least, but rather were something they were very used to seeing. When I asked Rachel if she ever felt that she should tell the owners in a Hindu shop or restaurant about Christianity she said that she "never got a thought like that".[90]

Active mission was not only unusual among strangers, but also among friends. To avoid controversies or loss of friendship my hosts often refrained from discussing religious issues with friends who were not Christian, or at least from bringing the topics up themselves. Instead they would pray to God for their friends. A common attitude was to leave the conversion of friends in God's hands, believing that God had a purpose and would call them when the time was right. Rachel said that since she herself disliked feeling forced, she did not want to force others. And though she had taken some friends to the FGAG to see if they liked it, she had never actually "spread the news to them... I don't know what people will think about it. I'm very conscious in that. And I'm too shy also... I'm kind of scared to talk about God's word to people, I mean to call or so", because she did not know what their reaction would be. In general she never talked about religion with friends who were not Christian. But she prayed that God would call them directly. She would like to talk to

[86] Interview with Pastor Philip 2008-02-29
[87] Interview with Esther 2008-03-15
[88] Interview with Matthew 2008-02-18
[89] Interview with Rebecca 2008-02-16
[90] Interview with Rachel 2008-03-04

people she knew about Christianity, but some may take it as an attempt to force them, which would "become a big issue actually". Therefore she did not like to talk about her faith.[91] John did not like to compare theological views with a friend who belonged to another religion, because it led to arguments and "in argument you can win anyone, but you will lose that person". Although many people in his neighbourhood had come to church because of his testimony he had waited until they took the first step and asked him about Christianity. "I don't insist Christianity on them or Christ on them. But I … share when they ask me."[92] Joseph and Samuel said that they did not talk to other students in their college about faith issues if they were not interested themselves. They said that they soon noticed what level people were on and how much they knew about the Bible.[93] Even Pastor Philip said it was when his Hindu or Muslim friends initiated conversations on theological issues themselves that he talked with them about it. This was because he did not want them to think that he was "pushing his religion on them", which they tended to do if he was too persistent. "I rather cherish the friendship", he said. He also prayed for his friends from other religions. In the end it was the Holy Spirit that brought about change, the pastor could not coerce people to become Christian.[94]

So instead of preaching when it was not welcome, my hosts preferred to wait until their friends took up faith issues themselves. They could also wait for other good opportunities, like when a friend was in some sort of crisis. Rebecca said that she did not talk about religion with friends who were not Christian. It was only if they had some problem that she recommended they go to church.[95] The family that Esther wanted to bring for the FGAG campaign had problems.[96] Pastor Philip said that "some crises, opportunities I look for", because then "they are open to anything, to listen". He did not start with talking about Christianity, but would "help them first... take them to the hospital or whatever. Because what happens is that opens them to listen... Because they know that you try; he's not just talking, he's also walking the talk."[97] Pastor Philip was not the only one

[91] Interview with Rachel 2008-03-04
[92] Interview with John 2008-03-03
[93] Conversation with Joseph and Samuel 2008-02-21
[94] Interview with Pastor Philip 2008-02-29
[95] Interview with Rebecca 2008-02-16
[96] Interview with Esther 2008-03-15
[97] Interview with Pastor Philip 2008-02-29

who thought that "walking the talk" was the most effective way to spread Christianity. Matthew talked much about how the behaviour of Christians would influence others. He has many friends who are not Christians, but "directly I cannot preach to them" so his mission among his friends was through "practical involvement" like supporting them when they were in need. "And personally within my experience, because of my behaviour, my attitude, my way of living, so many of my friends have said: Yes, he is a Christian. Jesus is a real god. And they have developed some kind of faith." This also applied to mission among strangers (in slum areas): "I cannot go and teach directly of Christianity to a stranger... once I've been an agent to give him relief, then I can talk about this."[98] John wanted his non-Christian friends "to know (the truth) through our Christian life, rather than imposing Christianity on them (verbally)". For example he has "never insisted" that his father should get baptised. "I'm not trying to force him. I just want to show God's love. Through our deeds, through our actions, not just simply talking." And he is praying that God will call his father.[99]

Even though "sharing the Gospel" with strangers was generally not practised, it was still sometimes seen as an ideal, as was witnessing more among friends. Sometimes when Rachel had gone to the FGAG and heard the preaching about "bringing souls" she had felt bad that she had not "called" people to come. She would "really want to do a lot of God's work (bring souls)", but felt that she was "still incomplete for that", which gave her a bad conscience.[100] About witnessing to strangers, Esther said that "maybe one day God will bring me up to that level".[101]

Self-images

Pastor Samodhanam compared the difference between The Pentecostal Mission and other churches to the difference between college and school.[102] This view of the respective church as providing deeper teaching on the Bible and how a Christian is supposed to live, and as taking such matters more seriously than mainline churches was common in both churches. That this resulted in more spiritual growth than one would get in other churches

[98] Interview with Matthew 2008-02-18
[99] Interview with John 2008-03-03
[100] Interview with Rachel 2008-03-04
[101] Interview with Esther 2008-03-15
[102] Interview with Pastor Samodhanam 2008-02-25

was also a common opinion. Esther said, for example, that in the Roman-Catholic church she used to go to they did not teach so deeply about "what we really need". But in the FGAG she had learnt many things and her faith had increased there.[103]

Pentecostal worship was seen as bringing about more profound change in the lives of those attending them. It was also described as livelier and freer. Rachel said that she personally felt that something was lacking in CSI. "Because you are just sitting... It's just the order of service you follow... And I could really see people will sleep in the sermon (in CSI). When it is so boring nobody will attend to listen to all that." In CSI[104] the worship went according to a "man-made" order and "you just come blankly, sit... and just listen to the sermon, sing songs and go back to your home, that's all. And what are you gaining from that?" In the FGAG on the other hand, the pastors waited for divine inspiration for their preaching and Rachel had learnt new things every Sunday: "and I felt like expressing it also".[105]

The central aspect of the self-image in TPM is what they see as their unique way of preparing people for the imminent Parousia. Several members of the ministry and congregation expressed their belief that they belong to the only church that does that.

An important aspect of the self-image in FGAG is that the church and its members are part of an international context (consisting of churches around the world fighting the same struggle) and see themselves as being a leading, important church.

Something else that is important for both churches' self-understanding is the conviction that their prayers are unusually effective and that miracles happen there, something that both pastors and members often talk about. This and other aspects of the self-image discussed here were shared by a man I met one day outside the pastor's room. He was from a Catholic background and first came to TPM because his mother had been afflicted by "black magic". They had tried many places, but only the prayers in

[103] Interview with Esther 2008-03-15; Rachel and Matthew also spoke about the teaching and spiritual growth in Pentecostal churches.
[104] Church of South India (A union of Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational churches)
[105] Interview with Rachel 2008-03-04

TPM could cure her. As a reslth they converted about ten years ago. Now he saw other advantages in TPM. They gave deeper teaching about the Bible and the pastor had more time for his congregants than the Roman-Catholic priests.[106] The good contact between pastors and church-members was another recurring theme in interviews and conversations. Another aspect of the self-understanding is of course that these are churches where the worship is free and people (in the Pentecostal manner) can really show their love for, and devotion to, God.

Conclusions

On the rhetorical level both churches are clearly exclusivist and stress the necessity to spread the faith. To confess Christ is generally seen as necessary for salvation. "Bringing souls" is more emphasised in the FGAG, while TPM focuses more on the perfection of those already there. But the close connection between eschatology and evangelism is noticeable in both these churches. Eschatology takes its part in the FGAG's preaching, while at the same time Rebecca's witnessing to strangers and the attempts to convert me are examples of how the eschatological theology of TPM leads to missionary efforts.

A literal reading of certain biblical texts as unproblematically authoritative provides the arguments for exclusivism. The social situation in Bangalore, where different religious groups live side by side, sometimes seems to call for a more pluralist way of thinking, but biblical passages usually have the final say, at least on a theoretical level. Another main reason for the exclusivist attitude taken is that members have experienced something very positive and want to share it with others, especially close loved ones.

Neither of the churches has any co-operation with other religious communities, probably as a result of their exclusivist theology. This makes followers of other religions primarily possible converts. (According to the message preached in the churches, that is. On the practical level that is not the case.) For both churches Hinduism, in particular, can work as an antithesis to themselves. Hinduism as "idolatrous" (with the importance given to iconography), "relativistic", "unethical" and "false" can be contrasted with these churches' lack of pictures (signifying a "direct"

[106] Conversation with anonymous man in TPM 2008-02-22

worship and relationship with God), stress laid on how to live (ethics), and unique "truth". Islam was described by some (in FGAG) as closer to Christianity because of its monotheism and ethics, and by some (in TPM) as idolatrous. Some negative opinions about Muslims were similar to common prejudices in Europe – that Muslim men treat women badly and are violent.

TPM's relations to other churches are determined by their view of themselves as being unique and their theology in which there is no room for different interpretations; while to the FGAG it is more important to be part of a larger picture. The FGAG is more ecumenical than TPM, which shows not least in their lack of attempts to convert me from Lutheranism. Still in both churches there does seem to be a general view that mainline churches are taking spiritual matters less seriously.

Their relations to other religious groups are coloured by a certain suspicion against Christians, who are known to be eager to convert others to their own faith and are associated with spreading Western influences and changing Indian traditions. Some Hindu fundamentalists oppose Christians, but in general co-existence between different groups is working well, according to my hosts.

Taking this co-existence into consideration, the churches and churchgoers have adjusted their strategies to reach new people. Even though the pluralistic environment did not noticeably influence the thoughts towards pluralism, it did influence the actions. As a minority group infamous for converting their neighbours they have to be careful about how and when to talk about their faith. Attempts to convert strangers were unusual among my hosts. Interaction with other religious groups in the city often seemed to take place without problems or reflection on evangelising. When they did try to spread the faith, they chose the occasions carefully. They wanted to be sure that their friends were receptive, which was often not the case in normal everyday situations when attempts to evangelise could lead to conflicts. One common strategy was to wait for good opportunities, like when someone faced a problem or crisis, or asked about Christianity. These were situations that had actually made some hosts turn to Pentecostal Christianity themselves (or to renew their faith).

