



THE MAGAZINE
FOR THE THEME YEAR 2016



REFORMATION
AND THE **ONE WORLD**

ONLINE EDITION OF THE MAGAZINE AND RESOURCES FOR THE THEME YEAR

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FOREWORD

BY HEINRICH BEDFORD-STROHM
AND PETRA BOSSE-HUBER

The Reformation is a citizen of the world. It cannot be otherwise. The main concern of Martin Luther and all the other reformers was to point towards Jesus Christ in fresh ways, which is why it was never an objective of their reformatory ideas to found a new church. Rather, at all times, they were concerned with the one holy catholic (i.e. universal) and apostolic church. This focus applies in the ecumenical context as much as it does in the geographical area and cultural sphere, and therefore the cultivation of provincial churchdoms is thus ruled out. Local ecclesial contexts will always refer to the "One Church in the One World". The One World is thus the relevant point of reference for the spiritual stimuli which the anniversary of the Reformation intends to give. In the same vein, it is also the germane point of reference for ethical input. This One World is endangered by injustices which literally cry out to high heaven: through wars, violence and the economic activity which is increasingly destroying the natural environment.

With the title: "The Reformation and the One World", this One World is the focus of the final year of the decade which precedes the anniversary of the Reformation in 2017.

That which, in retrospect, we term "Reformation" and sometimes (somewhat simplistically) only connect with events which took place in Wittenberg 500 years ago, has a global significance. Worldwide, more than 400 million people link their spiritual and religious existence to the reformatory events, which originated not only in Wittenberg, but also occurred in other European cities and regions.

This magazine examines the diverse effects of the Reformation, which continue across the globe today. Not only does it provide information about the diversity of Reformation churches throughout the world - and the related challenges - it also focuses on shared undertakings. One of these key responsibilities is to raise awareness concerning the global dimension of climate change, which destroys not only the biospheres and habitats of this

earth, but also people's lives. Joint action towards greater climate justice in the world is urgently required, and steps put in place to achieve this goal are needed. Reformation churches have a part to play in this, alongside other churches across the world, by following the call for climate justice issued by the 10th Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Busan.

The significance of the events which took place 500 years ago and their effects as a "world sensation" are not the only reasons why "Reformation and the One World" has been chosen as the theme of the Reformation-Decade: "Reformation and the One World" also trains the spotlight on today's need to display reformation by way of our actions and behaviour in the world. Listening to the Gospel in the Old and New Testaments, which is the precondition for any "reformation", leads to an examination of our own action. In this respect, the Reformation is not relegated to an event of the past, but rather, it is a continuing challenge for today.

In the same way that a single glance can only capture a fraction of the world, this magazine can only cover a limited spectrum of all which the topic "Reformation and the One World" has already triggered and will trigger. If the insights about the world which this magazine communicates prompt further and fresh understanding and lead to the formation of new perspectives, we would be delighted.

We would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to all the authors who have contributed to this publication, and to all those who have worked on the magazine. We hope that everyone who browses and digests this magazine will find it an enlightening and stimulating process, and be encouraged to engage with the manifold aspects of the "Reformation and the One World", in churches, in schools and wherever the opportunity arises.

Heinrich Bedford-Strohm

Petra Bosse-Huber



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THE REFORMATION AS A WORLD CITIZEN

Introduction **BY THIES GUNDLACH**

Our world has become smaller, nearer, closer. Perhaps a brief click on Google Earth provides the most accurate representation of our world as a “global village” (or “One World”). In the past, messages and goods took weeks, even months, to reach a different part of the world; yet nowadays, it is possible to reach Latin America within half a day. Today’s news is able to report all of the major events taking place in the world - and to do so simultaneously. In the same manner, environmental problems, which are generated in industrial nations, very quickly find their way into other countries. In this One World, life simultaneously takes place in some very dissimilar spheres at the same time: Many, for example, experience the conditions of the Middle Ages, whilst others live in hypermodern surroundings; there are people who live in extreme wealth and those who live in extreme poverty; some profit from the advantages of technological progress in medicine and mobility, whilst others are denied access to all of the above - and all of these lives are being led, all at the same time. This simultaneity means that the deep disjointedness of the One World is a daily experience and a shared challenge for us all.

“Reformation and the One World”, which is the theme of the final year of the decade prior to the anniversary of the Reformation in 2017, highlights the cosmopolitan nature of the Reformation as a world citizen (Martin Junge) in this global world. It is important that people gain an awareness of the

global dimension of the effects and responsibilities of the Reformation, before the many invitations and events, which are to take place in Germany (so often called the “Motherland of the Reformation”), become the centre of attention.

Reformation was - and is - an event which cannot be confined to a particular locality. Although a special impetus originated in the then university of Wittenberg and with its professors Martin Luther and Philipp Melancthon, other preceding, simultaneous and subsequent distinct reformatory movements also took place in different German and European localities and nations.

However, even if the oft-quoted statement, that it was the southern German Reformation which carried Luther’s insights into the world, is not completely accurate, one cannot conceive of a journey towards the Reformation as a “citizen of the world” without this step. Huldrych Zwingli in Zurich and John Calvin in Geneva were essential in making the Reformation a global sensation; and a worldwide propagation of Reformation thought cannot be understood without Thomas Müntzer and the left wing of the Reformation, without Menno Simons and the peace churches, without John Knox and the Scots, without John Wesley and the Methodists, and there are many other such examples. Furthermore, it is not only the churches that have their roots in Reformation times which contribute to the global diversity of Protestantism. On account of missionary activities and under the influence of their cultural contexts,



many independent churches unique in character have developed and are located not only in Africa and Asia, but also in Latin America. Even Pentecostal churches are expressing an interest in the heritage of the Reformation and in celebrating its anniversary. The “slightly different world church” pertaining to the belief system influenced by the Reformation was only ever present in a diversified, differentiated way. Therefore, the attempt to make the diversity of this world church visible in Wittenberg, five hundred years after its symbolic starting point (the date when Luther posted his theses in Wittenberg), is a signal not to take the fragmentation of the Reformation churches as their sole characteristic.

SHARED BASIS IN WORD AND DEED

In all its diversity, it is the One Word of God, as given to us in Holy Scripture and interpreted in the confessions of the Ancient Church, which forms the foundation of all the churches that have been shaped by the Reformation. It took a long time for two of the main theological currents of the Reformation times to find a theologically credible way by which to live in church fellowship despite existing differences; and this is contained in the Leuenberg Agreement of 1973. However, even visible diversity, inasmuch as it represents an essential insight of the Reformation, can be seen as enriching: As a consequence - and expression - of Reformation freedom, churches are aware of the “adiaphora”: these are matters that are allowed to remain diverse. The many church orders, diverse forms of services and numerous ethical evaluations remind us that, in general, Holy Scripture allows for several legitimate interpretations. With particular regard to the global dimension, it is advisable not to be rash in calling for the Church to take sides on issues of faith; which may have decisive consequences for the continuation of a church’s existence.

Alongside a focus on the Word of God, within the shared understanding of Reformation churches there is also a call to world responsibility and to world action. As a result of hearing the Word of God (“One Word”) and knowing about life in the “One World”, shared duties (“One Work”) evolve, and these should always be oriented towards the needs of the poor. Of course, the churches of the Reformation themselves reflect the disjointed nature of the One World and, in the thematic year of “The Reformation and the One World”, it is logical to take a self-critical look at colonial and mission history and their consequences. In recognition

of their responsibilities, the Reformation churches take on board social and diaconal projects, whether that be on a grand or on a small, ordinary scale. Each Reformation church in the world is not tasked with the same responsibility, as there are too many diverse contexts for this to be either possible or beneficial. Rather, the shared aspects of the tasks can be ascertained by submitting all action to a kind of “One-World-compatibility-testing” (Heinrich Bedford-Strohm). The arduous and often inconclusive negotiations surrounding issues relating to environmental protection and global warming show, for instance, that it would be preferable for all the churches which are influenced by the Reformation to call for responsible global action in this One World, with One Voice.

SPEAKING OF GOD

One of the tragedies of modernity is apparent in the fact that our ways of speaking about God are at crisis-point. For many people, the testimony of God has lost its power and credibility – and the success of the (neo-)Pentecostal movements reflects this crisis more than it conquers it. Have the Reformation churches settled for repeating old ways of thinking and speaking, instead of carrying them forward? How does our thinking and speaking about God need to be transformed so that people are moved by the biblical message? The anniversary of the Reformation in 2017 provides a good opportunity to explore such questions about God in the 21st century. Together, we can see, think, experience and recognise God in new ways, because he has looked at us afresh. This indeed is the deep desire behind the preparations for the anniversary of the Reformation in 2017. And this desire for God requires the wealth of insights gained by the churches shaped by the Reformation and all other churches; as it also necessitates contributions from all those who would seek after God and care for their neighbour in this One World.



DR THIES GUNDLACH,

Vice-President of the Church Office of the EKD in Hanover; Head of the Main Department II “Kirchliche Handlungsfelder und Bildung”/“Fields of Action in Church Ministry and Education”.

THE CHURCHES OF THE REFORMATION

Part of the Global Church of Jesus Christ **BY CORDELIA KOPSCH**

Reformation and One World". In this context, we in Germany think primarily of the many Lutheran, Reformed and United Churches all over the world, which often emerged from the missionary ministry of the churches in Europe (and North America). Their number is indeed impressive. In the Lutheran World Federation, there are 144 member churches with more than 70 million Christians from 79 nations. In the World Communion of Reformed Churches, there are 227 churches (both Reformed and United) with 80 million Christians from 108 nations. For many, this is an expression of the worldwide "success" of the Reformation. This view looks at the Reformation as a movement, which began with Luther in Germany and Calvin and Zwingli in Switzerland, and then spread across the whole world.

Lutheran, Reformed and United churches across the world, however, are no longer predominantly influenced by German or European traditions alone. In various languages and cultures, the theology of the Reformation has found diverse forms of expression. The churches abroad have continued to develop and now follow their own paths, for example in the area of missions and the fight for justice. Whenever there is a meeting between the churches which evolved from the Reformation and yet are located in different regions of the world, those involved find themselves enjoying a fellowship which spans the planet. They also find themselves engaging in discussions as to how the gospel of Jesus Christ can be effectively and adequately communicated and lived out today: How does climate change challenge the churches and how can climate justice be established? How can dialogue with other religions succeed and how can the voice of the Evangelical [i.e. Protestant] Churches be made audible within such discussions? How can Christians and churches live a life of integrity which is demonstrated both in their personal relationships and lifestyle, and also in the public sphere? As new reformatory impetus and stimuli from the churches of the global South come back to us, the Reformation will come alive in this day and age.



CORDELIA KOPSCH,

Pastor and Head of the EKD-Project "Diskurs Nachhaltige Entwicklung" (Dialogue on Sustainable Development) and Chair of the EKD's Advisory Commission for Worldwide Ecumenism.

At the World Missionary Conference of 1910 in Edinburgh, the hope was expressed that it would be possible to "christianise" the globe within a generation. At the time, people thought in Eurocentric ways and distinguished between the "Christian" and "non-Christian" world. The distinction was problematic at the time and is obsolete today.

SHIFT OF GRAVITY

More than 100 years later, there are indeed more Christians in many regions of the world than ever before. However, taking into consideration the growth of the world population, it is apparent that the proportion of Christians has remained the same, and stands at about a third of the population: While there were 600 million Christians in 1910, there were 2.18 billion in 2001; and yet, the world population increased during this time frame from 1.8 billion to 6.9 billion people. A fresh development has occurred in the distribution of Christians across the continents. In 1910, 93 % of Christians lived in either Europe, or North and South America, whereas in 2011, only 63 % of Christendom lived in these continents. The number of Christians has increased most dramatically in the African countries that are south of the Sahara and also in the Asian-Pacific-region. (In terms of percentages, Germany with about 58 million Christians hosts the second largest Christian population behind Russia; and it is the ninth largest Christian population in the world. In terms of numbers, however, there are already more Christians in Nigeria, for example, than there are in Germany.)

This development has been termed a "shift of gravity" – whereby the centre of gravity of Christendom has shifted to the global South. This is much more than a geographical change. In terms of theology, missions and its entire outward appearance, Christianity is increasingly shaped by Christians and churches from African and Asian contexts and is thus progressively becoming more of a non-Western religion – as it was in its origin. Europe is merely "one province in the worldwide Church of Jesus Christ" (Ernst Lange): Theologically speaking, this has always been the case, but

recognising and accepting this as a reality, within the framework of the ecumenical world, is for many not (yet) self-evident.

Furthermore, the change in numbers and distribution of Christians is not the only revolution on the map of global Christianity. The proportion of Pentecostal Christians (279 million – with the centre of gravity in Africa) and charismatic Christians (305 million – with the centre of gravity in the Asian-Pacific area) has skyrocketed, as too has the number of Christians influenced by the revival movement (“evangelicals”).

Given the overall picture, the churches of the Reformation find themselves to be a diminishing part of world Christendom. Often, they exist in a country alongside other “classic” Christian churches – e.g. Roman Catholic, Anglican and Orthodox – and increasingly find themselves next to churches and communities which are often Pentecostal or charismatic in nature and not associated with a particular denominational family. Many of these are unaware that, in their origins, they too were strongly influenced by Reformation traditions.

DIVERSITY AND ITS LIMITS

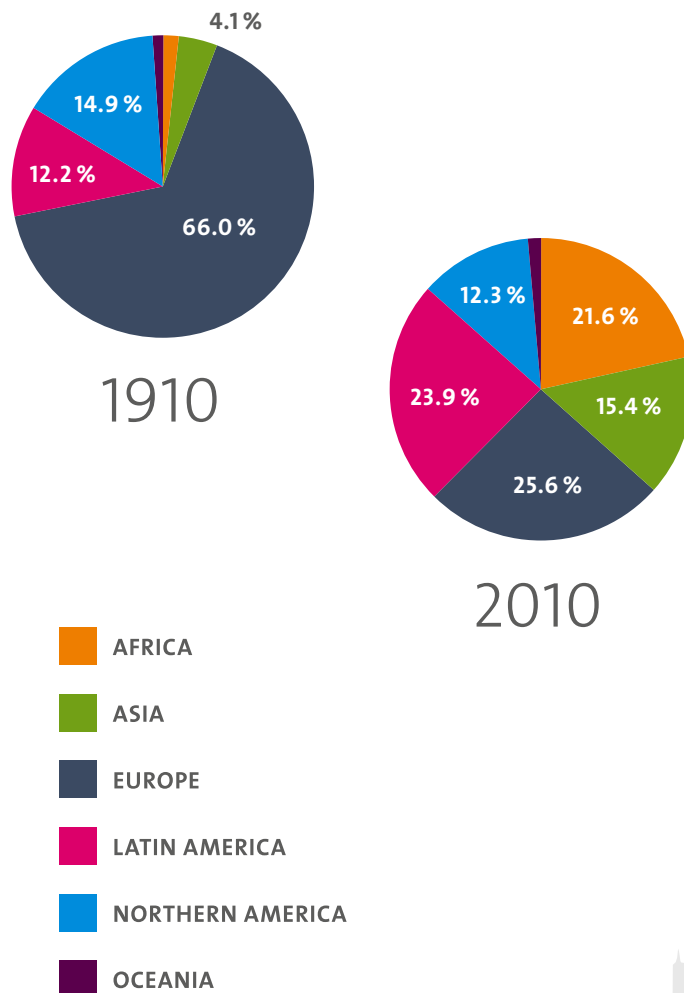
Today, World Christianity occurs in many diverse forms and is characterised by many different languages, cultures and regions. Therein lies a great strength, already observable at the very beginnings of Christianity, which “translates” the message of Jesus Christ into diverse contexts and enables it to become efficacious and significant for people across the entire inhabited world.

