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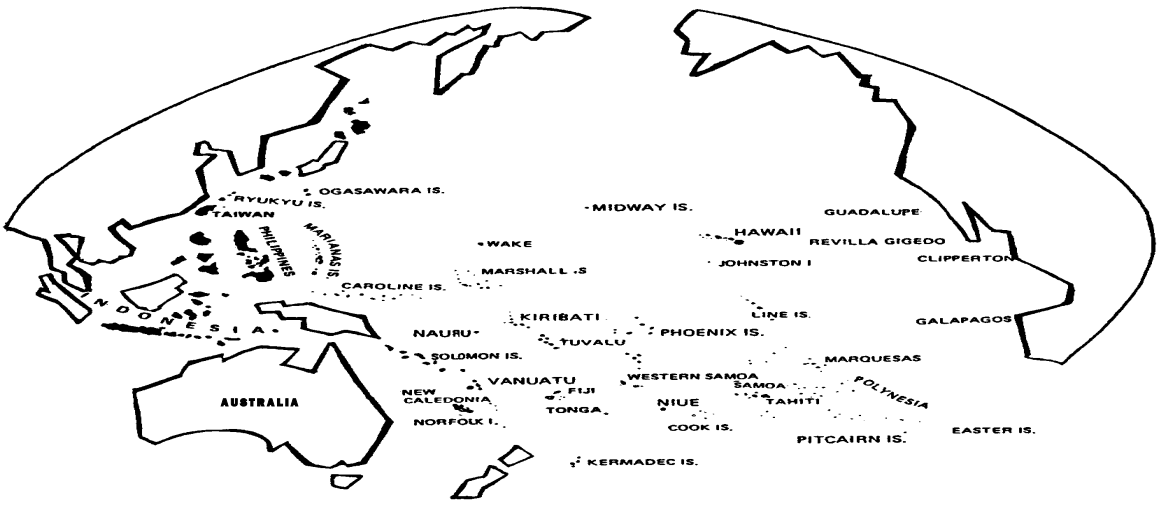

Australian Journal of Mission Studies

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The Journal is intended as a means for the exchange of ideas and opinions. Articles published express the views of their respective authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the editorial committee, or the publisher.

Review of articles

All major articles published in this journal are sent for review by scholars before being accepted for publication.

Purposes of AAMS

- Promote the theological, biblical, historical, practical and contextual study of mission, local and global;
- Promote engagement with the cultures and people with whom Christians share and explore the gospel, including, in particular, Australian indigenous voices;
- Encourage co-operation and sharing of research and experience among individuals and institutions engaged in mission;
- Bring together, through networks, conferences and seminars, those engaged in mission studies;
- Stimulate publications in missiology, including a journal;
- Affiliate with the International Association for Mission Studies (IAMS), work in partnership with the Aotearoa/New Zealand Association for Mission Studies (ANZAMS) and build links with those engaged in mission studies in the South Pacific.

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Editorial

The first issue

by Bruce Newnham

Bruce Newnham *is a Baptist minister who has worked in a number of countries with Global Interaction, the mission arm of the Australian Baptist Churches. Bruce has worked in Australia, Bangladesh, Malawi, China and Kazakhstan. He has been involved for many years in training people who serve in other countries. At present he is an intentional interim in churches in Victoria and an occasional guest lecturer at Whitley College. He is the editor of the* **Australian Journal of Mission Studies**.

Well we have finial made it! The first journal of the *Australian Association of Mission Studies* (AAMS) under the name of the ***Australian Journal of Mission Studies***. I just want to savour that for a moment, for it has taken a lot of time and work to get to this point. I would also like to acknowledge our rich heritage in the form of the 36 issues published under the name of ***South Pacific Journal of Mission Studies*** (SPJMS). As an association we are indebted to those who went before.

This first issue of the journal under its new name and auspices carries a wide selection of articles and a number of good book reviews.

The Internet

Ross Mackinnon, although semi-retired, has recognised the importance of the internet in our modern world. His interest in mission has led him to explore the importance of websites for mission.

Mackinnon has looked at 10 Australian church websites to see how they reflect the particular church's attitude to mission, finding that there is still a lot of insider language used that does not make the websites clear and or relevant to the outsider.

He concludes they need to separate *internal* information for members from information for others to allow their websites to be missional.

The emerging church

Darren Cronshaw has, over the years, been involved in the emerging church. His article defines the term *emerging church* and looks at the breath of meaning *emerging* has. He also looks at another term—*missional* that is used a lot, and looks at what it means.

He then outlines a particular place—Melbourne—and then looks at the different ways the church engages in those terms. The questions raised by these case studies are raised by Cronshaw; questions that the emerging missional church raises. He ends with a question: "How much does your reality match your rhetoric?"

Mission history

Darrell Paproth and David Turnbull have collaborated in writing a fascinating article on the eminent missionary Effie Varley. They have entitled it *Missiology as biography*. Both Paproth and Turnbull have a great interest in mission history, and Paproth's master's thesis has contributed to this work on Varley.

Their conclusion points to the importance of learning from those who went before, particularly Australian missionaries who have left their mark. In her person, theology and spirituality, and contribution, Varley exemplified an important missiological tradition of which she was an outstanding representative. She is an Australian that influenced many areas of evangelical mission from Kew to Nigeria. This is her story.

Interreligious dialogue in Asia

From an Australian missionary story we turn to Asia and a discussion of interreligious dialogue by Jacob Kavunkal. Kavunkal has contributed much to

mission studies and to the mission of the church, especially in the Asian context, through his writings and organisational efforts.

One characteristic that is common across Asia is its pluralism affecting every aspect of existence. This makes it a fertile laboratory of interreligious dialogue. Kavunkal has some profoundly interesting, concluding comments that bring a challenge to all who are involved in mission. I would encourage you to grapple with the issues he raises.

Finally we come to two articles written by AAMS committee members. The association's chairperson, Larry Nemer SVD, has been teaching missiology since 1962 in theological schools in the the United States of America (Chicago), Vietnam, The Philippines, the United Kingdom (London) and Australia.

Influence of Vatican institutions on mission

He currently lectures in mission studies and church history at Yarra Theological Union. Larry writes about the contribution the missionary movement has had on one particular arm of the Catholic Church. His paper focuses on the expression of and contribution to the centralisation of the curial office in Rome known as the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, or more popularly known as *Propaganda*, by the missionary movement.

Responding in interreligious dialogue

Ross Langmead, the present secretary of AAMS, approaches the question of openness and conviction in the missionary task. How does one respond to others; by entering dialogue that presupposes a possibility of changing ones mind, or by proclaiming a set of beliefs that cannot be changed?

He states, "Many, myself included, would like to find their way to a response in between mission as either dialogue or proclamation." After exploring the issues, Langmead concludes that we all need to learn more about God as we share what we know.

Thus to learn as well as to share, to explore faith in a spirit of mutuality with believers in other religions, needs to be the missionary's goal.

Added to these six good articles we are carrying a number of book reviews to encourage our readers to expand their missionary reading and continue to learn.

The books we have chosen to review are:

Doctor in Vanuatu by FREEMAN, E A

A biography written by a layperson, which offers an alternative perspective on the nature of the missionary task and an explanation of events in Vanuatu in the 1960s.

From Woolloomooloo to 'Eternity': *A History of Australian Baptists*, by MANLEY, Ken R. An important two-volume history of Australian Baptists.

The forgotten ways: *Reactivating the missional church*, by HIRSH, Alan, is a relevant and important look at the way we do church in a missional way in Australia.

Evangelical, Ecumenical and Anabaptist Missiologies in Conversation, edited by KRAYBILL, James, SAWATSKI, Walter & VAN ENGEN, Charles, is a book that is well researched and edited in honour of Wilbert Shenk. Shenk was gifted as a prophetic administrator, a creative scholar, and an inspiring lecturer.

Missions and Money: *Affluence as a Missionary Problem Revisited, Revised and Expanded*, by BONK, Jonathan J. It is well worth reading again and should be a must for all interested and serving in missions.

The first issue

So this is the first issue of the ***Australian Journal of Missions Studies*** and it is full of good reading and thought provoking articles. I would particularly like to thank Heather Weedon for her work in editing material for this issue. She has spent a long time reading and correcting articles. Enjoy the read and we would encourage you to subscribe to this new journal by joining the *Australian Association of Mission Studies*.

See the back page for details ■

Australian Church websites

What do they reveal about mission?

Ross Mackinnon

Ross Mackinnon *is a member of the Uniting Church in Australia (Glen Waverley congregation). He is a former technical schoolteacher and inspector and currently works in semi-retirement as a teacher registration officer in Victoria. He is an occasional assistant lecturer in Mission Studies at Yarra Theological Union, Box Hill, Victoria*

Websites are an important form of communication in today's world. This paper looks at the websites of ten Australian churches with a view to discerning what each church has to say about its mission. It concludes that all of the churches indicate their mission but need to be more concise, clear and relevant if their mission is to be meaningful, especially to people other than their own members.

Mission is a problematic term. Each Christian community seems to have its own perception of mission, and, as David Bosch has illustrated, perceptions of mission and mission strategies have changed down the ages.[1]

Some Christians see mission as the *great commission* (Matthew 28:19-20)—taking the gospel to all nations.[2] Others prefer Mark 16:15 because it includes creation.[3] Others see mission as per Matthew 25:35-36—serving people in need.[4]

Some regard Luke 4:18-19 (good news for the poor and victimised) as Jesus' mission statement and base their mission on this.[5] The Catholic bishops of Asia see mission as triple dialogue—with the poor, with culture and with other faiths.[6] The list goes on.

Despite the many perceptions, two things about mission remain constant—goal and action. A person with a mission is a person with a clear goal.

A person on a mission is taking action to achieve the goal. These two aspects apply to Christian mission as to any other mission.

Nowadays, *mission* is a buzzword. Mission statements abound and are made public, often on letterheads and websites. Good mission statements express an organisation's *raison d'être* and goals in a few brief, jargon-free sentences.

Concomitant with the proliferation of mission statements has been the dissemination of information electronically, via the *Internet*. In Australia today, information is increasingly available on organisations' websites, including churches.

This paper gives an overview of the websites of ten Australian churches with the specific aim of determining if the churches make their goals clear to the visiting public.

Because any one website contains almost limitless data via links to other pages and websites, this paper concentrates mostly on information provided on the *Home*, *About us* and *Activities* pages.

Some key questions are: What is the first impression? Is there a clear statement of mission? Is the information provided for church members or is

it also useful to others? What overall impressions does the website give about each church's goals?

The reference date for information taken from each website is 25 February 2007. Information downloaded on any other date may vary, as websites are constantly edited.

Anglican Church in Australia

The Anglican Church's website opens with a welcome which includes the purpose of the site—namely, to provide news and information on the Anglican Church and its organisations. This is followed by a list of links for liturgical material, locations of dioceses and parishes, answers to questions about Anglicanism, family history, Anglican history, financial concerns, professional standards, material by the National Missions Facilitator and General Synod office forms.

These links are followed by items for the 2007 calendar, the lead one being *Planning to Plant Conferences*, organised by the National Missions Facilitator. These one-day conferences will "help leaders with practical advice about how to research their area or target group; develop a church planting vision and strategy; build and train a core team; and think through ways of evangelising/doing mission locally."[7]

Mission and missions are mentioned from the outset, but there is no clear idea of what these terms might mean, other than church planting. The opening page seems to be aimed at providing information for members of the Anglican Church rather than for others.

Moving from the opening page to the *Who We Are* section of the *About* page, we begin to glean what the Anglican Church of Australia is and does. It gives a strong hint of a mission statement when it says:

> *Our ambition is to serve Christ faithfully in the circumstances of our daily lives. We invite you to join us on this journey… We hold the Christian faith as received from apostolic times and the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as our ultimate rule and standard of life. We are committed to obeying the commands of Christ, teaching his doctrine, administering the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion and maintaining an ordered ministry of bishops, priests and deacons*.[8]

Here, we have a goal and the means by which this goal is undertaken, but we are not told why this goal is important or why others might join the journey.

The website's *Social Issues* section covers several current issues—energy, environment and climate change; euthanasia; family issues; cloning and genetic therapy; homosexuality; reproduction/IVF and abortion; immigration and multiculturalism; economic and employment issues; reconciliation and other indigenous issues.[9]

This indicates an organisation concerned with ethical and social justice matters. The Anglican Church has its own body for indigenous Australians—the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Anglican Council—but this body's page is mostly administrative in nature.[10]

The *Community* page refers to ***Engaging Australia***, a programme to fund innovative approaches to mission. The funding programme's aim is to encourage "all sectors of the church to be creative and innovative in communicating the Christian faith in Australia today and into the future." Groups are invited to develop projects and apply for funds to support it.[11]

The Anglican website gives a goal and some indication of how this goal is to be achieved, but no real idea of the reason for the goal. Key aspects of Anglican mission as shown by this website are following Christ on a journey, an invitation to others to join the journey, communication with the Australian community, and social concern. The approach to missions is not overt conversion but communication, engagement and an invitation to join.

Assemblies of God

The Assemblies of God (AOG) opening page contains a brief message from the president of the AOG in Australia explaining that it is a movement of Pentecostal Churches in voluntary cooperation. The message concludes with a statement, which indicates mission:

> *Assemblies of God people are committed to bringing other people to a relationship with Jesus Christ (Matt 28:18-20) and seek to display the fruit of the Spirit in their lives (Gal 5: 22-23). They believe in the power and the gifts of the Holy Spirit and have a commitment to fulfilling their destiny in God*.[12]

The *About Us* page has a specific *Vision and Mission* statement:

> *Building a Holy Spirit empowered movement in which leaders can lead, churches can grow and people can fulfil their God given destiny to influence the world with the life of Jesus Christ*.[13]

The key values of this denomination are listed as being to:

- Love God by honouring a triune God as the creator of all life, celebrating God's presence through dynamic praise and worship, obeying God's commission through Holy Spirit-empowered world

mission and declaring God's infallible word through contemporary ministry. Mark 16:15 and Acts 1:8 are cited as commissioning commands from God.

- Love people by respecting the right of every individual to find and fulfil their God-given destiny, by recognising the local church as God's unique vehicle in empowering people for life and by valuing people of all races and gender, accepting them as equal before God.
- Love life by receiving God's gift of eternal life, by enthusiastically enjoying life and sharing God's abundance with others, and by valuing all human life as a gift from God to be honoured and protected.[14]

The website's *Ministries* page covers bible colleges, financial affairs and assistance, women, kids, youth, teenagers, world missions and church planting.[15] The *Church Planting* section indicates the specific goal of having 1,500 churches by 2007. Members are asked to pray for this vision's achievement.[16]

It is clear from this website that this church has a firm goal of converting the world to Christianity and the way to do this is by establishing vibrant churches worldwide. The Matthew 28:18-20 command is important to this denomination. The ultimate goal is to change people's lives by bringing them into contact with Christ. The emphasis of this church appears to be on worship, teaching and a prosperous life, rather than social issues.

The Baptist Union of Australia

The opening page of this church's website also begins with a message from the president. He describes the website as a "source that points you to many of the exciting things that God is doing through our family of churches across the nation." He hopes that, as president, he will "be able to encourage and inspire people and churches to make the most of the opportunities we have to share the good news of Jesus."[17]

The *About Us* page provides a mission statement when it says:

> *We unite around a common vision to demonstrate the love of God and share the life-changing message of Jesus within our local communities*.[18]

The *Distinctives* section explains clearly and with minimal ecclesiastical language Baptist core beliefs and how Baptist churches are organised. One distinctive includes a concern for the world—"This results in us having a deep concern for such issues as poverty, justice, freedom, equality and the environment."[19]

The *Activities* page includes a *Social Justice* section which refers to dialogue with members of parliament and other Christian denominations, training in ethics for ministers and Baptist World Aid Australia as a leading voice in justice and development issues.[20]

The *Activities* page also covers theological education, insurance, youth, women, aid and development, community care, evangelism, missions and remote churches.[21]

This website indicates the purpose of the website and gives a clear goal for the church—sharing and demonstrating God's love through Jesus. The emphasis is very much on caring for others, especially the needy outside the church. The church's various caring agencies "demonstrate the love of God" by their activities. Again, there is no overt emphasis on conversion. The emphasis is on sharing the good news especially by caring for the needy.

The Catholic Church in Australia

This church's opening page contains a welcome accompanied by a composite picture showing the sea, a group of people, which includes two vested priests, a stained-glass depiction of Mary MacKillop and a bishop's chair in a cathedral.

The remainder of the page comprises a brief daily reflection and key links to the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference (ACBC), the Australian Catholic Directory, the Catholic Enquiry Centre, the Australian Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes, Catholic Community News and Catholic Vocations Ministry Australia.[22]

The first link is to the ACBC website. The opening page for this site, instead of telling us what the ACBC is, gives a welcome and a list of news items.[23] The *About Us* page maintains the mystery—it begins by giving the legal basis for bishops' conferences by referring to decrees from the Second Vatican Council and canon law. It is not until well down that page that we are told:

> *The Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference meets at least annually… The Conference has a President and a Vice President… a Central Commission, various Bishops Committees… and a Secretariat*.[25]

This still does not reveal who bishops are and what they do, either individually or in conference. It is assumed that visitors know what a bishop is and that the Catholic Church in Australia is linked to Rome.

We have to move to the ACBC *Commissions* page to get an idea of the bishops' interests, which include information, canon law, Caritas, Catholic education, church ministry, doctrine and morals, ecumenism and interreligious relations, justice and service, liturgy, mission and faith formation, pastoral life and relations with Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders.[25]

A separate page for the ACBC Agencies includes, *inter alia*, the Migrant and Refugee Office, Social Justice Council, Catholic Earthcare, the Office for Clergy Life and Ministry and the Office for the Participation of Women.[26]

There is no clear statement as to why the Catholic Church in Australia exists or its mission. The ACBC's website concentrates on the bishops and their committees—for example, leaders and administration.

The wide interests of the ACBC commissions and agencies show a clear interest in social justice and ethical issues, but no *raison d'être* is given for these. The purpose of the website appears to be to provide administrative details, rather than a statement of mission.

To get an idea of the mission of the Catholic Church in Australia, one has to follow the link to the Catholic Enquiry Centre. This centre provides 18 lessons for people interested in the Catholic Church. Lesson 1, *Introducing Catholics*, begins by saying, "Catholics are a community. A body made up of many different people, united by a common bond of love."[27] Later, the lesson reveals:

> *Today, the Catholic Church continues the life of the early Christians… The invitation to faith is offered through local Catholic communities known as parishes ... the Church continues to speak the Gospel message and to stand as a living witness that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, brings us the fullness of life*.[28]

Lesson 18, *Sharing the Good News*, gives a clearer idea of this church's mission. Mission begins with Matthew 28:19-29. Nowadays, mission involves four things:

- Witness—we act like Christ.
- Proclamation—we tell others about Christ.
- Working—to bring in God's kingdom (which involves working actively for social justice).
- Recognising Christ in actions of love outside the church.[29]

The lessons emphasise the universal nature of the Catholic Church, rather than the Catholic Church in Australia.

This site lacks a clear statement of mission. Visitors to the site have to search doggedly before getting an idea of mission. The Church's formal structures via the bishops indicate a keen interest in ethical and social issues.

Other emergent key emphases are the universality of the Catholic Church and the authority of the bishops and the parishes under their control. Mission relates very much to the role of the church leaders and the church's formal structure.

Churches of Christ in Australia

The opening page for this website contains a picture of some happy people and links to *Who Are We*? and *National and State Contacts*. The *Who Are We*? page covers introduction, worship, ministry and mission, theology and heritage.[30]

The *Who Are We*? page indicates a vision for our fast-changing times. This vision is "to help Australians find faith and to live within the demands of the future."[31] Achieving the vision involves providing "worship which is positive, refreshing and renewing." It also includes responding with compassion to human need.[32] The Churches of Christ "encourage people to respond to Jesus by making an intelligent and meaningful commitment to him and to observe his teaching."[33]

Ecumenical activity is important to the Churches of Christ. Cooperation with other Christians, promoting unity and commitment to the ultimate goal of all Christians are all stressed.[34]

The *National Agencies* page indicates this church's interests including indigenous ministries, the theological college, Defence Force chaplains, overseas missions, women's ministries and youth vision.[35] Little specificity is given about social justice matters.

This website includes a clear mission statement—helping people develop a meaningful, relevant faith in Christ. The main strategies for achieving this are compassionate service to the needy and ecumenism. Overt conversion is not stressed in this church's mission strategy.

Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia

The Greek Orthodox opening page comprises an icon of the Madonna and Child, references to the primate and his assistant bishops, and to the Australian church's five administrative units.[36]

The next page gives links to various administrative units within the church and a directory of Australian parishes.[37] It also provides links to articles on Greek Orthodoxy in general and in Australia. The general articles relate mainly to liturgy, feasts, prayers and sacraments.

The article on Greek Orthodoxy in Australia covers the history of the church here, its structure, parish life, worship, the role of icons and particular liturgical customs. A key goal of the church is "to preserve the integrity of the Orthodox faith, as well as… the preservation of the mother language and cultural heritage of its people."

Considerable effort is put into this via education programmes at parish level and by St Andrew's

Greek Orthodox Theological College in Sydney. The preservation of the Orthodox style of worship and ethos is vital—"…the Liturgy holds the very first place" in worship.[38]

Cultural heritage is emphasised. Conversion of others, involvement in social justice and ethical questions are not mentioned. The only social work mentioned is for Greek people.[39] The emphasis is on helping Greeks settle into the Australian way of life without disturbing the liturgy. This church, however, does look outwards—ecumenical endeavour is a priority.[40]

This website indicates a clear goal for the Greek Orthodox Church—to preserve the Orthodox faith, the Greek language and Greek cultural heritage. It does this by providing educational programmes within a strong parish structure.[41] The overriding impression given by this website is that mission is mainly about preserving the Greek liturgy and cultural values.

Lutheran Church of Australia

The Lutheran Church's opening page is somewhat crowded and comprises several pictures and numerous links to various Lutheran agencies, news items and devotional snippets.[42]

When we move to the *About Lutherans—Who We Are* page, we find several dot points, which are mostly statistical information and a brief historical background of the Lutherans in Australia. The penultimate dot point reveals that the Lutheran church is the oldest Protestant church dating back to the 16th century when Martin Luther challenged some of the teachings and practices of the church of his day.

"Luther insisted that the Bible is the authority that decides what the church should teach and do."[43] And what the Lutheran Church of Australia does is revealed in the *Church in Action* pages. The church's activities cover counselling, emergency relief, low income support, refugee support, respite care and support for homeless youth, the long term unemployed and people with disabilities.[44] A separate page is dedicated to Aboriginal ministry with links to land rights, racism and reconciliation issues. One of the achievements of Aboriginal ministry is the establishment of local, self-supporting congregations.[45]

The Lutheran website includes a page for the Board for Mission, which is particularly concerned with supporting Lutheran missionaries overseas.

The board's work is to fulfil Christ's command as given in Matthew 28:18-20 enhanced by Mark 16:15, Luke 24:46-47 and Acts 1:8.[46] The website also includes a three-page paper entitled, *Our Church in Mission*. This paper emphasises that mission is God's work; Christians are sent to do God's work and are empowered to do this by the Holy Spirit. Mission is local and global and done in partnership with other churches.