The differences between the rhetorical and practical level are more marked in the FGAG, since the rhetorical level there is more focused on evangelism. One way to solve the tension between these levels is to leave the conversion of others in the hands of God. My hosts did that both philosophically (by thinking that ultimately it is only God who has the power to convert) and practically (by often letting prayers for other people's conversion be the only action they took towards that end). Since prayer is considered very effective in these churches, this is not simply a compromise to avoid conflicts. It is a way to feel that one actually does take measures for the conversion of a friend.

To summarise, the Pentecostals I met think that ideally all should accept Christ and have a relationship with him, as they do. But to maintain good relationships with other groups, both on the individual and societal levels, their actions towards followers of other religions most of the time do not include evangelism. Sometimes this goes against their conscience, but they have realised that it is more fruitful to wait for opportunities when people are unusually responsive at which time they show the positive aspects of Christianity through their actions, while praying for others to convert.

Sources

Interviews and conversations

Full Gospel Assembly of God (FGAG):

Interview with "Matthew" 2008-02-18 (recorded)
Interview with Pastor "Philip" 2008-02-29 (recorded)
Interview with "John" 2008-03-03 (recorded)
Interview with "Rachel" 2008-03-04 (recorded)
Interview with "Esther" 2008-03-15 (not recorded)

The Pentecostal Mission (TPM):

Interview with "Rebecca" 2008-02-16 (recorded)
Conversation with anonymous man 2008-02-16 (not recorded)
Conversation with "Joseph" and "Samuel" 2008-02-21 (not recorded)
Conversation with anonymous man 2008-02-22 (not recorded)

Interview/conversation with Pastor Samodhanam, "Joseph" and "Samuel" 2008-02-22 (not recorded). "Rebecca" was also present, but did not say much, except to explain something the pastor had said.
Conversation with Brother Joshua 2008-02-25 (not recorded)
Interview with Pastor Samodhanam 2008-02-25 (not recorded)

Except from these interviews and conversations that have been used explicitly in the text I have also learned from various other conversations with people in the churches.

Participant observations

FGAG Sunday service 2008-02-10
FGAG Fasting prayer 2008-02-14
TPM Sunday service 2008-02-17
FGAG Sunday service 2008-02-24
FGAG Fasting prayer 2008-02-28
FGAG Eagles youth service 2008-03-01
FGAG Care Cell meeting 2008-03-08
TPM Sunday service 2008-03-09
FGAG Women's church 2008-03-15

Internet and software

https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/in.html#People 2008-04-17
http://www.fgag.tv/aboutfgag.htm 2008-03-19
http://www.fgag.tv/gracechildren.htm 2008-03-19
http://www.fgag.tv/aboutfgag.htm 2008-05-16
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Literature

Hedlund, Roger E. 'Critique of Pentecostal Mission by a Friendly Evangelical', *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 8:1 (2005):67-94
Kvale, Steinar 1997. *Den kvalitativa forskningsintervjun.* Lund: Studentlitteratur.

Race, Alan [1983], 1993. *Christians and Religious Pluralism – Patterns in the Christian Theology of Religions*. London: SCM Press Ltd.

I have also read tracts, magazines and flyers printed by the churches, but since I have not used them explicitly in this text they are not listed here.

Swedish Missiological Themes, 96, 3 (2008)

'Battle for Survival': Responses of the Seventh-day Adventist Church to the HIV and AIDS Pandemic in Zimbabwe

Tompson Makahamadze & Fortune Sibanda

Of all the epidemics that have emerged in history, HIV and AIDS is one of the most widespread and devastating. Since the beginning of this pandemic in the 1980s, it has swept like veld fire around the world. In recent years it has centred on Africa, especially in the Southern African countries.[1] In fact, these countries including Zimbabwe have become a melting pot for the disease. Notably, the epidemic has received diverse responses from various stakeholders such as churches, governments, non-governmental organisations and individuals. This paper seeks to examine the responses of the Seventh-day Adventist Church (SDAC) in Zimbabwe to the HIV and AIDS pandemic. The SDAC is a worldwide church that believes in Jesus Christ as a World Saviour who will soon return to effect judgement on earth.[2] Its mission is to preach the gospel to all people and prepare them for the coming Kingdom of Glory. The name Seventh Day Adventist implies that they observe the seventh day of the week, Saturday, as the day of worship and that they look forward to the imminent return of Christ. The Church was formed in the 1960s by former followers of the Millerite Movement who include Mr. and Mrs. J. White, V. Himes and J. Bates.[3] The caption, 'Battle for Survival', serves to depict the nature and extent of the inevitable struggle of the church against the ruinous disease. Just like in any battle, there are two camps through which the struggle can be comprehended. On the one hand, we have HIV and AIDS that is wrecking havoc on the general populace. On the other hand, there is the SDAC that is striving to protect its members from the scourge. This paper therefore discusses the extent to which the church is managing to tackle the disease in Zimbabwe. The pos-

[1] For a detailed account on HIV and AIDS work in the Southern Africa see Frederiks 2008,4-22.

[2] Mukandabvute 2007.

[3] For the historical development of the SDAC see for example: Spicer 2006, 24-25; Makahamadze and Sibanda 2008, 290-308.

sible suggestions on how the Church can more effectively deal with this problem will be given as the paper unfolds. The last section of the paper will focus on the Missio-Theological Reflections.

Background

The emergence of the HIV and AIDS pandemic more than two decades ago took many churches, including the SDAC, by surprise. Like in the case of many other initial outbreaks no one had the fore-knowledge of how to deal with the epidemic. The question of its origin, the reasons for its emergence, the search for a cure and the meaning of life in the age of this disease immediately confronted the SDAC. Like other denominations in Zimbabwe, the SDAC sought the origins of the pandemic in the Bible. They argued that the epidemic was prophesied in the Bible, especially in the Old Testament. SDA Christians were quick to refer to Deuteronomy 28:22-27, 27-29, as evidence that the pandemic was foretold in the Bible. The text reads:

> The Lord will smite you with consumption and with fever, inflammation and fiery heat. The Lord will smite you with boils of Egypt and with ulcers and scurvy, and the itch of which you cannot be healed. The Lord will smite you with madness and confusion of mind; and you shall grope at noonday as the blind grope in darkness, and you shall not prosper in your ways.

This text is part of the Deuteronomistic formula of retribution, which talks of blessings when there is obedience and curses when there is pesa and disobedience.[4] In fact, the Old Testament people believed that there would be a sa'aqah cry as a result of suffering due to God's punishment for transgression and abundant blessings for mispat and sedaqah (Isa. 5:7). Many SDA Christians argued that HIV and AIDS is one of the epidemics referred to in these texts since it is not treatable. In addition, they believe that the pandemic is a result of punishment from God for sexual immorality and disobedience. According to the SDA Christians, indulgence, immorality and promiscuity are the sins that have posed the biggest health threat to human existence. Therefore they believe that repentance can go a long way in reversing the HIV and AIDS situation. This position might have been influenced by 2 Chronicles 7:14 which says "… if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their

[4] Thomson 1987, 4.

land". In fact, this text is a guiding principle for many churches. Clearly, many Adventist Christians seem to be unaware of the other causes of HIV and AIDS transmission such as mother to child transmission, rape, and use of sharp and unsterilized objects previously used by AIDS patients.[5]

Agreeably, the infections mentioned in Deuteronomy 28:22-24, 27-28 feature prominently in HIV and AIDS patients. People suffering from full blown AIDS experience hellish life as they are sometimes bombarded with a host of infections that are not curable. However, the correspondence between the infections mentioned in Deuteronomy and those found in HIV and AIDS does not imply that the pandemic was foretold in the Bible. Moreover, Deuteronomy does not speak of widespread epidemic; it outlines the infections that would befall the Israelites if they disobey their God. Other nations are not involved. On the contrary, HIV and AIDS is a cross-cultural and worldwide epidemic. There is a need for the church to equip its members with exegetical techniques to avoid anachronism. Notably, the association of HIV and AIDS with sexual immorality has led to unnecessary stigmatisation and abuse of the infected.[6] Instead of bringing hope and comfort to the afflicted, it created animosity, division and grief among the infected and the affected.

Methods and Procedure

The data used in this study was collected through formal and informal interviews, mainly in the Masvingo and Gweru Provinces between November 2007 and June 2008. Fieldwork involved interviewing SDAC lay Christians, pastors and church elders. Data was also gathered through questionnaires. Two hundred questionnaires were distributed randomly to SDA members and out of these one hundred and fifty were completed and returned to the researchers. Information sought revolved around such issues as sexuality, HIV and AIDS awareness programmes, treatment and prevention methods, and factual knowledge about HIV/AIDS as well as suggestions on how the disease can be tackled. Information was also gathered from seminars, camp meetings and sermons.

[5] For information on how HIV is transmitted, see also, Jackson 2002, 81-84.
[6] Wermter 2007, 34.

SDA Church's Response to HIV and AIDS

The initial response of the SDAC in Zimbabwe was a deafening silence and indifference about the pandemic. However, the church realised in the early 1990s the ferocity with which the AIDS pandemic attacked its members. Although they had no past experience of HIV and AIDS, the Adventists were called to attend to this problem urgently. On the one hand, the affected and infected members of the church needed healing and care. On the other hand, the uninfected required protection from the pandemic. Furthermore, a great number of the church's members had died of HIV and AIDS, including pastors. Pastor George Mwanza, the president of the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division said, "I have buried people who have died of AIDS - church members. There are pastors who are HIV positive that I know of and I counsel with….".[7] Pastor Nyoni states that AIDS was destroying at least four churches every year.[8] In the SDAC, a church is made up of at least 25 people. What this implies in the light of what Pastor Nyoni said is that HIV and AIDS is killing at least 100 people annually. This figure indicates that HIV and AIDS is a threat to the future of the church. In addition to what Pastor Nyoni said, Pastor Aaron Mukandabvute noted that 20 % of SDAC members are living with the virus in the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division[9]. In this section we want to discuss the responses of the church to HIV and AIDS and the challenges that they encounter in the process.