However, at the same time, it is necessary to think about the limits of diversity, commitment and (ecumenical) fellowship. The Reformed churches are involved in dialogue with many other churches and fellowships, for example, through partnerships or as part of the World Council of Churches.

Since there are increasing numbers of Christians of “diverse language and background” in Germany, the Reformation is literally returning to us in the form of people from other nations. Of the migrants who manage to reach Germany, there is (in many people’s estimation) a surprisingly high proportion of Christians (Hessischer Religionsmonitor 2010: 63%, globally 49%). Their combined congregations and groups display the diversity of world Christendom with Lutheran and Reformed, charismatic and Pentecostal Christians. How can we be Christians together with them? How can we be “Evangelical together” with them? These are questions that we, as well as our brothers and sisters across the world, need to explore.

CHRISTIANS BY CONTINENT, 1910 AND 2010

(Infographic: Todd M. Johnson and Kenneth R. Ross, Atlas of Global Christianity)





THE LEUENBERG AGREEMENT – A SUCCESS STORY

What Binds the Churches of the Reformation Together

BY MICHAEL BEINTKER

In March 1973, a significant ecumenical text was approved at a conference centre in Leuenberg near Basel: the “Leuenberg Agreement.” It did away with a division that had split Protestant Christianity in Europe ever since the Reformation. Through this Agreement, Lutheran, Reformed, and United churches, along with the closely-related pre-Reformation churches of the Waldensians and the Moravian Brethren established church communion by granting one another pulpit and table fellowship and affirming the desire to achieve the greatest possible commonality in their witness and service.

Within three years, 69 churches had signed the document. Today their number totals 107, including five Latin American churches with particularly close historical ties to the churches of Europe. In 1997, the Methodists of Europe were welcomed into the Leuenberg fellowship. The Agreement soon proved to be an “export article” appropriate for other regions of the world. Churches there have reached agreements comparable to the one at Leuenberg, as did the Lutheran, Reformed, and United churches of the United States with a “For-

mula of Agreement” in 1998 as well as the Lutheran and Reformed churches of the Middle East with an “Amman Declaration” in 2006.

The Leuenberg Agreement is rooted in the understanding expressed in article 7 of the Augsburg Confession of 1530: agreement on the right preaching of the gospel and the right administration of the sacraments is necessary and sufficient for the true unity of the church. In accordance with this understanding, the Agreement describes the shared understanding of the gospel as the message of God’s free grace and the resulting consensus made possible today with regard to preaching, baptism, and the Lord’s Supper. Differences concerning the presence of Christ in the Lord’s Supper which go back to the dispute between Luther and Zwingli are no longer considered to divide the church.

The churches who give their consent to the Leuenberg Agreement commit themselves at the same time to joint theological work in the form of so-called doctrinal conversations. These deal with doctrinal differences between participating churches – differences which continue to exist, but are no



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longer church-dividing. These conversations have left their specific mark on the growth and profile of the church fellowship created by the Leuenberg Agreement. At this level, church fellowship is experienced as a fellowship of learning and teaching. The results of these processes of learning and teaching are presented and decided upon in plenary assemblies that take place every six or seven years, most recently in 2012 in Florence.

THE PROTESTANT VOICE OF EUROPE

But church fellowship is much more than that: it results when people are confronted with the witness of the gospel in real life. Consequently, it is first and foremost a fellowship of worship. Lutheran, Reformed, Methodist und United Church members are thus bound together in worship, they join in fellowship around the table of the Lord, their ministers take turns preaching from one another's pulpits. This fellowship means cultivating and fostering common forms of worship with regard to liturgy and hymnody. Numerous projects have been

Church fellowship results when people are confronted with the witness of the gospel in real life.

developed in past years to encourage this: liturgical material for joint worship services was prepared, the CPCE hymn book "Colours of Grace" was put together and presented (2007), a much frequented internet portal on liturgy was established, and a Leuenberg Sunday was introduced.

It became clear after the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989 that the Protestant churches of Europe would have to cooperate more closely on an organizational level than they had been previously accustomed to. In 2003, what had initially been called the "Leuenberg Church Fellowship" became the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE). This name expresses the character of the CPCE as a forum of Protestant churches in Europe that seeks to make the "Protestant voice in Europe" audible, as called for by the plenary session of Belfast in 2001.

The Leuenberg Agreement itself says very little on the doctrine of the church. This issue was treated in great depth in the study "The Church of Jesus Christ" (1994), the most important text to emerge from the fellowship of the Leuenberg Agreement. This document discusses Protestant understandings of the church in the context of modern-day ecumenical relations.

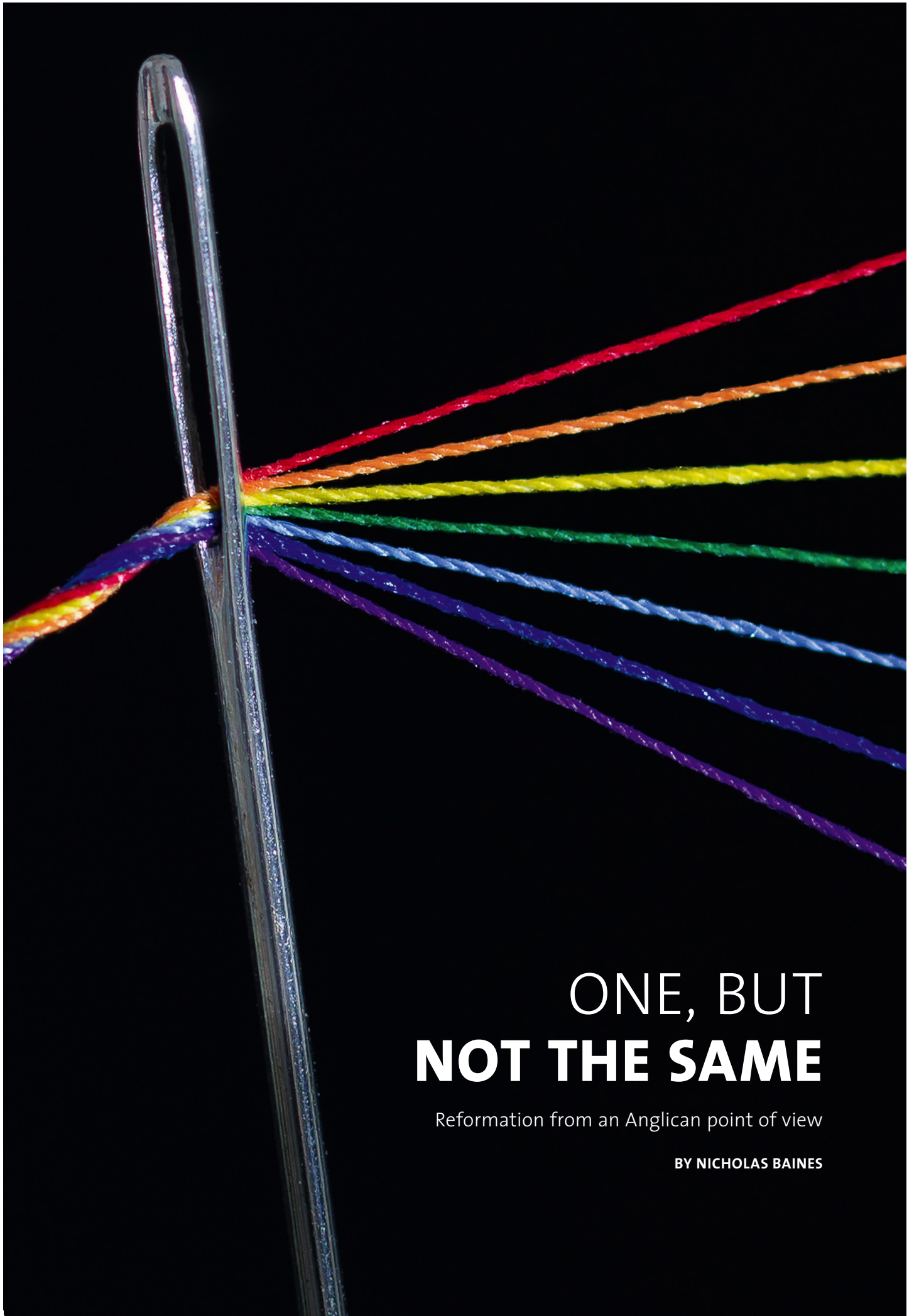
The study distinguishes between the foundation, the shape, and the mission of the church. It

thus corresponds with the fundamental Protestant distinction between the action of God and human action. The decisive statement is already made in the introduction itself: "The foundation of the church is God's action in Jesus Christ to save humankind. In this fundamental action God himself is the subject, and consequently the church is an object of faith. Since the church is a community of believers the shape of the church has taken various historical forms. The one church of faith (singular) is present in a hidden manner in churches (plural) shaped in different ways."

That means: The church stands under the gospel. It must keep its sights set on Jesus Christ and it only does justice to its mission if "it remains in Christ, the sole infallible instrument of salvation." Furthermore, the multiplicity of different Christian churches is not proof that something is lacking, but is rather evidence of abundance -- the one catholic, holy, and apostolic church exists hidden in the churches that we can actually experience. All have a share in it. It is for this reason that different churches can accept one another reciprocally as churches of Jesus Christ and need not refuse one another recognition as churches. Agreement on the understanding of the gospel and the proper administration of the sacraments as commissioned by Christ can thus lead to the declaration of church fellowship -- church fellowship as the organic interaction between legally independent churches, as also takes place within the fellowship of Orthodox churches, and not as a system with centralized structures.

The ecumenical model pursued by the churches of the Reformation is the model of a unity in reconciled diversity. The churches attain the goal of unity -- a unity that can always be experienced already now as a gift by God to the churches -- by allowing themselves to be sustained together by God's free grace and to search for a common understanding of the gospel precisely in this manner. That is how they become one: by allowing Christ to take shape in and among them and by allowing him to shape them.

It is no exaggeration today to describe the Leuenberg Agreement as the most successful ecumenical document of the twentieth century. Its forty years of history show that the ecumenical movement of Christian churches is by no means condemned to be stuck in old ruts and get nowhere, but can on the contrary continue to grow as a community of learning led by the gospel and the quest for its meaning.



ONE, BUT **NOT THE SAME**

Reformation from an Anglican point of view

BY NICHOLAS BAINES

I sometimes wonder if the Anglican Communion was designed to confuse the rest of the world church. The Reformation in Europe divided the continent between what became known as Protestantism and Roman Catholicism. So, in retrospect it sounds a bit like the English decided not to choose between the two churches; instead, the Church of England became a self-defined reformed Catholic Church - still Catholic, but reformed. The best of both worlds?

Well, ever since I agreed to be the Anglican co-chair of the Meissen Commission - the body that since 1988 has brought together the Church of England with the Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland - I have enjoyed trying to explain what sort of animal the Church of England is. On the European mainland there is essentially a binary way of understanding the Christian church: you are either Protestant or Catholic. But, in England this doesn't work: to be Anglican is to be both.

This is why the English sometimes get confused by the term 'Reformation' and need to be more precise - referring, for example, to 'the German Reformation'. England's Reformation was shaped by a king's political needs and by people who gave their life for the sake of the Bible and the need (or right) for people to be able to read it for themselves. Naturally, this created a drive for ordinary people to be able to read, and the Scriptures were what they were supposed to read. This would break the power of the Church to control the mysteries of God, and set people free to know the grace of God for themselves.

A CHURCH THAT TOLERATES FRACTURE

And this is what lies at the heart of the so-called Protestant Reformation in Europe five hundred years ago. The grace of God, effective by faith, transforming the life and death of the person and the world. Power was challenged and the Bible released.

Yet, this willingness to fracture the Church in one sense also created a church that tolerates fracture - often precisely over the question of how to read the Bible. It is impossible to know just how many Protestant denominations now exist worldwide. Individuals feel able to set up their own 'ecclesial communities' as the Roman Catholic Church has referred to churches of the Reformation such as the Church of England. The Reformation itself was never monochrome: Calvin, Zwingli, Luther and many others were clear about what divided them, and patience with one another was not a characteristic in plentiful evidence in either the sixteenth century or now.

So, what is there to say about Protestantism as it now exists around the world. Well, it offers the world a spectrum of theological and ecclesiological

cultures and emphases. It allows for a menu of expressions of worship, biblical focus and interpretation, prophetic challenge in the public square, and engagement with social and political order in every context.

The most interesting development here in the last few years has been the decision by the World Lutheran Federation to now call itself a 'Communion' - as in the worldwide Anglican Communion. There is clearly a significant difference between a federation (which has to do with association and polity) and a communion (which has to do with theology and ecclesiological identity). Perhaps this is evidence that the tendency of churches in history to fragment along lines of ever-thinner theological difference is recognised to be destructive to Christian witness in an increasingly hostile world. (It is worth noting also that the Communion of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE) is actually described in English as a 'communion'.)

It is here that both the challenge and the opportunity lies for the churches in Europe particularly. When I agreed in 2006 to be the Anglican co-chair of the Meissen Commission, I did so on the understanding that we should focus our joint attention on our common missional agenda in Europe. For it is in uniting our strength in this common mission - to remind Europe of its Christian origins and character, and to engage with our diverse societies at every level for the sake of (what in England we call) "the common good" - that our future unity lies.

Every clergyperson in the Church of England promises before the bishop to 'proclaim [the good news of Jesus Christ] afresh in each generation'. Our common ecumenical task is to support each other in doing this - faithfully, creatively, boldly and with enthusiasm.



RT REVD NICHOLAS BAINES,

Bishop of Leeds and Co-Chair of the Meissen Commission of the EKD and the Church of England.

The grace of God, effective by faith, transforming the life and death of the person and the world. Power was challenged and the Bible released.



KABUL, AFGHANISTAN, 24TH FEBRUARY 2013, a photographer films the body of an insurgent who has been shot

BEYOND THE SPECTACLE

A Review of Protestant Ethics **BY ALF CHRISTOPHERSEN**

Images,
like language,
can be violent.

In his *Society of the Spectacle*, the philosopher Guy Debord published in 1967 a critique of capitalism that became a central point of reference for the then French student movement. Reality is replaced, Debord asserts, by the “well-staged spectacle”, which is itself media-driven; and the claim to freedom disappears behind the mechanisms of the propaganda-controlled consumer world. Such militant rhetoric did not go unchallenged. The essayist Susan Sontag, for example, attacked the theory of the spectacle and declared it to be a fantasy in her reflections entitled “Regarding the Pain of Others” (2003). Ultimately, the writer and political activist, who was influenced by Jacob Taubes and Paul Tillich - she died in 2004 - deemed it to be a “breath-taking provincialism”. The paper regards the theory of the spectacle as one which “universalises the viewing habits of a small, educated population living in the rich part of the world, where news has

been converted into entertainment” (p.110). Whoever thinks that the attitude of the spectator is dominant, but is insensitive to the fact that real experiences of suffering are taking place in the world, fails to recognise reality. Instead, it is of the utmost importance to prevent reality being distorted by the media. Indifference is a luxury which the majority of the population cannot afford. In her collection of essays “On Photography” (1977), Susan Sontag critically raised the question as to how to deal with the omnipresent flood of images which seems to pervade every corner of daily life. If an individual is not to become numb, an “ethics of seeing” needs to be developed, which could help us discern the reality behind the visual image. Sontag purposefully looked at images of war and, in these, could only vaguely perceive the rapid visual and iconographic arms race of recent years. Images, like language, can be violent, and reveal their strength in how they

burn into people's subconscious minds. They bring the global horror of terror into every living-room. They leap over the communication difficulties experienced by language with seeming effortlessness. They play on their interpretive openness. Decapitations, mutilations and the destruction of cultural landscapes are frequently staged by all the means available to pop culture. An aesthetics of killing is taking centre-stage and pushing aside all attempts, even educational attempts, to establish a sensitive way of handling the visual image.