Every Christian is "to strive in word and deed to make known the good news of Jesus Christ to those who have not heard it… The goal is conversion." Special mention is made of the need to make the gospel known to Aboriginal Australians. The paper concludes thus:

> *The mission of the church is God's mission. Sent out by the command of Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit, the people of God participate in God's 'plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in Christ* (Ephesians 1:10).[47]

This website is one which contains specific details of mission—the clear goal is to convert others to Christianity because this is what God wants. Ways of doing this include building community and serving the disadvantaged.

The Presbyterian Church of Australia

The main feature of this church's opening page is an introductory paragraph, which explains the term, Presbyterian, and its historical origin. Special reference is made to the distinctive doctrine, discipline, worship, laws and practice of Presbyterianism.[48] We are then referred to a 23-page document—*An Introduction to the Presbyterian Church of Australia*.

This document deals almost exclusively with the structure and operation of the Presbyterian Church, even providing a glossary of Latin terms used for various meetings.

It gives the strong impression that the important thing for Presbyterians is the correct running of the church as an organisation. The only references to church agencies that are made in the document are to the Inland Mission and the Australian Presbyterian World Mission, but no details of these bodies' activities are given.[49]

The other links on the opening page are mostly references to administrative units of the church. The committees listed on the *Committees* page are also mostly administrative, except for the Church and Nation Committee which "deals with issues of morality, ethics, government, law, civil rights, values and social attitudes."

The church seeks "to fulfil a prophetic role by advising governments, citizens and the mass media on matters of public good." Three current issues are mentioned on this *Committee* page—the Victorian vilification case, workplace relations and stem cell research.[50]

The referral to the *Mission Partners* page takes us to links the church has with various overseas missions.[51]

This website concentrates mostly on internal organisational matters. One gains no real feeling from this website for local mission or the purpose of the church, although it does introduce the concept of mission as a *prophetic role*.

The Salvation Army

Although the Salvation Army's opening page is an extremely busy one with several pictures and a multitude of links to its various activities, it begins with a succinct statement of purpose—"We exist to offer people full life in Christ and to help those in need."[52]

One of the first links on the *Home* page is *Need help*? Specific links are also given to a variety of needs—aged care, counselling service, domestic violence, drugs and alcohol, financial troubles, missing persons, prayer requests, problem gambling, unemployment and youth issues. The opening page also has links for people who want to get involved in the Salvation Army's work and for those who wish to make donations. Further, it provides links to recent stories relating to social issues.[53]

The *Our Mission* section of the *About Us* page amplifies the succinct statement of purpose on the opening page with the following mission statement:

> *The Salvation Army, an international movement, is an evangelical part of the universal Christian Church. Its message is based on the Bible. Its ministry is motivated by the love of God. Its mission is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and to meet human needs in His name without discrimination*.[54]

This meeting of needs is certainly the core of the Salvation Army's work. The *Our Services* section extends to four pages and covers an impressive range of services for the needy.[55] It would not be hard to conclude that mission for the Salvation Army is serving others.

As well as providing help to those in need, the Salvation Army also takes social justice issues seriously and these are listed in the *Positional Statements* section. They include such issues as abortion, the environment, capital punishment, homosexuality, multifaith events, euthanasia, surrogacy and conscientious objectors.[56]

This church has a clear, brief mission statement—to preach the gospel of Christ and to meet human needs. The impressive range of practical activities indicates they take the meeting of needs seriously, and see this as an important means of proclamation of the gospel.

The Uniting Church in Australia

The Uniting Church in Australia's opening page comprises a picture of an outback road superimposed with the words *justice*, *evangelism*, and *compassion*. There are links to *Assembly*, *Synods*, *About the Uniting Church* and *Search the Uniting Church.*[57]

The *Welcome* section of the *National Assembly* page indicates mission:

> *The Uniting Church is an Australian Christian Church. It shares with Australian people in the search for meaning, purpose and community in life and is committed to justice and reconciliation between people*.[58]

The remainder of the page contains news headlines, a link to the 11th Assembly website and *Dates For Your Diary*. One of the news items refers to a new brochure promoting the church's mission in the local community. Reference is made to connecting "with the increasing number of people who have no contact with organised religion." Other news items include references to David Hicks' detainment in Guantanamo, government policy on Aborigines, the drought and church unity.[59]

The *About the Uniting Church in Australia* section of the *Who We Are* page details the church's purpose and activities. These include provision of community services, especially aged care, children, youth and family support, disability support, drug and alcohol counselling, emergency relief and housing and employment assistance.

The brief *History* section stresses the importance of ecumenism in the church's life and work. The *Our Calling* section amplifies the earlier statement of purpose and gives a better idea of the mission of this church, which includes preaching about Christ, bearing witness to Christ across cultural, economic, national and racial boundaries, a prophetic ministry which fights social evils and seeks justice and peace, standing alongside the oppressed, the hurt and the poor, responsible stewardship of the earth's resources, treasuring people's gifts and living lives of hope and joy.[60]

The *What We Believe* section refers to the need to tell others of the good news and to live it in acts of compassion, service and justice in the community.[61]

The *What We Do*, *Justice and Community Services*, *Frontiers* and *International* sections refer to the stand the church has taken on Aboriginal rights, environmental issues, disadvantaged minority groups, asylum seekers, multicultural issues, fair employment practices and reconciliation with Aborigines. (The church has its own indigenous arm—the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress).

Also mentioned are pastoral care for people in the remote outback, its dialogue with other Christian denominations and other faiths, and co-operative work with overseas churches, particularly in Asia, the Pacific and Africa.[62] The church's National Assembly's Agencies reflect these interests and priorities.[63]

This website has largely avoided ecclesiastical jargon—it hasn't bogged down in matters of doctrine or creeds. Its emphasis is on what it does and why it does it. The website reveals a clear mission—the search for meaning and a commitment to social justice and reconciliation.

Some conclusions

Each of the ten websites surveyed is a public site—the information on the sites is available to the general public, without needing a password to log in. The information provided indicates that each site has a dual function:

- To provide *internal* information for its members
- To provide information for the public about the particular church and its work.

One difficulty is that these two functions can be blurred. Each website, with the possible exception of the Catholic Church's website, reveals a clear goal, but rarely is this goal found on the opening page.

Because the goals relate to mission, it would be helpful if website visitors could be given a clear, concise mission statement on the website's opening page. This should be in non-church language, as it should not be assumed that church language will be understood by the general public or even by members of another Christian denomination.

As Australia becomes more multifaith and also more secular,[64] it is unreasonable to expect non-Christian visitors to church websites to understand even basic church words like *bishop*, *priest*, *deacon*, *bible*, *God*, *Jesus*, *Christ*, *Holy Spirit*, *Trinity*, *prayer*, *sacraments* or *synod*.

Biblical references and statements of belief would also be confusing to outsiders. If church websites are to express mission clearly, more attention needs to be given to the issue of language. Much of the language used indicates that the churches assume that this will be understood by outsiders. Some churches, particularly the Baptist Church, Churches of Christ, Salvation Army and the Uniting Church have made a particular effort to express themselves in non-church language—this is a good start.

The websites' emphases indicate what the churches think are important and, consequently, these emphases give an idea of how each church sees its mission.

All of the websites have much to say about structure and the internal workings of each church and provide details about administrative affairs and meetings. Visitors to the church websites could be excused for thinking that the operation of each church is an organisation is its mission. One unfortunate consequence of this is that the websites can be seen to be too inward-looking.

However, to counter-balance this, it is pleasing to note that almost all of the websites emphasise serving others, especially the needy, and show an active interest in social justice issues. These matters are clearly an important part of mission for the Australian churches. The needs of Aborigines rate special attention by most of the churches. The prophetic role of the church is still very much alive.

Most of the websites contain separate pages for women, but these tend to deal mostly with women's organisations, rather than the place of women in leadership roles. Australian churches, in the main, are male-dominated and in some instances, patriarchal in their attitude to leadership roles.

Ecumenism is mentioned by most churches, but not always as a top priority. Outsiders wishing to know about Christianity must be confused when confronted with such a multitude of denominations, each with its own goals and mission. If Christianity is to be a major force in Australian society, the churches need to make ecumenism and co-operative ventures a top priority.

On the wider ecumenical scene, relationships with other faiths must also be given higher priority. The websites scarcely mention other faiths. Given the growth of other faiths in Australia, dialogue and co-operative ventures with them must become an important part of mission.

One thing not clear from the websites is exactly why churches exist. Most websites contain statements of belief or creeds, but they do not indicate clearly any consequences, which might flow from these beliefs or why these beliefs matter.

To endorse the Apostles Creed, is to say, "This I believe," but what is missing is the result of such belief—"I, believe, therefore..." It is assumed that people will somehow know why a particular church exists. If the churches are to make their mission clear to others, some serious thought needs to be given to this.

Finally

If mission is about purpose and goals and if the Australian churches mean to use their websites to tell the public about their purpose and goals, they need to separate *internal* information for members from information for others.

Further, they need to prepare for others clear, concise, short mission statements outlining who they are, why they exist, what their goals are and why these goals are relevant to Australia. These statements must be expressed in non-church language and placed prominently on the opening page ■

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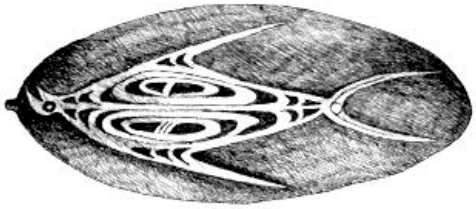

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Questions of emerging churches

'The shaping of things' now'

Darren Cronshaw

Darren Cronshaw *is a Baptist missionary and pastor who works with Forge Mission Training Network director of Theological Studies. His book,* ***Credible Witness: Companions, Prophets, Hosts and Other Australian Mission Models****, explores models of mission drawing on Australian history and culture. This paper introduces the four emerging churches Cronshaw is researching as case studies of mission and innovation, and some of the questions he is starting to explore towards a doctor of theology degree. Husband to Jenni, proud dad to three children, lover of good books and movies, and newcomer to the emerging conversation, he welcomes feedback to:* shapingnow@optusnet.com.au

My interest in the emerging missional church

My personal interest in the emerging and/or missional church as a movement stems from my background as a missionary. I served in Asia for eight months and had planned to be there longer. When that opportunity closed and we returned to Australia, I started thinking afresh about mission in my country and city.

I resonate with Lesslie Newbigin, missionary to India, who, when he returned to England after nearly 40 years, saw the west as a post-Christian, pagan mission field: "the most challenging missionary frontier of our time."[1]

In terms of mission in particular, how does the theology of mission that emerging churches espouse help foster the mission of emerging church participants, and how do they express their mission? What are some of the motivational factors that encourage church participants to engage in mission?

His writings led to the foundation of the Gospel and Our Culture Network (GOCN) in North America, which urges churches in the west to prioritise mission and cultural engagement.[2] These priorities have helped shape the emerging missional church and, part of why it captures my imagination, is its passion for mission and interest in culture.

The term *emerging church* has been hotly debated. Some mainstream churches say *what are you doing that we are not*? and some emerging churches resent the implication that they are still *emerging* into being a real church.[3] But *emerging* describes something that is changing and evolving rather than fixed in one place. The label recognises that such churches are emerging from a modern into a post modern framework, in a post-Christendom era, in a digital age, for a post-colonial era.

Interestingly, it is a term that has been used to describe the early church in the first century, since that was the time the church's leadership, worship and mission practices evolved. Arguably, therefore, emerging church is an appropriate term to use for churches today that are evolving for a new era.[4]

Australian leaders in the Forge Mission Training Network add *missional* to emphasise the primacy of mission: *emerging missional church* is a term that reminds churches that emerging is happening for the sake of mission and that mission is at the centre.[5]

The Forge ethos is that contextualising worship is good and more churches in the western world need to do that; but the mission of God is primary and all churches need to be focussed by that. I use the terms interchangeably to describe the movement of churches that are emerging (or re-emerging) as new ways of doing church for a new era, fuelled by mission and innovation.

Emerging church is not a new *quick fix* or model on

offer alongside seeker services or purpose-driven church. It is not surprising that some publishers, speakers and churches are jumping on the bandwagon to use the label (and put up candles and darken the room) in an attempt at programming emerging church. But the underlying philosophy goes deeper and relates to incarnationally engaging culture and grappling with how to transform church for the 21st century.

My interest in emerging churches has been furthered by my experience as a Baptist pastor. After leaving my last church to undertake this study, I was disappointed that I had neither transformed its structures, nor helped it grow in numbers, nor led it to become more multicultural and representative of its community.

Part of the reason may have been its history of systemic conflict and conservative expectations. Part of it was admittedly my own lack of leadership and communication skills. But my experience left me with the questions, "Is it possible to reshape established churches in an emerging missional framework and how can that be done?" and "Is it more fruitful to plant new churches that are mission-shaped from their beginning?"

I took notice in 2001 of the priority that my denomination, the Baptist Union of Victoria (BUV), started to give to *new missional communities* (NMC). They set out to establish at least 20 missional experiments and offered help through seed finance and support.[6]

New expressions

Anne Wilkinson-Hayes, my regional minister, has as part of her role, the responsibility of resourcing the NMCs.[7] Over the last few years new expressions of church have started including *The Living Room* in homes around North Fitzroy, the *New Community Ringwood*, which meets in an art gallery complex, the *Inspiral* justice-oriented group for university residential students, and an incarnational outreach to seekers of alternative spiritualities.[8]

The work of the Forge Mission Training Network has also been influential for me and the whole Australian emerging missional church movement.[9] They have played a key networking and training role in helping many (but not all) of the new emerging missional churches get started. Forge has developed an action-reflection training programme and approach to emerging missional church that is built around missional identity, sustainable spirituality and pioneering leadership.

The founders of Forge, Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, wrote *The Shaping of Things to Come*.[10] This has become a kind of textbook for Australian missional church life. The authors' sense of hope is not in revitalising established churches (though they acknowledge a place for that). Their vision is to see new, culturally diverse, missional communities planted with four organic characteristics:

- *missional structures* rather than Christendom's attractional and hierarchical model
- *incarnational ecclesiology* that infiltrates community networks
- *messianic spirituality* that engages culture and everyday rhythms of life
- *apostolic leadership* that pioneers new and innovative mission, prophetically questions the status quo and, evangelistically, goes beyond the church's walls.

The need for the new

It argues and develops a framework for why churches need to experiment wildly, be free to fail, cultivate a climate of radical change and develop church on the margins.

Around the world, among the experiments of new ways of *doing* church are alternative worship, basic ecclesial communities, café church, house church, cell church, new monasticism, festival celebrations, art cooperatives, missional orders, Celtic churches, youth congregations, children's church, and midweek, school-linked and seeker gatherings.[11]

Most of them are motivated by a desire to engage their culture and/or express mission in innovative and relevant ways. For example, the Church of the Saviour has developed a multi-congregational approach to church by having any new congregation ask first, *What is our mission in this area*, second, *what structures will best facilitate that mission*? and third, *what spiritual disciplines will sustain the community in that mission*?[12]

Timing of decision-making

They decide on other structures after they have decided on their mission, and shape church around that. The Church of the Saviour predated the emerging church as a contemporary label, but their missional focus has inspired other emerging expressions.

In Melbourne and across Australia, we have other pre-emerging church models for what emerging churches are striving towards. Over the last few decades, John Smith has started God's Squad, Truth and Liberation Concern and Care and Communication Concern as attempts to contextualise church and the gospel for Australians.

Athol Gill founded the House of the Gentle Bunyip in Collingwood as an intentional Christian community. Different groups of people have been seeking to follow Jesus in radical ways and have been striving

to shape church around mission. They have avoided a one-size-fits-all, get-the-latest-programme-from-overseas approach to church. They could be seen as forerunners of the missional church movement.

Emerging church practitioner, Mark Sayers, suggests there is something unique about Melbourne's openness to the emerging church because of the pioneering groundwork done by leaders like John Smith, Athol Gill and the radical discipleship movement.[13]

Case studies

My commitment to mission and cultural studies, my denomination's encouragement of new missional communities, my current work with Forge, and Melbourne's growing number of emerging churches, have all helped shape my research interest in emerging churches in Melbourne.

Frost and Hirsch's, **The Shaping of Things to Come**, offers a theological paradigm for the future of emerging churches, but I want to examine what innovation and mission is actually happening in a selection of emerging churches in Melbourne. The emerging church literature argues for re-consideration of the theology of church, but what difference does it make?

Advocates contend that new models are the way to reach people in a post-*modern* society, but do the results match the rhetoric? What innovation is happening and where is it taking churches in their mission? How is *the shaping of things* now?

I have visited four main congregations over six months in 2006. They were a Church of Christ, Pentecostal, Baptist and Anglican church spread across the eastern and inner north-eastern suburbs of Melbourne. I participated in their gatherings, collected documents, interviewed key leaders and conducted focus groups. Here is a brief overview of their stories, followed by questions their experience prompts me to ask, as well as questions other churches might ask of the emerging church movement.

Connection community—God and people

Connection is an innovative Church of Christ congregation in Croydon. In 2001, the Croydon Church of Christ literally closed. Then, new pastors, Wayne and Paula Nebauer, who had wanted to plant a church, came and worked with them on reinventing themselves.

Their Sunday gatherings are seen as *shop windows* to let people see what church is about and invite them into a deeper community experience.

For example, they have met on Sunday mornings in pubs, bistros and family restaurants for *Life Connection* gatherings. The leaders host discussion around tables over coffee, interspersed with sharing stories and multimedia, but rarely singing or long sermons. Connection has been marked by a passion for community, a flare for creativity and a desire to see how Christ relates to everyday life.

They also connect with the community through the dining room, high school ministry, playgroups and community faith nursing.[14] Their founding pastors have just left, so they are looking to the future and considering their needs for new leadership.

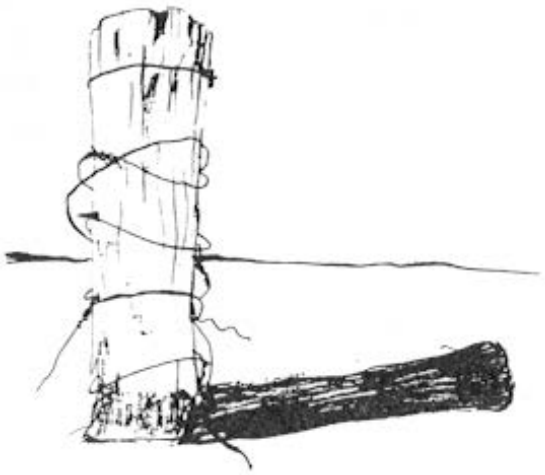
Urban Life—for the wellbeing of our community

Urban Life is a reinvented and relocated Christian Revival Crusade (CRC) in Ringwood. In February 2005, it left its old 4.5 acre facilities on the outskirts of Ringwood, and leased an old night club in the centre of Ringwood. They describe their journey as *from the country club to the nightclub*.

They explain to visitors that *The Urban* is a café, community centre and children's play area that also has church on Sundays. They have revisioned what they do as a church around the twin priorities of community and mission.

They describe community as *doing life deeply together*, and a key part of that is their new small group structure *Get-Togethers* (GTs), which have only two rules—there must be some shared meal, and there is no Bible study. They describe mission as *being found about our Father's business*.

As well as their global mission that they have traditionally prized, they are freshly looking at ways to serve and reach their own community. Community ministries include a soup kitchen, high school ministry, a craft group, book club, Prime Timers social group (50+), role-playing games and an exercise group.



Another radical part of Urban Life's story is that when they moved, they had a smooth leadership transition. Fifty-year-old Doug Faircloth handed over leadership to his associate, 35-year-old Anthea Smits.

Faircloth continues in a two day per week coaching role. They also changed their name—from Christian Life Centre to Urban Life, suggestive of their new location and an acronym for: *U'R Beginning A New Life*. They are looking forward to the hoped-for growth that they expect their obedience and openness will bring.[14]

Eastern Hills—lives to reflect the kingdom of God

Eastern Hills is a new Baptist church plant in Croydon. It was started in 2003 by a group of young adults including Bible College of Victoria graduates, Toli and Emma Morgan and Matthew Jones. They are characterised by creativity in worship, community and hospitality, and engaging the world.

They seek to engage the world at a variety of levels—cultural awareness, high school groups, a creative group for people with mental illness, a soup kitchen team which now runs a sports team, rent relief and assistance for Sudanese asylum seekers, and basically supporting anything people want to get involved in.

One of their first social undertakings was the harbour-deepening protest rally, which they went to out of a keen sense of social justice and because one of their members felt passionate about it. They met for four years at Wyreena Community Centre, but in early 2007, moved to the larger Yarunga Community Centre in Croydon Hills. They look forward to the flexibility and room for growth that more space offers them.[16]

Solace—thrive, celebrate and remake the world

Solace is a congregation planted in 2000 within St Hilary's Anglican Church, which has since branched off on its own and meets at Balwyn Baptist (in the east) and St Paul's Anglican, Fairfield (in the inner north-east).

They were started by Olivia MacLean with a focus on interactive worship—for all ages and all stages of faith and learning styles. Their Thursday evening and Sunday morning gatherings tend be interactive and contemplative.

They started with a vision for the unchurched but found they attracted a lot of de-churched and over-churched people, who appreciated the space to be free to question and explore their faith dilemmas.

Their distinctiveness is celebrating a spirituality of everyday life and vocation. They have developed this with a *Remaking* course and book about seven ways of Jesus-centred spirituality, based on Richard Foster's writing on historical spiritual traditions and Dallas Willard's concept of *transforming grace*.[17]

Another unique feature is their *Dreaming* nights to help people think about questions and plans (including business plans) to remake their world. They are looking forward to *bridging the gap* between their ideals and where what feel they are now.[18]

After visiting them, I have considered what participants consider are the strengths and weaknesses of these four churches. Drawing on their strengths, I have considered what these emerging churches have to say to other churches? And considering their weaknesses, what might other churches question and critique in them and the broader emerging church movement?

Is your mission primary?

A foundational question the emerging church asks is whether mission is primary, rather than our inherited traditions of church. Forge takes it a step further back and asks *is Jesus primary*

Frost and Hirsch, inspired by David Bosch, urge Christology to inform missiology, and then missiology to inform ecclesiology.[19] So instead of starting with church forms, they would start with understanding Jesus, then develop an approach to mission and then form church around that.

For example, Urban Life asked about all their programmes, *how does this help us with community and mission*? Their senior leader, Smits, says they are operating almost none of the programmes they were doing five years ago.

Their missional refocus has prompted a reallocation of resources—planned and unplanned. As people respond to the new challenge for local mission, they report plenty of people volunteering for the soup kitchen, community ministries and helping in the café, but are starting to feel an almost gratifying shortfall in worship team numbers![20]

As well as prioritising mission activity in church programmes, some emerging churches are beginning (at least in their aspirations) to refocus on mission of the whole people of God—in their families, community groups and workplaces.[21]

Some emerging churches are better at celebrating this than others. Solace is a great example, which is forming their whole network and ethos around encouraging one another in their everyday mission roles.

The theological basis that emerging churches are

inspired by is incarnational mission. Rather than bringing people in with an *evangelistic-attractional* model of church, emerging churches espouse sending their people out with a *missional-incarnational* impulse.

Thus Frost and Hirsch encourage joining community groups and building friendships through those networks, more than attracting people to join church groups.[22] Solace, for example, was recruiting board members and talking to someone about that until the potential recruit told the pastors that he was considering either the Solace board or the local school board. They encouraged him to join the school board. *Is your mission primary*? is the key question.

Is your leadership permission-giving?