Some of the information obtained from questionnaires is tabulated as follows:

Items and responses	Yes	%	No	%
1.Does your Church have Education and Health Departments?	150	100	0	0
2.Does your Church discuss issues of sexuality?	30	20	120	80
3.Does your Church teach about condoms as prevention methods?	10	7	140	93
4. Does your church teach about the importance of getting tested before marriage?	150	100	0	0
5. Does lack of material and qualified staff affect the effective implementation of HIV and AIDS programmes?	96	64	54	36
6. Does your church have special programmes on HIV and AIDS?	18	12	138	92
7.Does your church have projects for the affected and the infected?	144	96	6	4
8.Does your church have special activities for the affected and the infected?	18	12	138	92

[7] Mwanza 2003, 14.
[8] Nyoni 11 November, 2007.
[9] Mukandabvute 2007, 2.

From the above responses 150 (100%) respondents unanimously confirmed they knew of the existence of a Health Department in the SDAC. Some follow up interviews indicated that professionally trained personnel guide this department. The Education and Health Departments in the church have proved to be of immense value in the fight against the epidemic. The personnel in these departments disseminate information on HIV/AIDS awareness and treatment through pamphlets, magazines, newsletters and other educational programmes. These departments, particularly the department of Health, advise members to be particularly careful about what, when and how they eat, as bad eating habits can lead to ill-health and makes the HIV infected individual more susceptible to opportunistic infections. Though not mandatory, the church also advocates an ovolacto-vegetarian diet rich in fruit, whole cereals and vegetables. This is an age long message that has become even more relevant and appealing to the HIV and AIDS era. Researchers who conducted over 250 studies observed that the ovolacto vegetarian diet led to better health and greater longevity.[10] Furthermore, the SDA Christians are encouraged to carry on a healthy lifestyle with no tobacco, alcoholic beverages or other drugs.[11] Consumption of such products is regarded as sinful. Anyone found in possession of these substances risks suspension from participating in church activities or even cancellation from the church register.[12] Thus a healthy lifestyle with simple health habits can do much more for the well being of people than the most advanced medical technology and this is especially so for HIV and AIDS victims. Some people living with HIV and AIDS also support the importance of the vegetarian diet. Lynde Francis, an HIV positive woman in Zimbabwe who has lived with the disease for over 20 years states:

> My belief is that if your great granny did not eat it, you should not eat it either. Indigenous and herbal dishes are the best. Besides boosting the immune system, they are also cheap to acquire, [and] one can make a delicious immune boosting meal straight from the garden.[13]

In line with the SDAC teachings, she recommends unrefined foods such as mugaiwa (unrefined meal-mealie), muriwo with dovi (vegetables with peanut butter), fruits and mutakura (a mixture of boiled maize and either roundnuts, cowpeas or groundnuts).

[10] Pamplona-Roger 2002, 111.
[11] Pamplona-Roger, 2002, 109.
[12] Zvobgo 1996, 323.
[13] *The Sunday Mail*, 1-7 April 2007, 11.

The data collected through questionnaires and interviews indicates that the church is not keen to discuss issues about human sexuality and an overwhelming majority indicated that the church does not discuss such issues. The responses indicate that 120 (80%) respondents agree that there are no programmes on sexual issues in the church whereas only 30 (20%) point out that the church discusses sexuality issues. In fact, as Oscar Wermter states, "The Church is associated with a very negative attitude towards anything to do with human sexuality and reproduction".[14] Talking and learning about sexuality is still considered a taboo in many SDA Churches. This explains why the SDAC resisted the AIDS Education programme initiated by the Government of Zimbabwe in the 1990s.[15] However, lessons on sexuality are given at special occasions such as weddings, camp meetings and family life seminars.

Weddings are important occasions where issues of sexuality and human reproduction are discussed. In fact, such occasions provide a good platform, not only for evangelisation, but also for disseminating information about HIV and AIDS issues. At a wedding that took place at Mucheke SDAC, pastor Nyoni delivered a sermon entitled, 'Shuramatongo nemuchato' (HIV/AIDS and Marriage).[16] He described sexual immorality, infidelity and 'small houses'[17] as the factors that threatened marriages in the church. He stressed that these factors fuel the spread of HIV and AIDS. The pastor concluded his sermon by showing a slide depicting emaciated bodies of HIV and AIDS victims. The purpose of this slide was to warn the couple of the dangers of sexual immorality and infidelity. It was revealed in the interviews that this was a unique wedding in the sense that the pastor had the courage to preach about HIV and AIDS and graphically illustrate the pictures of the infected at an occasion usually meant for merry-making.

At a Camp Meeting held in 2004 Pastor S. Musiiwa delivered a lesson on homosexuality and pornography.[18] This lesson was based on his research

[14] Wermter 2007, 9.
[15] Zindoga 2004.
[16] Nyoni 2006.
[17] A small house is an extra-marital relationship undertaken either by a husband or a wife. It is one of the avenues through which HIV and AIDS can be transmitted. In order to discourage the persistence of 'small houses' in Zimbabwe a local soap called 'Small House Saga', which exposes the dangers of the practice, is screened twice per week on the National Broadcasting Television.
[18] Musiiwa 2004.

findings and reflected the position of the SDAC. The paper was distributed throughout the provinces so that everyone attending a camp meeting would benefit. In brief, the paper described the various forms of pornography and homosexuality. In uncompromising terms, such acts were described as sinful. The paper, however, did not mention any connection between HIV/AIDS, pornography and homosexuality.

At a seminar held in Masvingo urban area attended by one of the researchers, many participants confessed that they did not discuss sexual issues with their children and that the church did not encourage such discussions. The seminar, themed 'Safe From Harm', targeted parents as well as adolescents between 12 to 20 years of the Masvingo Urban Churches. The aim of the seminar was to promote dialogue between parents and children on sexuality and reproduction. The seminar covered such topics as sexuality and human reproduction, human rights, parent-child communication and behaviour change. After the seminar, both the parents and the children indicated that they would discuss issues related to sexuality openly.

One hundred and forty respondents (97%) indicated that the church does not encourage the use of condoms as a way of preventing infection, and only 10 (7%) reported that the church approves of their use. Since the church believes that HIV and AIDS are a result of sexual immorality and disobedience, it preaches abstinence before marriage and fidelity after marriage as the most effective strategy in the fight against the pandemic. It is convinced that leading an upright life and following God's commandments are the surest ways of preventing HIV and AIDS. Mukandabvute claims that sexual abstinence is 99% safe, 100% innocent and gives 100% peace of mind.[19] As such, the use of condoms as a measure to prevent HIV and AIDS infection was met with resistance by the SDAC. Pastor Henry Chigogora, then Youth Director of Zimbabwe East Division Conference, said in a tape recorded interview, "If the Health workers come to teach about HIV and AIDS and the risks associated with it, I will welcome them. But if they talk about condoms, I will tell them to go to hell".[20] It was also reported in the interviews that five young people had been suspended during a youth gathering at Mafuva in Masvingo when condoms were found in their cabins. The SDAC believes that encouraging the use of condoms would lead to promiscuity, which is regarded as a violation of the sixth commandment (Exodus 20:14). Thus,

[19] Mukandabvute 2007, 2.
[20] Chigogora, January 2004.

the church is guided by the maxims 'Keep the Commandments and Stop AIDS' and 'Keep the Promise and Stop AIDS'. The use of condoms, however, is recommended for discordant married partners. Advising a man whose wife tested HIV positive, A.R. Handysides and P.N. Landless, SDA medical doctors said "the best advice we can offer you is that you should use a condom to reduce your risk of infection…. A condom reduces your risk some 85 percent".[21]

All the respondents indicated that the SDAC encourages members to go for HIV and AIDS counselling and testing before marriage. The church members are usually counselled on the need to go for HIV testing to enable them to make informed choices before they get married. The same message is also given to married people. This position enables the infected to take the necessary precautions to avoid further infection. Nevertheless, this study established that many SDA members are reluctant to get tested before marriage. Their fear is that they would not be able to cope with the stigma associated with HIV if they discover that they are HIV positive. In addition, they expressed fear that they would lose their families and fiancées who may not be infected.[22] This implies that many church members are not fully utilising the facilities of free counselling and testing offered by organisations dealing with HIV and AIDS issues. There are, however, some instances where members were tested before contracting marriage. An SDA couple of over forty years of age, who wedded on 6 April, 2008 in Masvingo Urban, went for voluntary counselling and testing before their wedding. The fact that they were both found to be HIV negative made them role models for the youth. Pastor Tunhira, who officiated at the wedding, commended the couple for protecting themselves from the deadly disease.

Only 18 respondents (12%) affirmed that the church holds special programmes on HIV and AIDS whilst 138 (92%) stated otherwise. This lower percentage could be attributed to some Interest Coordinators[23] who do not prioritise HIV and AIDS programmes. Some churches, especially in the Masvingo Province, tend to focus mainly on evangelisation that does not necessarily include issues of HIV and AIDS. In fact, in Masvingo churches,

[21] Handysides and Landless 2006,11.
[22] See also, Mashau 2008, 27-28.
[23] An Interest Coordinator is a person who implements SDAC programmes from the Conference at a local church. Apart from executing conference programmes, he also decides what should be done in the church.

HIV and AIDS programmes are rare. Findings gathered from our interviewees indicate that the last time that the Masvingo churches had a vibrant HIV and AIDS programme was in 2004. This was when the churches, through the Conference, invited health specialists such as doctors, dieticians and educationalists to facilitate an HIV and AIDS seminar. Thus, while some SDA churches are forthcoming in the fight against HIV and AIDS others are lagging far behind. The latter should pluck a leaf from the local and international SDAC initiatives.

In particular, the Adventist Development Relief Agency (ADRA) does important work in HIV and AIDS awareness campaigns. Richard Willis, a writer who has worked with sexually transmitted diseases in special treatment centres, outlines the activities of ADRA. These are: HIV and AIDS care and prevention through music and drama presentations by volunteers; the donation of school notebooks specially inscribed with HIV and AIDS prevention messages; the use of education clubs that teach on care for the infected through, inter alia, sports; utilise radio programmes to deal with real-life family and community situations; provide general consultative services for people; and offering individual and community development and disaster relief to all people without discriminating on the basis of age, ethnicity, political or religious affiliation.[24] This reveals how others are prioritising HIV and AIDS issues.