However, it is not only the ubiquitous presence of war and violence, of delight in destruction and suffering through destruction which invites intense ethical reflection. There are many scenes of so-called applied ethics or concrete ethics, such as matters of surveillance or the sensitive relationship between ecology and technology, which gain new relevance in these times of accelerated social change and transformation induced by globalisation. From a specifically theological viewpoint, it is important to reflect in ecumenical agreement how Christian tradition relates with these present controversies. What are the consequences for the critical concepts of person, value, dignity, and how do they apply to the notions of the individual, community, conscience and justice?

CONTROVERSY IS UNAVOIDABLE

Depending on their historical, political, cultural and social circumstances and environment, the world religions have different perceptions concerning the tension-filled state of these ethical challenges. Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Taoism and the Baha'i-Religion all have in common that they extend their influence beyond the narrow scope of their faith into the political sphere, each faith in its own way. In so doing, controversy is unavoidable, as normative standards clash in society's struggle to give structure to life. Dependent on their degree of exclusivity and absoluteness, their claims are often anything but compatible. In 1993, Hans Küng was essentially responsible for the publication of the "Declaration Toward a Global Ethic". For some, this was the first breakthrough on the long road to a non-violent, socially-just, global society, which was underpinned by peace among the religions. For others, it was the epitome of a combination of religious creeds resulting in triviality. Ethos, which is inclusive of even non-religious, secular people, transcends world religions.

This sends us back to examine the reflective prowess of Protestantism. Protestantism thrives on its diversity and culture of constructive debate and communicative ability, which is both a strength and a weakness: on the one hand, with tradition constantly under close scrutiny, moral and ethical standpoints which were once believed to be secure and

permanently valid, become modified. This is clearly visible, for example, in the debates around assisted suicide and reproductive medicine. On the other hand, it is right to call for establishing reliable structures and institutions - as well as credible concepts - amongst the endless controversies. Social interaction is required. In this, the problem-solving competence of diverse religious communities is tested as they find a way to communicate in a non-violent manner. But how does one proceed, if the very concept of non-violent communication is negated? It is then that we come into the terrain of state legislation. If religious protagonists aspire to be fit for modernity, they have to accept the legal order of the state without blocking the internal dynamics of political action by making excessive moral claims. Those who identify God's will with governmental action and propagate the belief that the political sphere and religious and moral demands are inextricably intertwined, are incapable of meeting the demands of pluralist-secular societies.

CONSTANTLY EXPOSING ONESELF TO RISK

From the perspective of future eschatological consummation, all insight, even that which is intelligent, remains fragmentary. It is of central importance to be aware that one's own existence is not deficient but is provisional and imperfect, and to regard it as an opportunity to make good use of the time that is given. Adopting a Protestant approach however, does not avoid the risk of exposing oneself, time and time again, to the possibility of being mistaken and of not having the ultimate truth at one's disposal when responding to elementary ethical questions. Thus, there is an authentic achievement in having a full awareness of the constructive character of one's own heritage and tradition, and in finding existentially convincing answers to current areas of conflict, in such a way that the possibility of revising a response remains within reach. The more global the perspective, the more apparent is the relativity of one's own standpoint. Nevertheless, the claim upheld in Protestantism that the notion of freedom and redemption cannot be limited to one's own context, has a universal application. It becomes an eminently critical question when we examine the living conditions prevalent in the "One World", which are all too often determined and shaped by a small fraction of society at the expense of others.



SUSAN SONTAG,
Berlin, 1993

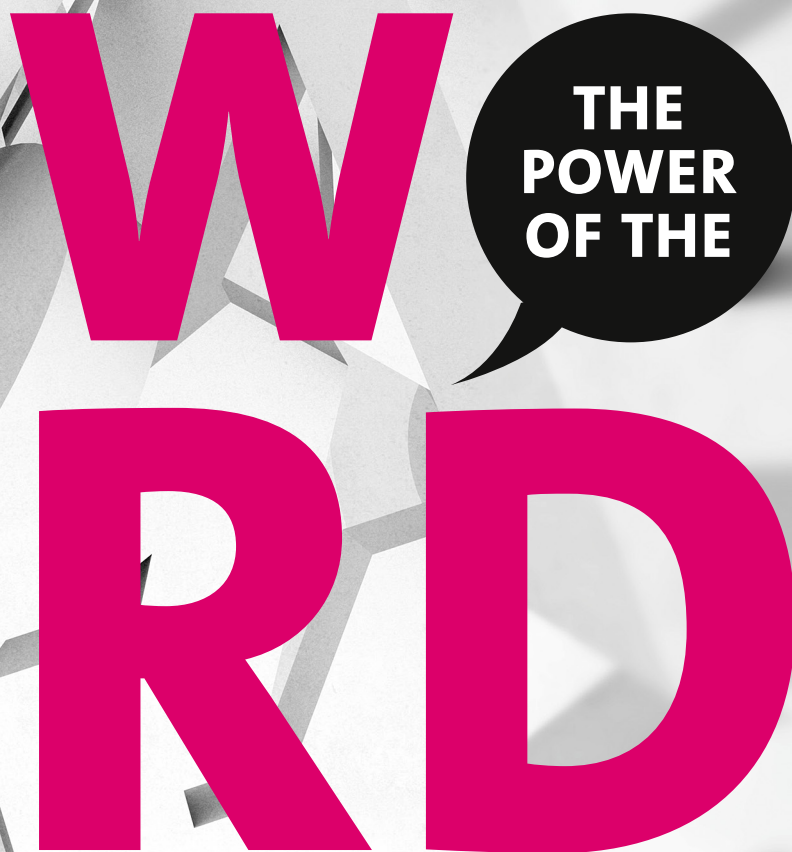


PD DR ALF CHRISTOFFERSEN,
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The “Power of the Word” is a catchphrase of the Renaissance. It refers to the efficacy of the message of Holy Scripture which, liberated from the constrictive authority of Church and tradition, directly speaks to the individual’s heart. This emancipatory process was initiated through the circulation of the Bible in its original languages by humanists such as Erasmus of Rotterdam. Even before the circulation of the Bible in the ancient languages through Renaissance scholars and before its translation into German by Martin Luther, the Bible was in circulation in Latin as well as in several common languages. However, the Church had never before so clearly defined itself as a “Church of the Bible”, as the Protestant faith communities did at this point in time.

Initially, Luther translated Erasmus’ Greek New Testament into German and it was published in a printed form in 1522. The “Luther translation” was reviewed by him and, since then, has been revised several hundred times. It was not the first Bible translation into German, and yet this translation, undertaken by a powerfully eloquent Bible theologian, outshone all previous translations.

The significance of the then recently invented printing press for the entire Western cultural sphere and their colonies cannot be overestimated, since it was the printed book which made it possible for the Bible to become the culture-forming instrument of many societies, both within and outside Europe. The availability of editions of the Bible in native languages led to a “Copernican revolution” with regard to spirituality, language and cultural self-awareness. Numerous contemporary sources testify to how much everyday language usage, everyday life and faith were influenced by the Bible. The connection between the growing literacy of lay people, Protestant spirituality and the reading



WORD

THE
POWER
OF THE

The Significance of the Reformation
for Languages and Societies

BY ALEXANDER M. SCHWEITZER

of the Bible is obvious. As the Reformation movement spread, more translations were produced, including, amongst others, several into Czech, which were undertaken by the Hussites, and several translations into French, which were undertaken during the course of the Reformation in France as well as in French-speaking Switzerland by John Calvin.

WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE? A CASE STUDY

Let us, however, direct our gaze beyond Europe and away from the historical contemplation of the Reformation, and towards a concrete example. A participant at the Third Latin American Congress on Evangelism in Ecuador remembers: “One of the most important aspects of this congress was the participation of sisters and brothers who originate from the indigenous groups; these women and men turned this rather boring assembly upside down with their powerful, prophetic message. Their direct, simple language and style were much more convincing than the carefully crafted talks of our academic colleagues. Participants at the congress asked: Who are these people, where do they come from? Most of them were Quechua hailing from Bolivia, Peru and Ecuador.”

LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

The Quechua language appeared about two thousand years ago in what is today known as Central Peru. From there, it spread and became the predominant language over and above other local languages. In the middle of the 14th century, Quechua-speaking Incas occupied the region. When the Spanish arrived in 1532, they found Quechua to be the lingua franca of the Inca Empire. Today, the Quechua language, along with its dialects, covers the region which stretches from the south of Colombia, incorporates Ecuador, Peru, northern Chile and Bolivia, and which extends all the way to northern Argentina. It is spoken by about ten million people and one of the main reasons for this is its use by the Church.

BIBLE TRANSLATION

The Spanish conquistadors insisted that the indigenous people learn Spanish. From the beginning, however, the Church insisted on the language of the people. As a consequence, grammar books and dictionaries were written and, in the 16th and 17th centuries, translations of numerous Bible passages were produced. In the 1890s, the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistle to the Romans were published under the direction of the American

Bible Society. In 1921, the entire New Testament was available in Quechua. In addition, the arrival of new missionaries after the Second World War, the establishment of Bible Societies and the Second Vatican Council of the Catholic Church, provided more impetus and stimuli for Bible translations in the region: the Old Testament was translated predominantly by Protestants and liturgical versions of texts were pre-eminently produced by Catholics.

SELF-AWARENESS, HOPE, VALUES

Language plays a central role in the struggle for survival of minority groups; it acts as a screen on which to project their view of reality and to express their cultural identity. For a long time, the Quechua were disdainfully referred to as Indians and for centuries were told that Quechua was not a proper language, or at least that it was not equal to Spanish. “Hablar en cristiano” means “speaking Spanish”. The Quechua Bible is, for the Quechua, evidence of the value and status of their language, their culture and their people.

The “Good News” begins, for the Quechua, on the first few pages of the Bible. Reading that humans were made in the image of God leads to a new self-image and a new understanding of dignity, gender relations and responsibility for stewarding creation. From here, a creation theology develops which ties in with the view amongst the indigenous peoples of the Andes that there is an all-embracing sacredness to the world in which they live. The Quechua identify themselves as runa (“human being”, “humans of the Andes”). The translation “and the Word became runa” (John 1:14) confers on the incarnation the meaning of divine solidarity and identification, which goes further than the meaning which the Spanish translation is able to capture: “and the World became flesh”.

The Quechua case study represents the innumerable contexts in which the Bible, read in the language of the people, provides identity, meaning and hope; being the element of identification, a socio-cultural catalyst and a mirror which reflects the life of both the individual and the community. With regard to spirituality, language and cultural self-awareness, the above mentioned “Copernican revolution” continues to take place today wherever there are people and communities who hold in their hand a Bible written in their native language. That the impetus for this stemmed from the Reformation and has far-reaching consequences for the Church of Jesus Christ, in all its confessional forms, is beyond dispute.

The “Luther translation” of the Bible outshone all previous translations.



**PROF
ALEXANDER M. SCHWEITZER,**
Director of the Department Bible
Translation of the United Bible
Societies.



& UNIVERSITY REFORMATION

No University - No Reformation with an International Impact

BY THOMAS KAUFMANN

Universities are – along with the papacy – the longest-lived institutions of Latin Europe. Their original social setting was that of urban, guild-like corporations of masters and scholars which emerged in the twelfth century for the purpose of imparting higher education. Endowed with privileges initially bestowed upon them by the Emperor and later by the Pope, they granted academic degrees of universal validity that enabled their graduates to assume influential positions in ecclesiastical or state administrations. From the eleventh century onwards, public life increasingly became the domain of “experts” and there was a growing need to back up one’s claims or proposals with scientific and legal arguments. This made university-trained scholars indispensable in many ways. The rise of universities was thus closely connected with the increasing diversification and sophistication of late medieval society.

MONK, PREACHER, PROFESSOR

The university was also the primary social and historical setting of the Reformation. The thesis “no university, no Reformation” remains unchallenged to this day because of its obvious plausibility: Luther was a professor of theology in Wittenberg, appointed to this task by his order; his theses on indulgences that would trigger the conflict with Rome – the so-called “ninety-five theses” – were drafted for an academic disputation; the support provided by his university colleagues was just as important for Luther’s “stepping forth” as was his

relationship to friends in the monastery. As Luther himself observed retrospectively by invoking Augustine, he considered himself one of those who make “progress” not “all of a sudden,” but in “tribulation” and “disputation,” “while writing and teaching.” He thus moved forward intellectually through painstaking academic work and instruction. Whatever elements of truth might be in the “ivory tower experience” – what matters is that Luther arrived at

Although Luther also interpreted the bible for the pulpit he did so primarily for the lecture hall

his insight in the course of his day-to-day occupation as a university professor preparing his exegetical lectures. Although Luther also interpreted the Bible for the pulpit, he did so primarily for the lecture hall. His early lectures are the mirror of a theology professor groping his way forward and coming into his own, seeking to keep abreast with the latest scholarship of his time, taking the use of the exegetical and philological tools of humanism for granted, and thoroughly consulting the medieval and patristic commentaries at his disposal. Luther was an irreproachable monk, a dedicated preacher – but also and above all: a conscientious professor.

It was crucial for the further development and momentum of the Reformation that Luther and his colleagues first debated their theological discoveries among their students before addressing a

wider public by means of the printed press. The students who suddenly flooded Wittenberg in growing numbers after the Leipzig disputation and mightily stirred up this sleepy princely seat and university town “at the edge of civilization” proved to be mobile and quarrelsome agents. They roved across the countryside and disrupted sermons; they stole from traveling book peddlers on their way to Wittenberg numerous copies of theses against Luther that had been drafted by Johannes Tetzel and Conrad Wimpina and they burned these on the market square; they harassed Eck wherever they could find him; they carried Reformation pamphlets from one town to another and distributed them even further; they wrote down Luther’s sermons during worship and sold the manuscripts to printers eager for a profit; after Luther burned the papal bull that had threatened him with excommunication, they got new fires started; they dumped one print run of the excommunication bull into the Gera River in Erfurt. This “Reformation of the students” was the earliest of all Reformations, much earlier than the ones that were to follow – the Reformation of the cities, of the peasants, of the territorial princes, of the knights, etc. – and which taken together constitute that unique combination of events which we can rightly continue to describe as the Reformation.

LEARNED = LED ASTRAY?

The fact that the Reformation emerged from the university was significant in almost every respect, for example with regard to the conceptual, cultural and discursive evolution of Reformation theological thought, but also with regard to the close affinity to the cultural practices of reading, writing, and especially printing. But the rootedness of the Reformation in the university was also crucially significant on account of the close connection between teachers and their students. The latter were quicker to draw conclusions and take appropriate action than Luther would have liked. His followers Franz Günther and Thomas Müntzer stoked up conflicts and stepped up pressure as agents provocateurs in the Magdeburg exclave of Jüterbog. The unruly spirits that Luther cited and which later ignored his commands were first and above all student spirits.

During the riotous and revolutionary phase of the Wittenberg Reformation, between the summer of 1521 and February 1522, while “doctor Martinus” was sojourning on the Wartburg, it seemed doubtful whether the close connection between university and Reformation would last long. Spirit-driv-

en prophets who found a sympathetic following among students fundamentally questioned the value of academic, learned scholarship. The widespread adage “the learned, led astray” (*Die Gelehrten, die Verkehrten*) also became popular in Reformation circles. The twofold doctor of theology and law, Karlstadt, donned the gray garb of a peasant and had people call him “brother Andrew”; one could not have found a more clear expression of the transformation of discredited scholarship into a holy simplicity in direct contact with the divine spirit and capable of comprehending the true and undisguised sense of scripture.