As I talked to leaders and participants of emerging churches, a recurring story of what they say is important in the growth of their church and in feeling valued, is a permission-giving approach to leadership. All four of my case studies show this pattern and have their own stories. It is particularly part of Connection's culture.

Wayne and Paula Nebauer at Connection said a lot of their time, from the green-light brainstorming at their first retreat through to an intern programme that has developed, has focussed on encouraging people to dream and think innovatively about church.

When people have a passion to do something, as long as it is within ethical and broad vision boundaries, they are generally given permission to implement their ideas.

There are no committee and church meeting structures that new initiatives have to be cleared through. One of Connection's interns, Yasmine, is among those who appreciate this aspect of Nebauer's leadership:

> *Wayne never said to me, "Oh, you have got to do this and you have got to do that." He just asked me where my heart is and then said, "Okay, cool, let me find something for you to do in terms of your passions and what you want*."[23]

Permission-giving & culture engaging leadership

Part of incarnational living and non-dualistic spirituality is to explore how God connects with contemporary culture. Emerging churches want to engage their culture in worship and evangelism. Eastern Hills was started by a group of young adult friends who were wrestling with questions of how the gospel engages culture. Toli Morgan said they were asking:

> *How do we do Church in such a way that it is connected with the world in which we live, with the community in which we live? How do we do this stuff? How do we actually make this connection between our Worship on a Sunday and what happens in our world?*[24]

Drawing on the inspiration of St Paul the Apostle and his understanding of how the gospel touches culture, one Sunday morning Morgan urged the congregation to grapple with questions of our culture.

He suggested going to public lectures, spending time in pubs, visiting galleries and watching films as a way of engaging culture and not just plundering it for gospel illustrations. Bible study takes time and so does cultural analysis, and Morgan argued both are as important as the other to allow the Word to become flesh and blood in our culture. His potentially controversial challenge was: "Don't you think that seeing a movie is less important than reading the Bible?[25] Are you engaging culture?

Are you interactive in worship?

One of the most formative aspects for me of the six months of visiting emerging churches was participating in their interactive worship. For example, my daughter and I visited Solace and participated in the *Solace liturgy* which invites six or seven people to lead different parts of the service.

People mingled or sat around St Paul's on various lounges, chairs and steps. Stuart Davey, one of the pastors, greeted us and explained we were free to go to different parts of the room to prayerfully read the papers on the wall (which included articles about the deaths of Steve Erwin and Peter Brock), make an offering in one of many offering boxes (with symbols of our money, time, environmental care or encouragement of others), respond by writing, painting or moulding play-dough, help yourself to a coffee (fair trade), or engage in quiet conversations.

After this, choose-your-own adventure *liquid church* experience, Davey called everyone together and asked, "Where have you seen God at work this week?" Con had visited a church in Queensland and appreciated the welcome and love he experienced. Someone else had just got to talk to their dad before he died. Davey had weeded his garden and reflected on what God was taking out of his life.

This was the first of a few questions through the morning, interspersed with songs, teaching about transforming grace,[26] and a Leunig poem.[27] Maybe only a third of people present contributed to discussion, but most listened with interest.

Well-constructed questions led to thought-provoking discussion and I noticed people did not criticise responses or seek to immediately resolve dilemmas.

I also noticed people were reasserting their

commitment to traditional evangelical practices like prayer, Bible reading and compassion for the needy, but wanted to do these things with right motives and not out of obligation. Davey summarised the morning, closed in prayer, and invited everyone to contribute to the six or seven things that needed doing to tidy and clean up.[28]

Solace gatherings have always tried to be *informal, participatory and authentic*. The symbols that represent the culture of Solace include mugs, candles, tables not pews, play dough, and (relative) absence of music.[29] Olivia MacLean says worship becomes like a game of Hacky Sack—anyone can start or contribute to the conversation.[30]

As well as teaching input with occasional lectures, they have an open microphone and lots of encouragement to ask and explore questions. As well as practising communion traditionally, at times they instead share whole meals together. Instead of meeting inside for worship every Sunday, once or twice per year they plant trees or participate in Clean Up Australia.[31]

There was question about what people might say in the open microphone session, whether lunch can replace Eucharist, or whether Greening Up Australia can replace a service. But participants say these practices helped them connect with God and one another in new ways, and they continue to explore interactive and diverse expressions of worship. Are you interactive in worship?

Are you doing life together deeply?

Emerging churches, at least those I have visited, as well as the rhetoric I read in the books, give priority to building authentic communities. Some have explored intentional community and living together. Others have re-evaluated or built their programmes with a focus on community.

Urban Life, in their small groups, wanted to get away from singing and preaching at one another without knowing one another. They wanted to move away from what they called the "craziness of telling each other how to live without being prepared to (or having the format to) open their lives to share life together."

Inspired by Acts 2:42-47 and the vision of a group of friends who would bleed for one another, they started asking, "What would a group look like that we could not wait to get to?" and "Into what sort of a space would we be comfortable inviting our friends?"

They dreamed that they would want good food, a big table and lots of laughing. They were not convinced they needed Bible study and singing, and got that input at other times. And so they refocussed their small groups as *Get-togethers* (GTs) with only two rules—there has to be a shared meal and no Bible study.[32]

GTs have become a primary context for community care. Smits visited a man in hospital after a heart attack. She started with, "Oh, I'm sorry I haven't been to see you, how are you doing? I heard you had a heart attack."

He said, "Oh, you didn't need to come and visit me, it was fantastic, the GT group, they just came in and they brought communion in for me and I had so-and-so come in and they have been coming in regularly to have prayer with me and oh its just fantastic."[33]

Authentic community is seen as worthwhile for its own sake but also an appropriate expression of mission, especially in a post-modern world where relationships are so valued. Aaron was a young person who basically walked in off the street one morning and came to Christian belief through belonging to the Urban Life community.

In some church cultures it is important to believe (and/or behave) before you can belong, but Urban Life seeks to prioritise welcoming people to feel they belong irrespective of their beliefs and behaviour.

In the case of Aaron, this led to him finding faith for himself and his behaviour is changing as he learns about following Jesus.[34] It is difficult to do effective mission without community. In fact, doing mission together is arguably the best basis for community, or even better *communitas* as, Alan Hirsch describes the sense of togetherness that comes from facing shared challenges around a common mission.[35] Are you doing life deeply?

These are some of the questions that my visits to emerging churches suggest to me. But there are also questions to address to emerging churches suggested by the potential weaknesses and shortfalls that participants identify.

Have you forgotten the importance of nurture?

Emerging missional churches place an emphasis on mission, sometimes to the neglect of nurture. Missional emphasis is actually one of the things that attracts many Christians, who like to be part of the action and long for more relevant expressions of church.

However, a disappointment of some emerging church participants is lack of nurture.[36] Part of that may be the *me-centred* generation of Christians who are used to being *fed* in other churches. Also, part of it is a preoccupation with Bible-teaching sermons as the form that helps people feel nurtured and a reluctance to appreciate more interactive forms of nurture.

Sometimes people do not realise the value of missionary spirituality and that they will grow best by

actively living out their faith. But sometimes people's concerns do reflect an actual lack of focus on teaching and spiritual formation. It does not have to be done in traditional ways, but it is important to develop appropriate approaches to nurture and spiritual formation. Alan Hirsch describes disciple-making as one of the six elements, and perhaps *the* most critical element, of missional fitness or missional-DNA.[37] But it is an element that can be too easily sidelined.

I am committed to the church and its purpose to glorify God through worship, mission, pastoral care and spiritual formation. Church is not *just* about mission. And, in fact, to do mission effectively, we need to give attention to the other aspects of church.

Emerging church practitioners sometimes say they are focussing on mission because it is the first thing that needs focussing on, or because the church has been so imbalanced on looking after itself that it needs a recalibration in the other direction.

But an imbalance in one direction does not justify an unhealthy imbalance in the other direction. Rowland Croucher's main reservation with **The Shaping of Things to Come** is that church includes four essential activities—worship (to God), formation (in ourselves), *koinonia* (with Christian others) and mission (relating to those outside faith). Renewal requires the integration of all four.[38] Have you forgotten the importance of nurture?

Processes for innovation and change?

Emerging churches value being on the edge of change and developing programmes (and shutting them down), depending on the needs of the context. Sometimes they hold on to their denominational tradition, but often they question it or at least want to transform it.

They often move, are regularly changing and aspire to innovate further. Some emerging churches have thoughtful processes for this and take the time to carefully plan consultation. Others are more ad hoc and have left people with their trust undermined and their efforts unappreciated.

This is not unique to emerging churches, but because of the importance they place on innovation it is particularly important to pay attention to. Emerging churches may attract a greater proportion of innovators and early adopters.[39] Yet this does not excuse emerging church leaders from ignoring appropriate processes.

People still expect to be consulted when change affects them, even if they are in a congregation without decades of tradition. One of the best resources for emerging leadership is the *Chaos Theory* and living systems thinking.[40] What are your processes for innovation and change?

Are you fostering evangelism?

Emerging churches say they place a high priority on mission and are often starting new community programmes. They tend to express a commitment to holistic mission. Solace refers to the $10,000 raised in 2006 for Opportunity International, Eastern Hills refers to their advocacy for asylum seekers and Connection prizes *The Dining Room*.

At Urban Life, Smits is clear to explain their holistic approach to mission as involving both proclamation and social justice or acts of mercy. They often talk about their desire to see people come to faith through verbal witness.

But they also have a clear commitment to service and demonstrating the gospel in action. Smits says, "Christianity is often about populating heaven, where it needs to be about transforming earth."[41]

The commitment to holistic mission is noteworthy and perhaps particularly appropriate in Australia where we value serving those in need and standing up for the battler.[42] But I am interested how much evangelism emerging churches are actually doing.

Some groups shy away from evangelism because of past experiences of insensitive programmes. Sometimes they question it as part of re-evaluating beliefs about the gospel and the uniqueness of Christ.[43]

Some groups avoid evangelistic programmes because of a commitment to relational evangelism and inviting people to belong to the community before they are expected to believe.

Most emerging churches say they design their gatherings to be more accessible to people outside the church, but this is sometimes more effective for attracting over-churched people back rather than drawing in unchurched people.

Troy Arnott at New Community Ringwood has a refreshing focus on evangelism. He has done a lot of theological reflection on how to share faith in a postmodern setting, and runs seminars for his people to encourage and empower them.[44]

I am looking forward to comparing National Church Life Survey (NCLS) data on evangelism and new Christians to see whether the New Community Ringwood's efforts have made a noticeable difference when compared to other emerging churches.

It will also be interesting to compare the evangelistic effectiveness of more mainstream church plants or national averages with new expressions of church including my four case studies. Are you fostering

evangelism?

Do you recognise the broader body of Christ?

A strength of emerging church thinking is encouraging diversity of models, but a weakness is that this can be perceived as questioning the validity of mainstream churches. One of Alan Hirsch's criticisms of the contemporary church growth movement (CCGM) is that however good their typically *attractional* approach is, they will only reach a certain segment of the population.[45]

Contemporary seeker-style churches need to be complemented with incarnational models. But emerging churches with their incarnational rhetoric need to evaluate how incarnational they actually are and would benefit from considering their *attractional* influence.[46] Emerging churches have prophetic challenges that mainstream churches need to hear, but emerging churches need to be listening to and appreciating the place of mainstream churches too.[47]

And, from my perspective in Forge, we are always seeking to balance the tension of being prophetic about the need for incarnational mission and new church plants and respecting the broader body of Christ and celebrating mission wherever it is.

One of Solace's founding principles is that they want to stay connected to helpful traditions and "hold the hand of the historical church."[48] There is also a challenge at an individual level; some leaders can value innovation in theology so much that they start to ignore the body and the importance of traditional boundaries. Do you recognise the broader body of Christ?

Does your reality match your rhetoric?

Solace has an expression, *mind the gap*, echoing the London Underground, or more philosophically the theory of cognitive dissonance; because they acknowledge that there is a big gap between their ideals and who they are.[49] This is something that motivates them to change, but identifying the gap (and for some emerging churches being more honest and acknowledging that it exists) is an important stage in their *becoming* who they want to be.

I am fascinated to explore what mission and innovation is happening in emerging churches. My hypothesis is that emerging missional frameworks are releasing new expressions of mission in innovative ways, but I want to explore that further with congregational studies and seek to understand the gap between reality and rhetoric.

In the form of more questions I am exploring:

How are mission and innovation being cultivated? How else can it be encouraged? What similarities and differences occur in understanding innovation and mission between pastors and congregation, and between different congregations? How have existing churches been remissionalised with emerging church frameworks and how does this compare with planting churches that are intentionally mission-shaped from the beginning? What can other churches learn from emerging churches and what have emerging churches still got to learn from other churches?

In terms of mission in particular, how does the theology of mission that emerging churches espouse help foster the mission of emerging church participants and how does it express their mission? What are some of the motivational factors that encourage church participants to engage in mission?

What factors detract from missional activity? What forms does mission take, in the lives of individuals and through the life of the congregation? To what extent can emerging church mission be described as *incarnational* and how much *attractional* mission occurs?

Innovation?

In terms of innovation, how do emerging churches deal with the management of change and the diffusion of innovation? What is participants' experience of innovation-decisions? What frameworks do leaders use? Are people satisfied with the frameworks? What can emerging churches learn from the sociology of innovation in religion, and the new science of chaos theory?

Do emerging churches attract people who are innovators? Do they intentionally build a culture of change that increases organisational innovativeness? What can other churches learn from emerging churches about how to lead churches through change and into innovative new approaches to church life?

Fad—missionary or revitalisation movement

It may also be fruitful to ask whether emerging churches are a fad, a missionary movement or a revitalisation movement, why people decide to attend emerging churches, and how their renewal and innovative practice may be sustained.

How much does your reality match your rhetoric? ■

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25) MORGAN, Toli, Eastern Hills Sunday sermon, 4 June 2006; cf. Acts 17

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41) Quoted in STEVE, *How We Treat Others—Salt and Light*, Urban Life sermon, Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:13-15, Ringwood, 2006

42) I explore these issues in CRONSHAW, **Credible Witness**, 111-123

43) This is sometimes associated with the sort of 'post-evangelical' doubt which is one point I sympathise with Don Carson's critique of emerging churches, although it is unfair to apply the critique to all. CARSON, Don, **Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church: Understanding a Movement and Its Implications**, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005; cf, JONES, Tony et al, **Our Response to Critics of Emergent**, 2005 [Accessed 5 October 2005], *http://emergent-us.typepad.com/emergentus/2005/06/official_respon.html*; TOMLINSON, Dave, **The Post-Evangelical**, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003

44) ARNOTT, Troy, Interview by the author, Ringwood, 19 July 2006

45) HIRSCH, Alan, makes this comment not to disparage contemporary churches, in fact he encourages those who do that expression of church well to do it better, but he wants to provoke thinking about other expressions of church. HIRSCH, *Emerging Missional Church*, HIRSCH, **The Forgotten Ways**, pp42-45

46) Emerging churches often worship and gather in creative ways which may attract newcomers more effectively than mainstream or even contemporary-focussed churches. NCLS figures have shown that 8 percent of Australian church attendees are newcomers, of which five percent are returnees after a long period of absence and only 3 percent come from a genuinely unchurched background. KALDOR, Peter et al, **Winds of Change: The Experience of Church in a Changing Australia**, Sydney: ANZEA, 1994, p214. It will be interesting to update these figures from the 2006 NCLS survey and to compare overall figures with emerging churches.

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Effie Varley

Missiology as biography

Darrell Paproth and David Turnbull

Darrell Paproth *is lecturer in church history and worship at the Bible College of Victoria. His main research interests are the history of Christianity in Australia, especially the evangelical movement, and the history of Geelong. His current major writing project is a history of the evangelical movement in colonial Melbourne*.

David Turnbull *was lecturer in missiology at the Bible College of South Australia before becoming head of the Intercultural Studies at Tabor College in Adelaide. He is a member of the National Leadership Team of Missions Interlink. His master's thesis is:* A Study of Australian Protestant Missions to Nigeria between 1960 and 1990.'

Introduction

In early in March 1966, Effie visited the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM)[1] headquarters at Jos, Nigeria, to farewell her longtime fellow missionary partner, Miss Dorothy (Queenie) Howe, who was returning to South Africa.

But on March 6, Varley had a heart attack. She was treated at the Bingham Memorial Hospital, but the doctors did not think that the attack warranted too much concern—she was not an old woman, and had been highly active physically during her long missionary career.

However on March 15, she suffered a further, and this time fatal, attack. It was a poignant ending to a remarkable life and hundreds attended her funeral at the Miango Town Church, where the Nigerian, Pastor Ronku, who had held her hand as she died, solemnly led the service.

The chief of the local tribe also spoke lovingly of Varley's work and gave a challenge to others to take up the work. He went on to say how the sick, the blind, the crippled and the aged in the surrounding villages would miss her visits to them.

An era had passed. No one could fill her shoes. But the Lord has 'called out for himself a people' that no longer worship fetishes and evil spirits but are taking up the challenge to reach out to those round them who are still in heathen darkness.[2]

Her remains were then buried in the small SIM cemetery in Miango. But who was Effie Varley?

In what follows I will briefly outline her life and then those contexts which *explain* her, and of which she was an outstanding representative: the evangelical movement, missions, the Melbourne Bible Institute, her family and, as a single woman, missionary. Varley was a product of Melbourne evangelicalism; this is her story.

> *… her contribution, contrary to what some might think given her evangelical (fundamentalist) heritage, was, in modern missiological parlance, incarnational. She and her SIM colleagues did far more than simply preach the gospel; their ministry was pastoral and compassionate, and cared for the whole person*

The early years

Ethel Russell (Effie) Varley was born 6 July 1900 in Kew, the granddaughter and daughter of forthright, uncompromising, itinerant evangelists. Her grandfather was Henry Varley, one of the best known of late 19th century evangelists, and who lived and plied his craft in Melbourne for a number of years.[3] Her father, Frank, followed in his father's footsteps, though limiting his itinerancy to Melbourne and country Victoria, with occasional forays to Tasmania.

Varley grew up in her parents' home, *Montpellier*, 5a Beaver Road, in middle class East Malvern. It was a secure family environment which continued to support her in Africa and which she greatly appreciated. "As I look back over my life, my first thought is of gratitude to God for a Christian home and consistent Christian parents—to whose steadfast example and loving, prayerful training I owe more than I can express."[4]

Early years

In her early years, Varley, and her siblings, attended Sunday School at the East Malvern Baptist Church where Reverend D J Graham was the pastor. There, week after week, like countless other children of her generation, she learned of the love of God for sinners, the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross and the great commission he gave his followers.

Then, in her early teens, during the 1912 Chapman-Alexander Crusade, and to the delight of her parents, she underwent an evangelical conversion and was baptised by Reverend Graham. "This was to be the beginning of a surrendered life, and I trust it will be a process which will be continued by the Holy Spirit day by day, until the Day of Jesus Christ."[5]

What followed was a single-minded preparation for her life's work. It was a natural progression for her to teach Sunday School, first at her church and then in a more needy area in West Melbourne where a friend had begun a Sunday School for children who otherwise had no connection with any church. She found this valuable experience of communicating the gospel message simply. When she was 18, to consolidate her experience thus far, she took the training course of the Normal College for Sunday School Teachers, gaining the diploma and the dux prize.

After primary school Varley went to the prestigious University High, where she excelled in her academic work. She was also one of the groups of students who revived the Christian Union in the school and became its treasurer.

Completing her secondary education, she gained entry to the Pharmacy College in Royal Parade, Parkville, where she again excelled, earning the highest marks in her final exams, and looked set to pursue a promising career.

In the immediate post-World War I years, this was not a typical career for a young woman. But the intelligent and practical minded Varley had her sights set on the mission field, and deliberately chose pharmacy because she, rightly, thought it would be valuable in missionary work.

During her senior high school and pharmacy college years she also became involved with the Melbourne Gospel Crusade (MGC) in its Sunday evening, open-air services, where she frequently sang solos. The MGC not only helped train her in evangelism; in 1929 it also sent her out for her second tour of duty.[6]

Interest in missions

Her interest in missions began early and was part of being an evangelical. In church, Sunday school and conventions, awareness of individual responsibility for the great commission was taught and understood.

At meetings, the need of the lost was clearly presented, and young people were often challenged with the need to proclaim the gospel.

Usually, Australians headed for the mission field went to Asia, the Pacific, or, if they were Anglican, to East Africa with the Church Missionary Society. A few went to South America. But Effie chose West Africa, and a faith mission, not the Baptist Missionary Society.

According to an obituary in the SIM archives, Charles Hummel, who had worked as a SIM missionary in Zagun, planted the seed, but no details are given.[7] Another factor might have been her sense of independence; after all, she was the granddaughter of Henry Varley; she had grown up with the interdenominational MGC and perhaps the *faith mission* principles of SIM appealed.

For her part, Varley was not so specific. In her **Account of My Life** she wrote:

> *My desire for missionary service goes back for many years. Probably I was about eight when one verse of a missionary hymn had a strong fascination for me:*
> *How sweet it would be at evening*
> *If you and I could say,*
> *Good Shepherd, we've been seeking*
> *The sheep that went astray.*
> *I did not lose this desire as I grew older, and came to believe that it was a desire given me by my Lord* (Psalm 37.4).

This was stimulated and developed in 1920 by the classes of the recently founded Melbourne Bible Institute (MBI) begun to train missionaries for the China Inland Mission, which she attended while completing her pharmacy qualifications.

After the watershed of World War I, the leadership of the Melbourne evangelicals did not waste time ruminating on perceived ill fortunes. The founding of MBI was the main expression of a determination to recapture the energy and drive that characterised the evangelical movement in colonial Melbourne.

Over the following years a steady stream of students went out to the mission field. At the institute, Varley came under the benign, pastoral and inspirational

influence of the Reverend C H Nash, who encouraged in her the missionary mandate.[8]

She was one of first (she was student No 25) of the more than 1,000 students who sat under Nash's teaching and were impacted upon by his teaching and personality, many of whom then went out to the mission field.

Even though her time at MBI was short, Nash's influence was critical: "… the hours spent there under the splendid tutorship of our beloved principal—Reverend C H Nash—have been times of great joy and spiritual blessing in the glories of the Word."[9]

In her personal letters to Nash from the mission field she thanked him for the *heart messages* he included in the MBI newsletter, expressed sympathy to Nash on the death of his closest friend, E Lee Neil, managing director of Myer and president of MBI (24 October 1935), and concluded her letters with spontaneous expressions of affection: "With Christian love, yours affectionately..." (1929); "With much love & another big *thank you* for all that God has done & is doing for me through you. Yours affectionately in him..." (1935); "With much love & cordial greetings to the MBI students, past & present. Yours in the joy of Christ's service …" (14 November 1939).[10]

The warmth of these letters was a natural expression of the family-type atmosphere of MBI, and a response to the fatherly Nash who was mentor and friend, never simply lecturer or principal to his students.

Spirituality

Another factor was the teaching, spirituality and environment of the Upwey Convention, where young evangelicals were informed about missions and challenged to go:

> *It was at the commencement of this year that I was led to see the need of a full surrender to my Lord. Through a conversation with a friend at our*[11] *Upwey Convention, I saw that, though I was living a Christian life, yet the one object of my life was not living entirely to Jesus Christ*.