This paper has established that limited resources, brain drain, cultural practices, depleted health personnel, poor physical infrastructure, socio-economic challenges and time constraints pose a tremendous challenge to the church's struggle against HIV and AIDS. Ninety-six respondents (64%) affirmed that a lack of material and qualified personnel prevents the effective implementation of HIV and AIDS programmes, whereas 54 (36%) disagreed. The loss of critical staff in Zimbabwe cuts across all churches and the SDAC has not been spared. Many professionals including pastors and health experts migrated to the other countries in search of better economic opportunities. The loss of skills, experience and motivation has reached desperate levels, consequently retarding progress in the fight against the HIV pandemic. The few professionals who have remained in Zimbabwe prefer hospitals and clinics in urban areas to those in the countryside since these have better facilities such as good transport and communication networks.

[24] Willis 2002, 80.

The poor facilities in the rural areas of Zimbabwe do not only affect the professionals but also disadvantage the rural folk due to inaccessibility. Such movement has affected the church's health programmes in rural areas, as lack of health professionals in the church impinges upon the provision of up-to-date research based programmes. Therefore, issues on HIV and AIDS prevention, treatment and care are often done by laypeople that may not have adequate training in the requisite health techniques.

The church has multiple programmes and other needs that require money. The major sources of funding for the church are contributions made by its members, mainly through tithes and the collection of gifts. The majority of SDAC members in Zimbabwe, however, are not economically stable, implying that what they give to the church is not sufficient to implement all its programmes. Thus resource constraints are indeed a major drawback in the church's quest for quality programmes. The limited resources mobilised by the church do not enable it to fully address HIV and AIDS issues, but efforts are being made. In this way, a total of 144 respondents (96%) indicated that the church conducts programmes for the infected and affected members of the Church, whereas only 6 (4%) felt otherwise. The harsh hyperinflationary environment prevailing in the country has worsened the situation. Some churches, as has already been noted, are involved in fundraising activities to fund HIV and AIDS programmes.

Eighteen respondents (12%) indicated that their churches have special prayers and activities specifically for the affected and the infected, such as the HIV and AIDS week of prayer which is also found in the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe,[25] whilst 138 (92%) indicated otherwise. Some SDA churches through Women's Ministries administer community care and treatment programmes for both the infected and the affected members of the church and society in general. They provide food, clothes and other necessities including spiritual counsel. Such programmes saw the church extend its helping hand to those in prisons, orphanages, schools, old people's homes and children on the street. For instance, SDA in Chinhoyi has recently been granted permission to preach and teach about HIV and AIDS to prisoners. This could be a pool of people suffering silently from the epidemic. Apart from providing these people with basics, they also offer special prayers for them. As they know that the disease is scientifically incurable, they believe

[25] See for example, Methodist Church in Zimbabwe HIV and AIDS Policy Draft, July 2005.

that only God can effect the healing. Nevertheless, they believe that God exercises His discretion to heal or not to heal an individual. The church teaches that should one pray for spiritual healing, God answers in one of the three ways, namely, He may heal somebody instantly, He may delay the healing or He may decide not to heal for the spiritual benefit of the infected member in their endeavour for salvation. Therefore the SDA Christians are not worried if they fail to heal HIV and AIDS patients.

Way Forward: Challenging the Challenger

The SDAC in Zimbabwe has a mammoth task to prevent and protect its members and would-be members from the HIV and AIDS pandemic. Since the HIV and AIDS epidemic spreads like veld fire, there is need to confront the disease by adopting multi-faceted strategies to curb its spread. As a way of confronting the epidemic, the church should strive to eliminate all forms of social injustice. As Musa W. Dube rightly points out "where there is poverty, gender inequality, human-rights violation, child abuse, racism, ageism, HIV/AIDS stigma, classism, international injustice, violence, ethnic and sex-based discrimination, HIV/AIDS thrives".[26] The church as the voice of the voiceless has a mandate to eradicate these factors. Notably, Jesus preached good news to the poor, proclaimed release to the captives, set at liberty those who are oppressed and to healed the sick (Lk 4:16-19 cf. Isa. 61:1-2). By following the example of Jesus, the church can win the fight against HIV and AIDS.

In order to play a part in arresting the spread of HIV and AIDS, as well as providing quality care, the church requires training and education in all issues that pertain to prevention, treatment and care of AIDS sufferers. It should not hesitate to utilize mainstream HIV and AIDS education in its institutions of learning. Notably, many SDAC pastors who are now serving never learned about HIV and AIDS during their training. They did not get instruction on HIV and AIDS counselling, care and prevention. Yet they are expected to confront the challenge of HIV and AIDS. Solusi University, where the pastors and other Church ministers are trained, should instruct them to read the Bible from the context of HIV and AIDS. Pastors should also be encouraged to develop liturgy that specifically addresses the pandemic.[27] Though the AIDS crisis demands the use of abundant resources ranging from human,

[26] Dube, 2003, vii.
[27] M.W. Dube, vii.

financial to medical resources, the SDAC can adopt simple strategies that do not necessarily involve precious resources but go a long way in alleviating the problem. Examples of the strategies that can be used include:

(a) Having panel discussions on the social issues linked to HIV and AIDS in the community.
(b) Promoting research projects related to HIV and AIDS issues to church members.
(c) Providing a question box within the church premises where members can ask question about HIV and AIDS anonymously and have their questions answered through special programmes.
(d) Having brainstorming sessions where members come up with ideas of their own to promote HIV and AIDS awareness and ways of caring.
(e) Inviting AIDS patients and those affected to share in the social and spiritual activities of the church. The church can invite individuals like Pastor Maxwell Pakachawo and Mr. Davies Mazodze, a lecturer at the United College of Education in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. These individuals have openly revealed their HIV status and appear on national television proclaiming the noble message of living positively with HIV and AIDS. Their motto can be captured thus: 'Don't be negative about being positive'. The church can invite these people as resource persons to fight yet another form of pandemic, namely stigmatisation and discrimination of those living with HIV and AIDS.
(f) Initiating fundraising programmes for people living with HIV and AIDS.[28]

There is no doubt that these initiatives require little from financial resources. They require will power and determination of the church members.

Missio-Theological Reflections

From a theological perspective, the doctrine of Parousia and the institution of the Sabbath to a greater extent divert the attention of many SDA Christians in Zimbabwe from the HIV and AIDS issues. The SDAC is renowned for preaching the doctrine of the imminent Parousia. M. Finly highlights the

[28] Willis, 79.

importance of the doctrine of the imminent return of Christ saying, "The Second Coming of Christ is the blessed hope of the Church, the grand climax of the gospel".[29] The doctrine is based on an interpretation of Daniel 8:14 which says that after a period of 2300 years Christ would return to cleanse the sanctuary. According to the calculations of the Adventists, the prophetic days would terminate on 22 October, 1844. They believed that the sanctuary represented the earth. Hence, the prophecy was interpreted to mean that Jesus Christ would return on 22 October, 1844 to bring judgement on earth.[30] When the appointed time came, and the Parousia did not occur, numerous followers of William Miller suffered cognitive dissonance. Many of these had sold their valuables in anticipation of the great event, which never came to fruition. According to Festinger, cited by Togarasei, "Cognitive dissonance always gives rise to activity oriented towards reducing or eliminating the dissonance".[31] There was a great temptation for the group to disband as a result of the disturbances. However, instead of disbanding, some of the followers of Miller embarked on an extensive programme of rationalisation. They rationalised the discrepancy of the event saying that the prophecy was fulfilled. For them, on 22 October, 1844 Christ entered the sanctuary in heaven and will at any time descend to judge the world. They argue that Miller and the earlier followers erred when they interpreted the sanctuary to mean the earth. With the conviction that Christ may come soon, they undertook and intensified the programme of proselytising, which was characterised by a series of sermons on the second coming of Christ, camp meetings, revivals and crusades. Although they have moved from their initial position, of time setting, to the belief that no one knows the hour of his coming, they still proclaim that the advent of Christ is imminent.[32] In their preaching SDA Christians are guided by such biblical passages as: the parables of the ten virgins (Mt 25:1-13) and the coming of the Lord (1 Thess. 4:13-18) which talk about the imminent return of Jesus Christ.

The SDAC doctrine of the Second Coming has affected their other programmes, including their approach to HIV and AIDS. Instead of investing

[29] Finley 2003, 27.

[30] Spicer 2006, 24; Wieland 1997, 119-122; White 1888, 396-411.

[31] Togarasei 1997, 56.

[32] See also, Adventist Pioneer Library, http://www.tagnet.org/apl/Gallery.htm. This website addresses, among other issues, the history of the SDAC, beliefs and practices of the church and the relationship between the SDAC and other Protestant churches. It is clear from the Adventist Pioneer Library that the doctrine of the Second Coming and the Sabbath observation on a Saturday are what distinguish the SDA from other churches.

resources in HIV and AIDS awareness, prevention and healing programmes, many SDA Churches today exert their energy to evangelisation. They believe that they alone have the mandate to carry the advent message to the entire world. The attention given to HIV and AIDS issues is very minimal. This implies that the disease is not regarded as a major challenge requiring immediate consideration. In fact, the pandemic is regarded as one of the signs of the return of Jesus in the same way earthquakes, wars, droughts, floods, famines and pestilences are viewed (cf. Mt 24:7; Lk 21:10-12). Such perceptions could create complacency and a lack of adequate initiatives for combating the disease. A number of SDA preachers question the logic of preaching about AIDS when the return is so imminent. Instead of wrestling with the problem, many believers feel that they should intensify the programme of evangelism to prepare people for the return of Christ. Unless preachers integrate the HIV and AIDS message into their doctrines, their preaching will not touch the lives of those infected and affected by the disease who heed to their call and join their church. If the sick do not receive compassion and healing they may end up seeking assistance from the spirit-type churches[33] and ministries, which claim the ability to provide physical healing even to those suffering from the epidemic. Mathias and Mildred Ministries of Zimbabwe often invite people to bring "all the sick, the HIV infected, diabetic, heart troubled, victims of cancer, tuberculosis, high blood pressure, ulcers, the deaf and mute, paralytic and those suffering any other affliction"[34] to their healing miracle crusades. They believe that Jesus is a healer and through faith in him patients receive their healing and deliverance from all forms of devil bondage. Some people who claim to be formerly infected with HIV and AIDS have often appeared on national television testifying that they have been cured of the disease. The faith healers are convinced that physical restoration is a sign of redemption in the hereafter. Thus they offer an attractive package to both the infected and the affected unlike the SDAC which pays little attention to the physical needs of its members. This does not mean that Adventists are not doing anything to assist HIV and AIDS patients. We have already noted the good works performed by some SDA churches locally and internationally in the fight against the disease. However, many SDA churches in Zimbabwe are lagging behind in this struggle. Although the doctrine of Parousia is not bad

[33] For example, Johane Marange Church in Zimbabwe commands a large following because of its claim to possess healing powers. For more information on this aspect, see for example, Daneel 1986; Sibanda, Makahamadze and Maposa 2008, 68-86.