Luther and the faithful schoolman and ingenious academic organizer at his side, Philip Melancthon, had to invest considerable effort in calming these mighty waves, thus continuing the humanistic reform of the university begun in the years 1517/18 and making of it a university of the Reformation. In it, the biblical languages and the exegesis of Holy Scripture were given clear priority; the church fathers also became the subject of regular study; the conferral of degrees was restored, for the church of the evangelical movement was going to need doctors; the canon of humanism was rounded off in the faculty of arts; Aristotle was not robbed of his significance. The Latin language retained its central status – an important precondition for the rapid internationalization of the Wittenberg student body, as enrollees soon converged from many different European countries, eager to soak up the “true doctrine” pouring forth from the pure source at the “white mountain,” the *Leukorea*.

Without the university, the Reformation could scarcely have become a European event. Wherever the Reformation carried the day, universities were reformed or were founded from scratch, for example in Marburg in 1527, or in Geneva in 1559, with a wider impact of unforeseeable dimensions. In the history of Protestantism, universities and academic theology have always been sources of an “unrest” that has spurred the church on – to a much greater extent than in Catholicism, which had its teaching office (*magisterium*). As we commemorate the Reformation jubilee, it is fitting that we become aware of the extent to which the churches that issued from the Reformation are indebted to the university as a cultural point of reference. This is not the worst service we could render our churches, which in the midst of zealous activity all too often fall prey to anti-intellectual and anti-theological fervour.



**PORTRAIT OF
PHILIP MELANCTHON**

woodcut, 1561,
by Lucas Cranach the Younger



**PROF DR
THOMAS KAUFMANN,**

Professor of Church History
(Reformation Era and Modern
Church History) at the University
of Göttingen and the Chairman
of the Verein für Reformations-
geschichte (Society for
Reformation History)



BANGLADESCH, Dalit girls doing their homework.

MISSION/EDUCATION **EMPOWERMENT**

How Protestant Mission contributes to an Awareness of our One World

BY CHRISTOPH ANDERS

The churches that emerged from the Reformation did not come into the world equipped with a thorough awareness of belonging to a Christian body that encompassed the entire world or with knowledge of the interconnectedness of this one world.

The actors at the centres of the Reformation sought to renew the existing church and fight “paganism” within their own ranks through religious and general education. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, while epoch-making conquests were taking place in the Americas and Catholic Christendom was being exported to the colonies, Protestants in Europe were busy securing territorial boundaries on the one hand and drawing doctrinal boundaries on the other. The up-and-coming Protestant world powers of England and Holland showed no interest in organized mission in their colonies. Yet it remained inconceivable to develop “indigenous” churches without the guarantees and the support provided by a pious magistrate.

In Germany, with the founding of the “Francke Foundations” (Franckesche Stiftungen) by A. H.

Francke in Halle in 1695, a charitable and missionary project of enormous historical impact emerged. Seeing itself as “work for the kingdom of God,” it focused its attention on people in need. The founding of orphanages and schools for the poor constituted the point of departure of this charitable educational establishment, the impact of which was soon felt in Germany, Europe and beyond.

The ideas it spread were picked up by the Moravian Church (Herrnhuter Brüdergemeine) in particular. Under the leadership of Count Zinzendorf, it sent its first missionaries to African slaves in the Caribbean from 1732 onwards, and later to other regions of the world. The development of an international network of Moravian churches was often accompanied by the founding of schools.

After the creation of the “Danish(-English) Halle Mission,” the missionaries Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg and Heinrich Plütschau were sent by the Danish king to the colonial outpost of Tranquebar in south-eastern India in 1706, with Halle playing a crucial leadership role. The defining element of this pioneering Protestant undertaking was the found-

ing of schools aimed particularly at those sectors of the population that were excluded from Indian society. There were schools for boys – and girls! – from lower castes, “integration schools” with joint instruction for Tamil and European children, as well as schools for poor and orphaned children.

Religious and secular literacy programmes were carried out with the purpose of making the image of God discernible amid the “heathen.” There were, however, distressing examples of just the opposite, as in the case of boarding schools in Canada in which children of First Nation People were deliberately uprooted from their communities in order to expose them to the influence of western culture under the leadership of missionaries and church workers.

NEW KNOWLEDGE ABOUT RELIGIONS AND CULTURES

The crucial importance given to Scripture led to intensive study of foreign languages. Missionaries were eager to communicate directly with those they met in the mission field, not least in order to convince them better. Dictionaries and grammars made it possible to translate the Bible into their languages. This is just one of the areas in which missionaries sought the support of natives, who were trained so that they could later proclaim the gospel on their own. Today we recognize more clearly the significant contribution made by these for the most part anonymous “helpers” in communicating the gospel.

Ziegenbalg and his successors put great effort into understanding the religious and cultural make-up of these societies by meeting and corresponding intensely with Tamil scholars. They recorded their newly-gained insights in comprehensive travel accounts and activity reports, treatises on foreign religions, people, animals and plants. These texts spread throughout the networks of missionary societies and were printed in their publications, acquainting a broad audience at home with new knowledge about religions and cultures.

Even though the presumed superiority of Christianity in its European/North Atlantic manifestation was never called into question, knowledge of other religions led to a relativization of one’s own Christian standpoint. Europeans could no longer ignore the existence of sophisticated religious and cultural systems, especially in Asia, which did not simply collapse upon contact with Christian mission and western culture.

The more missionaries advanced into remote regions in the course of further waves of European/North Atlantic expansion, the more poignantly they became aware that the people of entire continents had not yet heard of Jesus Christ. Things could not remain this way. This insight found expression in the – Protestant! – World Missionary Conference held

in Edinburgh in 1910 and in its proclaimed goal: the “evangelization of the world in this generation.” Mission was now conceived as boundless world mission.

HAVING ONE’S OWN PERSPECTIVE ON THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS

In view of the challenges which Protestant missions faced in “the field,” there were calls to close ranks when confronting the outside world and facing “others.” This was the beginning of the modern ecumenical movement. Its fundamental convictions can be summarized today as the following:

We offer the Good News of Jesus Christ to all peoples, but that does not mean we withhold love and respect from people of other faiths. Ecumenical efforts to achieve visible unity cannot be crowned with success if we do not accept differences among Christians. Assuming responsibility for the world by pursuing justice, peace, and the integrity of creation constitutes an integral part of the witness and service of the church.

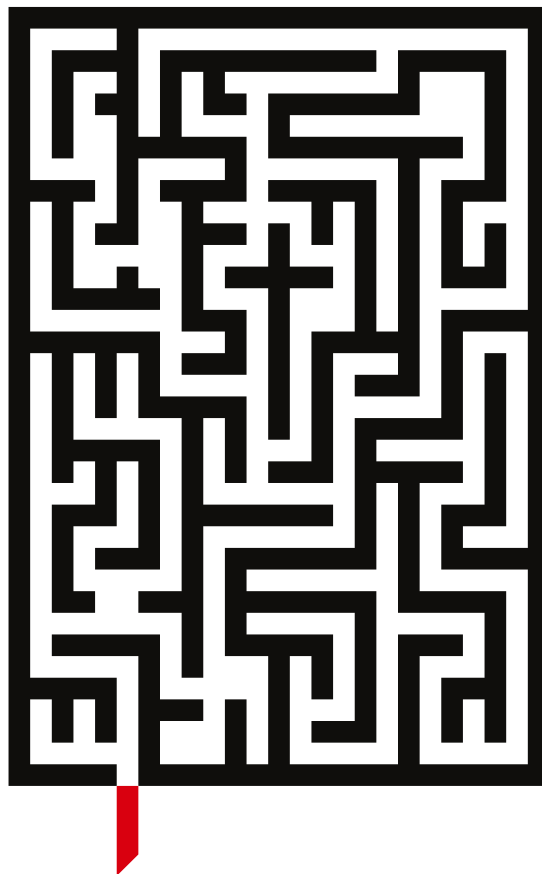
Educational programmes tie in with these goals in multiple ways. In India, for example, the Centre for Dalit/ Subaltern Studies (CDS) carries out necessary church lobbying work on behalf of the much-discriminated outcast group of the Dalits. In recent years, a complete Dalit commentary of the Bible has been published with the support of the Association of Protestant Churches and Missions in Germany (Evangelisches Missionswerk in Deutschland = EMW). It enables Christians of Dalit background to read the Old and the New Testaments from their very own perspective in a new, liberating manner. These commentaries contribute decisively to empowerment, for deeply entrenched caste antagonisms can also be found in Indian churches, and the Dalit, when they experience the connection between the liberating biblical message and their own lives, are strengthened in their struggle against oppression.

Partnerships between congregations and churches serve as testing grounds for alternative models of ecumenical, intercultural, and interreligious learning. Trips organized for the purpose of meeting people and exchange programmes broaden horizons; scholarships and educational grants form an integral part of day-to-day relationships between churches. Of course, this does not mean that existing imbalances in power are automatically done away with. Processes of mutual acceptance often entail risks. And yet: as an important family that forms part of worldwide Christianity, Protestant churches will continue focusing on education in the future and will make transformative contributions to peaceful and sustainable coexistence in this one world of ours.

We offer the Good News of Jesus Christ to all peoples, but that does not mean we withhold love and respect from people of other faiths.



CHRISTOPH ANDERS,
Pastor and Director of the
Association of Protestant
Churches and Missions in
Germany (EMW).



BIBLE **RISK FACTORS**

Information and Hermeneutics versus Fundamentalism

BY REINHARD HEMPELMANN

Diverse reformatory movements have contributed both to the Bible reaching the hands of Christians and also to it becoming the standard of Christian doctrine and church practice.

Within the context of religious and ideological pluralism and the simultaneous increase in the number of people who are unaffiliated to any particular denomination or religion, Christian churches are having to deal with the escalating “Bible vanishing sickness of modernity” (Gerhard Ebeling), which labels the Bible the “Bestseller without readers”. At the same time, the Bible is increasingly used as a standard of faith to which we can refer as a reference book, in which everything is equally important and valid and indisputable. Thus, a two-fold task lies before us: On the one hand, the Bible is to be given room as an indispensable resource for the forming of Christian identity. On the other

hand, the authority of the Bible should not be confused with restrictive legalism: the acceptance of the guidance given by the Bible should not be mistaken for Biblical fundamentalism.

THE BIBLE BOTH UNITES AND DIVIDES

It is accurate to say that the history of Christianity is the history of how the Bible has been interpreted. The diverse interpretations and forms of the Christian tradition display the wealth of the Bible’s reception history. At the same time, the vast diversity of denominations, churches and Christian communities is also indicative that there are tensions and controversies. With the same Bible in different hands, the ordination of women is both justified and rejected. With reference to the Holy Scriptures, a certain constitution of the church is both called for and criticised as “unbiblical”. Invoking the Bible, different arguments are made on the subject of ho-

mosexuality. The canon of Holy Scripture seems to allow for a diversity of interpretive approaches. The Bible is thus not only the shared foundation of all Christian churches and the central reference point for all ecumenical processes of communication and potential agreement, it is also a bone of contention. It both unites Christians and divides them. Across all denominations, Biblical fundamentalism is possibly the “greatest schism of the present age” (Gerd Theißen). In Catholicism, it manifests itself as backward-looking traditionalism. In Protestantism, it fights historical biblical research and the theory of evolution ... and predominately articulates Christian identity by way of dissociation from and exclusion of others.

CENTRAL DOCUMENT OF FAITH

Can the controversy about the interpretation of the Bible be brought to an end by including the Bible, as it were, into the creed, saying: “We believe in the Bible as the Word of God, given by God, ‘inerrant’ and ‘infallible’”? Can questions of authority and power be answered in this way without lengthy discussion processes? Numerous proponents of the literal interpretation of Holy Scripture think it can. They believe that their declared belief in the Bible can bring the controversy to an end. This, in my opinion, is inaccurate. The disagreement over the true interpretation will not be concluded by the assertion of its “absolute infallibility”. Even groups and educational institutions shaped by biblicism harbour different and contradictory views with regard to the understanding of Scripture. This is apparent in the debates concerning the ordination of women, creation and evolution, the relationship between faith and healing or the ultimate question as to what Christians hope for. What does an understanding of Scripture look like, whereby the freedom and the bonds of a Christian’s relationship with Scripture are taken into account in equal measure?

According to Protestant understanding, the testimony of the Bible is foundational for church action and doctrine. Scripture is the central, original message and document of faith, the authoritative testimony of the “free grace of God to all people”. Part of the renewal and reform of the Church, through the spirit of Christ, has involved a new way of listening to the testimony of Scripture. This is why the reformers emphasise Scripture as the sole and exclusive source for the proclamation of the Gospel (sola scriptura, Scripture alone). Whenever Christians, who have been shaped by the conservative evangelical and Pentecostal/charismatic movements, highlight that all expressions of church life,

Christian witness and church ministry have to be subject to the authority of Holy Scripture, they are advocating an originally Protestant concern. The Bible’s capability to provide guidance is not something over which we can exercise control. God’s healing presence in his word is only available in broken forms. Neither in the creeds of the Reformation, nor those of the early Church, is the Bible an object of salvific faith. In the Bible, God allows people to testify of him. He speaks through the faulty grammar of human language. The word of God is neither verifiable nor visible. The divine Word hides within the inadequate human word and yet, allows itself to be found therein. Whenever such tensions are negated, certainty becomes a false security.

In the slums of Manila, the Bible is read and received differently from the way in which it is in the service at the beginning of an EKD-Synod. Part of the legitimate diversity in dealing with the Bible is the existence of numerous “engaged interpretations” (Gerd Theißen). The widening of historical biblical interpretation, through an endeavour to include interpretations based on spirituality, depth psychology and liberation theology, amongst others, serves to remind us of aspects which have been neglected and makes us conscious that every interpretation of the Bible is also determined by its reference to a concrete situation and a context of interests.

First and foremost, the Bible is read rightly when it is read from its centre, which is the Gospel. This centre is God himself, who has communicated himself to the world through the history of the Jewish people and in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. All efforts to interpret the Bible are futile, however, if they do not come from a knowledge and appreciation based on expectant listening in everyday life.

Today, Biblical fundamentalism is possibly the “greatest schism of the present age”.

(Gerd Theißen)



DR REINHARD HEMPELMANN,

Head of the Evangelical Central Agency for World View Issues (EZW).



PARTNERSHIP WITH TENSION

Protestant Church Partnerships from the
Perspective of the Swedish Church

BY ANDERS WEJRYD

To draw attention away from the institutional constitution of the Church is a genuine Lutheran tradition. It is important rather to make the Gospel accessible to the people and not to allow red tape to get in the way. “And to the true unity of the Church it is enough to agree concerning the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments” (Augsburg Confession VII,2).

As a consequence of the efforts of the far-reaching ecumenical world, the Church today has been inculcated into many contexts and is vibrant under the most diverse of conditions. On the basis of the Augsburg Confession, we can say that Christian churches may have very different outward appearances. Most of us find it easy to accept this - at least in principle and in theory. In terms of actual cases, however, when facing the related challenges, such an acceptance becomes increasingly difficult. At an organisational level, the churches of the Reformation are independent of each other and some were so firmly rooted in their local contexts that they became national churches. Swedish King Gustav II Adolf (1594–1632) spoke of “the greatness of our fatherland and of God’s church, which therein abideth”.

Autonomous, independent churches govern themselves. They do not like others to tell them what to do. According to reformatory principles, it is solely the Gospel - the understanding of God’s nature and his actions - which is the criterion for church action.

Today, the independent churches live in close fellowship with one another. For many minority

churches, having connections with other churches which share the same faith tradition is vital. Belonging to the Lutheran World Federation, which has developed from a federation of churches into a communion of churches with sacramental communion and mutual recognition of ministries, offers a strong fellowship. This is of special importance to small churches, helping them to stand firm amidst the pressures of their respective surroundings. In addition, the connections which have been made during the history of missionary work between European and American churches on the one hand and on the other young churches in Africa and Asia, are profound and place obligations on the churches involved.