I spent some time alone with him and the result I have recorded in my Bible as follows:

> *Matthew 4:19 His call and promise*
> *Luke 9:23 What it means*
> *2 Corinthians 5:15 My desire*—All for Jesus
>
> *"For me to live is Christ" Philippians 1:21*
>
> *"I am the Lord's, yet teach me all it meaneth,*
> *All it involves of love and* loyalty,[12]
> *Of holy service, absolute surrender,*
> *And unreserved obedience to thee.*
> *"I want my life to tell of Jesus;*
> *That everywhere I go men may His goodness know,*
> *I want my life to tell for Jesus."*
> *Upwey Convention, January 1921*.[13]

Varley also completed a short nursing course at Bethesda Hospital in Richmond and gained experience as an *assistant dispenser* at the Melbourne General Hospital, the first woman to hold the post. During this time, she continued her studies at MBI. Her Melbourne General Hospital experience was a forerunner of the later practice of MBI students to learn basic medical skills in preparation for mission work.

This was because the training at MBI was *practical*; that is, it was focussed on equipping the students for mission at home and abroad. In Varley's case, it was a natural outcome of her initiative, drive and single-mindedness—she was preparing herself for missionary work in Nigeria, where she would serve for 42 years.[14] Most women missionaries in her era focussed their efforts on teaching, medical work, or evangelism—areas in which they were qualified.

Nigeria

In the 19th century, Christianity was introduced to Nigeria, then a British colony, along the coastal regions by the Anglicans, Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians and the Catholics.

In the latter part of the century, missionaries of SIM, the Sudan United Mission (SUM), and the Anglican Church Missionary Society penetrated into central and northern Nigeria. SIM had some unpromising starts, but eventually 1910 saw the mission's first baptism in Nigeria.

Miango

It was to this central part of the country that Varley went. The Bauchi plateau, now called the Jos Plateau, is about 8,000 square kilometres of grassland surrounded by scarp. Today, it is Africa's main tin mining region, but in Varley's day, the main occupations were traditional farming and grazing.

Miango, the main town, which housed the SIM mission and which was to be Varley's home for four decades, was 15-20 miles from Jos (according to cross-country or road travel), the capital of the Plateau Province, and the average height above sea level was 1,280 metres.

It was a strategic location for both state and church; the central location determined its role as an administrative centre of the colonial power.

There was still a wet and a dry season, but the

weather was not as oppressive as on the coast and the area more liveable for Europeans.

But it was not going to be easy. The main tribal group in and around Miango was the Iregwe. The beliefs and customs of the Iregwe and the surrounding peoples were pagan.

Their religion was a mixture of sun, demon and ancestor worship. They were polygamous and their customs included killing one of twins by pouring lye down the infant's throat.

The mission

SIM work in Miango may be thought of in terms of five centres of ministry, in different parts of the town, which made up the Miango Christian community.

First, there was the Missionary Rest Home. In 1910, the Canadian, Doctor A P Stirrett,[15] visited the plateau looking for a suitable site for a rest home for missionaries. After investigating a number of sites, he recommended to the mission that Miango was the best place.

The site was surveyed in 1911 and building begun, and the home officially opened in March 1913. Varley noted: "The first contact the Iregwe tribe had with Christian missionaries was when Miango was decided upon as a suitable site for a rest home."[16]

Second, the mission station, I use this expression in a general sense, as indicating the missionaries and the centre from which they operated. The work included pastoral and evangelistic work—especially among outlying centres—translation work and medical work.

This involved running a medical clinic in the town and outlying centres. In 1940, after being hindered by protracted negotiations between SIM and the colonial government, SIM began leprosy work at Miango. Then in 1951, the Leprosy Mission asked SIM to supervise and run leprosy settlements in the Bauchi and Niger provinces, and the Bauchi Leprosarium began the following year.[17]

Third, the Kent Academy was officially opened in 1947 with 16 students as an elementary school for the children of SIM missionaries.

Fourth, the outcome of evangelistic and pastoral work among the Iregwe was the establishment of the Miango church. This included all the usual pastoral, educational and social activities and organisations one would expect: Bible class, children's groups, Boys' Brigade, women's groups, Sunday school, and worship services.

Fifth, Miango later became a popular and famous Missions' Conference Centre, not only for SIM but also for other missions in Northern Nigeria. These conferences reflected the content, nature and spirituality of the deeper-life conventions that the missionaries were used to at home." … *It was just like Keswick*, and included some 90 missionaries from seven different societies, two of whom had come all the way from the Sudan."[19]

There also developed an annual *Native Conference*, a deeper life convention to foster among the Nigerians the spirituality the missionaries had grown up with and which nurtured their own spiritual growth.[19] In her prayer letters, Varley expressed her longing for Nigerians to experience the *conviction of sin*.

Varley's work among Miango people

Thus Miango, Varley's home for the remaining 42 years of her life, was a busy place. It was a business-like place too. Each month and every quarter, reports were filled out on official table-type sheets. Church attendance grew from the high 100s to mid 200s in the late 1930s, to over 400 by the late 1950s.

Effie's contribution centred on evangelistic and pastoral work, language work and medical work. First, pastoral-evangelistic church work: evangelism was a family tradition and always important for her. It began when she taught Sunday School, when she was working in the Melbourne Hospital and when she was involved with the MGC activities.

Her work in Miango was a natural extension of this.[20] As well as evangelistic and pastoral work in the Miango church, Varley's ministry was notable for her constant itinerancy among the surrounding countryside and villages. These were not casual jaunts.

Harold Ogilvie remarked in a resume of the Miango station in early 1935, "The Misses Varley and Howe took a ten day itineration trip, accompanied by the Christians. Seven villages were visited."

Queenie Howe also remarked in a report later in the year: "In August we spent three and a half weeks itinerating in our further villages."

Again, in the July-September report, she noted, "At the beginning of the quarter a fortnight's itineration trip was made. Eight villages were visited." In March the following year, after she had returned from furlough, Varley reported, "Three and a half weeks were spent itinerating in our villages off the plateau."[21]

Because of her itinerating, she became famous for sometimes trekking 20-30 miles a day in the tropical heat, knitting as she walked. "A nine-mile walk before breakfast was nothing unusual. Her nine outstations lay scattered along the bush paths 10, 15

and 18 miles from here [Miango], most of them off the Plateau, down a steep descent with rivers to cross."[22]

During these treks she sought out enquirers, encouraged isolated believers, alleviated physical needs of individuals, and assisted local churches. She got on well with the Nigerians, not least because they appreciated the efforts she made in her ministry.

Turnbull records:

> *She was nicknamed* the white mother *in her first term, and it stuck. … [The sobriquet indicates] that they appreciated her work and loving and caring manner, which reflected the importance of the role of mother in their culture, especially spiritually. 'It is significant that this title was given to a single woman so early in her ministry [And while only in her twenties*].[23]

Daunting work

It was daunting work. In her prayer letters, Varley remarked upon the problem of distance, of famines and shortage of food.

There were problems of wife stealing and of homes where the husband was not a Christian. Pagan sacrifices, like eating food that had been sacrificed to demons, echoing Paul's experience with the Corinthian church.

The influence of witch doctors and demon possession were ever present and babies were brought to the witch doctor and sacrifices made. Turnbull points out that no details are given in her formal writings about conflict with evil spirits, but quotes from oral tradition by Nigerian, Hwie Zamfara.

> *There is a story of a time when she encountered evil spirits (iblis) at Gui [Twin Hills], which is not far from Chohwu's extended families' farm. They often blocked her and she would kneel and pray when they did this. By the time she was through praying they would let her go and she would continue her walk. She had many bitter experiences.*
>
> *These experiences, however, did not deter her from doing her work. She did not fear the evil spirits. Because she trusted and believed in God, she drove away all the evil spirits*.[24]

Also, some of the nationals were appallingly indifferent to the missionaries and their message; others would say what they thought the missionaries wanted to hear, but their response was only one of the lips. In spite of this the church developed and thrived.

Language

Before Cameron Townsend formed the Wycliffe Bible Translators, a foundational policy of SIM was that the Bible should be translated into the language of the people among whom missionaries worked.

Often this involved reducing a spoken language to written form before the Bible could be translated. At Miango, Hausa was the *lingua franca* (the Hausa Bible was finally printed in 1932) and Iregwe was the language of the local ethnic group.[25]

Like many missionaries of her era, Varley had no formal language training, but with her natural intelligence and ability with words she was able to help translate the Bible into Iregwe.[26]

This was no small thing: reducing a spoken language to written form, constructing the grammar and vocabulary, checking spelling and meaning of words was laborious and mechanical presses made the work time consuming and expensive. But it was fundamental to the SIMers' missionary purpose.

Medical

Additionally, there was the invaluable medical work of the mission, which was a major part of Varley's labours. In a report for the SIM in 1924 she noted, "… For the month of November alone our treatments numbered more than 3000..."[27]

The bush dispensary, which she began, gave her acceptance among the indigenous people, though it took her and the other missionaries time to persuade the Iregwe to relinquish some of their practices. One was the superstition that washing a baby would lessen its chance of recovery, thus babies of unbelievers were brought in quite filthy.

In her résumé for the first quarter of 1950, she refers to "years of disappointment against the twin killing custom here [but]… We at last have three sets of twins living in pagan families all thriving …' And the next quarter she was able to report, 'We now have five sets of twins in non-Christian homes."

The medical work was enhanced with the arrival of her younger sister Minnie, who had graduated in medicine from the University of Edinburgh (one of 25 successful candidates out of 104), before sailing for Miango, where she was sent to relieve Doctor Stirrett.[28]

Both sisters were overjoyed; they were very close, and Minnie shared Varley's love for the Nigerians.

In her prayer letter of February 1927 she wrote, "... I am now sailing towards the land that has won my heart. But only because the Lord has won my heart's affection and he has called me to the place of his choice.

I know it is his love for those dear, dark people that

has filled me with the desire to go and tell them of his salvation." Unfortunately her health was not robust and she had to return to Melbourne in 1928.

The furloughs

SIM policy was for missionaries to spend four years on the field and one year at home. During her 42 years service in Nigeria, Varley had nine furloughs. The first eight at home and the last one, in July 1964, in South Africa.

Because she got on well with the nationals, Varley's farewells were painful for her and the Nigerians; she was *their white woman*. After the farewells there was the long trip to the coast, a ship to England and then home to Melbourne.

These furloughs were for rest and recreation and for deputation work and renewing contact with supporters.

The latter was especially important for a missionary operating with the *faith principle* and who did not know when and how much financial support might come in. In her 5 April 1927 prayer letter, the then-26-year-old Varley referred to her trepidation at facing deputation work:

> *May I now add a personal request? This is my first furlough and deputation work will be a new experience for me. To me it is far more than talking about the work and trying to rouse and increase interest.*
>
> *God has brought me back with a sense of the responsibility of being a representative of the* Sudan Interior Mission,[29] *and especially of the Iregwe tribe. Will you pray that I may be faithful and never address any meeting save with the cons-ciousness that I am giving the Lord's message in his own way*?

Home highlight

A highlight of being home was speaking and being present at the Upwey-Belgrave Heights Convention, which was written up in the *Keswick Quarterlys*. These appearances supplemented her prayer letters. One of a steady stream of missionaries, she reported to the faithful the progress being made, asked prayer for the difficulties faced and gave a human face to the reports that came back from the field.

She was a fixture at the convention: the faithful listened, were informed and inspired, and prayed for her. For Varley the missionary was an exemplar, and for evangelicals, next to top preachers, good missionaries have star quality.

There was a reflexive dimension to this: those attending the convention felt themselves to be part of the missionary effort and the missionary was encouraged emotionally and spiritually, as well as supported financially. Inspiration flowed to both parties and, in accord with deeper-life spirituality, there was an empowering for service for the missionary at home and abroad.

Conclusion

In her person, theology and spirituality, as well as her contribution, Effie Varley exemplified an important missiological tradition.

Evangelical

She was an early 20th century evangelical, and her personality, contribution, and significance were determined and shaped by this.

Though a Baptist, Varley belonged to this wider, interdenominational evangelical tradition.

It was a formative event in her young life, the culmination of her religious upbringing, the continuation of, rather than the beginning of the process of sanctification and the basis of her message. She exemplified evangelical spirituality, determination and loyalty to the great commission.

Faith missionary

Second, she was a *faith* missionary, following the missiological principles worked out by Hudson Taylor and his China Inland Mission.

A woman

Third, she was a woman, and women formed the vanguard of the missions' movement.[30] Most went to the mission field as married women but, from the time of Hudson Taylor's revolutionary programme, single women were accepted as missionaries in their own right.

SIM followed suit; it had no gender bias. This policy and practice was part of first-wave feminism in the second part of the 19th century and Varley and others who carved out a career as independent single women on the mission field were an extension of that movement.[31]

Varley was an extremely able woman. This was evident from her early years when she swept all before her at University High School and the Pharmacy College.

These abilities translated into her multi-faceted mission work—she had language, pastoral and personal, as well as medical skills of a high order. She had drive and initiative, and her legendary treks indicate a physically tough woman. There was an indefatigable quality about her.

She was an affectionate woman. This is evident from her relationship with her family, in particular Minnie, and with her colleagues at Miango, especially Queenie Howe and C H Nash. She was also a fun-loving woman with a sense of humour, qualities which commended her to the Africans as well as to her colleagues.

Fourth, She was a long-term missionary. For more than four decades she made a special and greatly appreciated contribution to the young church in Miango and district, in language translation, evangelistic and pastoral ministry, and medical work.

This length of service and her lifestyle, enabled her to identify with and win acceptance with the Iregwe. Her commitment to discipling Nigerian believers, especially women, was noteworthy. In this too, she was an example of 19th century understanding of the call to missionary service as a career commitment.

Fifth, She was a loyal missionary. She stayed with SIM through her whole career and was a great asset to the mission. The team at Miango impressed as intelligent, able people, who deliberately and unstintingly gave their all for the mission.

She was also loyal to the people back home—her family and friends, and that wider band of Melbourne evangelicals who read her reports and prayer letters, all expressed using the accepted piety and vocabulary of contemporary evangelicalism. They were upbeat, honest about struggles, appreciative of answers to prayer and progress in the work, positive in her attitude to what God could do and positive but honest in her attitude to the Africans.

Sixth, her contribution, contrary to what some might think given her evangelical (fundamentalist) heritage, was, in modern missiological parlance, incarnational. She and her SIM colleagues did far more than *simply preach the gospel*; their ministry was pastoral and compassionate, and cared for the whole person.

Seventh, she was an Australian. While not many Australians went out with SIM,[32] many did go to other mission fields and with other organisations. Indeed from colonial days to the present, Australian missionaries have made outstanding contributions to great commission. For most, their stories have yet to be told ■

END NOTES

1) The Sudan Interior Mission society was founded in 1898 and grew rapidly to become the largest of the second-generation faith missions. Today, it has amalgamated with a number of other evangelical mission agencies, its initials now standing for Serving in Mission.

2) JANZEN, F, *Prayer Letter*, 28 March 1966, SIM Archives, Fort Mill, South Carolina

3) For details see my *Henry Varley and the Melbourne Evangelicals*, ***Journal of Religious History***, February 2001; and *Henry Varley Down Under*, parts 1 and 2, ***Lucas: An Evangelical History Review***, (nos 33 & 34, 2002 and 2003)

4) VARLEY, E, *Account of My Life*, (This was a typed, two-and-a-half-page testimony submitted to SIM as part of her application to be a missionary. It is dated 8 November 1922, SIM Archives.

5) VARLEY, E, *Account of My Life*. In one sense her *conversion* was the culmination of her evangelical upbringing and was fundamental to evangelical theology and spirituality. In another, it was an important rite of passage in her spiritual life, a catalyst for a life of sanctification and service. She was never to go back on that decision she made in her early teens

6) *KQ*, August 1929, 52

7) HUMMEL wrote reports to the (British) District Officer in Nigeria 1918-41. His accounts of his work include, *A Visit to the Rukuba Tribe in Northern Nigeria*, ***The Evangelical Christian and Missionary Witness***, Vol X No 10 (October 1914), 313; *Mid the Tribes of Darkest Sudan*, ***The Evangelical Christian and Missionary Witness***, Vol XIII No 2 (February 1917), 54

8) On NASH see my **Failure is Not Final: A Life of C H Nash**, (Sydney: CSAC, 1995). On MBI see my, *The Melbourne Bible Institute: Its Genesis, Ethos and Purpose*, in TRELOAR, G, [ed], **The Furtherance of Religious Beliefs: Essays on the History of Theological Education in Australia** (Sydney: CSAC, 1997)

9) *Account of My Life*

10) The letters from which these quotations come are in the SIM Archives

11) *Our*: there was a sense of unity and purpose and family among the faithful habitués of Upwey

12) *Loyalty*: in her reports and letters Effie was respectful and loyal to her colleagues and the mission. In the 1950s there was much disquiet concerning the administration of SIM, but there is no hint of this from Effie.

13) *Account of My Life*. For the nature and significance of the Upwey/Belgrave Heights Convention see my *The Upwey Convention and C H Nash*, ***Lucas: An Evangelical History Review***, No 16 (December 1993) and *The Deeper Life Movement in Victoria 1880-1914: Our Yesterdays* (Victorian Baptist Historical Society), June 2002.

14) As this was before SIM had representation in Australia, she applied directly to Rowland Bingham. She was accepted on 18 December 1922 and left Australia on 12 July 1923, arriving in November

15) Stirrett was impressive; see the obituary in **Sudan Witness**, Vol 1 No 5, 1 (September 1948).

16) VARLEY, E, **Sudan Witness**, Vol XI No 4 (Jan-Feb 1937), 5; the article is a summary of the establishing of the indigenous Christian community there

17) See TURAKE, Y, **Theory and Practice of Christian Missions in Africa. A Century of SIM/ECWA History and Legacy in Nigeria 1893-1993**, Nairobi, International Bible Society Africa, 1999, p327

18) From a warm editorial in ***Sudan Witness***, Vol VII No 6 (May-June 1935), 6; cf too ***Sudan Witness***, Vol IX No 6 (May-June 1936), 22-3

19) The missionaries did not baptise people until they had attended church for a year, attended a year-long baptism class, and gave ample evidence that they were *walking with the Lord*

20) cf reports in *KQ*, Vol 1 No 4 (November 1926), 51. A highlight for her was the visit of Billy Graham to Jos in 1960.

21) Miango File, SIM Archives. However, for all her energy and drive, the physical effort sometimes took its toll. Howe adds, "Almost immediately on our return from itineration, Miss Varley was taken ill with fever and has been in bed for five weeks." In a later *résumé*, she added, "Miss Varley has had to go on furlough on account of continual ill health. .. **Turnbull, 'Effie Varley: White Mother'**, p18, points out that, because of financial reasons and the opportunities for personal contact, Effie's trekking continued after the motor car and motor cycle made their appearance in the region

22) Newsletter written by Canadian SIM missionary JANZEN, Frieda, who worked at the Missionary Rest Home (1952-64) dated 28 March 1966 on Varley's death. SIM Archives. Cf "In 1965, after a stay in hospital after a period of recuperation, she wrote, 'I will be so thrilled to get back to trekking once more'." VARLEY, E, Missionary Letter to D Jagger, 5 October 1965, 1, SIM Archives

23) TURNBULL, **African Oral History**, 1.

24) TURNBULL, **African Oral History**, 5

25) English was regarded as a *civilising language* and of education

26) TURNBULL, D, *Email*, 28 November 2006

27) ***Sudan*** Witness, Vol IV No 3 (Jan-March 1925), 9

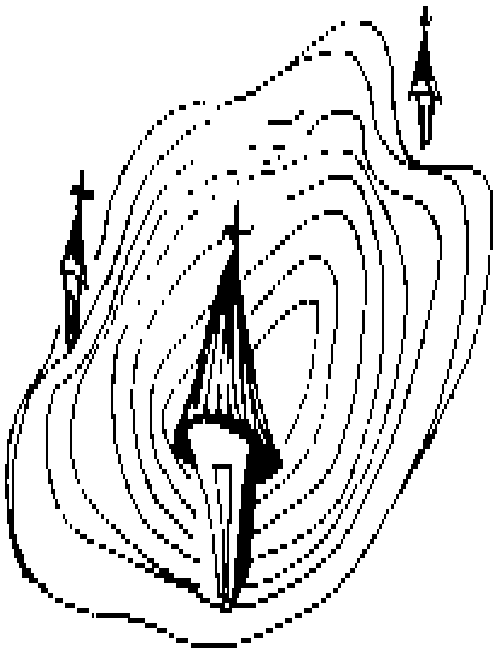
28) Prayer Letter, SIM Archives. *KQ* May 1926, 35ff, reported that she had "full qualifications in both medicine and surgery from both Edinburgh and Glasgow Universities." She might have done extra study at the University of Glasgow

29) Emphasis added. Varley was loyal to SIM

30) See WEST, J, *Daughters of Freedom: A* **History of Women in the Australian Church**, (Sutherland, NSW: Albatross, 1997), 231ff, for women missionaries between the wars. And ROBERT, D, **American Women in Mission: A Social History of Their Thought and Practice**, (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1996) for the experience of American women

31) For Varley, part of the cost was forgoing the prospect of marriage and family. TURNBULL, *Effie Varley: White Mother*, 6, records her response to a Nigerian who asked why she was not going to get married: "Not yet, I'm not ready." Her commitment to the cause of mission was in keeping with her single-mindedness; today, she would also be called a workaholic

32) Apart from Varley, those who went out before 1960 included Elijah Bingham (1944), Charles Hummel (1913-41), Ronald McCullagh (No 4 student of MBI, 1923-39, though it is doubtful he served with SIM for all of this time. He died of yellow fever), John L & Dorothy Jagger (Jaegger?) (1960-2), Mary Timmer (neé Wait) (1959-62), Minnie Varley (1925-8)



The Asian Church and interreligious dialogue

Jacob Kavunkal

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One characteristic that is common to Asia is its pluralism affecting every aspect of existence. Asia confirms how the God of the Bible is a lover of pluralism. One of the expressions of this pluralism is in the area of religion.

As well as many primal religions, most world religions, including Christianity, also have their origin in Asia, and Asia has welcomed practically all the religions of the world.

It is this faith and commitment to mission that makes the Asian church enter into dialogue with the followers of other religions. Though interreligious dialogue is not for the sake of giving rise to new Christian communities, it does lead to the realisation of the kingdom

Hence, Asia is a naturally prepared laboratory of interreligious dialogue. No wonder, Christianity right from its beginning has lived a life of dialogue with the followers of other religions in one part of Asia, Kerala[1], for the last 2,000 years. Hence, the Asian church can claim the uniqueness of having lived in dialogue with the followers of other religions all through its existence.

Interreligious dialogue for the Asian church is not escapism, as though the Christians in Asia are too lazy to bring all the people of Asia into the church; nor is it an expression of convenience, because nothing else can be done due to the opposition from fanatics and fundamentalists.

Similarly, interreligious dialogue for the Asian church is not something provisional, waiting for the right opportunity to baptise all. In this case, dialogue would only be a preparation for mission. Neither is it an attempt to make room for the followers of other religions in a church-centred world.

The Asian church's inter-religious dialogue emerges from a pastoral cycle. It is the result of an analysis and a reflection on the experience of religious pluralism in the light of the Christian faith, leading to a Christian commitment to the project of the kingdom. Interreligious dialogue is any collaborative activity in which the religious faith of the other is taken seriously and respected.

The basis of dialogue

Interreligious dialogue, for the Asian church, is based on genuine Christian faith. Christian faith tells us how the whole creation is Trinitarian (Genesis 1:1ff.). God creates everything through God's word in the Spirit. Hence, creation is God's revelation in deed. If so, all people participate in God's revelation.