[34] Madzivanzira and Madzivanzira October 2004.

per se, it should be moderated and merged with HIV and AID programmes for the growth of the church. Ignoring this aspect impacts negatively on the already afflicted church. Research has shown that there is a high death rate due to the AIDS epidemic, particularly in the 14 to 49 age group who are economically active and constitute the majority of church membership. This is likely to affect the human and material resources of the church. The church should follow the example of Christ who strove to satisfy the needs of his audience in spite of the imminence of the kingdom of God he proclaimed to them.

The institution of the Sabbath is yet another stumbling block in the fight against HIV and AIDS in the SDAC. The Sabbath for the SDAC lasts from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset (Lev. 23:32). The basis of this teaching is the third commandment, which says, "Remember the Sabbath Day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labour, and do all your work; but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the lord your God…" (Exodus 20:8-10). It is argued that the commandment is based on creation stories where God is said to have created the world and everything in it in six days and rested on the seventh day; which is Saturday. On the seventh day, SDA Christians are supposed to suspend all their activities and devote the holy hours to God. They are required to worship, visit the sick and preach the advent message to the people. Ellen G. White, cited in the Seventh Day Adventist Church Manual says, "The Sabbath is not intended to be a period of useless activity. The law forbids secular labour on the rest day of the lord; the toil that gains livelihood must cease; no labour for worldly affairs or profit is lawful that day…"[35]

The institution of the Sabbath is one of the major causes of division among SDA Christians and those from other denominations. The SDA Christians claim that they are the only ones who keep the law in its entirety. All those who observe other days of worship, including Sunday, are said to be violating the Sabbath law. It is from this backdrop that many SDA Christians are reluctant to fellowship with non-Adventists. Moreover, SDA Christians are opposed to any form of ecumenism that seeks to "bring all the churches and denominations to into one super church in both doctrine and worship patterns".[36] They argue that accepting ecumenism would force them to abandon the Sabbath of the Lord and force them to observe Sunday as the day of worship, which is a violation of God's commandment. They adhere

[35] Seventh-day Adventist Church 2005, 174.
[36] McElwain 2002,128.

to Paul's advice that says, "be ye not unequally yoked with unbelievers" (2 Corinthians 6:14-18). The implication is that SDA Christians are not eager to work with other Christians from other denominations.

While the SDAC is an autonomous church and has the right to adhere to its doctrines, SDA Christians are encouraged to co-operate with other Christians and non-Christian organisations in the fight against the HIV and AIDS epidemic, as the battle against this disease cannot be won single-handedly. Christians who think that they would have fulfilled the Gospel when they have preached to the people are surely mistaken. G. Kinoti who used to think likewise notes, "We failed to apply the gospel to the whole of life, limiting it to spiritual life only. We read the scriptures selectively, placing emphasis on those that talked about justice, peace and material well-being. We …must seek to apply the whole of the Word of God to the whole life".[37] The Church should adopt a holistic ministry, which resembles that of Christ Jesus who did not only preach the Gospel of the Coming of the Kingdom of God. He also fed the hungry, healed the sick, comforted the sorrowful, etc. In fact, Jesus touched people at the point of their greatest needs. As W. O'Donovan states, "Nothing opens people's hearts more than loving ministry to their physical and emotional needs."[38]

Conclusion

This study has noted the struggle of the Seventh-day Adventists in the struggle against HIV and AIDS in Zimbabwe. It has analysed the perceptions of SADC members and their responses to the epidemic. It has also established that there are some Adventist churches which are trailing behind in this battle, especially those in the rural areas, yet the pandemic continues to ravage. The paper has also argued against stigmatisation and mudslinging by some church members, which fuels the spread of the disease and impedes the development of the church. As part of the solution the paper encourages the SDAC in Zimbabwe to utilise simple but effective strategies to raise awareness and equip church members with skills to provide care and protection for the infected and affected. Above all, the church should be moderate in its teaching about the Parousia as it compromises the struggle against the monstrous HIV and AIDS disease.

[37] Kinoti 1994, 2.
[38] O`Donovan 2000, 66.

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Book Reviews

Emi Mase-Hasegawa
Christ in Japanese Culture: Theological Themes in Shusaku Endo's Literary Works
Leiden: Brill 2008; xxvi, 250 pp.

First of all, I would like to thank Emi Mase-Hasegawa for giving me an opportunity to reconnect with Shusako Endo, an author-theologian who influenced my theological thinking immensely in the early 80's. Since then I have not kept á jour with his development and thus still have to acquaint myself with his last book, *Deep River*.

Christ in Japanese Culture is a revised version of Emi Mase-Hasegawa's doctoral thesis from Lund University. As indicated by the title, Mase-Hasegawa's basic question is how to make sense of Christ and Christianity in the Japanese context, or framed more simply, "How can one be Christian and Japanese?" and she turns to Endo as her guide in this quest. In her preface, she makes clear that it is her own personal quest as well as Endo's, and that she in many respects can identify with him. Like Endo, Mase-Hasegawa received Christianity from her parents, but as she grew up became increasingly uneasy with her Christian identity, experiencing it as an alien faith in the Japanese context, and herself as "different" in western Christian contexts.

In Endo's work, she detects his struggle to inculturate the Christian faith in terms of *koshinto*, the indigenous beliefs and spirituality of the Japanese people. *Koshinto* is a term introduced by Mase-Hasegawa as her analytical tool and not a concept found in Endo's work. Significant traits in *koshinto* are, according to Mase-Hasegawa, a non-rational, emotional approach to religion based on a loyalty to nature with a syncretising attitude seeking harmony in diversity, inclined toward dependence and with a strong "feminine" dimension.

Mase-Hasegawa describes the stages in Endo's literary development with the headings "Conflicts", including the autographical novel *Foreign Studies*, which in a claustrophobic atmosphere despairs of reconciling East and West;

"Reconciliation", starting with the masterpiece *Silence* which marks the beginning of his theological quest for a Japanese Christianity; and "Mutual Integration", culminating with his last novel *Deep River* where he, in Mase-Hasegawa's interpretation, reaches a global, pluralist theology.

For one who has read Shusako Endo with western eyes, it opens new and intriguing perspectives to be introduced to the Japanese dimensions of his work. For example, in a footnote Mase-Hasegawa discusses the translation of the expression *Fumi ga ii* in the crucial episode in *Silence* where the missionary is commanded to trample on the *fumie*, the image of Christ, as a sign of his apostasy. He hears the *fumie* speak to him, and in the English translation it says "Trample!" Mase-Hasegawa would prefer "You may trample", a softer, more passive, "motherly" expression. This, in Mase-Hasegawa's interpretation, is an example of how Endo's Christology involves the feminine aspect of Jesus.

In discussing Endo's relationship to his mother, the "feminine" aspects of Japanese religiosity, as well as the "Maria Kannon" of the *Kakure Kirishitans*, the underground Christian movement that survived from the days of the early mission to the 19th century, Mase-Hasegawa emphasises the "maternal" aspects of Christ in Endo's theology. It is an important aspect, but I wish that Mase-Hasegawa, who defines herself as a feminist, would have problematised the terms "feminine" and "motherly" – terms which, at least from a western feminist viewpoint, are not unproblematic.

In the same manner, a discussion of the terms "Japanese", "Asian" or "Eastern" would have avoided the tendency to essentialism which permeates Mase-Hasegawa's work. Is it wholly adequate and unproblematic to speak of a Japanese spirituality? To what extent is the dichotomy between East and West an orientalist construction? Since the 1990s, there has been a discussion among Asian theologians about the relevance of the concept "asianness" or of Asian theology. There are vast differences within the continent of Asia – however one wants to define its borders – and among Asian theologians affiliated with EATWOT it has even been questioned whether Japan, which lacks the experience of colonialism and with an economic status as a first world rather than a third world country, should at all be considered as an Asian country. This discussion has not found its way into *Christ in Japanese Culture*. Personally, having read Mase-Hasegawa's book, I think it is

meaningful to speak of "Japanese culture" etc., but it would have added to the credibility of the work if the author had qualified these terms.

Mase-Hasegawa does not, however, view Endo exclusively through the Japanese lens, but also traces influences of contemporary western theology and psychology, such as negative theology, Hick's pluralism and Jung's concept of the unconscious, in his theology. Especially, she underlines how the pluralism that Endo developed in his later years coincides with Hick's ideas. Perhaps one can question whether Endo is a pluralist, as Mase-Hasegawa's retelling of *Deep River* seems to point rather to a form of inclusivism with a "universal Christ" being found in all religions – but as I have not read the book myself, I will not pursue this discussion.

In her conclusion, Mase-Hasegawa uses the traditional image of the seed that is sown in new soil as a symbol for inculturation. It could have been interesting to introduce Chung Hyun Kyung's critique of this image as a patriarchal understanding of receiving cultures as passive recipients into the discussion. "We are the text, the Gospel is the context" claims Chung in a reversal of the understanding of Gospel reception. Mase-Hasegawa's book contains no references to Chung, though she borrows her term "life-affirming syncretism", which has a reference to Kosuke Koyama, who in the reference does not really subscribe to a positive view on syncretism.