EXPERIENCES MADE WITH COLONIALISM ARE DEEPLY-ROOTED

Sometimes however, this communion and these partnerships undergo an acid test: such as, for example, when Indian Lutherans wanted to accept the caste system as a culturally determined factor; or when African Christians regarded polygamy as a possible way of life for Christians. These context-dependent outlooks were confronted with arguments which followed Lutheran ethics and which emphasised the dignity of humankind. However, individual dignity, which is bestowed through creation and which manifests itself in the possession of basic equal rights for all people, was not always a key principle of Lutheran ethics. Often, historical circumstances, as well as old (and some not-so-old) traditions were validated under the pretext of the “order of creation”. Fortunately today, this prefer-

We do not have the right to conduct ourselves in ways that give others the impression that we want to force our church order upon them.

ence for the conservative has largely been overcome and laid aside in favour of a course which embraces equal human rights.

After such a long period of time, today there are hardly any churches in existence that are willing to accept a large degree of responsibility for colonialism – especially in the countries which only had a few colonies. However, such an attitude obscures the fact that colonial experiences shape modes of conduct for a long time. This is something which is difficult for those on the winning side of a conflict to appreciate. In the Swedish Church, this becomes especially apparent when we examine the relationship between the Church and the native population.

ENCUMBERED BY VALUE CONFLICTS

Our sister churches, which evolved from European missionary activity, are deeply influenced by colonialism; whether they experienced it as benevolent or through exploitation. For a long time, they have had to put up with the relativisation or rejection of their perspectives and interpretations of history. By way of contrast, in the new contexts of Africa or Asia, many missionaries were convinced that they had built “truer” churches, much better than had ever existed in Europe.

In the light of such experiences, when European and North American churches gave up traditional convictions, for example by introducing the ordination of women, a conflict of values emerged, the resolution of which has taken a long time.

Today, such a conflict exists with regard to the acceptance of the cohabitation of homosexual people. This stands in stark contrast to the cultural context of some young churches and the doctrine they had been taught by Europe and North America. It is therefore easy to appreciate their reaction: “You told us before what to do. Is it the same now? Do you not understand that this makes us lose our credibility as Christians in our own environment?”

While these conflicts are serious, and, in some cases, result in the severe and lasting impairment of partnerships and relations between individual churches, the member churches of the Lutheran

World Federation have clearly jointly decided that these questions are not schismatic in the Lutheran tradition.

It is helpful to be reminded of the perspectives laid down in the Augsburg Confession (CA 7), which help us make good use of the gifts which are available to our churches through our communion. Even if many of us are convinced that the resolutions we have made in our churches, cultures and traditions are important and adequate, we have no right to conduct ourselves in ways that give others the impression that we intend to force our church order upon them. We can only inform and explain how our theological considerations are achieved – perhaps even voice recommendations – but always with the greatest respect for our counterparts and with an awareness of the long-lasting effects of our colonial history.

While the continuing economic bonds between young and old churches hold us together, there is also a danger that they perpetuate a sense of superiority or of inferiority. It is evocative of a marriage in which the partners are not on an equal footing. The economic independence of many young churches does not eliminate their need for communion with other churches. One could again use the analogy of a marriage as it is not the economic independence of the partners which makes love grow, but rather it flourishes through getting to know each other in a deeper way, the continuing exchange of experiences and an increasing insight into their mutual need to complement each other. This is why encounters and exchanges between churches need to be increased on every level, influencing both our churches and individual people. Such encounters are serious work, they are not pleasure trips! _____

TRANSLATION FROM THE SWEDISH:

SUSANNE BLATT



CONFIRMATION in Swedish



DR ANDERS WEJRYD,
Retired Archbishop of the Church of Sweden, President for Europe of the World Council of Churches.



PLURALISM AS A TRADEMARK

When Resolutions of Protestant Churches
lead to Conflicts with other Churches

BY ULRICH H.J. KÖRTNER

In just the same way as Protestant churches are characterised by a high degree of pluralism, so are Protestant ethics. Protestant churches and ethics are based on the Gospel truth that the justification of the individual is achieved by faith alone; therefore, Protestant ethics are an ethics of freedom, which give priority to the conscience of the individual. Freedom, love and responsibility are the three pillars of Protestant ethics, which can also be described as a form of the ethics of responsibility determined by love. The Protestant understanding of responsibility is directly connected with the belief of justification by faith alone. This is the basis of the distinction between a person and their works, liberating us from the compulsion of self-justification and therefore enabling us to take on board responsibility. At its core, the Christian ethos consists in action undertaken for the sake of love. Transcending the realm of the ethical and its conflicts, the Protestant theologian Paul Tillich (1886–1965) coined the term “transmoral conscience”, denoting a conscience that does not base its decisions on obedience to moral law, but rather makes them according to the reality to which it belongs, which transcends the sphere of moral laws. According to biblical testimony, that which drives the conscience beyond the law is a love which does not despise the law as

a structure of responsible living, but rather it is both above the law and relates freely to the law.

Faith, from the Protestant perspective, is tantamount to the assurance of salvation; the unconditional acceptance of the individual and the unconditional nature of divine love. However, this assurance does not establish ultimate certainties, nor does it claim theological supremacy in the realm of morals and ethics. With regard to today's ethical conflicts in the areas of social and environmental ethics, for example, there can be no such claims, since not only the norms of action are controversial, but so is the analysis of the issues, and thus therefore the very description of the phenomena. If, however, the deduction of rigorous ethical standards from theological certainties is proven to be a fallacy, then the only way to do theological ethics can be what is described by the social ethicist Martin Honecker in Bonn: "to take the uncertainties as a starting point which challenge us to ethical reflection". The Bible doubtlessly offers fundamental orientation for ethical questions. However, many of our contemporary problems do not feature in the Bible and can therefore not be answered by quoting from the Scriptures.

THE BINDING NATURE OF FAITH

In a pluralistic society, ethics is an ongoing quest of exploration. However, it does not absolve theology and the Church from the responsibility of taking seriously the binding nature of faith in the lives of individuals and society. Endeavours to establish a commitment to faith, as part of the lifestyle of the Church, should not be played off against the autonomy of the conscience of church members, who wish to be taken seriously as mature Christians.

An ethics which conforms to the Gospel thus moves into a field of tension where the freedom of faith and conscience lies on one side, and the binding nature of faith and the imitation of Christ lies on the other. It is this which is evoked when pluralism is occasionally referred to as a "trademark" of Protestantism. Critics regard this as the primary weakness of Protestant churches. In reality, this is their very strength.

With regards to issues arising from the many spheres of life and their ethical questions, such as bioethics, peace ethics or homosexuality, there is much disagreement. Of particular controversy are the effects of Protestant pluralism in such cases as when individual churches take up a position that is rejected by other churches, and both underpin their standpoints with biblical and theological arguments. Relationships with other denominations are strained

by, for example, the acceptance and blessing of homosexual partnerships, or even the permission of cohabitation in a vicarage; and this is not the only consequence: Even the church fellowship which exists amongst Protestant churches can be put to a critical test by such a divergence; be it within the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe or within the Christian world communions. Women's ordination is also still an emotive issue in the ecumenical world.

THE CONNECTING AND BINDING NATURE OF FAITH

It makes a difference whether it is an individual who makes a public statement, a university professor who writes a professional article about ethics, or a synod or church leaders that take up a position on an ethical question. Often, it is difficult to articulate that which is connecting and binding about a shared faith in such a way that it is sufficiently concrete and provides guidance, whilst also accommodating a plurality of well-reasoned theological opinions which may differ greatly. The Evangelical Church in Germany's position on peace ethics is such an example. Here, non-violence is given preference over and against the threat and use of means of violence, and yet, even within the framework of the concept of a "just peace", the use of military means as a last resort is not excluded. Positions which some might consider to be extreme, in terms of a critique of globalisation, for example, may be thought of as not radical enough by others.

Certainly, prophetic critique is also part of the Church's commission to proclaim the Christian message and to discharge her public mandate. However, it is no less important to endeavour to maintain agreement within the Church. The Augsburg Confession of 1530 terms this the "magnus consensus". Similarly, pluralism and the quest for consensus may not be sought at the expense of the establishment of the truth. Wherever a discussion touches on the belief that humankind is made in the image of God or on the dignity of every person, regardless of their health or disability, colour or gender, nationality or religion, the Protestant Church cannot and must not compromise. Racism for instance - since it is contrary to a faith in God the Creator and in Jesus Christ, who died for all people - is not a matter of ethical opinion, but rather an issue of faith calling for a clear confession.

With regards to the issues arising from the many spheres of life and their ethical questions, such as bioethics, peace ethics or homosexuality, there is much disagreement.



PROF. DR. DR. H. C. ULRICH KÖRTNER,

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HOW DO YOU READ THE BIBLE?

The Role of the Bible in diverse
Christian Environments

BY MICHAEL DIENER

In my teenage years, I became aware, for the first time, that not all Christians on this earth read and understand the Bible in the same way that I do. Then, during a service, a missionary explained how difficult it was for his African listeners to understand the word “hope”, until it was translated as “seeing through the horizon”. Indeed, this is hope: seeing through the horizon.

Will such an interpretation however, satisfy an enlightened European? It is likely that a member of our cultural sphere would never have conceived of this interpretation; nebulous as it appears and not particularly useful. Wikipedia defines hope as a “confident inner orientation which is linked with positive expectations”. Even if this definition also leaves many questions unanswered, its focus on “that which is inside” corresponds more readily to our European-Western tradition than the metaphorical definition from an African context.

I am neither a cultural scientist nor a missiologist, but it is immediately clear to me that the Bible is both read and understood very differently in diverse contexts, environments and cultures. If we define culture somewhat crudely as “a person’s interpretation of themselves and the world”, then it is entirely obvious that a teenager who grew up in an

African tribal culture will have a very different approach to the Bible from that of many of the confirmation candidates under my care, to whom I am meant to give an understanding of the Good Book, as it is called. I should also hasten to add that the candidates, who are resident in a European, Western German town, originate from entirely different Christian cultures. As a result, I am pondering

Why should a book
have anything to do
with my life?

whether it is accurate to say that all my confirmation candidates come from Christian (!) cultures. Some were not baptised and had never encountered the Christian faith along their previous path through life. One would almost have to resort to using the term “Christian Western civilisation” - a term much-laboured in recent times - in order to succeed in locating these young people within a Christian cultural sphere. It becomes clear that speaking about the Bible in relation to culture is not that easy!

If we stay with my group of confirmation candidates for a moment and combine our first insights about the understanding of (biblical) texts as they relate to the contexts in which an individual both lives and reads, with some basic assertions of milieu research, then the issue very quickly becomes very confusing.

Take Kevin, for example, who, from a precarious background, has hardly ever held a book in his hand. Given his situation in life, he would never have thought that words in a book could have a fundamental significance. On account of his difficulties with reading, even the very act of taking a Bible off the shelf moved him to a state of excited awareness: "Why should a book – and especially such an old book with long texts and virtually no pictures – have anything to do with my life today?"

TAKING DIVERSITY SERIOUSLY

In some respects, Mechthild's reaction was entirely different. She came from the conservative- established milieu, listed reading as one of her favourite pastimes and, as a result of her upbringing, was familiar with a considerable proportion of world literature. For her, the Bible was an important cultural document, deserving of respect and capable of shaping the culture of the past. However, particularly since her Religious Education teacher had introduced the mysteries of historical-critical Bible scholarship to her, she was convinced that the Bible needed to be read through the sensible eyes of the Enlightenment. She was in no doubt that the Bible, which she knew quite well through Sunday school and the occasional attendance of the whole family at church services, should be taken seriously as a religious document, and that in it – just as in other books and other religions – reasonably good thoughts could be found. However, religion was not at the forefront of Mechthild's mind just now: "The Bible was written long ago and I am alive today: How can I identify which bits are still important for me today?"

For Karl, this kind of thinking was unimaginable. He had come to Germany from Kazakhstan about ten years ago, as an ethnic German emigrant with his parents and grandparents. He belonged to the traditional milieu and, on account of his upbringing and his experiences in the former Soviet

Union, his relationship with the Bible was vital. For him, the Bible was God's Word and he gained encouragement, correction and guidance from it on a daily basis. Many passages in his Bible were marked with several different colours and since ridicule from the other candidates in the group no longer mattered to him, he fought fierce battles with them over the question as to whether Adam and Eve had really lived and whether the commandments of the Bible needed to be taken seriously. His questions regarding the Bible were completely different: "What should I do?" and "Am I good enough for you, God?"

Whether we detect these cultural differences within a group of confirmation candidates or whether, as has been the case in so many interesting projects, Christians from very different parts of the world read the same biblical text and give very diverse interpretations, the manifold contexts of thought and communication in which people discuss the Bible – sometimes precisely because of their background – are truly astonishing.

The journey which started off by taking diversity seriously leads directly on to the joy we experience through the many elements which bind us together: Christianity is a so-called book religion, and however diverse Christian cultural contexts may be, Christians will not be able to do without the Bible. No matter what the cultural context, we encounter people from every cultural sphere who read the Bible as described in the powerful story of the treasurer from Ethiopia (Acts of the Apostles 8:26ff.), who encounters the living Christ through the Scriptures and continues his journey with joy. This is what really matters. _____



DR MICHAEL DIENER,

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A QUESTION OF PERSPECTIVE

Can I read the Bible with the eyes of others, through the eyes of women and men who live in Africa or Asia?

BY SUSANNE LABSCH

A very special experience of reading the Bible with the eyes of others occurred during my visit to the Indonesian island of Halmahera several years ago. In 1999 and 2000, the island had witnessed violent conflicts between Christians and Muslims. Motivated by religious and social factors, these conflicts were always called to mind whenever problems between Christians and Muslims arose. The journey to the island was an adventure in itself and, when crossing the turbulent sea in a small boat, I thought of the calming of the storm in the Bible. Arriving on dry land, the first thing which met our eyes was a church which had been destroyed during the conflicts. In the cemetery in the village of Duma, there is a large monument in the form of a ship. On it is marked the date when a number of refugees, who were predominately children, women and old people, were lost at sea. Next to this is the shared grave of all those who died during the fighting in June 2000. How could Christians and Muslims continue to live here, together and in peace?

During the course of my visit, my Indonesian hosts taught me how to read the Bible with the eyes of others using an impressive example. The chosen Bible passage was Matthew 5:21–26. In the German Luther Bible, this passage is entitled: About Murder. It outlines the strict prohibition of killing and maintains that even an angry word can bring about death. In the course of the discussion, we found ourselves asking about the meaning of the two terms of abuse mentioned in the passage – “you good-for-nothing” and “you fool” – in our respective cultures.

Our Indonesian brothers and sisters explained the following: The Indonesian word for good-for-

nothing is “kafir”. A kafir is a person who does not believe in anything. When someone derides someone else as being a kafir (kaffer), he is saying that they do not have any faith. If someone said to a Muslim: “You kafir!”, they would be denying that this person is a person of faith, and this would be tantamount to a declaration of war. Therefore, they would never use the expression “you kafir”. The Indonesians did not want to deny the faith in God that their Muslim or their Catholic neighbours possessed. I was surprised that my Protestant hosts spoke about Roman Catholic Christians and Muslims as being “people of a different faith” in the same breath. By the same token, my Indonesian brothers and sisters thought it strange to distinguish between ecumenical and interfaith relations, as we do in Germany. For them, every person of a different denomination or religion is a person “of a different faith” – and someone who needs to be respected in their faith “for the sake of peace”. Thus, denominations and religions do not necessarily stir up conflict, as it is often alleged, but can be peace-makers – wherever they learn to read the Bible with the eyes of others.