Further, the book of Genesis reminds us how all human beings are created in God's image. Image, in the Near East, was understood as something or someone who stood in the place of another. Human beings, participating in divine intelligence and will, are presented as stewards of creation.

It is this divine image in humans that enables them to rise to the divine. Humans, as finite beings, would not be able to rise to the transcendent without the transcendent taking the initiative. The Bible presents this initiative in terms of God creating humans in God's image. This is further spelt out through the biblical category of the universal covenant and

through the role of wisdom, in the Wisdom literature. We are told how "God has placed God's eye on every human person" (Sirac 17:8).

Wisdom and Jesus Christ

When we come to the New Testament, Wisdom is identified with Jesus Christ (Matthew 11:9; Lk 11:49). The prologue of John affirms more explicitly how all are created (1:3) and enlightened (1: 4-5, 9) by the pre-existent Word.

Thus, in the light of the Bible, we cannot speak of natural religions as opposed to the revealed religions. All religions are the social and historical expressions of the human response to the divine revelation. Though all participate in the same mystery, it would not be right to assume that all religions are the same, due to human selfishness and cultural differences.

St Paul uses *mystery* to refer to Jesus Christ (Romans 16:25; Ephesians 1:9). I use *mystery* rather than Jesus Christ intentionally, as it would be more acceptable to the followers of other faiths, including the Buddhists.

Thus, Christian faith tells us how all participate in the mystery of Jesus Christ. No-one comes to the Father, except through Jesus Christ (John 14:6). There is one God and there is one mediator between God and humans, Jesus Christ (1 Timothy 2:5).

Despite the activity of the pre-existent word from the beginning, this word became flesh and dwelt among humans (John 1:14); he became God with us [Emmanuel] (Matthew 1:23). His entire ministry was manifesting, spelling out the meaning of being God with us, so that at the end he could say, "Those who have seen me have seen the father" (John 12: 45; 14: 9).

The sacrament of the kingdom

His ministry had one focus, that of realising the reign of God. And with this mission, he sends out the community of his disciples (John 20: 21) as the sacrament of the kingdom.

The church is sent as the sign and instrument of the kingdom, insofar as the message of the kingdom is accompanied by the formation of the community (Mark 1: 14-15 & 16ff). It has the mission of both giving rise to communities to be the sacrament of the kingdom, as well as the mission of working for the realisation of the kingdom.

It is this faith and commitment to mission that makes the Asian church enter into dialogue with the followers of other religions. Though interreligious dialogue is not for the sake of giving rise to new Christian communities, it does lead to the realisation of the kingdom.

Asian Christians are aware that they do not have an exclusive possession of the divine mystery, immense and unlimited as the mystery is. The followers of other religions also share in the same mystery. As *Nostra Aetate* states, we have a common origin and a common destiny with the followers of other religions.[2] This impels Christians to turn to their neighbours of other faiths.

Along with them Christians can work towards the realisation of the kingdom. The full flowering of the kingdom is an eschatological reality. Together with the followers of other religions Christians are pilgrims towards the fullness of the kingdom.[3]

At the service of the kingdom

Interreligious dialogue in Asia is practised in different forms. The first and most natural form is ordinary daily life where Christians live in the midst of others in good neighbourly relationship. As mentioned earlier, the St Thomas Christians of Kerala have been involved in such a dialogue of life all through their history.

Religious differences were accepted and respected, while reaching out to each other in the various spheres of life. Social harmony was not disturbed by religious differences. In fact the St Thomas Christians amalgamated themselves well with the social, cultural and political life around them without compromising their Christian faith. While they accepted each religious way as salvific to the followers of the way, they kept their faith in the uniqueness of Jesus Christ, which they celebrated in their liturgy.

This situation suffered a setback with the arrival of the Portuguese who tried to ban the social and cultural customs of the St Thomas Christians, though not always successfully. Even after the coming of the Portuguese social harmony prevailed. True, in modern times, one comes across instances of conflicts and social disturbances due to various factors, including the question of religious proselytisation. But in general, it can still be said that Asian Christians are engaged in a dialogue of dynamic and transforming presence in society.

Interreligious dialogue in Asia received a strong impetus with the encyclical, *Ecclesiam Suam*, of Paul VI and the Second Vatican Council.[4] Following the example of the Vatican Secretariat for Non-Christian Religions, several bishops' conferences in Asia formed episcopal commissions for interreligious dialogue.

The Indian bishops also produced a *Guideline for Interreligious Dialogue* in 1977, which was revised in 1989; it was the only one existing in the Catholic Church until recently.[5] The Commission for Interreligious Dialogue of the Federation of Asian

Bishops' Conferences also has been extremely active in organising dialogue sessions and promoting interreligious harmony and collaboration in Asia. Harmony has been a traditional constitutive value of Asian identity. Hence John Paul II qualified mission in Asia as a mater of "complementarity and harmony."[6]

Dialogue

Often intellectual dialogue leads to what may be qualified as the dialogue with the poor. Followers of different religions coming to discuss religious issues do not stop at that, but rather ask if their religious faith has something to say about the dehumanising poverty of Asia.

The question becomes all the more significant when we realise that the poverty of the masses has to be understood also in terms of the religions of Asia in one way or the other. Consequently, interreligious dialogue leads to collaboration among people adhering to different faiths for the alleviation of poverty and for the improvement of the quality of life for the poor and people suffering from violation of human rights in many forms.

Many religious sisters make use of their visits to non-Christian friends and socialising occasions to lead the attention of the perpetrators of poverty in one way or the other to the need to improve the situation or to treat their workers more justly. Without this concern for those on the margins of the society, interreligious dialogue would remain an ivory tower.

Agent of social conversion

Interreligious dialogue becomes an agent of social conversion. The term *poor* is used here with a wider understanding to include not only the economically poor but also others like the unborn babies who are not allowed to be born, women who cannot have their right to participate in the society with equality and mutuality with men, children who are denied their childhood, humans ill-treated in the name of the caste system, etc. They all stand to experience the blessings of interreligious dialogue.

Thus, the church in Asia enters into interreligious dialogue, not for the sake of measuring the faith of the followers of other religions or to determine how they are related to the church in the economy of salvation, but for the sake of the realisation of the kingdom for which it has been sent into the world by its Lord.

True Expression of Mission

Practically always, it is Christians who take the initiative in dialogue. This is rightly so insofar as Christians are heirs to a mission of communion and transformation bequeathed by Jesus Christ. Hence, they reach out to others for the sake of establishing communion and harmony.

In the process there is room for a conversion of the persons involved with one another by overcoming the prejudices and misrepresentations of other religions. There is also the reality of their conversion to God together. Common prayer, common celebrations of each other's feasts, are very much part of religious dialogue in Asia as expressions of conversion and communion.

Dialogue, more so in its intellectual form, demands rootedness and openness. Dialogue partners are rooted in their respective religious faiths and at the same time open to listen to the other. The Christian will speak about the Christian faith and thus will witness to Jesus Christ in interreligious dialogue. Though interreligious dialogue does not directly aim to change the religion of the other, the Christian sharing of the Christ experience often becomes an inspiration for others. True, Christians also learn from others. An example is in methods of prayer, more so the contemplative type of prayer and interiority. This way, dialogue becomes a matter of complementarity.

In Jesus' mission there was a great concern for the other person manifested in many ways, such as Jesus dining with all, his giving priority to the human person over the laws of Sabbath and ritual purity, his respect for women and children, his criterion of the last judgment.

All this has a bearing on interreligious dialogue where the conversation partners are taken as possessing a particular history and individuality due to their specific God-experience through their religion. They have a specific identity. They are not just a non-Christian or an anonymous Christian. This acceptance of the other in interreligious dialogue is without any paternalism or hidden agenda. Admittedly, interreligious dialogue is not aimed at giving rise to new Christian communities and therefore it is not the whole of mission.

Obstacles

Interreligious dialogue in Asia is not without obstacles and problems. The greatest challenge comes form fundamentalists from different religions including Christianity, who do not want to have anything to do with dialogue but only baptism—on the part of Christians—or isolating the Christians—on the part of others. Most Asian countries have their share of fundamentalism.

Another difficulty is the burden of our past mission, which was carried out without sensitivity to the religious sentiments of others. Due to their unpleasant experience at the hands of the Christians, followers of other religions see dialogue as the same

old hook with a new bait to trap them! This can be overcome only with patience and ongoing sincerity of approach.

Along with this difficulties arise from *official* statements and pronouncements. Thus, the hopes of harvesting the fruit of Christian faith in Asia in the third millennium, as it was done in Europe and Americas in past millennia, as well as statements that only we have the God-intended religion and salvation, make us objects of suspicion, if not also derision.

New humanity

Despite all this, the Asian church surges ahead with interreligious dialogue, shaping a new humanity of interconnectedness and interrelationship. This relationship is the core of interreligious dialogue, and rightly so, insofar as Christianity is primarily a religion of relationship to God and to humans.

The late John Paul II, visiting India in November 1999, said that to fight in the name of religion was irreligion. He exhorted the Indian bishops to do everything possible to promote the church's mission of interreligious dialogue according to the teachings of the church. The Asian church through its involvement in interreligious dialogue promotes relatedness in place of suspicion, competition, hatred and violence.

The Asian church is endeavouring to inculcate among Catholics a culture of acceptance and respect for the followers of other religions, free from prejudices and stereotyping. Catholic children are taught to speak with respect to fellow students belonging to other religions, treating them as equals and not as inferiors. Parents are advised to foster at home an atmosphere free from prejudices to the followers of other religions.

Some Catholic schools even invite specialists of other religions to talk to students about the different religions so that they can be acquainted with them. Similarly, some Catholic hospitals provide space for worship for the followers of other religions as well. Not only does the seminary curriculum include religious studies and theology of religions but, in many seminaries, the seminarians are also introduced to the ministry of interreligious dialogue. All these are steps towards harmony in society leading to the realisation of the kingdom.

Concluding remarks

Traditionally mission was understood as going out to distant lands to work among non-Christians with a view to bringing them into the church. The Asian experience of interreligious dialogue revises this understanding of mission by enabling the church to experience a sort of relational power for the realisation of the kingdom, by making room within oneself for others—which is an expression of the Trinitarian life—and reaching out to others in self transcendence, the root of life within the Trinity ■

END NOTES

1) Kerala is one of the Indian States, where Christian faith is believed to have been introduced by St Thomas, one of the disciples of Jesus Christ. The community, to this day, is known as the St Thomas Christians

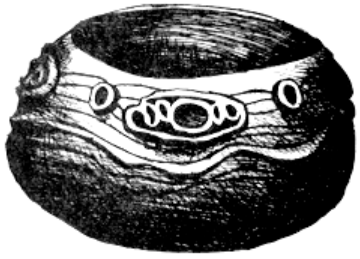
2) POPE PAUL VI, ***Nostra Aetate*** [On the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions], *http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html* #1

3) POPE PAUL VI, ***Lumen Gentium*** [Dogmatic Constitution on the Church], *http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html* #5

4) POPE PAUL VI, ***Ecclesiam Suam*** [Papal Encyclical on the Church], *http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_06081964_ecclesiam_en.html*

5) There have been two documents from the Vatican: *The Attitude of the Church Towards the Followers of Other Religions*, from the Secretariat for Non-Christians, given on June 10, 1984 (cf *Omnis Terra*, No 151, Sept-Oct (1984): 388-400) and *Dialogue and Proclamation: Reflection and Orientations on Interreligious Dialogue and the Proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ*, jointly given by Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and The Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples, given in December 1991 (cf *Bulletin of the Pontificium Consilium pro Dialogo inter Religiones*, 26.2 (1991): 210-250. However, these are not exactly guidelines on interreligious dialogue. The Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI) Commission for Dialogue and Ecumenism, *Guidelines on Interreligious Dialogue*, 2nd ed,1989

6) POPE JOHN PAUL II, ***Ecclesia in Asia*** [Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation], *http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_06111999_ecclesia-in-asia_en.html* #6



Rome and the Catholic Church in British West Africa

A case study

by Larry Nemer

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The argument

In the last half of the 19th century, there were two movements within the Catholic Church which were significant for its future development: ultramontanism and centralisation in Rome.

Ultramontanism (looking beyond the mountains from cis-Alpine Europe towards Rome), was often expressed through a personal devotion to the pope and the unquestioning acceptance of his authority.

Centralisation in Rome, on the other hand, was expressed through the developments taking place in the curial offices whereby more and more decisions about local Church matters were being made in Rome.

While it can be shown that the missionary movement contributed to both of these movements.

The argument of this paper will focus on the expression of and contribution to the centralisation of the Roman Curial Office, known as the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, and popularly as the Propaganda, by the missionary movement.

The Propaganda was established in 1622 for the express purpose of taking control of the Church's missionary activity.

In 1493, by the Treaty of Tordesillas, the pope had *divided the world* between Spain and Portugal, giving them the right to all the lands and people they discovered, as well as imposing on them the obligation to preach the Gospel and set up the church in those lands.

By the 1600s, neither Spain nor Portugal was able to provide the needed missionaries for their various territories. More-over, with the realisation that the world was round, the line of demarcation was no longer a clear marker of rights and obligations.

There was confusion about jurisdiction not only in China, Japan and Vietnam, but also in India. The history of the Propaganda in these lands is a long and confused one, but it resulted in the *Rites Controversy*, which reached its climax in the 1700s.

Rites controversy

By the end of the 1700s, the missionary movement, due to the *Rites Controversy* and the suppression of

A final issue that was discussed in the correspondence at this time was the use of baptismal formulas in the vernacular. The first request came from the Gold Coast. Planque asked if it is all right for the natives to be baptised in the vernacular, not knowing Latin, even though the formula literally translated into: "In the name of the Father, in the name of the Son, in the name of the Holy Spirit..." Planque wondered if this denied the unity of God

the Jesuits, was grinding to a halt. Then, during the Napoleonic Era, the Propaganda in Rome was shut down and all its offices and archives were moved to Paris.

After the fall of Napoleon, these offices were returned to Rome. But the situation in the world had changed and there was a great deal of confusion regarding the authority of the Propaganda in Asia, Africa and the South Pacific.

Throughout the 19th century, the Propaganda gradually began to assert its authority in these territories. This case study is meant to describe how it came to exercise that authority and what its concerns were. What can be said about Africa could to a great extent also be said about Asia and the South Pacific.

As a preliminary remark, it can be mentioned that the role of the Propaganda in the development of the missionary work at that time was undergoing significant changes. For example, before 1900, when it came to making decisions about specific mission territories and their boundaries and about which congregations should be working in the territories, the Propaganda, which had the responsibility for this, was quite willing to be guided by the recommendations of the missionary congregations themselves.

For the most part it simply confirmed what the congregations recommended. It recognised that it was dependent on the good will of the missionary congregations and it was not always sure the congregations would accept their decisions (there were incidents in India where the Jesuits refused to recognise the authority of the Propaganda).

Pro-active role

However, by the 1900s, the Propaganda took on a different role, initiating decisions rather than just confirming them. The documents suggest that the missionary congregations played a significant role in this change. There were several incidents in the 1880s and 1890s where the Propaganda, confronted with a conflict between congregations about borders or about working in specific territories, instructed them to sort it out and let it know what had been decided.

It was the unwillingness of the congregations to come to an agreement and their appeal to the Propaganda that eventually led it to making decisions then, and later, without necessarily consulting the religious congregations beforehand.

Another change that took place was that, before 1900, the Propaganda was quite willing to give the faculties that were needed for celebrating the sacraments, especially confession, and the dispensations that might be needed for marriages to the major superiors of the congregations in Europe and to let them delegate them to the person they chose in the mission.

But, by 1900, the Propaganda was no longer willing to do this. It insisted that it would give the faculties needed only to the designated superior of the mission and not to the superior general in Europe.

It insisted on this even though it caused great hardship for some of the missions. For example, in Ghana, because of illnesses caused by the climate, the Society of African Missions (popularly known as the Lyon Fathers—SMA), who worked in that country, had seven mission superiors in seven years!

At times the faculties only arrived after the death of the superior and so there were long periods when no one in the mission had the needed faculties.

A third, and final, change that took place happened before 1900. The Propaganda depended for its information about the missions on the superiors of the congregations in Europe. Sometimes it was well informed, sometimes poorly informed. But by 1900, it was not only asking for yearly reports from every prefect and vicar apostolic, but also was often responding to these reports with specific directions about actions to be taken in the missions—something it would not have done at the beginning of the 19th century. This is another example of the centralisation taking place.

Thus it can be seen that the centralisation of the mission work in the Propaganda during this period was a gradual process and the mission congregations contributed to this process. Details of this process can best be seen through a case study.

Case study

This case study covers the period from 1885 to 1900, viz, the period after the Congress of Berlin in 1884, which had recognised the claims of the various European powers in Africa and which divided West Africa principally between France and England.

The congress did not settle all matters. French and British commercial companies would continue to compete for trade and political influence up to and into the beginning of the 20th century. Moreover, agreements on definitive borders between the countries being established would have to await further exploration and negotiation.

But by 1900, British control would be solidly established in countries we know today as Gambia,

Sierra Leone, Nigeria and the Gold Coast (Ghana)—countries that came to be known as British West Africa and which form the subject of this case study—even if much of the administrative machinery for these territories would only be developed in the first decade of the 20th century.

In summary, it can be said that between 1885 and 1900, the Propaganda played a significant role in the development of the Catholic Church in these territories in four ways:

- It continued to subdivide and modify what had been known as the Vicariate of the Two Guineas, which embraced all of this territory, into prefectures (eg. Gold Coast in 1879, Upper Niger in 1884 and Lower Niger in 1889) and assigned these territories to specific missionary congregations;

- It arbitrated disputes concerning boundaries between these missionary congregations' territories;
- It controlled the appointment of prefects and vicars apostolic and made the decision about when an episcopal presence was needed; and finally
- It gave advice and directions to and responded to requests from the various superiors of congregations and of missions.

Each of these roles can be considered independently.

Prefectures and assignments

Between 1885 and 1900, the only new prefectures set up in British West Africa arose in Nigeria, while the prefecture in the Gold Coast was modified. These were entrusted to the Lyon Fathers (SMA) and the Spiritans (CSSP). A study of the process involved in the setting up of these territories, exemplifies the relationship these congregations had with the Propaganda as well as the concerns of the congregations and the Propaganda.

Gold Coast (Ghana)

The Prefecture Apostolic of the Gold Coast had been sectioned off from the vast Vicariate of Sierra Leone in 1879 with the approval of the Superior General of the Spiritans.[1] When first established, it embraced both the Gold Coast and the Ivory Coast.

During this period, the Propaganda decided to separate the Ivory Coast from the Gold Coast and add some new territory to the Gold Coast so that the prefecture would correspond to the English colony and protectorate—a frequent criterion used by the Propaganda. This new territory was taken from Dahomey (but within the borders of the English territory) and was added in May of 1894.[2]

It is interesting to note the reasons that Planque, the superior general of the Lyon Fathers, gave the Propaganda for requesting the separation of the Ivory Coast in February 1895:

- the size of the territory (there were 1,300 kilometres—780 miles—of coast);

- the inability of the missionaries who had been working in the Gold Coast since 1880 to begin operations in the Ivory Coast due to the great loss of personnel through death (the Lyon Fathers lost eight men in the first six years)[3]; and

- the difficulty of communicating by land or sea, since one territory was under French rule and the other under English, so that the same boats did not stop at the ports of each territory.

At the same time, he proposed that the Prefecture Apostolic of the Gold Coast be made a vicariate, since great progress had been made since 1880 and there was need of an episcopal presence.

The Propaganda was persuaded to separate the two territories and did so by a decree of 28 June 1895,[4] but it was anxious to have further information before making the Gold Coast a vicariate.[5] It would not be made a vicariate until 1901, after the British had subdued the Ashanti and extended their protectorate further inland.[6]

Nigeria

Up until 1889, Nigeria, which, until 1900, was administered by the Royal Niger Company, was ecclesiastically divided into two parts: the western part of the country belonged to the Lyon Fathers' (SMA) Vicariate Apostolic of Benin and the eastern part to the Spiritan (CSSP) Vicariate Apostolic of the Two Guineas and Gabon.

Beginning in the early 1880s, the British continually advanced the exploration of this vast territory and gradually *reduced* part of it to a colony and part to a protectorate. This enabled the Catholic missionaries to move more freely through this territory and this demanded a new ecclesiastical organisation, which only the Propaganda could give.

In 1883, Planque proposed to the Propaganda that Dahomey, which was still part of the Vicariate of Benin, be separated from it and made an independent prefecture. He argued that not only was the present territory of the vicariate vast, but also the king of Dahomey was suspicious of missions in his territory being governed by someone from Lagos, since he feared an English invasion into his territory.

Planque was convinced that Dahomey had the resources to develop into a flourishing mission. Moreover, he argued that this would leave the missionaries in Benin free to move into the interior of Nigeria, which was being developed by the English.

Planque wrote, "For I believe that in no other part of Africa is there a population so dense and so disposed to be led to the Gospel."[7] This division was approved by the Propaganda on 20 May 1883.[8]

The following year, Planque asked the Propaganda that part of what now remained of the Vicariate of Benin, plus some additional territory, be set up as an independent Prefecture of the Upper Niger. It was land between the Niger and Benue Rivers, a territory as large as France and Spain put together.

Since some of that territory would be coming from that of the White Fathers (in the north) and the Spiritans (in the east), the Propaganda approached Lavigerie and Emonet, the superiors general of their respective congregations, and asked for their opinions.

Both agreed with Planque's suggestion, although they each proposed a slight modification in the boundaries proposed. Emonet was concerned that the Vicariate of the Two Guineas, "the oldest and without contradiction the most important," should not be too restricted,[9] while Lavigerie pointed out that, although the boundaries proposed overlapped with the present territory of the White Fathers, he was happy about the extra workers in that part of the country. "God preserve me from a ridiculous jealousy in this regard,"[10] he wrote. The congregation approved of this new prefecture on 18 February 1884 and entrusted it to the Lyon Fathers.[11]

Lack of personnel

However, by early 1887, Planque realised that his young seminary would not be able to provide enough missionaries for this vast territory and he wrote to this effect to the Propaganda.

The latter said it appreciated this frank statement and asked him to propose a division of the territory as well as a congregation to which a new prefecture might be entrusted.[12]

But nothing more is heard of this matter until Planque's proposal to divide it into three prefectures in 1904, which was not acted upon; only in 1911 was it finally divided into two prefectures.[13] In these cases, the superior general made these proposals to the Propaganda, but the congregation apparently had its own reasons, as the reasons for not acting on them are not articulated in the archival sources.

In 1885, after the establishment of the new Prefecture of the Upper Niger, the Vicariate Apostolic of the Two Guineas and Gabon had been reduced in size but still extended from the Benue River to the French Congo, a vast territory embracing English possessions in Nigeria, German possessions in the Cameroons and French possessions in Gabon.

Division suggested

In February 1889, the superior general of the Spiritans, Emonet, proposed to the Propaganda that the vicariate be broken up, with the English territory to be given as an independent prefecture to the Spiritans, the German territory to German subjects, and the French territory to remain in the hands of the Spiritans.

He pointed out that the Spiritan missions in Nigeria were flourishing and that it was difficult to administer this mission from Gabon.