I have pointed out a few points that could have added to the complexity of Emi Mase-Hasegawa's book, but they are really marginal compared to the great achievement of her work. It is truly a ground-breaking work, systematizing the theology that is implicit in a literary work of a great author, offering new insights into literature as well as theology. The personal tone of the book where Mase-Hasegawa, while maintaining academic accuracy, acknowledges that Endo's quest is her own and draws her own conclusions concerning the inculturation of Christianity in Japan, which makes it all the more urgent. She also shows that Endo's work, though steeped in the Japanese context, has universal significance. I hope that many through this book will discover or re-discover Shusako Endo as one of the most profound theologians and authors of the 20th century.

Helene Egnell

Sebastian Murken (ed.)
Ohne Gott leben:
Religionspsychologische Aspekte des ››Unglaubens‹‹
Marburg: diagonal-Verlag, 2008, 262 pp.

Over the last decades we can observe globalization and pluralisation advancing a growing encouragement of interfaith-dialogue and cooperation. On the other hand we can notice a lack of dialogue between those who believe and those who disbelieve even though they meet and interact in their everyday lives.

In 2002, due to this situation, Werner Höbsch and Bernhard Riedl of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Cologne spared no effort to launch an online project (www.ohne-gott.de) intended to open a dialogue with those who consider themselves non-believers. Its users are invited to report and explain what a life without God is like. In 2006 Dr. Sebastian Murken from the Institute of Science of Religion, University of Leipzig initiated a research project base on this information. He and his students studied the comments people posted on www.ohne-gott.de from a psychological perspective. The collected results of this exploration are now available in the positively refreshing book *Ohne Gott leben, Religionspsychologische Aspekte des ››Unglaubens‹‹*.

Whereas psychology of religion frequently examines the psychological aspects of believing and believers' lives, it is seldom concerned with the lives of non-believers (p. 9f). With this in mind the book is a contribution to the study of doubt and renunciation of faith that takes individual situations and perspectives into account. Indirectly it illuminates the change of faith contents and thereby also the contemporary conditions of religiosity and even spirituality. The comprehensive ambition of the research project was to establish categories that go beyond the classical dichotomy between belief and disbelief whereby embracing the heterogeneity of the phenomenon. The leading question was how individuals explain and legitimate their scepticism and disbelief and it became evident that there is a wide spectrum of answers. The material was divided into three categories: doubt and disappointment, denial, and alternatives.

The first category, doubt and disappointment, contains material by those who do not resolutely deny God or religion but rather had had experiences that made them sceptical (p. 39). Within this group a range of different arguments were stressed by the contributors to explain their disbelief. Thus these arguments help provide individual meaning. Some people attributed the motive to disbelieve on the question of theodicy, and personal and general affliction; some to a negatively connoted or critical view of God and the institutionalized church. Others mentioned their desire for the ability to believe and to receive God's support. Finally, some people felt aggrieved, hurt and disappointed by either God or representatives of the church. The material thus shows that disbelief can be an emotional decision or a temporary state in an individual's worldview.

The second category, denial, deals with the comments that somehow express denial of the existence of God or the purpose of religion (p. 139). A huge group in this category represent those who are unconcerned or insensible regarding God and religion. These so-called "religiously indifferent" people neither have experienced any kind of religious socialisation nor do they know much about religion. Living without God for them is not a question mark but a natural state. Moreover, this category includes atheists who in a narrow sense deny the existence of God and in a broader sense people who deny the existence of any gods or religion as such. They both argue against certain aspects of the Bible, Christianity or the church and the possibility to prove the existence of God and/or anything at all transcendental. Believing, for them, is associated with psychological complexes and dependence whereby their disbelief is experienced as a true and free position (p.168). Furthermore, this category incorporates agnostic points of view that are either declaring that the existence of God/gods is undetermined, will not ever be possible to explain or is irrelevant for one's life. Thus agnostics are situated between belief and disbelief at the same time as their arguments are located between the religiously indifferent and the atheistic positions. This category shows that disbelief can be a matter of relativity; irrelevance for the individual's life and neglect are more or less reflected and elaborated in this point of view.

However, the material of the third category, alternatives, is characterised by those who prefer other religious or worldviews to those of Christianity such as Buddhism, Satanism, Islam, or different forms of spiritualism, humanism or scientism. This category makes it clear that a life without the Christian, and in particular Catholic, God can be a life with an alternative God, gods

or a world view, moreover the Christian God is neither the natural nor the most attractive choice in today's Germany.

Nevertheless, this third category indicates the deficiencies of this study's results. It illustrates that the psychological categories of belief/disbelief fail when they are applied to material regarding belief in the Christian God. As a matter fact, this evokes the methodical difficulties that the research group had to deal with since the material has such a Catholic bias. One can wonder to what degree the fact that the internet site in question was launched by representatives of the Catholic Church inspired or affected the users. Would they have answered in the same way if the internet site had been initiated by another church, a ministry of the Federal Republic of Germany or a private blogger? Furthermore, it has to be taken into account that the material was collected between 2002 and 2006, which is post September 11 and shortly before Richard Dawkins' *The God Delusions* initiated the so-called new atheism. It is consequently a laudable merit of Murken's research project to have taken this unique material into account in this book and to have provided the wider public with it.

First of all Murken and his students had to examine the material to discover which questions could be analysed (p. 32). It is needless to point out that the material could not claim to be representative for the whole of German society, because material from the internet is subject to certain self-selection. Keeping these constraints in mind and collecting the available information from a total of 1226 documents it could be demonstrated that about three quarters of those who posted on the internet site were under the age of 40 (46,4 % between twenty-one and forty, 30,4 % under twenty-one, n = 358). At the same time 39, 7% of the users could be identified as male, 18, 1 % as female, while over 40 % did not mention their sex (n = 663) (p. 27f). Even though these numbers correlate with general statistics of internet users, they give a rather uncertain picture about how the material was built.

Therefore this study applied an explorative and qualitative approach to reconstruct and understand the individuals' attitudes and positions. Hence in a second step the contents of the documents were analysed and coded; categories were discussed, defined and allocated with patterns of argumentations and finally exemplified. At the same time the process offered an opportunity for the students to experience scientific work. The project thus represents an exceptional and pedagogical way of learning, teaching and proceeding through a scientific process. Of course a professional research group would

have come to different and certainly more detailed and profound results, but the students' curiosity and engagement can be seen as a resource of its own. Hence the book is a salient example demonstrating that these rather unconventional forms of student–teacher interaction can be productive and should not be undervalued in social science. Therefore specialists in the field may find the book as a source of inspiration for their own work. In addition, the book supplies the reader with a great deal of background information concerning the particular categories, their history and models of explanation taken from the field of psychology of religion. This makes an interesting introduction and can be read by students and general public alike.

Still, to a certain degree the subcategories are ambiguous although they demand to be distinct and precise. For instance, the subordinated category "atheist", that in both its narrow and broader sense is counted as denial, shows a significant resemblance to the subordinated category of "scientism" that is included among the "alternatives". Even though the book offers a general chapter on methods, I would have preferred to read about how the particular categories were generated. However, the fact that some categories partially overlap actually proves that disbelief is not a one-dimensional phenomenon but a complex and manifold one. It involves one's personal relationship to, and experience of God, and religious representatives; one's general world view; the construction of meaning and priorities, but even one's surroundings and society; and, last but not least, one's particular situation. The merit of the book is its focus on this fact.

With this discussion in mind it is no surprise that the book avoids stringent definitions of the terms belief/disbelief to the advantage of a model that characterises belief and disbelief as parts of a whole panorama of world views. Following Ninian Smart, world views are understood as relevant religious or non-religious contents which the individual is constructing and deriving meaning from (p. 255). From this point of view atheism, scientism and scepticism are beliefs.

Apart from the categories some other interesting aspects were observed. Many of the messages analysed presented a negative view of the Bible and selected bible verses were quoted and used as arguments against God, Christianity or the institution of the church. At the same time there were a number of stereotypes, factoids and prejudgements observed as well as self-made exegetics which correspond to the declining knowledge about Christianity in European

societies. Furthermore, a number of messages argued with the binary distinction between believing and knowing. Along with this comes the opinion that God simply does not belong to modern societies but is a concept of the past. Belief is here exclusively understood as cognitive. Emotional, social or esthetical aspects are not taken into account. Finally, there are messages that voice it is God's disappointment that makes it impossible to believe. It is noticeable how often God is equated with the church and the church with its representatives. In addition one could have expected more radical voices where most of the material shows personal issues in the question.

According to the material, the church and the actions of its representatives, both in history and nowadays, have an enormous impact on the credibility of the Catholic belief. This fact is not only crucial for mission studies, but it also illuminates that the God that atheists deny is not necessarily the same God that Catholics believe in. Representatives of churches and other religious organisations have to be aware of that fact in order to proceed in fruitful work. This conclusion makes a dialogue, a mutual search for understanding beyond the boundaries of incommensurability between believers and non-believers even more important, especially when noticing a certain sharpening of atheist groups over the last two years (p. 252).

To sum up, it can be said that the book shows that religion can serve as a cornerstone in one's identity and worldview. One can turn themself to it or against it while others do not bother at all. Over all the landscape of worldviews is rather vivid. Of course the results have to be seen in the German contexts but they still might attest a more general tendency. At the same it demands further research.

Still, reading the book one has to notice that even though the initiators of the website give a report about their idea and reactions, the question To Live without God – what does it look like? can doubtless be interpreted as a provocation or a matter of justifying a deviant position. Actually it is quite surprising that disbelieving individuals took the effort and were able to write about their relationship to God. The book demonstrates that when it comes to worldviews, there is no deviant position today. Nevertheless, it illuminates that we today might need a barefaced curiosity in order to reach out to people and connect with them in dialogue.

Vicky Marie Eichhorn

Charles E. Farhadian (ed.)
Christian Worship Worldwide:
Expanding Horizons, Deepening Practices
Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007, 301 pp.