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ONESIMOS NESIB (1856–1931), ETHIOPIA

THE TRANSLATOR

Onesimos Nesib was one of the Oromo people of Ethiopia. His original name in the Oromo language was Hika, which means translator. When he was four years old, his father died. Soon afterwards, Onesimos was kidnapped, sold as a slave and, after many difficulties and much turmoil, was brought to Massawa by the Red Sea (which lies in today's Eritrea). There, he was freed and received his early education

in a boys' school of the Swedish Evangelical Mission. In 1872, he was baptised and travelled to Sweden to train in Johannelund. On his return to Massawa, and after several unsuccessful attempts to reach the Oromo region, he translated the entire Bible into the Oromo language, with the help of the young Ethiopian Aster Ganno. It was only in 1904 that Onesimos Nesib was able to go back to Welega,

in the Oromo region, and begin his preaching ministry in the Oromo language.

BY DIETRICH WERNER

Prof Dr Dr h c Dietrich Werner,
Senior Theological Advisor at Bread for the World.

Berlin, Paris, Boston, Seoul, Tukuyu (in Tanzania), Brasilia – Protestant services are conducted in all these locations. In the ways that they listen to the Word of God, the churches are similar. They are diverse, however, in the ways in which they express their faith and also in the ways in which they finance church life.

What role does money play in the life of the church and what role does it play in the thinking of Protestant churches across the globe? The Bible's stance on how to deal with money is not without equivocation. Many will recollect the parable of the camel and the eye of the needle: The rich, young man comes to realise that he is too much a part of this world to follow Jesus unconditionally. The requirement on the young man is the same for us today and yet, the ascetic way of life will always only ever be possible for a small minority. While their critical ideas remain challenging, the survival of society depends upon the economic activities of the majority who purposefully live differently and seek to secure their livelihood. Economic success is not criticised in the Bible. This is reflected in the wealth of King Solomon and also in the parable of the talents entrusted to the care of the servants. The two servants who multiplied the talents were praised. The third however, who had not put his talent to use, was reprimanded. Wealth must therefore be put to use. Even the money which the deceitful manager uses to buy support when he is called to account, is accepted. Admittedly, mammon is deemed to be 'unjust'. "No man can serve two masters, ... you cannot serve God and mammon." It follows from this distinction that Christians are to deal with the money which is entrusted to them in a different manner. It must not be at the centre of their endeavour, nor take the place of God. "The different ways of dealing with money clearly reflect whether they are of service to mammon or of service to God" (Ralf Meister).

THE TWOFOLD LAW OF LOVE

The Gospel demands that money never be considered as an end in itself, but always as a means to an end. Setting a course towards the twofold law of love - to love God and to love our neighbours - is essential. How Protestant churches fulfil this commission differs in different parts of the globe. The means chosen are also dependent upon historical

developments and social conditions, as reflected in examples taken from different continents.

The church tax is the principal source of income and the foundation of all church finance in Germany. As a membership contribution, it is collected by the state (for a fee) and staggered according to the income of the members. The church tax provides the churches with planning certainty for their ministry and activities, enables churches to be independent of major individual contributors and theological trends and biases, and facilitates

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Financing Protestant Churches across the Globe

solidarity between those regional churches with a greater share of wealth and those with less finance, enabling the Gospel to be proclaimed in regions that are structurally weaker. This money, as well as that which comes from the voluntary church contributions, offerings and donations, is predominantly used for church life. It is also used for the maintenance and upkeep of church buildings, new construction, educational work and public relations activities.

Since the rise of the welfare state, diaconal responsibilities such as caring for the sick, the disabled and the elderly, as well as children and young people, which have been undertaken since time immemorial by the Church as a fulfilment of the commandment to love our neighbour, have largely

ISSUES & ANSWERS

BY KARLIES ABMEIER

the North American model, it is argued that the churches which do not receive church taxes are much more vibrant. In such churches, the members are directly informed about how their money has been spent and therefore volunteer much more intentionally - even in terms of theological work.

The separation of church and state is the normal state of affairs for the Protestant Church in France, where the Church has to raise its own finance for new church buildings as well as for church life.

Outside of Europe and North America, entirely different conditions for Protestant churches are to be found. When the Presbyterian missionary John Livingston Nevius (1829–1893) came to Korea, for example, he relied upon the extensive financial independence of individual churches.

In order to achieve independent financial stability, churches expect to receive the comparatively large amount of a tenth of their members' income. Where believers make a connection between their offering, the grace of God and earthly prosperity - an attitude which is widespread in traditional religious ideology - it can lead to an overemphasis of the significance of money. Another side-effect is the intense isolation of individual churches, which also manifests itself in the large number of different denominations.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Brazil is an immigrant church, which was dependent for a long time upon its sister churches in North America and Europe. When this financial support dried up, the churches saw it as an opportunity to become more self-reliant through a programme entitled "Faith in Gratitude and Obligation". "Offerings of Gratitude" have become the foundation of some new ways of financing church life and work. The members' financial contributions serve to strengthen their willingness to participate in church life with a missionary focus and to witness in the world.

SUPPORT FROM EUROPE IS VITAL

The Evangelical Lutheran churches in Tanzania, which are growing at a rapid pace, face a particular set of challenges. Neither the Sunday offering nor the monthly contributions are sufficient for the upkeep of the clergy. This lack of finance results in the migration of junior staff to other professions and leads to preachers with little theological education losing church members to other congregations. In order to enjoy a credible performance as advocates for greater education and justice, it is essential that support from Europe be maintained.

Church life is not only dependent upon economic conditions. A secure financial basis alone cannot produce a vibrant church; however, involvement without sufficient funding can quickly lose its attractiveness. Ultimately, the right way forward in each situation will need to be ascertained through much discussion and debate.



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RE-THINKING & RE-SPEAKING GOD

Do we need a new language for God? **BY LUTZ ENGELKE**

Historic places fascinate me. Wittenberg is one of them. Late last autumn I visited the town with the project group. We got on our bikes to explore and find the river Elbe that flows through it. And we asked people what Luther means to them today. We were hunting for traces of events that stretch back into the sixteenth century. With the 500th anniversary of the Reformation looming, we wanted to get a sense of the history and have an ice cream in the place where that revolution began.

I asked myself what will be left of the upcoming anniversary celebrations in a hundred years' time? What will people remember in 2117?

Which messages will survive? Which pictures will make it into the history books and crucially – which debates will get people thinking about God?

THREE CENTRAL QUESTIONS ACCOMPANIED US ON OUR JOURNEY:

How should the church talk about God and how can the word of God reach people in the 21st century? As an international, inter-faith event the 500th anniversary of the Reformation should be the occasion to ask these difficult questions.

Which formats, what language, symbols and rituals are appropriate to achieve this? How new and different should it all be?

What should we 'do' with Luther? Rather than turning him into a historical figure, how do we bring Luther into the present? How can we use Luther to look to the future and ask questions about faith in the modern world?

Our bikes glide past five centuries of history. Every cobble, every house and every yard in Wit-

tenberg has its own story to tell. Five hundred years ago Luther translated the Bible into vivid and comprehensible language for his contemporaries. In doing so he gave anyone who could read German a chance to hear the word of God directly. Something that had never been the case before.

Half a millennium later, and the Gospel in Luther's words seems to have lost its power. A life without God and religion is increasingly normal in western societies. You can almost hear Marshall McLuhan saying the 'medium' has lost its 'message'. The language of the church seems to have lost the ability to touch people and strikes them as antiquated. In times of digital revolution with its constant oversupply of information and distractions this kind of language is drowned out.

At the same time religious faith is becoming an ever more important factor in international politics.

You only need to listen to the news. God and religious belief are here to stay – whether we like it or not. If anyone needed any proof of that - the 9/11 attacks brought home just how much religious belief had become a question of war and peace. The 'clash of civilisations' that many talk of threatens to crowd out the intimate nature of religious faith. Burning Bibles and Korans, and preachers who turn churches and mosques into conflict zones – all this adds up to an explosive moment for inter-faith relations. Recent events in the Middle East, the attacks on Charlie Hebdo in Paris and the shooting in Copenhagen remind us that we need to think about God and faith in a broader context.

HUMANITY'S GREATEST NARRATIVES

On first glance none of these things really ring true for Wittenberg. Its Luther high school stands empty, the Melancthon House is open for visitors.... The Schlosskirche is still a building site. The same can be said of the Reformation anniversary plans. We cycled on. In between all this history our task was staring us in the face. What we need to do is find a new language for God, a leitmotiv to tell a story about God, faith and religion that works in the 21st century. Take the occasion of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation and use it to unite the idea of a global story with the life of the church and people's daily experience. The year 2017 is a fantastic chance for an intellectual, theological and symbolic debate in which all of society can participate and fill the idea of inter-faith dialogue with life. Given the situation we're in – the world is crying out for a new narrative. As we had our ice creams and our coffees I looked up at the sky. Speaking in political terms, that means bridging the divide between the church and society. How can we give the Gospel

back to people? How can the church keep its role as a pillar of society or even become one for new groups of people? How can God reach people in today's world?

We know that religions are humanity's greatest narratives. Religion gives millions of people a leitmotiv to understand their own lives. It provides purpose, meaning and fulfillment. For billions religion is a fulfilling purpose in their lives. What is it that brings people together deep down? What lies at the heart of all religions? Luther's radical approach changed things. He made us look at things in new ways and championed an individual, intimate relationship with God – something he himself experienced. Even if science does one day solve all the mysteries of the natural world, it still won't provide us with answers to the existential questions, as Wittgenstein pointed out.

God is beyond reason. Perhaps the Reformation anniversary celebrations should re-connect to that radical idea and put the search for God in the 21st century at the heart of the commemorations. Somewhere amid all the complexity and vague longing for transcendence lies the central question about the true nature of God. The global crises previously mentioned mean that it remains imperative that we discuss God in a context that is international and includes other faiths. The 500th anniversary of the Reformation has a chance to set new standards and take on an international profile. The year 2017 should be an opportunity for people of all confessions to re-think God.

Re-thinking God also means talking, reading, feeling and experiencing God in new ways. Jesus used poetry, metaphor and comparison with everyday life. This fascinated people and sometimes even provoked their anger, unsettling their ways of thinking.

Re-thinking God in times of a 'God of the Churches'. This brings us back to the pamphlets of Luther's day.

Re-thinking God takes us back to a large and historic community of people seeking God. Martin Luther King did it for African Americans, Dietrich Bonhoeffer pulled it off under the Nazi regime....

Re-thinking a 'men's God' – is something women did...

Re-thinking the rich man's God – that's what South America's liberation theology achieved.

A look at the past shows that everyone finds answers in their heart of hearts as soon as they begin to ask the right questions. >

Find a new language, a leitmotiv leading to God and a new narrative about God, faith and religion for the 21st century.

The less we understand our own intellectual history the more we risk being overwhelmed by a tsunami of digital confusion.

Re-thinking God will necessarily bring up different answers for different people. Some will open up new lines of enquiry, others will return to existential problems, but the God of Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Jacob is no unchanging, monolithic God, but one who moves with his people now and in the future. God can and does regularly escape from his Babylonian captivity.

That is why for all its apparent radicalism, re-thinking God' is a fundamentally Lutheran and Reformationist concept. Re-thinking God together can bring Protestants and Catholics together in a celebration of Christ. The cross is the challenge to Christians to re-think God. This is the basis from which to invite other religions to re-think God with us. Maybe what we need is a new kind of translation, a new map or a compass to help us find our way out of uncertainty. Our reality and God have to be brought together on a new kind of map. That map even needs to show the way to a symbolic, theological and political journey that satisfies our need for calm, purpose, ritual and religiosity.

WHAT IS HOLINESS?

One destination I'd definitely like to mark on this map and one that we've lost touch with is holiness. Holiness is about the quiet longing for purpose. The very concept of holiness is a rejection of utilitarianism, which, as Hans Jonas has said, creates an ethical no man's land. The holy in its loftiness and seclusion creates a unique space, one that sets itself apart from all the utilitarian, technically oriented digital worlds of the present. It's interesting that the greatest parallels between the monotheistic religions come to light in their longing for the holy.

The quest for the holy must be part of any journey round Wittenberg and lies at the heart of the task of re-thinking God. Living a faith and re-thinking God must enter into a dialogue. The Reformation anniversary is the perfect opportunity to promote that inter-faith dialogue. This could turn Christian rapprochement into a motor for peace in a world of relentless globalization and create a peace-preserving narrative for the 21st century.

Back in February a council of Islamic thinkers met in Qatar under the chairmanship of Dr Mohammed Shibabb, the former Pakistani Minister of Religious Affairs. Their aim was nothing less than devising a new critical interpretation of the Koran. For Shibabb, the Islamic text needs to be re-inter-

preted in a modern context.....outdated texts need to be replaced and brought into line with modern science.' A copy of the guarantees for Christians drawn up by the Prophet Mohammed was recently presented to the Pope. Things are beginning to change. Re-thinking God together with other religions in the context of the 21st century is the best thing we can do to combat fundamentalism in our century.

The year 2017 demands that we take a stand. All I can do is point to the new head of the German Evangelical Church, who has already argued for greater political involvement, for precisely these reasons. Re-thinking God means exactly that – active involvement, participation in a reflective faith and a challenge to all to get involved and to use one's faith and mind. That in itself will likely be seen as a provocation by defenders of the stagnant status quo. It's an attempt to translate God in the spirit of the Reformation for the 21st century.

Jesus lived 2000 years ago. The Old Testament is about 5000 years old, while the Prophet Mohammed lived in the 7th century. All of these dates, way back in history, are now vanishing from our sight and are no longer part of our present world. The less we understand our own intellectual history, the greater the risk that we become overwhelmed by the tsunami of digital confusion. Hearing, recognising and feeling God in all the cacophony is no easy task.

The year 2017 is a chance for the church to assume its place in the modern world. We will invite the world to join us on this journey. In Wittenberg, we want to show the world what role God plays in our lives. The bike paths are still a bit bumpy and the Schlosskirche is still a building site, but in fewer than 24 months seven gates of freedom will welcome visitors to Wittenberg. What awaits them? A European way of the cross, a world exhibition on the Reformation, as well as a celebratory prayer service and youth camp. Wittenberg will live up to its claim to be a centre of the Reformation in the 21st century. But the bikes will still be there, as will locals' hospitality. We've got a lot still left to do – let's get going and trust in God.



PROF LUTZ ENGELKE,
Founder and Leading
Partner at DENBANK and
Managing Director of
TRIAD Berlin.



LYDIA MENGWELUNE (1886–1966), CAMEROON

A WOMAN TRAILBLAZER

Lydia Mengwelune was born in Cameroon in 1886. From a young age, it had been intended that she marry a tribal chief and live in his house for a while. However, this marriage never came to pass. Lydia remained in the court of the mother of the King of Cameroon and received a good education. There, in 1906, she met Pastor Martin Gohring of the Basel Mission and was greatly interested in his preaching. Meanwhile, she had become the 31st wife of a court official. In 1909, she was one of the

first people of the Bamun ethnic group in Cameroon to be baptised. Her husband punished her severely for what he perceived to be her waywardness. Lydia however, was already so involved with the life of the small congregation in Foumban in Western Cameroon, that she became the only female elder of a council predominately made up of men. She taught in the girls' school of the church and became an assistant to the Basel missionaries. Eventually, she also preached in the church. By 1931,

the church had 35 preaching stations in the region – and Lydia Mengwelune was a leading figure in this endeavour. She died at a ripe old age in 1966.

BY VERONIKA ULLMANN

Veronika Ullmann, Theologian and Journalist, Editor in Public Relations for Bread for the World.

The catchword “internationalisation” belongs not only to the common strategic vocabulary of those university governing bodies and councils which strive for excellence, but has for a long time been incorporated into the everyday language of theological faculties. Until German re-unification, such bodies could still draw upon the heritage of the former international standing of German-speaking theology and exegesis; but since that time, the situation has changed radically.