The Propaganda was persuaded by these arguments but was concerned about whether or not the Spiritans could provide English-speaking missionaries for the territory of Nigeria.[14] The Spiritan superiors assured the Propaganda that the missionaries they sent would be English-speaking, that this would cause no problems with the British government since the congregation already had a working relationship with the British government in Gambia and Sierra Leone and that the congregation would send British subjects as soon as they were available.[15]

The Propaganda was persuaded by his arguments and thus approved of his proposal; the Prefecture of the Lower Niger was established 25 July 1889 and entrusted to the Spiritans.[16]

Disputes about boundaries

As we have seen, the Propaganda, in the establishment of new prefectures generally followed the recommendations of the missionary congregations. However, there were times when boundaries had to be modified and, in case of conflict, the Propaganda had to play a mediating role. Let us consider how it proceeded in just one of these disputes.

A conflict between the White Fathers, the Spiritans and the Lyon Fathers was due to the fact that the southern boundary of the Vicariate Apostolic of the Sahara, entrusted to the White Fathers, was not only vague ("mountains of Kong, around 10 degrees Lat"), but it also had been established before the English had determined their northern boundaries for Nigeria and the Gold Coast where the other two congregations worked.

Bad feelings were already stirred up in 1899 when Hacquard, the vicar apostolic of the Sahara, without consulting or even informing the vicar apostolic of Benin, sent a telegramme to the English government saying that he would not allow the Lyon Fathers to establish a mission in *his* territory.

Pellet, the Lyon superior in Benin, was about to open a mission in the north at Nikki. He telegraphed Planque to find out if the mission was within their territory. He was assured it was and so he informed the Propaganda of his intention to establish the new mission.[17]

Cardinal Ledochowski, the prefect of the Propaganda, immediately wrote to Pellet and asked him to hold off on his action since the territory was under dispute.[18] Pellet responded immediately and said he was surprised by Ledochowski's letter. He complained that Hacquard had unilaterally interpreted the vague boundary at nine degrees (and not 10 degrees) latitude across the Gold Coast, Dahomey and Nigeria.

If the Propaganda supported him in this, he said, it would mean that Benin would lose the healthiest portion of its vicariate in which he hoped to build stations where his missionaries could recuperate (the average life-span of a missionary sent to Benin at the age of 25 was four years, seven months and 21 days).[19]

The cardinal wrote to Hacquard presenting him with Pellet's arguments and asked him to suggest a more precise boundary.[20] He also asked the heads of the missions to meet and come to some agreement.

But Pellet had been so hurt by the actions of Hacquard that he refused to deal with him.[21] In the end, Hacquard agreed to abide by the boundaries established by the English in the case of Nigeria and the Gold Coast (ie. 11 degrees and 45 inches Lat N), but refused to budge with regards to Dahomey. However, after having tried to get the congregations to settle this matter between themselves without success, the Propaganda simply determined that ecclesiastical boundaries would follow political boundaries.[22]

Appointment of prefects and vicars apostolic

The Propaganda also played an important role in the development of the church in British West Africa through its appointment of prefects and vicars apostolic. In most cases, Propaganda accepted the names recommended by the superiors general of the respective religious congregations; however, sometimes it raised questions or made up its own mind.

Before 1900, there were three vicars apostolic with concerns in British West Africa: one in Sierra Leone, the vicariate having been set up in 1858, one, whose vicariate had existed since 1872 (Senegambia—French Senegal and English Gambia) and one in Benin/Nigeria.

The method of appointing the vicar apostolic of Senegambia and prefect apostolic of Senegal (one office but two territories) was a complex one, since it involved the Propaganda, the French government and the missionary congregation. The history of their appointment is chequered; it will not be treated here.

A mission in British West Africa, that had a vicar apostolic at its head after 1891, was Benin (until then Benin had been governed by a pro-vicar—Planque—who resided in Europe). The mission was begun already in 1861 and entrusted to the Lyon Fathers. It is interesting to note that between 1871 and 1879 there were as many superiors as years. All but two of them quit and returned to Europe because of differences between themselves and Planque.[23]

The initiative to make Chausse a vicar apostolic with episcopal character, interestingly enough, came not from Planque but from the people of Lagos. Planque strongly recommended Chausse, the pro-vicar, who was 44-years-old at the time, and had been serving in Benin since 1871 and had been superior of the mission for a long time.

On 2 October 1890, Paul Pellet, the superior of the mission at Lagos, sent to Cardinal Simeone, the then-prefect of the Propaganda, a petition from the people asking that Chausse be made a bishop.

He mentioned that he and his confreres joined in this request and that such an action would be good for religion in that country. The request, he said, is made "in the name of the undersigned, of all the Catholics of the Benin missions and of all the people who still do not know the truth."

In the petition, they pointed out that since the mission was first founded at Lagos in 1868, it had made great progress, having by 1890 six stations, 12 schools, 17 priests, 19 sisters, 16 native school masters and 8,000 faithful.

They argued that creating a bishop for Benin would give a great impulse to this work:

> *Prestige has a great weight in the minds of the Africans and the episcopal dignity would give a great prestige to the Catholic religion here. This reason becomes the more forcible because the Protestants are going to have a bishop of their own at Lagos. Europeans will never be able to bring the immence (sic) countries of Africa to*

Catholicism unless they be helped in their work by native clergymen. We hope some day to see some of our children priests and missionaries. But we have not the means to send them to Europe, they will have to be instructed here, they will want a bishop to ordain them.[24]

They recommended Chausse for this office since he knew the people, their languages and their manners; was esteemed by the Muslims and Protestants; and was loved by the people. There are 165 signatures on the petition, many with Brazilian names.[25]

Having received this petition, Cardinal Simeone wrote to Planque on 3 December 1890 to ask his opinion on the matter[26] and also to request a *terna* of names of candidates, should they proceed to choose a vicar apostolic.[27]

In April 1891, the Propaganda met and approved of Chausse as vicar apostolic;[28] the decree appointing him Vicar Apostolic was dated 25 April 1891.[29]

The Propaganda in this case simply followed the recommendation of the superior general. The choice of choosing his successor was much more complicated but the story cannot be told here.

Confusion shows new policy

The appointment of a prefect apostolic was made by the Propaganda according to the recommendation of the superior general. This was generally straightforward.

However, in the case of the Lyon Fathers working in Ghana, there was some confusion because, in the past, the Propaganda would appoint the superior in Europe as the prefect apostolic and allow him to designate the priest of his choice to have the faculties needed for the governing of the missions.

However, after 1885, the Propaganda wanted to appoint as prefect apostolic a priest on the mission recommended by the superior general and not the superior general himself. This caused a great deal of confusion, both because of the frequent turn-over of personnel and the deadly climate in Ghana, as well as because of Planque's resistance to giving up the governance of the mission he had until then.

Thus, when Moreau, the first prefect apostolic of the Gold Coast residing in the mission, died in 1886, Planque wrote to the Propaganda and asked if the faculties reverted back to him.

He was told "no," since the Faculties had been given directly to Moreau.[30] Planque then wrote saying that Moreau had not delegated the faculties to anyone else and asked once more that the faculties be given to him to be delegated to someone else; but, once again, the Propaganda sent the faculties directly to Moreau's successor.[31]

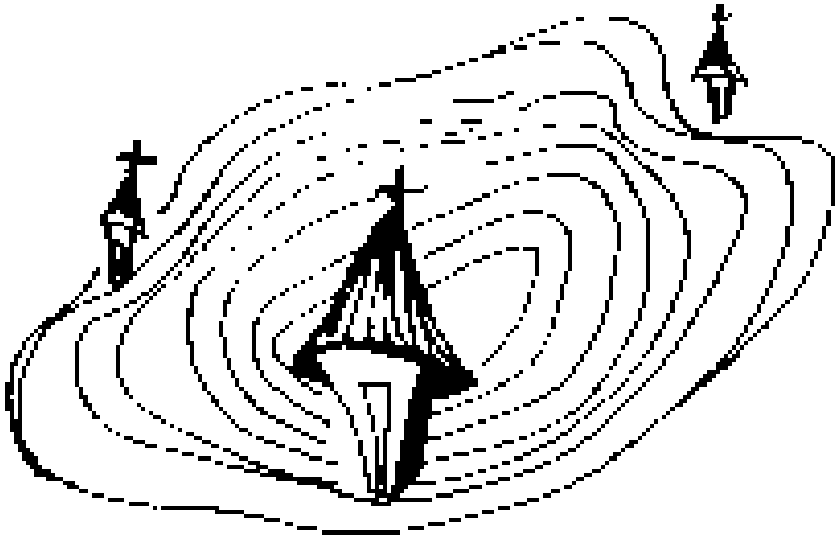
Planque continued to ask the Propaganda to appoint him as prefect apostolic right up until 1895, but the Propaganda would not return to its old policy. A significant change had taken place in its style of administration.

A similar story could be told about the appointment of prefects apostolic for the Upper Niger. There were no such complications in the appointment of prefects apostolic for the Lower Niger, which was in the hands of the Spiritans; the Propaganda simply appointed the person recommended by the superior general of the Spiritans.

Guidance, advice and comments

The final role of the Propaganda in this centralising process can be considered as that of guiding, advising and correcting. Some examples of this have already been noted, eg. calling on religious congregations to negotiate disputes among themselves, recommending that ecclesiastical boundaries coincide with civil boundaries and deciding how faculties were to be distributed to superiors.

There were two ways in which they exercised this role: one was by way of comments on the reports



that were sent in by the vicars and prefects apostolic and the other was by way of a response to specific questions asked.

Propaganda priorities

The first detailed report from the Gold Coast was that prepared by Maximilian Albert in 1900. Cardinal Ledochowski was not only pleased with the report but went into some detail about the good things the missionaries were doing, especially in the field of education and the arrangements for ownership of property.

Interestingly enough the only caution he mentioned was that the mission must be careful not to go into debt. This perhaps was based on an experience the mission had in earlier times or the experience of some other mission, since there is nothing in the report that would merit such a comment.[32]

The first detailed report sent from Benin was also sent only in 1900 and prepared by Paul Pellet. The cardinal found much more to comment on in this report and in this way he does give the reader some sense of what the Propaganda considered important at this time.

He applauded the zealous action of the missionaries, but was concerned about the lack of religious discipline reportedly present among the missionaries; he therefore took steps to have Planque appoint a religious superior who would oversee this.

He told Pellet to continue to urge the missionaries to learn the native languages, since this was most important. Also, if it was impossible for the missionaries to come together regularly to discuss moral cases, then Pellet should try to do something by correspondence to make sure there was uniformity in teaching.

He was pleased that a higher school was established, which could become a seminary, but made it clear that he was not to seek special funds for this from the Propaganda. He also advised something that occurs quite frequently in the correspondence after 1885, when Europe had intruded itself into Africa—get a clear title to mission properties so that the government could not take them away. He also mentioned that as much as possible Catholics should attend Catholic schools.[33]

Two reports came into the Propaganda from the Spiritan territory of Lower Niger: One, from Reling, in 1896 and one from Pawlas, in 1899; neither of these reports followed the detailed questionnaire that had been sent them.

Commenting on Reling's report, Ledochowski was obviously pleased with the new villages that were begun for ransomed slaves and promised him the financial support he would need for them.[34]

In response to Pawlas' report, Ledochowski stated that he was impressed with the medical work that the missionaries were doing and praised him for the direct and indirect evangelisation that was being carried out.[35]

Significant questions

The other way in which the Propaganda exercised influence in the development of the African church was by responding to specific questions put to it. Although there were many questions addressed to it, the three most significant ones that seemed to engage the Propaganda during this period were: the Propaganda's subsidisation of missions; the intrusion of missionary personnel into territory belonging to a different congregation; and the baptismal formulae used.

For the most part, the correspondence of the Propaganda is remarkably free of financial discussions during this period. The reason for this is that it had nothing to say about the funds distributed by the Society of the Propagation of the Faith, a lay organisation founded by Pauline Jaricot in 1822, and the Society of the Holy Childhood, also a lay organisation, although it had been founded by Bishop Forbin-Janson; the missions wrote directly to these organisations for funds. The Propaganda was only able to distribute funds raised by the Anti-Slavery Society, but strictly according to the purposes of that society. There is frequent reference to this in the correspondence.

A second kind of request to which the Propaganda had to respond, and which led to the Propaganda having an impact on the development of the Church, was for mediation. About a year after the Prefecture of the Upper Niger was set up (1885), the Lyon Fathers thought it would be good to set up missions on the left bank of the Niger, even though it was Spiritan territory.

It seemed to be a propitious moment since Crowther and the Protestant missions had, in the eyes of these Catholic missionaries, lost some esteem among the people, and yet the Spiritans did not seem to be moving into this territory.

Poirier, the Lyon Fathers' prefect apostolic of the Upper Niger, asked LeBerre, the Spiritan vicar apostolic of the Two Guineas and Gabon, if they could so act, but he received no response.

Planque then approached Barillec, the secretary general of the Spiritans in Paris; the latter was polite,

but said "no." So Planque then asked the Propaganda to mediate between them.[36]

Barillec must have immediately informed Eschbach, the procurator general of the Spiritans in Rome, about Planque's request, for Eschbach immediately dashed off a note to the Propaganda saying that the superior general intended to send missionaries shortly to the place where Planque wanted to start and so there was no point in the Lyon Fathers opening a station there.[37]

However, the Propaganda had been persuaded by a personal visit from Planque as to the advantage of beginning soon in the territory. So the cardinal prefect wrote to Emonet on 18 May 1885 and asked if he intended to send missionaries there or if "for the salvation of souls" Planque's men could work there.[38]

On June 3, Emonet responded that he did intend to send missionaries into that territory and had indeed already made arrangements with LeBerre to proceed there.[39] This information was passed on to Planque,[40] who responded by return mail and promised to give the Spiritans information on the tribes that go back and forth—"if they are indeed beginning there"; however, he added that if they did not do so in a reasonable amount of time he would again ask the Propaganda to rule in their favour.[41]

Thus it is clear that the Propaganda was guided by the recommendations of the superiors, but also that the congregations would not go against the decisions of the Propaganda.

A final issue that was discussed in the correspondence at this time was the use of baptismal formulas in the vernacular. The first request came from the Gold Coast. Planque asked if it is all right for the natives to be baptised in the vernacular, not knowing Latin, even though the formula literally translated into: "In the name of the Father, in the name of the Son, in the name of the Holy Spirit..."

Planque wondered if this denied the unity of God.[42] He was told that the formula was valid and was asked to inform the prefect apostolic of this decision.[43]

Propaganda initiative

The second discussion of the period was actually initiated by the Propaganda. In his 1895 report on the Prefecture of the Upper Niger, Zappa mentioned that in cases of emergency they baptised using the formula in the vernacular which translated into, "I place the water of God in the name…"

He also mentioned that the catechists regularly used the formula in the vernacular which says, "I wash you (or rather I am washing you) in the name of the Father and of the First Born Son and of the Holy Spirit."[44]

In his response to the report, Ledochowski asked three questions about the formulas"

- Did "place water" imply "wash" in the vernacular?
- Was the person being baptised designated?
- And why was the "first-born" introduced?[45]

Zappa wrote and said he would send further information on the baptismal formula after he met with his confreres.[46] On July 19, Zappa sent a detailed explanation of the formulae. He said that "I place water" came into the vernacular as a result of Anglican missionary activity many years ago and the natives continued to use it as a ritual for good health.

It would seem to connote baptism, he argued, by reason of its history but not of washing. He mentioned that the catechists did indicate the person being baptised; he had just neglected to mention it.

With regards to the term "first-born", he said, the word does not have a chronological meaning, but signified the right of succession. He said the missionaries just took the vernacular form they already found in use; they never thought of just using the word for Son, which certainly would be possible.[47]

The Propaganda sent this information on to the Holy Office, which decided that the formula using "first-born" was invalid and those people should be re-baptised with matter and form only. The formula "I place water" it considered doubtful and told the missionaries to rebaptise conditionally.[48] These decisions were then communicated by the Propaganda to Zappa.[49]

Conclusions

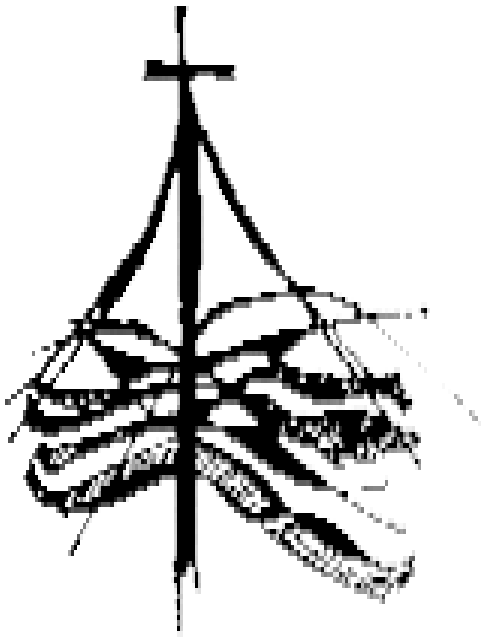
This case study focussed on the role that the Propaganda and its two cardinal prefects during this period, Simeone and Ledochowski, played in the development of the church in British West Africa by determining territorial boundaries, assigning territories to religious congregations, appointing prefects and vicars apostolic and guiding the development of mission policies, but also contributed to the centralising tendencies.

This was not an unusual experience. The Propaganda was developing the same style of administration also in Asia and the south Pacific. This centralising authority of the Propaganda certainly provided certain advantages to the missionary movement as it went forward.

However, it also had the effect of reducing the authority of the missionary congregations and the missionaries in the field. The full impact of this development needs further study. However, it is clear from church history that the missionary movement also had an impact on the centralisation of the church in the curial office known as the Propaganda ■

END NOTES

1) *Lettere et Decreta*, 1880, f.660
2) *Acta*, 265 (1895) f.363
3) *Serie Romana*, 1886, f.945
4) *Nuova Serie*, 73 (1895) f.137-138
5) *Acta*, 265 (1895) f.366
6) *Acta*, 272 (1901) f.179-182
7) Car j'estime qu'aucun point de l'Afrique n'offre un population aussi dense et aussi dispose a se laisser amener au Saint Evangile, *Acta*, 251 (1883) f.240
8) Ibid, f.238
9) le plus ancient de tous et aussi le plus important sans contredit, *Acta*, 253 (1884) f.55
10) Dieu me preserve, a cet egard d'une jalousie ridicule *Acta*, 253 (1884), f.56
11) *Acta*, 253 (1884), f.51: *Lettere et Decreta*, 1887, f.29
12) *Acta*, 284 (1911) f.207-211
13) *Acta*, 259 (1889) f.214-215
14) *Serie Romana*, 1889, f.180,190; *Lettere et Decreta*., 1889, f.313,383
15) *Lettere et Decreta*, 1889, f.557
16) 22 December 1899—*Nuova Serie*, 214 (1901) Rub141, ff.266-267
17) 22 December 1899—*Nuova Serie*, 214 (1901) Rub141, f.269
18) 27 February 1900—22 December 1899 – *Nuova Serie*, 214 (1901) Rub141, ff.273-275
19) 3 April 1900 – 22 December 1899—*Nuova Serie*, 214 (1901) Rub141, ff.276-277
20) 22 December 1899—*Nuova Serie*, 214 (1901) Rub141, ff.294-295
21) *Acta*, 272 (1901) f.192-198
22) *Serie Romana*, 1892, f.521-529
23) *Serie Romana*, 1890, ff.308-310
24) *Acta*, 270 (1899), ff.311-315
25) *Lettere et Decreta*, 1890, f.808
26) *Lettere et Decreta*, 1891, f.59
27) *Acta*, 261 (1891) ff.110-112
28) *Lettere et Decreta*, 1891, f.334
29) *Lettere et Decreta*, 1886 f.417
30) *Serie Romana*, 1886, ff.1003-1004
31) *Nuova Serie*, 193 (1900) Rub141, ff.546-547
32) *Nuova Serie*, 193 (1900) Rub141, ff.476-477
33) *Nuova Serie*, 118 (1897) Rub 141, ff.6-7
34) *Nuova Serie*, 168 (1899) Rub141, f.163
35) *Serie Romana*, 1885, f.904
36) 7 May 1885— *Serie Romana*, 1885, f.906
37) *Lettere et Decreta*, 1885, f.273
38) *Serie Romana*, 1885, f.917
39) *Lettere et Decreta*, 1885, f.342
40) *Serie Romana*, 1885, f.920
41) 17 December 1884—*Serie Romana*, 1884, f.884
42) 26 January 1885—*Lettere et Decreta*, 1885, f.44
43) *Nuova Serie*, 118 (1897) Rub141, ff.26-27
44) 7 March 1896—*Nuova Serie*, 118 (1897) Rub.141, ff.31-32
45) 29 June 1896—*Nuova Serie*, 118 (1897) Rub.141, f.38
46) *Nuova Serie*, 118 (1897) Rub141, ff.40-43
47) 23 February 1897—*Nuova Serie*, 118 (1897) Rub.141, f.51
48) 12 March 1897— *Nuova Serie*, 118 (1897) Rub.141, f.53



Conviction and openness

Christian witness in a multifaith world

Ross Langmead

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If I want to get a lively mission-logical conversation going, I find that all I have to do is quote Paul Knitter, who once wrote:

> *The goal of missionary work is being achieved when announcing the gospel to people makes the Christian a better Christian and the Buddhist a better Buddhist*.[1]

Christians tend to respond in three main ways: Some agree, arguing that mission is dialogue in this sense. Others strongly disagree, arguing that mission is primarily a matter of proclamation.

It is the third response—or cluster of responses—that I want to explore in detail here. Many, myself included, would like to find their way to a response in between mission as either dialogue or proclamation.

> *I remember the Muslim representative insisting that we each make large banners speaking from our own tradition, so that all could see that we were working together. He particularly wanted Muslims in Indonesia to see on television that Christians in Australia opposed the war, because, he said, they just assumed that most Australians were Christian and supported the war ambitions of the American Christian leader, George W Bush*

Conviction and openness

I would like to argue that mission is essentially dialogical and yet that the Christian church must also witness to what it believes is genuinely good news for all, rooted in God's revelation in Jesus Christ.

It is possible, in other words, for Christian witness to flow from a deep conviction that we are discovering a central clue to life and its meaning, but also to be characterised by an openness to discovering more, wherever God's Spirit is at work.

There are many ways to express this middle ground. For example, it is common for the three main stances towards religions to be labelled *exclusivist*, *inclusivist* and *pluralist*.[2] In such a framework this is a form of inclusivism—a belief that God is revealed definitively but not exhaustively in Jesus.

A second way to express it, which I will explore further, is to suggest that in a multifaith context the appropriate Christian stance towards the world is one of both conviction and openness. I want to argue that these are neither opposites nor incompatible.

A third way is to say that Christian witness is dialogical by nature, because the Good News is about love and justice, a new way of relating characterised by reciprocity and openness to *the other*.

In its broadest sense, dialogue is all about respectful conversation in which two or more parties share what they believe while open to learning from each other.

The way this middle ground was expressed at the World Council of Churches' mission conference in San Antonio in 1990 was that "we cannot point to any other way of salvation than Jesus Christ; at the same time we cannot set limits to the saving power of God".[3] The delegates at this conference felt that there was an unresolved tension in this statement.[4]

David Bosch also felt an ineradicable tension in this position. In **Transforming Mission** he ends his succinct summary of various theologies of religion by asking the question: "How do we maintain the tension between being both missionary and dialogical?"[5]

But he doesn't see it as a debilitating tension. He sees it as an inevitable part of our being human and finite and, in fact, part of our spiritual adventure. We can launch into mission and dialogue confident that God's Spirit will surprise us and teach us more. In one of Bosch's signature phrases, he says our witness in a multifaith context needs to occur in bold humility, or humble boldness.[6]

Strength of the tension questioned

I am not convinced that this tension is nearly as strong as Bosch and the San Antonio gathering felt it to be. There are three reasons for my sense that the Christian call to mission is one, rather than a two-fold calling to be held in tension.