There are anthologies more interested in becoming published than being read. Consisting of articles with little or a far-fetched cohesion, and lacking internal progression or discussion. I am happy to say that *Christian Worship Worldwide* is not one of those anthologies. Instead, this book has a thought-through disposition with three main parts building explicitly on each other, with different writers referring to and discussing each other's contributions. The strong presence of Farhadian, the editor, helps to hold the work together: he not only introduce the book, but also the three main parts and even each individual article which places them in context and highlights their particular contribution to the whole. The fact that the book ends with an index of both topics and names – something none too common in anthologies – strengthens the impression that this is a work with a great many hours, as well as money, invested into it. In short, it is an ambitious work.

The second section possesses the book's main contribution. It consists of seven case studies of worship in Zimbabwe, India, South Korea, Latin America, the Amazon, Samoa, and Papua New Guinea. Surrounding this and holding it together is a first section containing an article about plurality of worship from a Biblical perspective written by Andrew Walls, and a third section with five articles that discuss theologically some of the implications and questions raised by the studies in part two.

The title of the book is slightly misleading. It is not worldwide worship that is investigated, but worship in the non-western world. This is pointed out on the first page of the book but the paradoxical relation between title and scope is never excused or even explained. The book can be described as a book for the North about the South – a characterization that might sound a bit derogatory, but it is really just descriptive. The book has a clear "we" (p. 282), "our" (p. 210) and "ourselves" (p. 170), which is generally the USA and sometimes the western world in general, while the seven case studies are from non-western contexts. I have no moral objections against this – having a specific audience makes communication more effective and the topic surely

deserves further study. One can, however, lament the absence of a case study of worship in the West. To have the image of, say, a postmodern, suburban house-church next to those surveyed in the book would have enriched the painting and also made clear the extent to which worship in the West is context-bound as well. Not that there is any tendency of denying this in the book; on the contrary the continuity between western culture and worship and the difficulties to appropriate; for example, traditional western liturgy in other contexts are pointed out repeatedly.

Methods and approach vary between the different main parts of the book, but also to some extent within these sections. This is most apparent in the second part made up of the seven case studies. The preface does not promise a unifying method, but only the "analyzing [of] illustrative examples of worship practices" (p. xv). The predominant method is, however, phenomenological, wherein concrete aspects of worship are carefully described and analyzed. Along with this the reader finds historical and anthropological investigations that give an understanding of the various contexts. While all three perspectives are present to some extent in each of the seven studies, there are still variations in relation to prominence. The phenomenological approach dominates the studies by Dana L. Robert and M. L. Daneel (Zimbabwe), Thomas A. Kane (Samoa), and Charles E. Farhadian (Papua New Guinea). In his study of worship in the Amazon, Robert J. Priest has more of a philosophical approach and focuses largely on the theological continuity and disruption when it comes to issues such as ethics and the image of God in the "traditional" and "Christianized" culture. Miguel A. Palomino and Samuel Escobar describe the broader trends of worship in Latin America with a focus on its "pentecostalization". The article includes a historical overview from the 1960s to today, as well as a phenomenological analysis of different agents in a modern neopentecostal service (song leader, preacher, "prayer warriors"). Most deviant in terms of method are the articles by Philip L. Wickeri (India) and Seung Joong Joo (South Korea). Wickeri investigates the merge of eastern orthodox and reformed theology in the Mar Thoma Church in South India, discussing themes such as hierarchy, liturgy, mission and evangelism, discrimination and ecumenism. The eyewitness description of worship is not integrated into the study but placed as an introduction before the beginning of the investigation. Seung Joong Joo's article argues for a synthesis of Christian and Chusok thanksgiving worship. He describes the conditions for such a combination, as well as an example of successful integration of this sort.

While this variation in approaches has its benefits, a stronger adherence to one method would have facilitated the comparative perspective and also given this part of the book would have given the reader a more unified impression. The purpose of presenting different worship practices are best served by the phenomenological approach, which focuses the event and allows the act to communicate in a less obscured way. This method also – according to this reader – results in the most interesting read.

This is a theological work in that the authors in many cases do not shy away from taking normative stands or making recommendations. This is mostly true in parts one and three. In the first part Walls argues that globalization has meant the return of what he calls "the Ephesians moment", that is that the church again has to deal with multiculturalism on a local level. According to Walls, the great diversity of Christian faith today "means a greater capacity for blessing and perhaps more capability for disaster" than ever before (p. 37). In the third part, after the case studies, this thread is followed up and different authors discuss how multiculturalism can become a blessing – and not a disaster. C. Michael Hawn discusses what he calls "pitfalls and possibilities of cross-cultural worship", while Bryan D. Spinks reflects on the unchangeable ("things of heaven") versus the relative ("things of earth") in worship. John D. Witvliet too, in his closing afterword, elaborates on this theme.

The oscillation between the religious studies approach of the case studies and the more explicit theological discussions in the first and third sections is one of the books greatest benefits. The imagined readers seem to be seminar students; pastors-to-be for whom mere knowledge of diversity of worship is not enough, but who will have to deal practically and theologically with this reality. The editor continuously guides the reader by suggesting questions to ask of the text. This enhances the impression that this is a book that ought to work excellently as classroom material.

What, then, is to be done? How should a congregation or pastor deal with the results of this book? To this question some different suggestions are presented throughout the book. In his series preface, Witvliet writes that he hopes learning about different worship practices "will energize and deepen faith and common worship." (p. xviii) Among the authors in part two, Thomas A. Kane in his study of Samoan worship is most explicit with what consequences he hopes will result from his investigation, namely that it will "open new possibilities for worshiping God" (p. 170). Kane seems

open to the idea that western churches import actual practices from what he calls "the world church." C. Michael Hawn rather suggests the reader to seek inspiration from the structure of the worship practices presented: not to imitate the cleansing practice of the Aguaruna people, but instead ask oneself how one's own congregation prepares for worship. In a similar way Witvliet (again, but this time in his afterword) sees the studies as encouraging a critical/self-critical reflection, especially in terms of inculturation: seeing how the worship in another culture is contextualized can help me to perceive the ways in which the worship of my own congregation is contextualized. This broad hermeneutical perspective appears to me as the most fruitful ways of using this book as a springboard for theological reflection. But here again it can be pointed out that a case study about worship in a western context would have facilitated this type of reflection regarding western contextualization.

Many of the case studies investigate worship practices with what would be considered as a certain "Pentecostal" flavor. At first glance this might seem to strengthen the case argued by many for the ongoing pentecostalization of Christianity in the South. But looking closer we might instead notice that these studies could as well, at least implicitly, challenge that argument. Most of the studies focus on actual practices and what emerges is not a unified picture but rather a highly diversified one. This at least leaves me wondering what really unites the worship of Latin American neopentecostals, worship in the "Glory Hut" in New Guinea, and the worship among Apostles and Zionists in Zimbabwe. To draw these disparate services under one common label, and a label connected to a specific movement and even specific denominations, seems highly problematic. (And here it might be suitable to add that I am myself a Pentecostal.) One seldom sees the numbers of Catholics, Orthodox, and mainline Protestants added up as "liturgical", and to gather the figures under the label "Catholic" would of course be unthinkable. If anything "charismatic" would be a more appropriate label for denominations practicing a (seemingly) less structured service than what is common in the historical churches.

Inculturation in one of the key-themes of the book, and the times and places where it has been believed that there exists only one true form of worship is tastefully lamented. The case studies are generally free from tiring moralism and instead describe the different practices rather benevolently (the study of Latin American neopentecostals with its rather critical tone an excep-

tion from that rule). No one ever suggests that the dancing Samoans or charismatic Africans ought to think about adopting a service of traditional liturgical style. While such a suggestion would of course be problematic, the complete absence of any such discussion is a sign of a general deficit in the book, namely that of historical perspective. While some contributors give the global perspective made possible today by modern technique such high praise that one wonders how the church could ever have survived without it, little is said about tradition despite the fact that this can fill a similar function as that of the global perspective. Cultural plurality can indeed prevent us from becoming blind to an unsound influence from the culture that surrounds us, but so can tradition.

The many centuries of Christian theological reflection represented by tradition should be taken into account in every context. As pointed out by Bryan D. Spinks in his contribution, it was one specific culture – the Semitic – that was chosen as the vessel of salvation. Trying to attain salvation in the abstract without taking into account this specific culture – including its worship – tends towards Gnosticism. The Christian tradition can be described as a struggle to remain faithful to the past as well as the present guidance of the Spirit. In line with this the worshipping early Church drew upon the liturgy of the temple as well as that of the synagogue, but did so in light of the new revelation of God in Christ. Obviously the surrounding (Hellenistic) culture provided the language for this venture, and so influenced the worship, but the surrounding culture was neither the focus nor did it set the agenda. Christianity does not exist in the abstract and becoming Christian means connecting to the site of the incarnation, that is the tradition. No culture is exempt from this. While there is a general tendency today, as well as in Christian Worship Worldwide, to focus on what the younger Christian cultures add to the tradition, the opposite perspective (which may have dominated inappropriately before) should not be neglected.

In all, Christian Worship Worldwide is an ambitious work with numerous benefits. Though it seems particularly drafted for use in classrooms, its multifaceted structure with both case studies and theological discussions should be valuable for anyone interested in the topic.

Joel Halldorf

Katharina Kunter and Jens Holger Schjørring (eds.)
Changing Relations Between Churches in Europe and Africa: The Internationalization of Christianity and Politics in the 20th Century
Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2008, 253 pp

This book is an edited volume with contributions from different authors. It is a result of the conference on "Changing Relations between Churches in Africa and Europe in the 20th Century: Christian Identity in the Times of Political Crises", held in Makumira University College of Tumaini University in Tanzania, 8-12 October, 2005. The conference came at the end of a project bringing together "an international group" of scholars with the aim of contributing to a study of the history of Christianity in the 20th century that is not fettered by the conventional European and African perspectives. It is from this conference theme the book takes the first part of its title. It is important to reflect on the title of the book: *Changing Relations Between Churches in Europe and Africa: The internationalization of Christianity and Politics in the 20th Century*, which I think, introduces at the outset the complexity of the subject under scrutiny. It points to the nature of the relations – they are 'changing', and a transformation of Christianity and politics is implied in 'the internationalization' process that has taken place in the last century.