In the 19th and 20th centuries, German-speaking theologians determined the course of research. One could think of names such as Julius Wellhausen, Adolf von Harnack or Rudolf Bultmann – not to mention the great classical authors of dogmatic theology such as Friedrich Schleiermacher or Karl Barth. The most decisive debates were conducted within the context of German academic theology and radiated from there into the English-speaking world, even as far as Africa and Asia. In the last third of the 20th century, the centre of grav-

ademic activities is leaving visible marks, there is no international debate nor is there any research agenda which could set the tone and dictate the rhythm for German-speaking theology. Some may take this as evidence for a rampant provinciality within the systematic theology currently being discussed at German universities. It may well be worth our while however, to take a closer look.

An increasingly international orientation of systematic theology can be observed, particularly in areas where there is a reception of corresponding developments in important related academic disciplines: philosophy or sociology, for example. With regards to philosophy, this phenomenon could be seen for a while in a focus on the analytic philosophy of religion; currently, it applies in particular to the reception of American pragmatism and its influence on the philosophy of the social sciences.

In addition, it is certainly beyond question that an international broadening of perspectives

AN



PROTESTANT THEOLOGY?

ity began to shift – gradually at first, but then at an increasingly rapid pace. In the exegetical and historical disciplines, English has since become the common academic language. Research is increasingly undertaken within the framework of international co-operation, and the most decisive inspiration and ideas no longer come from German-speaking theology. In an example which is almost symbolic, this trend has materialised in the research on the historical Jesus: Whilst the great wave of research in the 1950s and 1960s took place under the German banner “Neue Frage nach dem historischen Jesus” (New Questions about the Historical Jesus), contemporary approaches and debates are now being summarised using a keyphrase in English: “Third Quest for the Historical Jesus”.

By way of contrast, things are slightly different in the field of systematic theology and there is unquestionably no universal internationalisation; there is no “global” Protestant theology. Indeed, whilst the progressive internationalisation of ac-

BY MARTIN LAUBE

can lead systematic theology out of a problematic narrowing of vision and also open up new inspiration and ideas. Thus, the reception of pragmatism mentioned above helps to overcome the increasingly scholastic fixation on the intellectual history of German idealism and historicism. Moreover, the communitarian tradition of the USA, which defines the relationship between an individual and community in a different way, offers productive stimulus to break the spell brought on by the Enlightenment’s separation of the public and private sides of Christianity. One of the ways in which this occurs is through the theological approaches developed in North and South America which – influenced by the large, growing charismatic churches – promise to rectify the traditional disdainful neglect of the dimension of the Spirit and its work in German-speaking theology.

Nevertheless, it is apparent that the internationalisation of German-speaking systematic theology - in spite of all its ecumenical contacts and international co-operation - is advancing at a remarkably slow pace. There are several reasons for this: 1) In contrast to Roman Catholicism, the Protestant Church is not a world church. Therefore, there is no “global” Protestant theology which would be the equivalent of the tendencies found in Roman Catholic theology. The Lutheran World Federation or the World Communion of Reformed Churches do not have a common theology. 2) There is a visible rift between the theological work undertaken by the ecumenical world and the academic theology produced in Germany. Even if there were a common ecumenical agenda, there is no guarantee that it would be adopted by academic theology in its research and debates. Upon closer inspection, it becomes obvious that the ecumenical world had a decisive influence on the re-orientation of German theology after the end of the Second World War.

There is no thorough internationalisation to speak of within systematic theology; there is no “global” Protestant theology.



However, in these present times, one can no longer claim that there is a comparable configuration. 3) The tradition of Schleiermacher's concept of theology, which is still in operation in Germany today, defines theology as an academic discipline related to the Church. It thereby ties theology to the visible form of an historically defined denominational ecclesial organisation. In this way, the scope of theology becomes limited to the treatment of those responsibilities and problems which are connected with a particular form of Church and Christianity committed to a certain socio-cultural constellation. The degree to which theology is determined by its dependence on its context becomes apparent not least in the fact that the German tradition of the relationship between the state and church (which is different to the system in the USA, for example) confers upon theology the status of being a state-approved university discipline. This has important implications in the form of interdisciplinary opportunities and obligations, co-operations and contacts, which bestow upon German-speaking theology an orientation and character that is not easily translated into the international sphere.



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COMENIUS

LET VIOLENCE BE FAR FROM THINGS

A Portrait of Johann Amos Comenius



BY CHRISTOPH TH. SCHEILKE

To educate people towards humanity, towards international understanding, towards peace:

hardly anyone worked more vigorously for these ideals than John Amos Comenius, a distinguished European thinker with Hussite roots. He did so in the course of countless practical attempts as a teacher and school principal, but also in over 250 works he wrote as a philosopher, pedagogue, and theologian.

Born in Moravia in 1592 as Jan Amos Komenský, he worked tirelessly for the realization of a worldwide ecumenical reform to “improve human affairs” during a time of political terror, the Thirty Years’ War. He believed that joint consultations undertaken by the world’s leading minds in science, politics, and the churches could succeed in overcoming war and violence once and for all. “Let everything flow freely, let violence be far from things,” was his motto.

The key question he posed was: “What do human beings need as human beings?” His answer: “Wisdom, i.e. they must know how to deal [rightly] with things, with other human beings, and with God. The first of these is called philosophy, the second politics, and the third religion; without the knowledge and practice of these three, human beings would not be human beings, but rather creatures devoid of reason, even if they were fully endowed with riches, honour, and every possible convenience.”

Wisdom was for him the key to peaceful coexistence in freedom. “We must strive unconditionally to give back to the human species its freedom: freedom of thought, religious freedom, and civic

freedom.” Human beings were endowed with this freedom from creation. The democratically-elected Czech presidents Tomáš Masaryk and Václav Havel have expressly appealed to the example of Comenius.

The work of educating towards wisdom and peace must already begin in schools. Children must learn what things are, why and for what purpose they exist. Only someone who recognizes the order of the world together with all the things in it is capable of understanding them and their causes. Such a person uses them, cares for them, and enjoys them. “Everything that exists must be known; everything that is mandatory must be done; everything granted by God’s grace should be enjoyed.” For this reason, all people must learn all things thoroughly (omnes, omnia, omnino). This holds true for both the rich and the poor, for both boys and girls. Schools should become “workshops of humanity.”

Schoolbooks such as the *Orbis pictus*, an illustrated primer for elementary instruction, and his Latin textbook made him famous throughout the world. He believed one must call things by their proper name and be able to communicate in a universal language. Comenius is considered the founder of modern pedagogy. The nineteenth century celebrated him as a “teacher of the peoples.” He himself avowed: “Everything I wrote on behalf of the young, I wrote as a theologian.” Comenius was, of course, not only a teacher, but also a preacher and a bishop of the Moravian Church (Herrnhuter Brüdergemeine). This peace church with roots in the Reformation, well-known for its Daily Watchwords, has over a million members throughout the world today.

Improving schools was just the beginning. Comenius aimed towards a “universal” reform of education, church, and society to be achieved by means of joint consultations which would take place in an ecumenical council. In order to prepare for this, leading scientists were to form a “College of Light,” the churches were to constitute a world council of churches, and statesmen were to form a “Council of Peace.” These three bodies were to draw up suggestions for reform and submit them to the council.

Comenius became involved in pedagogical, philosophical, political, and theological issues throughout Europe. Expelled from Moravia, he assumed the leadership of a school in the Polish town of Lissa (modern Leżno). An initial draft of his philosophy was published in England. Soon after, he was welcomed by Parliament. In Holland, he engaged in debate with Descartes. He turned down offers of professorships in Paris and at Harvard University. While in the employ of Sweden he prepared schoolbooks – including some for the use of Queen

Christina. In Hungary he reformed the schools in Sárospatak at the request of the local prince. A “living encyclopedia” took shape, consisting of theatrical plays that condensed the state of knowledge at the time – including scientific knowledge. In this way he put into practice his principle that learning should take place quickly, provide amusement, and be reliable. In the aftermath of the “great” fire that destroyed Comenius’ library and his writing workshop in 1656 after returning to Lissa, he fled to Amsterdam. He lived there until his death in 1670, enjoying high respect. The Amsterdam city council gave him financial support, leading Comenius to dedicate his collected didactic works to it: “All well-being to the distinguished city of Amsterdam, the most renowned marketplace of the world, and to the wise city council!”

His chief work, the *Consultatio Catholica*, remained incomplete, however.

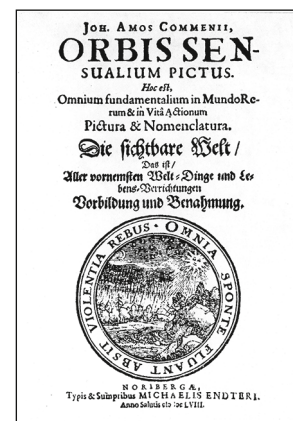
During his entire life, Comenius acted as a practical intermediary in confessional disputes between Catholic and Protestant, but also between Reformed and Lutheran Christians. In the final years of his life, he vigorously championed political peace, investing the experience of a lifetime into this cause. At the age of seventy-five, he beseeched the delegates of England and the Netherlands in an open letter entitled *Angelus Pacis* (“Angel of Peace”). In it he admonished them as Christians to put an end to the Second Anglo-Dutch War. Once again he sought to bring about a universal reform that would enable worldwide peace. For this purpose he addressed his missive not just to the negotiators themselves, but “thereafter to all peoples throughout the world, that they may pause, abandon war, and leave room for Christ, the prince of peace, who already wishes to proclaim peace to the peoples.”

Throughout his life, Comenius was of the steadfast conviction that peace can only grow wherever human beings are educated to become human beings, where people speak to one another, identify differences clearly, and join together throughout this one world of ours in awareness of their responsibility before God, the creator and sustainer of life.



PROF. DR. CHRISTOPH THEODOR SCHEILKE,

was Director of the Comenius Institute for Educational Science in Münster and is a Founding and Board Member of the German Comenius Society.



COMENIUS, ORBIS SENSUALIUM PICTUS

Title page of the Nuremberg edition, Michael Endter, 1658.



WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES (WCC)



**World Council
of Churches**

PETRA BOSSE-HUBER,
Bishop, Vice-President of the
Church Office of the EKD in
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and Ministries Abroad"; Member
of the Central and Executive
Committees of the WCC.

Although the World Council of Churches (WCC) is housed in Geneva, its field of action is the world in which we live. Day by day, its 345 member churches create a little piece of heaven in their respective environments as they outwork on a daily basis the commission given by Jesus Christ. Such churches have joined forces to form the WCC, which includes Orthodox, Anglican, Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist and Reformed churches.

Its roots go back into the 19th century. However historical events of the first few decades of the 20th century delayed the founding of the WCC until 1948. Against the backdrop of experiencing the two world wars, Christians began to build understanding and reconciliation and to promote peace and justice in the world. The title of the first Assembly in Amsterdam was: "Man's Disorder and God's Design", under which heading people met to discuss the over-

all theme. It is important to continue building according to this design today, since in no way can it be said that healing and wholeness have been achieved throughout the world. The WCC focusses on three programme areas:

1. Unity, mission and ecumenical relations
2. Public witness and diakonia
3. Ecumenical formation

The relevance of spiritual life, inter-religious dialogue and the building up of a just community of men and women are key in all of its programmes, of which the "Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace" is a good example. The WCC is a modern, ecumenical movement. Within the diversity of the churches, unity in faith becomes tangible.

www.oikoumene.org

COMMUNITY OF PROTESTANT CHURCHES IN EUROPE (CPCE)



Today, it seems natural to us that Protestant Christians would worship together and join in activities across the different perspectives and traditions which co-exist within the Protestant churches. This however, was not always the case. Since the time of the Reformation, the Reformed and Lutheran Churches condemned each other's doctrines. It was only through the Leuenberg Agreement, which was designed to overcome the schismatic doctrinal differences, that from 1973, the way became open for co-operation between the diverse churches of the Reformation. Since then, 101 churches from Europe and six churches from South America have accepted this Agreement or joined the fellowship of churches; and together they form the "Community of Protestant Churches in Europe" (CPCE). Its members, which are Lutheran, Reformed, United, Methodist and Pre-Reformation churches, grant one another table and pulpit fellowship, i.e. they

allow pastors of the other churches to preach and celebrate communion together. The fellowship is deepened through witnessing and serving together, supporting one another and meeting regularly to discuss theological topics in the various European regions. As a result of mergers, dissolutions or territorial partitions, the number of member churches currently stands at 94. Approximately every six years, delegates of the member churches come together for a General Assembly in order to determine the basic direction of the work of the CPCE. Between these General Assembly meetings, the thirteen members of the Council, headed by a three-person Presidium, are in charge of overseeing the work which is co-ordinated through the main office in Vienna.

www.leuenberg.eu

DR MICHAEL BÜNKER,
Bishop of the Evangelical Church
A.B. in Austria, General Secretary
of the CPCE.

THE CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN CHURCHES (CEC)



The Conference of European Churches (CEC), founded in 1959, unites 114 Orthodox, Anglican, Old Catholic and Protestant Churches across all European nations. It co-operates with 40 national church councils and partner organisations. Its aim is to strengthen the European churches in their witness and ministry, to advance the unity of the Church and to promote peace and reconciliation. During the time of the Cold War, CEC acted as a bridge-builder between the East and the West. It facilitated communication and understanding in important theological issues and supported the Conciliar Process for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation, which began in 1983. Three European Ecumenical Assemblies (1989 Basel, 1997 Graz, 2007 Sibiu) organised by CEC and the CCEE (Council of European [Roman Catholic] Bishops' Conferences) made a vital contribution to the task of "Giving a soul to Europe". This entailed helping to shape the continent and bring the voice of the Church into political dialogue with the European

Union, with particular reference to the areas of bioethics, education, economic and social issues, climate change and ecology, human rights and religious freedom, inter-religious dialogue, migration and refugees. By way of the Charta Oecumenica of 2001, the member churches commit themselves to "work towards the visible unity of the Church of Jesus Christ in the one faith", to "deepen ecumenical fellowship" and "to contribute towards reconciling peoples and cultures" and "our common responsibility in Europe". A reform process, which began in 2009, led to a tightened structure and a prioritisation of tasks. The member churches and partner organisations aspire to be reliable in contributing their competencies, expertise and requirements at European level, and they also hope to regain in this endeavour the support of the Russian Orthodox Church, which has suspended its membership.

www.ceceurope.org

CHRISTINE BUSCH,
Deputy Head of the "Ecumenical Relations Department" of
the Evangelical Church of the
Rhineland.



FLORIAN HÜBNER,
Officer for Public Relations and
World Service of the German
National Committee of the LWF.

THE LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION (LWF)

Reformation across the world – this is what the global communion of churches of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) stands for. In the LWF, 145 Lutheran Churches with more than 72 million members have been brought together. From South Africa to Iceland, from Papua-New Guinea to Wittenberg, they are united in pulpit and altar fellowship and live together as a communion of churches. On the approach to 2017, the LWF is focussing on three principles: • Today, the Reformation is a global citizen: In all its activities, the international dimension of the Reformation is central to the LWF. • Ecumenical accountability: As well as marking the 500 years since the Reformation, the LWF will also look back on fifty years of ecumenical achievements. • Ongoing Reformation: The Reformation of the churches has not yet reached its ending point, but rather, it continues. And what about Germany? In the summer of 2015, the global youth conference of the LWF took place in Germany. In 2016, the LWF Council will

meet in Wittenberg and officially hand over the Luther Garden to the public. In 2017, the LWF member churches will bring the international dimension to the “Reformation World Exhibition” and commemorate across the globe 500 years of Reformation. Eleven German churches are members of the LWF. They form the German National Committee of the LWF, which is based in Hanover: *Evangelical Lutheran Church in Baden, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Brunswick, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hanover, Lutheran Section of the Church of Lippe, Evangelical Church in Central Germany, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Northern Germany, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Oldenburg, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Saxony, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Schaumburg-Lippe, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Württemberg*

www.lutheranworld.org



PHIL TANIS,
Executive Secretary for
Communications at the WCRC.