First, the Christian call to mission is a call to witness, and this term embodies both the boldness and humility to which Bosch refers. Second, my view of truth allows for both conviction and openness—a form of boldness and humility—without deep tension. Third, because our witness works itself out incarnationally, in all dimensions of life and particularly through relationships, our witness is expressed holistically in love for neighbour. Let's explore these three in further detail.

Mission as witness: *Be my witnesses*

The Christian call to mission is a call to bear witness to God's saving activity in Jesus Christ.[7] The word group underlying the idea of *witness* or *testimony* is at least as frequent in the New Testament as the word group associated with *preaching the Word*, *proclaiming the gospel* or *kerygma*.[8] The clearest expression of mission as witness is found in Acts 1:8, where Jesus appeared to his disciples, promised the power of the Holy Spirit and said, "You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Christian witness is part of mission of God

The role of the witness is more modest than the role of defending an idea or promoting a worldview. A witness tells what he or she has seen or experienced. The witness in a court case is of no interest other than pointing credibly to what happened in the past or is happening now. The task of Christian witness is simply to tell the story of Jesus and to share how the liberating reality of the resurrection is evident now.[9] It is the mission of God and we are invited to be a part of it by being witnesses.

We can bear witness not only in word but in deed. The word *martyr* comes from the Greek word for *witness*. Many Christians have borne witness to the Good News of Jesus Christ by paying the ultimate price, giving their life.

Less dramatically, the call to mission is a call to bear witness to our understanding of God's love in all parts of life. Jesus' call to "be my witness" was not just a call to give witness verbally.[10] I will return to this later when considering witness in all of life.

Multifaith context

We bear witness in the context of a new community. This is relevant to the multifaith context, because it is only together that we can, at least to some degree, point to Jesus as the source and inspiration of our community.

Darrell Guder points out that the New Testament concept of witness encompasses not only the person who witnesses, but also the testimony given by the witness and the process of bearing witness.[11] So Christian witness defines "the entire Christian life, both individually and corporately."[12]

> *(I have to say how liberating this is compared to the expectations of witness that were spelt out in my undergraduate years at university among my evangelical friends. Personal witnessing was the model; it consisted of acting as an individual to engineer conversations with strangers so that we could introduce the gospel, summarised in a few simple sentences, into the conversation. It neither valued relationships nor involved listening; worst of all it placed a burden of guilt on those who were not good at this awkward technique.)*

These observations about the nature of witness make it clear how it is both bold and humble. In a court room, witnesses are asked to say what they know, but nothing beyond. Their expertise is limited, and if they speculate they are soon reminded that it is inappropriate.

Witness in informal dialogue

In a multifaith situation a clear understanding of mission as witness helps greatly.

When it comes to formal or informal dialogue, there is a time for bearing witness to the story of Jesus and to the living reality of the Spirit of the risen Christ in our lives. Sharing what we believe is an integral part of dialogue.

If we do not enter into dialogue with convictions, but pretend to have completely open minds, we have no genuine dialogue.

On the other hand, in dialogue there is also a time to

listen and learn. There are many things we do not know or understand.

I have expressed this in the words of a song:

Lord let me learn, learn more and more
Learn that what I know is just a speck of what there is to know,
Learn to listen to my neighbour when I'd rather speak and go …[13]

Need for humility

To take a simple example of the limitations of being a witness, when we see something dramatic in daily life we know we can misinterpret it. When there are police cars, sirens and people running everywhere, are we in the middle of a crime scene or a film set, a rescue drill or a genuine emergency? A certain humility is due.

How much more is humility—or openness, provisionality, respect, listening and eagerness to learn—central to interfaith dialogue, where the deepest mysteries of life are being explored together?

A sense of proportion about the task of Christian mission takes some of the sting out of the tension of wanting to share with others yet wanting to respect their different beliefs. Our role is to point to what we know and experience, acknowledging that there is far more to be understood and experienced.

There is no ultimate tension between conviction and openness here. As Lesslie Newbigin says, in discussing the question of whether there is salvation for those outside Christian faith, how arrogant are theologians who seem to think that Christians are authorised to tell the rest of the world who will be accepted or rejected by God. All we can do is to point to the love and grace of God. It is not ours to second-guess the mind and activity of God.[14]

Truth in dialogue: *Through a glass darkly*

The second reason there is not a deep tension for me in the call to both Christian mission and a dialogical approach to those of other faiths stems from my view of truth.

Religions differ

There is no way to avoid the truth question when it comes to faith. Most religions have claimed to be true and to be the superior or final presentation of the key to reality and happiness. And yet they differ deeply on what reality and salvation are.

Some people think that all religions ultimately say the same thing or that we all really worship one God by different names.

When I began postgraduate religious studies at Lancaster in the United Kingdom, my professor was Ninian Smart, a renowned world religions scholar. I can clearly remember him saying, "Those who say that all religions are ultimately the same have not looked at the religions." His point was, that if we listen carefully to the genuine and deep differences between religious visions (both within and between world religions), we will be forced to give up any unifying pattern we might want to impose on the incredible variety that exists.

Some forms of faith follow one God, some no god at all, others many gods and others a complex layered system of many gods and one absolute reality. Some religious worldviews aim to escape this cosmos and others to renew it. Some religious visions insist that our salvation is up to us while others speak of grace, forgiveness and assistance on the way. Some are essentially solitary paths and others emphasise communal practices.

Any philosophy we might distil from a religious community is likely to be so deeply embedded in a complex set of myths, rituals, sacred scriptures, social structures and religious ethics, that it would be unrecognisable if we were to extract it from its embedded form.

Ghandi mistaken

So Mahatma Gandhi was mistaken when he wrote, "Religions are different roads converging to the same point." He asked, "What does it matter that we take different roads so long as we reach the same goal? Wherein is the cause for quarrelling?"[15] In reply, we could ask, "Would it matter if we were to reach different goals? Would there then be reason to talk about which road to take?"

Mark Heim has built his theology of religions on this very point: There are many salvations, a "real pluralism of religious ends."[16] In other words, the differences between Buddhist nirvana and Christian communion with God cannot be smoothed over.[17]

While I cannot make sense of Heim's own constructive proposal—that we must accept that there are many salvations and that each in some sense has validity as "the only way"[18]—he is persuasive in arguing (and here I use Knitter's paraphrase of Heim) that "religions not only say they are different; they really, deeply, and forevermore are different."[19]

We know in part: Critical realism

If religious visions are genuinely different, how do we approach the question of their possible truth? I am arguing here that there is no deep tension between conviction and openness. This follows from holding to a critical, realist view of truth.

Critical realism stands between the two poles of naïve realism and nonrealism.

Naïve realism approaches reality as external to us and readily accessible. Our language is understood to be matched by *objective reality*. This was the dominant philosophical view of truth until the 19th century. Scientific models were seen literally. When scientists posited the existence of the ether or of atoms, these theoretical objects were seen as actual physical entities.[20]

In Christian theology the corresponding view is literalism or fundamentalism. For example, God may be seen as really more like a father than a mother, or literally a person. In interfaith dialogue, a naïve realist would argue either that the spiritual world is real and that the gods compete, or that one spiritual vision is true and the other *gods* do not exist.

This stance towards other religions is what is usually labelled the *exclusivist* approach, where one's own religion is seen as literally and exclusively true.

Non-realism, on the other hand, denies the existence outside ourselves of the objects we refer to in our language. Non-realists in science see theories as merely instrumental, not representative of the *world out there*, which is inaccessible. They are seen as fictions to be judged only by their usefulness.[21]

It is believed that we construct our reality. In religion, nonrealists see religious language as referring not to transcendent realities outside ourselves, but to emotions, intentions or perspectives.[22] In interfaith dialogue this corresponds to one form of pluralism, where religious beliefs are seen as human constructions that meet human needs but do not actually refer to a transcendent reality.

Critical realism takes something from both of the other views. Its scientific and religious expressions are similar. N T Wright puts it well:

> *This is a way of describing the process of* knowing *that acknowledges the reality of the thing known, as something other than the knower* (*hence* realism), *while fully acknowledging that the only access we have to this reality lies along the spiralling path of appropriate dialogue or conversation between the knower and the thing known* (*hence* critical).[23]

Critical realist view

A critical realist view of truth, in simple terms, argues that the way we talk only approximates what is *out there*. We have an active role in imagining it, so we should take our constructions of reality with a grain of salt. But we have a basic faith (and ultimately that is all it is) that there is something out there to describe, and that some beliefs do better than others at describing it.

The criteria for deciding between versions of reality are complex and do not usually lead to proof. Our theories in some areas of life are not controversial, and *reality* seems to shape our theories more than the other way around. But in other areas of life—and religion seems to be one such area—the role of human imagination plays a bigger part, and worldviews compete seriously for our acceptance.

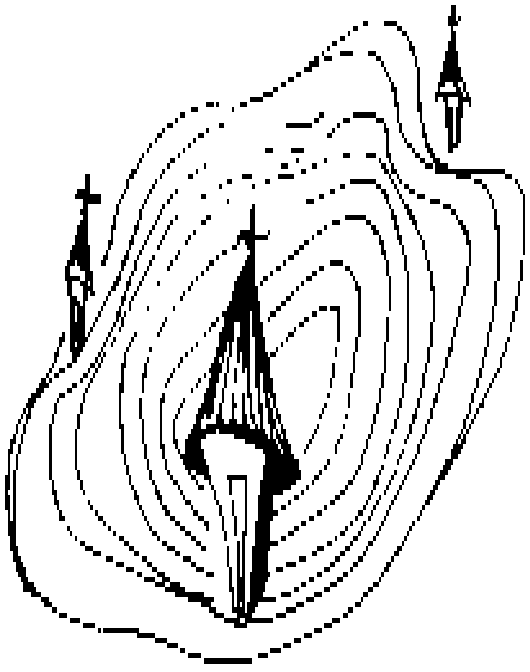
We can find whole paradigms of existence, fully fleshed-out and satisfying millions of people while leaving others cold. Critical realists say that some of these visions of reality are closer to the truth than others, although we don't have direct access to reality in order to decide between them. Each faith perspective is likely to contain some truth as well as error.

Echoes of St Paul

There are echoes of this recognition of the limits of our knowledge in St Paul's famous words in 1 Corinthians 13: "For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known" (1 Cor 13:12). As a result of this partial knowing, Paul says, we must walk by faith.

Dialogical engagement

We can see easily that a critical realist approach to truth makes a big difference in the way we approach the religious beliefs of others. There is no tension between conviction and openness. It is the very nature of our understanding of truth that it will be partial.



As a result, Christian witness is appropriately accompanied by an openness to learn about God as understood by those who differ from us; that is, it is naturally characterised by dialogue as a way of life.

Tolerance

This openness is often described as *tolerance*, but tolerance is too passive a concept.

Not that we should ask for less than tolerance, as some Christians seeking a theocracy seem to demand. As a Baptist, I value religious toleration highly and regard freedom of religion as a central plank of human rights. There are many places in the world where even tolerance is not granted.

This is an example of where, if the issue of religious freedom came up in interfaith dialogue, I would feel compelled to express my deep convictions, despite the risk of frosty relations. For example, I am aware that in some parts of the world, Muslims who convert to another religion risk losing their citizen rights, their freedom and even their lives.

No, we should aim for more than tolerance, if tolerance means merely that we accept the co-existence of *the other*, perhaps with indifference or even hostility. In interfaith dialogue, we should aspire to actively engage with those around us who follow a different path. Part of our religious conviction is that we know only in part.

Meeting *the other* is an opportunity for us to learn more about faith. Jews in Jesus' time would not have expected to learn from Samaritans and yet Jesus powerfully invited his hearers to revise their religious understanding by learning from the Good Samaritan in Jesus' famous story of faith with its sleeves rolled up (Luke 10:30–7).

This open stance, in which we recognise that we do not have the whole truth, is also sometimes labelled *inclusivism*. Classically, this position held that the partial truth in other religions found its fulfilment in Jesus Christ.[24] But there are a variety of Christian inclusivisms. Karl Rahner called certain believers in other religions who live by grace *anonymous Christians*.[25] Others, such as Gavin D'Costa, believe that God's Spirit (admittedly constrained by being the Spirit of Christ) works freely throughout the world, so Christians are obliged to engage dialogically with believers in other faiths in order to learn more about what the Spirit is doing.[26]

While inclusivism—a commitment to a partially-understood Christ balanced by acknowledgement that there is much to learn elsewhere—is the stance towards believers of other faiths that resonates most easily with a critical realist approach to truth, I would argue that critical realism can be found in each of the three commonly identified positions.

Pluralism

There are *gentle exclusivists*, such as the well-known Evangelical, John Stott, who say that, although they believe that salvation is available only through Jesus Christ, they trust that in the grace of God the great majority of humans will be saved, although we don't know how.[27]

The World Evangelical Fellowship also left the question open at its 1992 conference.[28] The combination of conviction and openness is to be found in these views, where a certain agnosticism about the ways of God can be seen.

Pluralism also often takes a critical realist approach. John Hick is explicit about this, even though his dismissal of much religious belief as *mere myth* suggests that he sees religious belief as mostly shaped by human construction with only some shaping by a transcendent reality.[29] Wherever he stands on critical realism, however, Hick—with nearly all pluralists—is deeply committed to dialogue involving the sharing of our convictions in an open spirit.

So whatever the stance towards non-Christian religions, a critical realist position on truth leads to a commitment to dialogue. Christian mission, then, will take the shape of witnessing in bold humility, prepared to share, when appropriate, our partial understanding of God's activity as we have experienced it and yet open to listening and learning, even to the point of revising what we believe.

Incarnational witness: In all of life

The third reason I find it natural to see Christian mission as one, rather than as two tasks in tension, is that our witness works itself out incarnationally in all dimensions of life, particularly through relationships. We are called to express our witness in love for neighbour. This is a holistic concept. Our strong desire to follow Jesus' way of love is not compromised by our openness to difference in the other or by the likelihood that we will learn and be changed as we interact.

Several dimensions of this all-of-life witness are suggested in the Catholic document *Dialogue and Mission* (1984), which calls us to pursue dialogue in theological exchange, religious experience, action and daily life.[30] I have listed them in rough order from the rare to the everyday.

Theological exchange

Much of my discussion so far has focussed on theological exchange. We have to admit, however, that genuine interfaith dialogue at this level, in which the conversation partners are mutually enriched by listening to each other and probing each other on

matters of belief, is rare. While we do not give up on it, from day to day it is the other three dimensions where we have most opportunity to bear witness through our dialogical approach.

Religious experience

Our personal experience of God is a vital aspect of bearing witness to the reality of Christ. By religious experience I am referring here to prayer, contemplation, faith journey and any experiences of a distinctly spiritual nature, whether *ordinary* or extraordinary.

While experience can confirm a narrow religious outlook, if religious experience occurs within the framework of conviction and openness, it opens us to *the other*. For example, my wife has a friend who is a devout Muslim woman. Because the spiritual dimension of life is real to both of them, a deep openness to the reality of both their experiences is present in the relationship. To encounter believers of other faiths, who are deeply committed to their spiritual paths, is often to become aware of a holy space and to provoke ourselves to ask again how the Spirit of God is active in the world.

I suggest that in a multifaith context, one of the best ways for Christians to witness to their faith is to practise the spiritual disciplines and allow them to bear fruit in their lives. Many younger spiritual seekers in the west bypass the church because they do not see them as spiritual—this is probably a surprise to Christians.[31]

There are times when Christians will feel able to meet with people of other faiths in a multifaith gathering, and then questions of whether we can pray together or enter into rituals belonging to other traditions arise. Increasingly there are guides to such occasions in order to help us to respect each other as we gather together and sense the spiritual experience of others.[32]

Action

The dialogue of action is, in one sense, the least controversial, because most religions affirm certain ethical ideals related to peace, justice and human rights which would allow them to co-operate and work together *dialogically* for human freedom. Given the mess our world is in, the religions have a job to do and could learn a great deal from each other by working shoulder-to-shoulder for peace, justice and care of the environment.

This is certainly the vision of writers such as Hans Küng and Paul Knitter, who call for a global ethic: If the world is to know peace between peoples it will need to know peace between religions.[31] There are many local initiatives where interfaith cooperation occurs in common resistance to social evils.

Christians for peace

I was an organiser of a peace vigil against the war in Iraq when it loomed as imminent in 2003. The group began as *Christians for Peace*, but was soon joined by *Muslims for Peace* and other groups, and the vigil became an interfaith protest.

I remember the Muslim representative insisting that we each make large banners speaking from our own tradition, so that all could see that we were working together. He particularly wanted Muslims in Indonesia to see on television that Christians in Australia opposed the war, because, he said, they just assumed that most Australians were Christian and supported the warring ambitions of the American Christian leader, George W Bush.

This example, however, reminds us how urgent and important the dialogue of action is, because huge political rifts are forming across the world along broadly religious lines.

It also reminds us that many social ideals are not shared by all; examples are renunciation of terrorism, a multifaith and multicultural society, the opposing of patriarchy and a commitment to democracy. There are great differences within religious communities as well as between them.

In the dialogue of action, Christians can bear witness to their faith through their commitment to the kingdom of God, the new order of relationships in which the poor are fed, the voiceless are heard, the powerful do not exploit the powerless and there is liberation for all to become fully human. Some of this vision may, at times, be distinctively Christian, but we share a common cause with many believers of other faiths.

Daily life

It is in the interactions of daily life that incarnational witness occurs most frequently. I have in mind here all the ways in which Christians bear witness, most often through their actions, their relationships and their attitudes and values, and occasionally through opportunities to speak about their faith.

We bear witness when we move beyond our comfort zone to befriend the outcast, the migrant, the believer of another faith—*the other*. It is the practical outworking of loving our neighbour. We bear witness when we live simply and in a welcoming manner, when our discipleship takes a *downward* journey as well as an inward journey and an outward journey.

We bear witness when we defend the weak, care for the orphan, share our resources and visit the lonely and isolated. We bear witness when we are honest at work and treat others respectfully. The list goes on, of course.

The dialogical dimension of this witness is found in our openness to *the other*. The biblical tradition of hospitality to the stranger, to the traveller and to widows and orphans is specifically linked in the New Testament to the discovery of God in *the other* (Genesis 18, Matthew 25:31-46, Luke 24:2, 24:13–25, Romans 12:13, Hebrews 13:3).

Enlarged by the other

In the search for truth we acknowledge that we know only in part, and we seek greater understanding by listening to others; in the witness of daily life we acknowledge that we are diminished by interacting only within our own group and we are enlarged as we make space for *the other*.

In daily life, difference is a gift from God. Just as we are richer and wiser in a multicultural context, we are also spiritually richer and wiser when we interact in a multifaith context. Our witness, being dialogical in nature, is always open to both sharing (in word and deed) and receiving (in word and deed).

Conclusion

Bosch's famous phrase *bold humility* has been a helpful one as I've explored what Christian witness means in a multifaith context. It has helped me to argue that the tension he identified between being missionary and being dialogical is not a deep one after all.

If we acknowledge our limited understanding and live open to learning more about God and the activity of God's Spirit in the world, it is part of our very witness to listen as well as to talk, to learn as well to share, to explore faith in a spirit of mutuality with believers in other religions.

I explored three reasons for holding that the Christian call to mission is unitary rather than twofold and to be held in tension. The Christian call to mission is a call to witness, and this term embodies both the boldness and humility that Bosch refers to. A critical realist view of truth allows for both conviction and openness—again, boldness and humility—without significant tension.

And witnessing through the dialogue of religious experience, action for justice, and daily life is a holistic expression of love for neighbour in which it is natural for us to open out to *the other* at the same time as we witness to our own faith ■

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News & Notices

AAMS CONFERENCE 2008

Following the successful Australian Missiology Conference in September 2005, the new Australian Association for Mission Studies (AAMS) is planning a second conference, to be held in July or September 2008 in Canberra. Details will be published in this journal as they become available.

Inquiries can be directed to Dr Ross Langmead, Secretary, AAMS, on (61-3/03) 9340 8021 or *rlangmead@whitley.unimelb.edu.au*

IAMS CONFERENCE 2008

The International Association for Mission Studies (IAMS) will gather for its 12th assembly in Budapest, Hungary, from 16 to 22 August 2008. The theme will be: *Human Identity and the Gospel of Reconciliation: Agenda for Missionary Churches in the Twenty-First Century.* Abstracts for proposed papers are due by 31 March 2007.

For further information, see *www.missionstudies.org*

EDINBURGH CONFERENCE 2010

An international conference on world mission will be held in Edinburgh exactly 100 years after the International Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910, which many say marked the beginning of the ecumenical movement of the 20th century. The dates will be 14 to 23 June 2010.

There is a series of annual gatherings leading up to Edinburgh 2010, the next being a seminar on Christian unity to be held at New College, Edinburgh, on 27 and 28 April 2007.

For information on Edinburgh 2010 and associated events, see: www.towards2010.org.uk

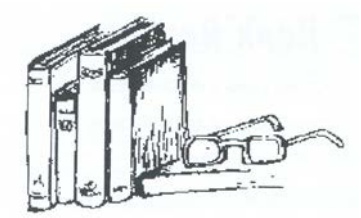
INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CATHOLIC MISSIOLOGISTS CONFERENCE 2007

(IACM) will hold its Third Assembly in Pieniezno, Poland, 28 August to 2 September 2007.

The theme is: *The word of God grew and multiplied (Acts 12:24): Sharing the Good News in the interaction of cultures.* Participants should arrive in Warsaw by August 27th at the latest and will be bussed to Pieniezno.

For further information contact the secretary of the association, Bill LaRousse, at:

BOOK REVIEW



DOCTOR IN VANUATU

by

E A Freeman

IPS publications, University of the South Pacific, 2006

***Reviewed by Ian Breward**, who has been keenly interested in the history of missions since the 1970s, with special reference to the Pacific, including a substantial section on the subject in his history of the churches in Australasia, which was published in 2001. He is currently archivist for the Uniting Church in Victoria, where a considerable amount of missionary material is held.*

Missionary biographies and autobiographies are mostly written by the ordained. Accounts by lay missionaries are much less common, but can often offer an alternative perspective on the nature of the missionary task and an explanation of events, which puts them in a fresh context.

Freeman's story of his work in the New Hebrides as superintendent of the Paton Memorial Hospital is such an account. It is fundamentally frank and he does not hesitate to admit his own limitations and failures, at a time when medical knowledge and techniques were much more basic than they are now.

Freeman speedily applied himself to learning about the intersections between local custom and medical needs. Nor did he neglect medical politics, though he lost the battle to persuade the Presbyterian Church to hand over responsibility for the hospital to the government

He was himself fortunate to survive a severe attack of meningitis, which led to his being invalided back to Sydney and undergo a long period of convalescence.

Lack of knowledge

Five years after graduating in medicine from Sydney University, he offered to serve in the New Hebrides and was surprised how little the appointing committee knew about work there.

No orientation was given, facilities were inadequate and his salary was not sufficient to the needs of his young family, given the much higher cost of living there.