The essays in this collection, most of them by well known scholars of world Christianity, are empirically grounded and clearly articulated. The book is divided into three parts, with nineteen chapters preceded by an introduction by the first editor. This division into three parts is logical and helps to separate not only the historical phases of the period under examination, but also accentuates the thematic division of the volume.

The authors deal with diverse issues relating to the relations between churches in Africa and Europe; and the churches' involvement in politics. The volume assumes a historical trajectory within the first part, comprising six chapters focusing on the "churches, mission and politics" from the early decades of the twentieth century to the independence period in Africa. The various contradictions and challenges that characterized the relationship

between the African and the European churches are clearly articulated in the analysis of the complex case of church and state interaction in Uganda; the relations between the mission field in Namibia and the mission board in Finland; the challenges for Norwegian missionaries in Northern Cameroon who were apparently caught between the ideals of "evangelization" and "civilization"; and the practice of slavery which the French colonial administration did not dare to oppose. This section also addresses the challenges of the Nazi period to ecumenism, the impact of the two World Wars on German mission in Africa, and what seemed at the time to be the dissenting voices of African critique of missions.

The second part, also comprising six chapters, examines the situation of churches and human rights during the Cold War. From a different perspective, there is an analysis of Uganda "in the context of [the] competing forces" of budding African nationalism and communism, and of the repression experienced by the churches under communist regimes in Ethiopia. These studies complement each other in illustrating how the dynamics of the struggle between the two blocks (East and West as they were known during the cold war) affected churches in some African countries. It is instructive to note that two articles in this part are devoted to the role of the church in Zimbabwe, a country whose political future seems to be hanging perilously on the precipice particularly after the disputed general elections on 28 March, 2008 and the re-run of the presidential election boycotted by the opposition which has led to the current stalemate on power sharing.

The third part examines the role of the church in the struggle for independence and for justice in society. One chapter relays that when faced with the challenges of the recent land reforms, a section of Zimbabwean Christians sought answers in the Bible. The discussion in this part illustrates the struggles of the Christian communities with contemporary challenges and at the same time takes the readers back to the theme of mission in a changing international arena. The last two essays on African Christians tie together these two ends, so to speak, through discussions that start with the relationship between mission fields in Africa and the mother churches in Europe. The essay on the expansion of churches founded in Europe by Africans living there makes a useful contribution to the study of emerging trends of Christianity in the world. Similarly, the discussion on the emergence of what are often referred to as 'African churches in Europe', which are founded by immigrant African communities, provides insights into a phenomenon

which is yet to be fully documented. By suggesting that the mission of African Christians in Europe is to claim "the continent for Christ", and as such mission is happening "in reverse" in the context of migration of African Christians to Europe, the two essays fittingly illustrate what I would call the 'two-way traffic' nature of mission between Africa and Europe.

Also of particular interest is the illuminating examination of the dynamics of relationship between church and state in Uganda and the impact of the world mission conferences. The challenge of internationalization and its consequences on mission is unraveled in the discussion of the Ugandan participation in the world mission conferences. The discussion is elaborate on the "cleavage between the clergy and the leading group of laymen" (p.15) and the relationship with the British colonial masters. For Ugandan delegates, the exposure at the conferences served as an eye opener, so to speak, to world Christianity and the experiences gained there was to shape their attitude. It is pointed out here that the conferences signaled a wind of change was beginning to blow as dialogue on equal terms emerged "for the first time in mission history" (p.17). The ideas inspired by the experience at the conferences were to set the agenda for the Church.

From a different perspective, the essay on the Church in Namibia lucidly illustrates the role of the Church in the struggle for human rights and dignity. During the liberation struggle, the churches were at the forefront, however, after SWAPO came to power they were said to "have slipped into a deep coma" (p.173). Here the author also focuses on the churches' failures - once free, the churches did not seem to know how to engage with the emerging social situation. For instance, they did not endeavour to bring about reconciliation between the groups divided by the struggle with South Africa. Hence people are somewhat disillusioned with the very churches that inspired them during the struggle for liberation. From this perspective, this essay contributes to the discussion of the contemporary issues and contradictions apparently inherent in the church's role as a social institution in a changing social arena.

In the introduction, the first editor (Katharina Kunter) states that the aim of the volume is to "contribute to an expanded body of literature on mission and its consequences" (p.4). She calls for a "global historical approach" to the study of the role of Christianity in Africa and Europe during the Cold War, the value of which she has demonstrated by marshalling this wide array of

articles. For her, this theme has been neglected as most of the attention has been directed on Africa after the Cold War and now research on Africa and the Cold War is merely in its infancy. The history of African Christianity during the Cold War period must first be written. She suggests that the conflicts and inter-ethnic struggles which were to characterize African societies are the ramifications of the events of the Cold War period.

More importantly, Katharina Kunter suggests that recent discussions on the churches during the Cold War have not taken up some of the pertinent issues and goes on to highlight urgent questions for further research. Not only does she identify the questions, but she also suggests "some new directions" and presents in her position paper "some broader reflections about the issue of Churches and the Cold War, Europe and Africa" (p.112). Here trends in current debates and the perspective of the ecumenical movement are analyzed and the gaps highlighted. There is no doubt the research questions that she raises need urgent attention if the picture is to be complete. With this discussion the author places this volume squarely within the contemporary missiological debates.

On the whole this collection's strength is in the dazzling array of case studies with a breadth and diversity which can only be achieved in this way. It is a resource not only for those interested in the history of Christianity during the Cold War period, but the case studies also present historical material that will be interesting and relevant for various other themes including the changing role of the African woman, African churches' responses to community struggle against injustice and also the churches' failures to deal with post-conflict situations.

Anne N. Kubai

Klaus Koschorke, Frieder Ludwig, Mariano Delgado (eds.)
A History of Christianity in Asia, Africa and Latin America 1450-1990:
A Documentary Sourcebook
Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007, xxxiii, 426 pp

Until recently little source material for the Christian History in Africa, Asia and Latin America has been available in a single volume. A few publications could be mentioned that offer readings from Christian history in a single country, such as M. K. Kuriakose, *History of Christianity in India: Source Materials*, 1999; J. N. Schumacher, *Readings in Philippine Church History*, 1979; and D. A. Reily, *Historia documental do Protestantismo no Brasil,* 1993. Yet most of the documentary source materials are scattered in many different publications and in many different languages, which makes it very hard for even the serious student to get an overview of the available source materials. This new book*, A History of Christianity in Asia, Africa and Latin America 1450-1990*, fills this gap and provides a remarkably wide range of sources from the early modern period to the present for all three continents. It is a cooperative effort of the editors and financially supported by grants from Munich University, Luther Seminary (St. Paul), University of Friburg (Switzerland), Misereor (Aachen) and the Thyssen Stiftung (Cologne).

The aim of the book is to document the history of Christianity in Asia, Africa and Latin America from the time of the Portuguese expansion around 1450 until 1990. Its focus is "to give a voice to the multitude of local initiatives, specific experiences and varieties of Christianity in very diverse cultural contexts" (p. xxix). A few texts focus on the contributions and perceptions of foreign missionaries, but more space is generally given to indigenous initiatives such as "Ethiopianism and Prophetism" in Africa (pp. 216-225). Particularly interesting are a number of texts on non-Christian perceptions of Christianity. A few examples are given of sympathetic as well as hostile perceptions: "The arrival of the Portuguese from an Arab perspective" (pp.11-12), "St. Thomas Christians on the arrival of the Portuguese 1504" (p.12) "A Chinese Voice on [Matteo] Ricc"i (p. 36) and "North Korea: Kim Il Sung on the Sermon on the Mount" (p. 122).

Some of the questions which the editors give extra attention to are questions concerning colonial conquest, slavery, mission initiatives and demands for ecclesiastical independence. Here are some examples relating to Africa: "European expansion and new discoveries", "Encounters", "African Catholicism in the Congo", "Ethiopia and Portugal", "Slave trade", "Catholic rulers", "Catholic experiments and failures, "Protests against the slave trade", "Abolition of the slave trade and mission", "New mission societies", "Livingstone and other explorers", "Mission initiatives and African rulers, "African Christian Elite, "Scramble for Africa", "Concepts of ecclesiastical independence, "Developments within the Roman Catholic Church", "Themes of the 1920s and 1930s", "National movements and Christianity", "Wind of Change", "Africa Churches and nation building", "African Theology", "Church and Apartheid in South Africa", "Conflicts and new beginnings".

The book aims to document a variety of confessional sources. Given the strong Roman Catholic mission on all three continents there are plentiful Catholic documents particularly from the earlier periods. The Orthodox is represented only by five documents pertaining to Ethiopia and Uganda (pp. 139-142, 226-227) as their mission was quite limited during the period 1450-1990. The different kinds of Protestant missions, however, are represented in a larger number of documents covering Anglican, Lutheran, Reformed, Baptist and Pentecostal history. What is lacking, however, is source material on Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity in Africa and Asia. This is striking as Charismatic Christianity has tended to become a majority religion in some parts of Africa and is even growing strongly as a movement in some parts of Asia (e.g. India, China, Korea, Philippines). The exception is the section on Latin America which includes some three or four texts on Pentecostal and Charismatic movements.

The book also contains texts from a variety of geographical and linguistic regions. It covers most regions and major countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. There is plenty of material on the larger countries such as China, India, Japan, Nigeria, Brazil, but even a large number of middle size countries and regions are represented in the source material. The source material is also collected from a number of different languages, first of all a number of European languages, such as English, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, German, Dutch and French, but there are also documents that originally were written in non-European languages such as Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, or

even Náhuatl (Mexico). A number of people helped the editing committee to translate documents and introductions into English.

On the whole I found the book to be a fascinating collection of some 317 documents which bring the reader much closer to the original events, encounters between missionaries and locals, and perceptions of local observers. The editors have done a fine job in collecting relevant texts, which cover many of the most important developments in Southern Christianity. There are plenty of surprising and enlightening choices and the expert commentaries serve the reader's interest well in helping to understand the framework of each text. Furthermore every text is supplied with source references and also extensive suggestions for further reading.

The book is highly recommended for scholars, students and professors of mission, religious studies and general history, and a wider readership interested in global mission and global church history.

Klas Lundström