Freeman was not an acquiescent employee. He refused to put up with an elderly kerosene fridge, when the hospital had its own generator, despite the fact that it was not mission policy to give staff electric fridges. He won.

While his wife did initially teach their children by correspondence lessons, the mission did not give an allowance for the children to go to school in Vila, until the British authorities gave the Freeman's a grant.

Freeman gives a vivid description of the limited surgical facilities, the shortage of drugs and the inadequate financial support given. The hours were long and medical and nursing staff were expected to make considerable sacrifices.

Tropical diseases

Though his knowledge of tropical diseases was limited, he read up whatever he could. He also had to deal with a wide range of fractures, lacerations and obstetric emergencies, as well as a variety of fevers and epidemics of whooping cough, measles and flu.

Some of his descriptions of the emergencies he dealt with are not for the fainthearted. He was prepared to take risks in order to save lives, for he had only himself to consult. His adaptability and willingness to mentor occasional medical students provided them with invaluable experience.

A couple of them have written about the value of their Vanuatu experience. He learned quickly about the importance of consultative relationships with nursing staff and quickly learned to rely on translators for descriptions of symptoms, for his Pidgin was limited.

Answering questions

Every lunch hour he answered questions from nurses, teachers and missionaries on isolated stations. He dealt with expatriate emergencies as well as those of indigenous patients and travelled between islands on boats, which would not have been licensed in Australia.

He developed a scheme for doctors in Australia to send drug samples, which saved many lives. He worked with the Red Cross and the local authorities to set up a blood bank. His wife was the first donor, to demonstrate to locals that it was safe.

Freeman speedily applied himself to learning about the intersections between local custom and medical needs. Nor did he neglect medical politics, though he lost the battle to persuade the Presbyterian Church to hand over responsibility for the hospital to the government.

His attempts to enlighten a group of visiting British parliamentarians failed, for the financial grants did not improve. He dealt with twice the number of patients for which the hospital had been designed.

Respect of British authorities

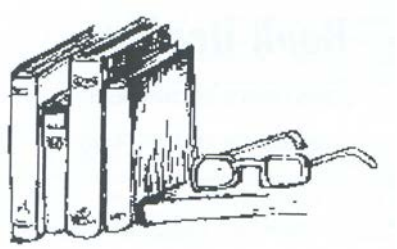
The respect in which he was held by the British administration led to his being invited to do further surgical training at government expense. He would have refused the offer if his wife and family could not accompany him. Once again he won, even though it meant very tight budgeting in Edinburgh.

His wife Dorothy was just as committed as he was and her support was indispensable. He completed his fellowship first time round and returned to the New Hebrides to discover that his new role paid less than that of teachers. Again he pressed his case and secured equality. He was fortunate to survive an attack of meningitis, but had no regret about spending time in the New Hebrides.

He believed that God had a purpose for every life and he writes about his experiences in ways, which underline how they enriched him and his family.

Altogether it is a valuable addition to Pacific missionary literature and a moving read about the joys and tribulations of missionary service in the 1960s.

BOOK REVIEW



FROM WOOLLOOMOOLOO TO 'ETERNITY'

A history of Australian Baptists

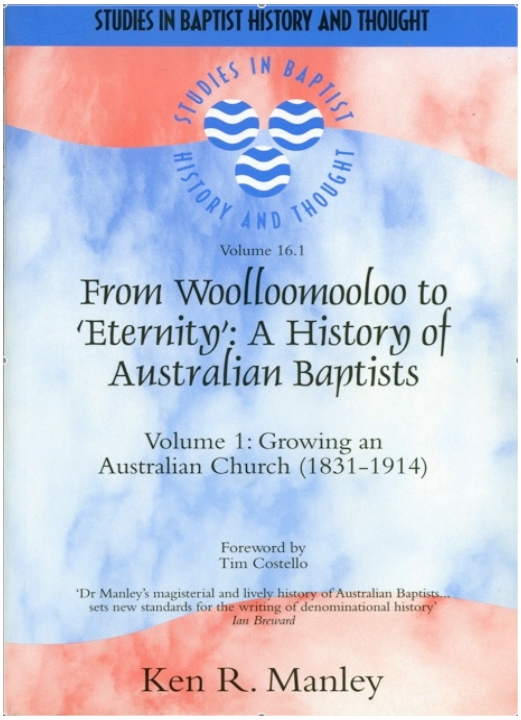
by Ken R Manley

published by Milton Keynes, United Kingdom, Paternoster Press, 2006 (Two Volumes)
ISBN 1-84227-405-8 (2 volume set)

***Reviewed by Ross Langmead**, professor of missiology at Whitley College and secretary of the Australian Association for Mission Studies*.

It is difficult to sum up what is distinctive about Baptists. On the one hand they can be characterised as a non-conformist, Protestant Evangelical denomination with a congregational structure and an identity built on adult-believers' baptism.

On the other, Baptists come in many varieties, from fundamentalism to liberalism, from strong evangelists to social reformers, from megachurches to the occasional Baptist monastery. And all of these differences are found in Australian history.



This two-volume work is the first substantial history of Australian Baptists and is a fine example of good historical writing. Ken Manley has chosen just the right balance between careful documentation of events and people and a broader analysis of the meaning of those events and how they relate to the social changes going on around them. It combines scholarly rigour (including a good index, extensive bibliography and footnotes) with readability.

The last book over 850 pages I read from beginning to end with real interest and without flagging was John Harris', **One blood: 200 Years of Aboriginal Encounter with Christ-ianity** (1990), and there are some similarities. Not only, in both cases, did the quality of the writing keep me reading with pleasure, in both books I also felt at times attracted to, and at times ashamed of, those about whom I was reading—in the first book, Australian missionaries, and in the second book that fractious lot called Baptists.

I'm allowed to say that Baptists argue often, because I am a Baptist.

I should also declare that I came to this book already with an appreciation for Ken Manley's passion as a historian and teacher, because he was for many years the principal of Whitley College, where I teach.

This is, as Manley says in the preface, an insider's history of a denomination, but Manley doesn't try to spin it positively or airbrush away the failings of those who went before.

He brings a uniquely broad experience to his task, as he taught history in Baptist theological colleges in three states (South Australia, New South Wales and Victoria) and has served as a vice-president of the Baptist World Alliance. This *magnum opus* has been

years in the writing and is the culmination of his work as a historian.

An intriguing title

What does that intriguing title, **From Woolloo-mooloo to 'Eternity'**, mean? Woolloomooloo Bay was the site of the first baptisms in 1832 by the first Baptist minister to come to Australia, John McKaeg. And *eternity* is the word written secretly, perhaps half a million times in chalk on pavements across the city of Sydney, by Baptist layperson, Arthur Stace, after the Second World War—two significant examples of distinctive Baptist presence in Australia.

Manley divides Australian Baptist history into the periods before and after the First World War, with a volume for each. In each volume he covers events and people more or less chronologically in one large section and then covers themes in another large section.

Ken Manley has chosen just the right balance between careful documentation of events and people and a broader analysis of the meaning of those events and how they relate to the social changes going on around them. It combines scholarly rigour (including a good index, extensive bibliography and footnotes) with readability

The themes in the first volume include the seeking of an identity as a minority denomination; the role of women, leaders and youth; and social issues. The themes in the second volume include Baptist enthusiasm for global mission; a changing identity since the 1960s; more recent social issues; conservatism and radicalism; and leadership and training developments. Manley finishes with reference to the global Baptist identity, indigenous issues and the changing shape of mission.

Manley's picture

The picture that comes through clearly in Manley's work is of an energetic, passionate minority, struggling for identity and, at times, respectability. I despaired as I read how often their independence of mind led to splits, heated arguments and refusal to cooperate.

Baptists reflect Australia's federalism, in that being Baptist is much more a state-based identity than a national one. On almost any issue—from the ordination of women to admitting members who have been baptised as infants elsewhere—Baptists have differed from one end of the country to the other.

I was sorry to read that in my city, Melbourne, as early as 1850, there was already a Baptist church in Collins Street and a breakaway church in nearby Albert Street.

This pattern repeats itself, accounting for a certain divisive spirit and certainty in doctrinal matters that seems to hamper the sharing of the Good News that is so close to the heart of Baptists and other Evangelicals.

I was surprised to discover that while Baptist churches have never been regarded as mainstream or *establishment*, many successful Baptist leaders, more often than not lay members, played significant roles in building Australia.

The quest for an identity at three levels, as Australians, Australian Christians and Australian Baptists, seems to have been a lively one. Manley suggests that Baptists are now less sectarian and would now more readily echo Charles Wesley's vision in which "names and sects and parties fall" and "thou, O Christ, art all in all."

I agree that many Baptists identify more as Evangelicals than as Baptists, and others go further in their ecumenism and seek to identify simply as *Christian*.

Crucial ways of relating

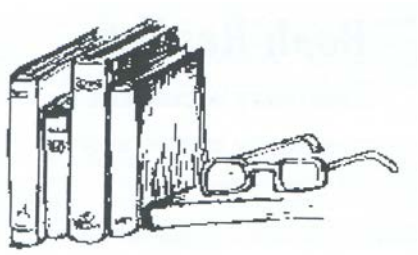
Baptists are noted for their passion for mission. As Manley shows, in the past it has largely meant *evangelism*, but now is likely to include all dimensions of God's gracious reign.

The more recent changes he charts so carefully are crucial, it seems to me, when it comes to the way Baptists relate in mission to those around them, both in Australia and globally.

Will Baptists retain the image of strident conservatives or will they find new and different ways of being a believers' church in a largely post-Christian society?

This not only makes for fine reading but also, I am quite sure, will become a standard text for understanding Australian Baptists and their approach to mission ■

BOOK REVIEW



THE FORGOTTEN WAYS

Reactivating the Missional Church

by

Alan Hirsch

published by Brazos Press, Grand Rapids, 2006

***Reviewed by Darren Cronshaw**, some details about the author can be found on page, with his article* Questions of emerging churches. *He is currently researching emerging missional churches at Whitley College, works with Forge Mission Training Network and lives in Melbourne with his wife Jenni and three children.*

The Forgotten Ways explores what Alan Hirsch maintains are the basic elements of what makes a missional movement. He starts with an analysis of the early church and the church in China—groups without legality, buildings or professional leadership, seeker-sensitive services or much in the way of scripture—and asks how did they foster their phenomenal growth?

He draws on these experiences and on his reading of history and scripture to point towards new imaginative ways of doing mission and church. These ways, that he suggests, though often forgotten, echo movements like the early church and China

The answer, he says, lies not in anything that can be packaged as a new programme. Rather, it stems from what he term *Apostolic Genius*, which is latent within the people of God and made up of six inter-relating elements of missional-DNA (mDNA).

Jesus is Lord

The early church and believers in China distilled the message down to this simple confession (or sneezable virus) that recognised the claims of the one God over all of life.

To counter the sacred/secular dichotomy, Hirsch contends, "Following the impulses of biblical monotheism rather than setting up some sacred spaces, our task is to make all aspects and dimensions of life sacred—family, work, play and conflict—and not to limit the presence of God to spooky religious zones" (p.95).

Disciple making

Contrary to consumeristic patterns of faith, Hirsch reminds us that the lifelong task of a disciple is becoming like Jesus and embody his message (like little Jesus' in our communities).

Rather than expecting to "think our way into new ways of acting," as if we only need to know the right things, Hirsch calls believers to action and obedience, quoting, among others, T S Eliot, "The greatest proof of Christianity for others is not how far a man can logically analyse his reasons for believing, but how far in practice he will stake his life on his belief" (p101).

Missional-incarnational impulse

Rather than relying on an *evangelistic-attractional* mode to bring people into church, the *missional-incarnational impulse* seeks to seed and embed the gospel in the midst of cultures.

This takes discipline to practice what he explores as presence, proximity, powerlessness and proclamation.

Grassroots groups, such as Upstream Communities in Perth and Third Place Communities in Hobart, are test cases of communities of Jesus followers seeking

to live life and "do church" in ways consistent with the rhythms and needs of their local communities.

Apostolic environment

Hirsch describes apostolic leaders as custodians of the mDNA. They are the servant-inspirers who cultivate an environment for other leaders and ministries to emerge.

An important part of this is APEPT leadership drawing on Ephesians 4:7-13—including those gifted in apostolic, prophetic and evangelistic ministry (who are sometimes sidelined in the church) as well as pastoral and teaching ministries (which a lot of training and expectations are about in the church today).

Organic systems

Rather than an institutional approach to organisation, where CEO-styled leaders direct with a command and control CEO—approach to leadership, missional movements spread more organically.

When groups network as organic systems, they can unleash their members to flexibly interact with one another and their environment.

Rather than retreating from the chaos of change, they can embrace it and flow with the rhythms of life, "Planting a new church, or remissionalising an existing one, in this approach isn't primarily about buildings, worship services, size of congregations and pastoral care, but rather about gearing the whole community around natural discipling friendships, worship as lifestyle, and mission in the context of everyday life.

As a living network "in Christ" it can meet anywhere, anytime and still be a viable expression of church. This is a much more organic way to plant a church or to revitalise it (p185). This is a theme, in fact, of the whole book and is explored further in an addendum.

***Communitas*, not community**

Rather than seeking *community* as an end in itself, Hirsch explores the ideal of having our imagination captured by seemingly impossible mission challenges, out of which *communitas* evolves.

He draws on Victor Turner's anthropological analysis of *communitas* (how a group forms together around a dangerous journey or mission) and *liminality* (a transition process accompanying a fundamental change).

In one sense, the context of post-Christendom, which has marginalised the place of church in society, and the way we face rapid discontinuous changes in the 21st century forces us into liminality, but in another sense, liminality is where we belong anyway as the pilgrim people of God.

Each of these elements is important in itself, but when they operate together they create the synergy of Apostolic Genius and can foster phenomenal growth.

Strengthening any one area can help a local church grow and be healthier, but fostering all of these elements is how this kind of material in *The Forgotten Ways* can foster missional movements.

Other books treat individual elements in themselves, but this book significantly explores them together, not to bolster up the church as institution, but to cultivate a movement of organic growth.

Hirsch has led a local church and a denomination through processes to reflect on their missional fitness, planted churches among subcultures, started (and closed down) an innovative missional café project, started Forge Mission Training Network in Australia and consulted with missional groups around the world.

He draws on these experiences and on his reading of history and scripture to point towards new imaginative ways of doing mission and church.

These *ways*, that he suggests, though often forgotten, echo movements like the early church and China.

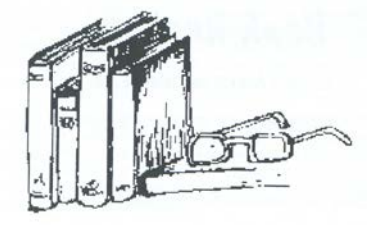
While we do not face the same persecution as those two groups, we do face the *adaptive challenge* of dealing with *rapid discontinuous change* and the thirst for spirituality and community in western societies. His reflections are worth reading, reading again and most importantly acting upon.

The Forgotten Ways is a welcome and significant addition to the literature on mission to the west written by one of Australia's leading missiological strategists.

It will prove to be a useful tool to help shape new forms of missional church—for church planters, those leading change in existing churches and all mission-hearted followers of Jesus. It is not an academic tome but a handbook for practitioners.

I am using it to evaluate missional churches that I am visiting and learning from, and as a compass to guide a missional experiment in our neighbourhood. A blog and further resources (including a missional fitness tool and APEPT analysis) is accessible at *www.theforgottenways.org* ■

BOOK REVIEW



Evangelical, Ecumenical and Anabaptist Missiologies in Conversation

edited by

James Kraybill, Walter Sawatski
&
Charles Van Engen

published by Maryknoll, New York, Orbis Press, 2006
ISBN-13:978-1-5705-653-5

***Reviewed by Larry Nemer**, member of the Missionary Society of the Divine Word, lecturer in mission studies and Church history at Yarra Theological Union and current president of the Australian Association of Mission Studies.*

This *festschrift* in honour of Wilbert Shenk, on the occasion of his retirement from teaching at the age of 70, is one of the finest publications of this genre that I have ever seen.

It was conceived of and financially supported by the three organisations that have benefited greatly from his life and ministry: the Mennonite Board of Missions (director of overseas mission from 1965 to 1990), the Associated Mennonite Biblical seminary (connected with it from 1971 to 1995) and the School of Intercultural Studies at Fuller Theological Seminary (lectured there from 1995 to 2005).

Shenk, in his service to these institutions, was gifted as a prophetic administrator, a creative scholar and an inspiring lecturer.

When I finished reading this book I said to him, "Wilbert, I didn't know you were such a genius." He laughed, "Neither did I!"

Mission administration and studies

The book is divided into five parts, focussing on the various contributions that Shenk has made to mission administration and mission studies.

Each part is introduced by a short paragraph that acknowledges Shenk's distinctive contribution to the aspect being considered.

This is followed by a number of articles—none of them long, but all of them of the highest quality—focussing on the particular aspect being considered.

Thus this is not just a collection of articles by outstanding scholars, but of articles that are related to one another by a specific theme. Often in these articles the specific contribution of Wilbert Shenk is highlighted.

It would be impossible to summarise or even comment on all five parts of this book, but let me choose just three to comment on.

History of missions

As a mission historian of note, Wilbert Shenk was concerned about the way the history of the missions was being written.

Therefore, he organised a conference to discuss the writing of a global mission history (the papers were later published under the title: *Enlarging the Story: Perspectives on Writing World Christian History)*.

He also initiated the Global Mennonite History Project. Five different authors contributed articles on this topic, among them the well-known mission historians, Dana Robert and Andrew Walls.

Mission trends

Another section focusses on trends in mission and ecclesiology. Shenk has always been faithful to his

Mennonite tradition and has constantly worked to bring the evangelical, ecumenical, Anabaptist and, I might add, Catholic traditions into dialogue with one another.

He has seen the need for contextual theologies, but he always envisaged these being in relationship with the various church traditions. In this section several Mennonite theologians explore the insights that Shenk brought to these dialogues.

Mission in the west

A third part focusses on his interest in mission to the west. He was a close friend of Lesslie Newbigin and was involved in the early movement of the Gospel and Culture Movement as it developed in England.

He spent several years there deeply involved in the questions that were facing the Church in England at that time, such as post-modernism and a "churchless" Christianity. He later was involved in the development of the Gospel & Our Culture Movement in the United States.

In this section are several articles which analyse the mission challenges to the church in the west and highlight some of the contributions that Shenk made to this discussion.

Administration et al

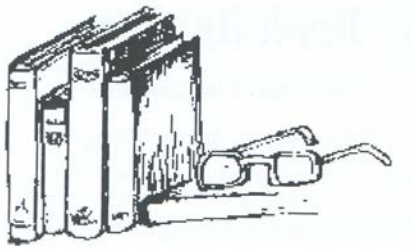
These are just some of the topics that are discussed. There are also articles about administration in mission societies in today's world, about the need for cooperation between mission strategists, mission historians and mission theologians (Shenk was secretary of the American Society of Missiology for 10 years) and about the need for on-going dialogue between the various traditions.

The articles are well footnoted, although this reader was not happy with having to flip constantly to the back of the book to check a footnote.

There is a complete bibliography of Shenk's writings as well as of the books cited in the text. Finally there is a helpful index at the end.

It is a book not only worth reading but studying. Hopefully the reader will find that as an enjoyable task as this reviewer did ■

BOOK



REVIEW

MISSIONS AND MONEY

Affluence as a Missionary Problem

by

Jonathan J Bonk

Published by Maryknoll, New York, Orbis Books, 2006

Jonathan Bonk, a missionary in Ethiopia for many years, is now the director of the Overseas Ministries Study Centre, the editor of the ***International Bulletin of Missionary Research*** and the editor of the internet-based ***Dictionary of African Christian Biography***.

It was his personal experiences in Ethiopia that prompted him to draft **Missions and Money: Affluence as a Missionary Problem** during a sabbatical year at Yale University.

In 1991, Orbis published it. Its reception was immediate. It was used as a textbook in many Protestant missionary training centres in North America. Because of its popularity, Orbis Press asked Bonk to revise and expand the text.

American Protestant focus

Bonk focusses primarily on the American Protestant missionaries and the particular problems they would have with "affluence" when serving in a poor country. However, the issues that he raises can equally apply to any missionary coming from or trained in the first world—the world of affluence and consumerism—or from a poor country.

In the first two sections of the book, *The Context of Western Missionary Affluence* and *Consequences of*

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His chapter in Part I on *The Rationale for Missionary Affluence* (economic arguments, domestic rationale, social justification and strategic validations) articulates a rationale used by many missionaries today, even missionaries coming from poor countries.

Indeed, the reasons offered suggest that there is still a need for them to be thought through, not only by missionaries but also by missionary agencies.

Relational

The chapter in Part II on *Relational Costs of Missionary Affluence* will speak to the experience of many missionaries. The author talks of: affluence and missionary insulation, affluence and missionary isolation, affluence and social gulf, economic disparity and the illusion of superiority, affluence and relational mistrust, and finally affluence, envy and hostility.

Bonk illustrates these points with concrete examples drawn from the experiences of missionaries and their reflections on them.

Consequential

In the next chapter, *Communicatory and Strategic Consequences of Missionary Affluence*, the author focusses on the difficulties/challenges that affluence brings to the communication of the Gospel: communicatory costs of missionary affluence and strategic costs of missionary affluence. Again this chapter is fleshed out with concrete experiences of missionaries of how affluence influenced their communication of the Gospel.

Ethical and theological

The third chapter in Part II is entitled: *Theological, Ethical and Biblical Considerations on Missionary Affluence*.

The author treats the theological and ethical considerations in just eight pages, but he addresses some profoundly important questions: is western missionary preoccupation with material things—"with a continual lust for more"—no more than an innocently acquired trait of their consumer culture?

The sin of greed

Is the sin of greed less deadly for affluent missionaries than for the poor among whom they live? Can a comfortably secure, independent missionary have any genuine sense of dependence upon God?

Bonk then goes on in the chapter to offer 50 pages of quotations from the Old and New Testaments that have to do with poverty and wealth. It quickly becomes clear that the Bible would be greatly reduced in size if all the teachings about wealth and poverty were removed from it.

The challenge of affluence

It is in Part III, *The Challenge of Western Missionary Affluence*, that the author has made a major revision.

In his first edition, Bonk made calls to bring missionary lifestyles and strategies into conformity with New Testament teaching on the Incarnation—as both theologically descriptive and strategically prescriptive, on the cross—as both symbol of the atonement and prescription for the only way of life promised to the followers of Jesus, and of weakness—as the channel of God's transforming power.

He believes that these are still necessary for the missionary. However, he suggests that what might be needed in missiology is a study of the "righteous rich" in the scriptures—offering indications how the affluent missionary might behave in a righteous way.

When looked at from this point of view, the Gospels would offer some interesting suggestions on how Jesus could serve as a model for the affluent missionary, eg, in the way that Jesus was willing to set aside his "agenda" to meet the immediate needs of the people in front of him. Bonk has several interesting pages on this idea of Jesus' "distractions."

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The book has been expanded by three articles written precisely for this edition, addressing the topic of the "righteous rich" suggested by Bonk. Christopher Wright, the Old Testament scholar, has written an excellent short article entitled: *The Righteous Rich in the Old Testament* (it almost sounds like an oxymoron, he suggests).

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The book is enriched by a useful bibliography and index. It is one that should be read by all missionaries, wherever they come from and be used in all missionary training centres ■

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