THE WORLD COMMUNION OF REFORMED CHURCHES (WCRC)

With roots in the Reformation of the 16th century, in particular in the theology of the Reformer John Calvin, the history of what is now the World Communion of Reformed Churches begins in the year 1875. Almost a century later, in 1970, the organisations of the Presbyterian and Congregational churches became the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC). Today, about 230 Congregational, Presbyterian, Reformed, United, Uniting and Waldensian churches, from more than 100 nations, belong to this world communion. It represents about 80 million Christians across the globe and moved its executive office from Geneva to Hanover in January 2014. With the motto “Called to communion and committed to justice”, the WCRC:

- promotes theological innovation, participates in ecumenical dialogue and works for the unity of the Church;
- supports the partnership of men and women in the governing bodies of the Church;
- strengthens the active witness for peace and justice of its member churches;
- re-enforces the churches’ action through clear declarations of belief (e.g. the Accra Declaration);
- supports the diaconal and missionary work of member churches - chiefly in the global South - through its “Partnership Fund”.

www.wcrc.ch



AMY CARMICHAEL (1867–1951), INDIA

THE PROTECTOR

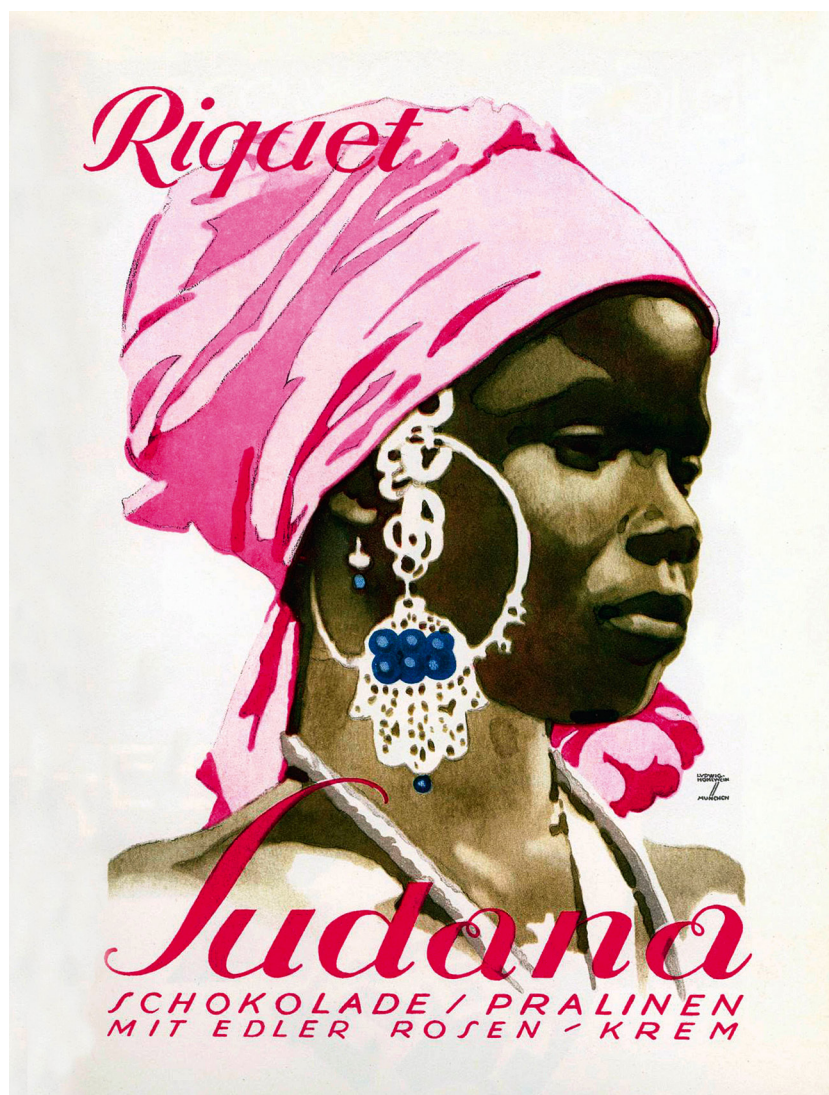
Originally, Amy Carmichael came from Northern Ireland. She lived from 1867 to 1951 and was a Presbyterian Christian. At an early age, she discovered a passion for the poor, in particular for disadvantaged children and women. In her home village, she offered a spiritual home to the children of workers, known as “Amy’s Tin Tabernacle”. In Manchester, she worked as a missionary in the deprived areas of the mill workers before receiving training in London as preparation for her work in Asia. After

a short period in Japan, she settled in Southern India. There, she worked in particular to improve the lives of girls. In Tamil Nadu, she founded the Dohnavur Fellowship, a place of refuge for children. In order to integrate with the people of India, and to show that she respected their culture, she wore traditional Indian clothes and dyed her skin darker. The children with whom she worked were never given Christian names, but continued to use their Indian names. Alongside her social and

missionary work, she published many books. Her gravestone in India is a bird bath which bears the single inscription: “mother”, written in Tamil.

BY VERONIKA ULLMANN

Veronika Ullmann, Theologian and Journalist, Editor in Public Relations for Bread for the World.



WOUNDS OF COLONIALISM

A Challenge for Theology and the Church in Germany

BY SABINE JAROSCH

In school, I learnt that Otto von Bismarck was a great, prudent and rational politician. I did not learn in school, however, that he was also a great colonial politician, who was responsible, alongside many other German merchants, politicians, missionaries and their wives, for the suffering of millions of people. Today, the myth that Germany's involvement in colonial wrong-doing was negligible still persists.

At the end of February 2016, Berlin's Wilhelm Street will be the venue for the 10th Remembrance March for African victims of the slave trade, slavery, colonialism and racist violence (www.africave-nir.org). The march commemorates the West Af-

rica Conference in Berlin in 1884/85, organised by Bismarck, in which the continent was divided up among the European colonial powers with the help of a map and a ruler. The German Empire took hold of the colonies of German South-West Africa (Namibia), German East Africa (Tanzania, Burundi, Rwanda), as well as Cameroon and Togo. The documentary film "The Colonial Misunderstanding", by the Cameroonian director Jean-Marie Teno, indicates how deeply the churches' missionary work was implicated in colonial trading interests. Informed by the revival movement, the Protestant missionary societies became increasingly nationalistic after the foundation of the Reich (which re-

ferred, amongst others, to Luther for its ideological justification), and were often responsible for laying the foundations of subsequent “Treaties of Protection”, respectively territorial conquests. In that way, mission contributed to the establishment of stable colonial regimes.

Postcolonial theories, which have emerged since the end of the 1970s, aim to show that this colonial history has by no means reached a conclusion, but continues to have an effect today. Here are some examples: Even now, there are statues or pictures of black service personnel in numerous German cafés. Advertisements for chocolate still use the racist figure of the Moor. There are those who are vehemently opposed to abolishing the original, racist language which appears in children's books, even when those affected express how offended they are by certain words. The museums are full of colonial loot - which have not been returned to their places of origin in spite of relevant demands. The payment of reparations for the genocide perpetrated on the Herero and Nama in Namibia was rejected by the Federal Republic of Germany. There is strong political and societal resistance against initiatives to rename streets which bear the names of those who committed crimes in colonial history. Black people and people of colour (a political, self-imposed term) are more frequently subjected to police checks, purely because they fit the “perpetrator profile” on account of their skin colour. People who are not read as possessing “white” pigmentation are made to feel “different” time and again. Constantly being asked, for example, where you are from, makes you feel you do not belong to German society and giving the answer: “From Germany”, often leads to probing questions.

NATURAL, AUTHENTIC, PRIMITIVE

Postcolonial approaches therefore analyse the extent to which the colonial legacy - rather than simply being a relic of the past - continues to affect our thinking and our institutions today. Here, an important concept to understand is how ‘foreignness’ is construed. Differences are not natural; they are created in human discourse and, unfortunately, are often incorporated into paternalist-hierarchical relationships. On the one hand, there are the primitive, natural, authentic, and supposedly (despite poverty) incessantly happy “others”. On the other hand, the recognition of these particular attributes serves as a negative foil to the development of a Western, enlightened, culturally and technologically progressive identity. Such processes of “othering”, which were studied by Edward Said and Gayatri Spivak, amongst others, contribute to the perpetuation of colonial power relations. In recent decades, there has been much movement in

the churches towards a critical reappraisal of mission history with all its ambivalence. This is why I see great potential in further, self-critical analysis even of current practices, such as the way in which partnerships with churches of the Global South are conducted, the way migrants’ congregations are integrated into local churches; or the way in which fundraising is staged by church development organisations (cf. the film of the same title at www.whitecharity.de). In such instances, it is irrelevant whether the ascriptions have come from the best of intentions. Even noble objectives have contributed to the legitimisation of violence and violation for centuries. In this respect, Walter Mignolo speaks of “colonial wounds”, which have etched themselves onto generations of people. Their bodies bear witness to scars and injuries, as has been impressively described by Toni Morrison in her novels.

In her book “The Touch of Transcendence”, the postcolonial theologian Mayra Rivera memorably discusses the tension between ascriptions which inflict colonial wounds and the idea of God-given differences between all creatures. On the one hand, it is almost impossible to refrain from pigeonholing people, in the fraction of a second, into categories of gender, “race”, health etc. On the other hand, it is also impossible to objectify people entirely, since they seem to escape us time again. For it is true that an indelible part of God has been given to all beings, as they are God’s creatures. Even amongst human beings, it is possible to encounter transcendence, by infinitely valuing the differences between ourselves as a gift of God. However, not every interaction between humans is a happy one. Rivera speaks not only about experiences of happiness, but also about experiences of being hurt, which are the experiences of victims who have been denied to participate in the transcendence of God. (Colonial) wounds and scars of the past centuries can etch themselves onto bodies today. Rivera plays with the metaphor of the ghost: The ghosts of the past continue to pursue us, hunting us down, crying out for justice and demanding the transcendence which they did not experience.

Can we hear these unruly ghosts? For not only is there a history of colonial wounds, but also a history of resistance against them and a history of longing for change and hope. It is important to become more sensitive - in church, theology and society - to postcolonial voices and to develop practices which are marked by co-operation not patronisation.

IMAGE:

Advertising poster by Ludwig Hohlwein (1874–1949)

The ghosts of the past continue to pursue us, hunting us down and demanding justice.



SABINE JAROSCH,

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SDG SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

An Expression of Solidarity for the South?

BY HANS DIEFENBACHER

In 2015, the international negotiations concerning the “Sustainable Development Goals” (SDGs) entered a decisive phase. Now that the SDGs have been adopted, they will provide nothing short of a universal framework by which to guide the global developments of the next few years. This incredibly ambitious goal gives the SDGs a wide and far-reaching significance. Following the “Millennium Development Goals” (MDGs), which were meant to be implemented by 2015 according to the declaration made by 147 heads of states and governments assembled at the Millennium Summit of the United Nations in early September 2000, the SDGs are a logical next step. By way of the Millennium Declaration, the existing agreement with the principles of sustainable development and with the Agenda 21, which was adopted at the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) of 1992, has been re-enforced.



**PROF DR
HANS DIEFENBACHER**

Deputy Director of the Protestant Institute for Interdisciplinary Research and Extraordinary Professor for Economics at the Alfred-Weber-Institute of Heidelberg University.

Over the last 15 years, though there has been great potential for progress regarding many of the MDGs, there is “reason for optimism, but no reason for ecstatic joy”, as Saskia Millmann of the UN Youth Association Germany put it last year in a provisional appraisal. According to the 2014 progress report based on the results of the monitoring system of the MDGs, in which 60 indicators are scrutinised, in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, for example, the goal to reduce hunger by 50 percent has not been reached. Also, with particu-

lar regard to the goals which promote a decrease in the mortality rates of children and mothers and access to sanitary facilities, there are still substantial shortcomings. Finally, there has been a continuation of the major trends which threaten ecological sustainability.

A discussion as to how to proceed with the MDGs, post-2015, began several years ago and the question was asked: Should there be new, more ambitious MDGs, even if some of the objectives set in 2000 had not been achieved? The setting of new goals would only be possible if there was an agreement concerning the reasons why these goals had been missed. It is, of course, self-evident that every goal and every region should be examined in a differentiated manner; beyond this, fundamental differences in analysis and evaluation are becoming apparent.

- A top line of reasoning claims that deficiencies with regard to the achievement of objectives can be attributed to deficiencies in the “governance” of the affected nations.
- Another line of argument put forward is that part of the failure to comply with the MDGs can be ascribed to an insufficient fulfillment of the commitments made by the developed nations themselves. Since the 1970s, there has been a pledge to commit 0.7 percent of the gross domestic product

to development co-operation. This goal has, so far, only been reached by Norway, Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands and Luxembourg. Germany, too, is far from this level with its spending on development at less than 0.4 percent.

- In addition, a third argument emphasises that relations between the global North and the global South display serious structural injustice, of a two-fold nature: On the one hand, the global South is affected by numerous disadvantages when it comes to competition on international markets, making catch-up development difficult, if not impossible. On the other hand, the level of prosperity in the North is so high, that to try and harmonise living conditions would greatly overstrain the earth's natural resources; such an alignment with all its consequences, therefore, cannot be approved by the North.

If the failure to achieve the MDGs cannot be laid solely at the door of bad governance in the global South, then the framework conditions of sustainable development need to relate to the countries of the South as well as those of the North. In this respect, they bear a joint responsibility, from which different goals of action must follow. SDGs would then be tasked to:

- describe development goals which are achievable for all whilst remaining within the limits of the ecological carrying capacity of the planet earth;
- define goals of action which take into account the differences between the initial conditions prevalent in the global North and South as a starting point.

In this respect, the 17 SDGs in the proposal of the Open Working Group (see page 51) can indeed be understood as a fundamental course-setting document. It is also becoming clear however, that the goals need to be more fully differentiated, underpinned by a time frame and - first and foremost - accompanied by measurable indicators so as to be able to ascertain whether developments are progressing well or not. The Open Working Group has already attended to a proportion of this task: The 17 SDGs are already supplemented by 169 targets in the "Proposal for Sustainable Development Goals" of July 2014.

Indeed, the list of goals and targets clearly shows that poor and wealthy nations will need to act in different ways in order to achieve the goals by

2030. In this, the wealthy nations are challenged in two ways: Firstly, they will need to extend their endeavours towards development co-operation. The financial dimension has already been mentioned - however, it would be a mistake to regard these payments merely as an act of Christian love and solidarity. If one considers the additional value created, first by the colonies and then by the unjust conditions of the global market in favour of the early developed nations, payments made within the context of development co-operation can be viewed as a small contribution towards a form of reparation. The SDG 10 - reducing inequalities within and between countries - and SDG 17 - strengthening global solidarity for the realisation of the goals and revitalising the global partnership for sustainable development - point in this direction.

However, the present proposal of the SDGs avoids dealing with the question as to whether a much more intensive form of sensitivity from the global North towards the global South will be required: a marked reduction of resource consumption and pollutant emissions, especially of greenhouse gases, is needed in order to make catch-up development truly possible for the nations of the South. With regard to all the SDGs in which sustainability is expressly called for, various steps of a similar sort are more than likely to be taken. For this reason, SDG 8, which calls for continuous - and yet simultaneously sustainable - economic growth, seems a rather ineffectual attempt to avoid the conflicts which will inevitably arise from discussions about an "economy of sufficiency" in wealthy societies; and also from their commitment to follow a path of development towards a degrowth-society. This debate however, will be the acid test in discerning whether the SDGs are merely another ineffectual document, or whether they can be carried forward by mutual solidarity.

"Sustainable Development Goals" are goals set by the United Nations (UN), which are intended to further safeguard sustainable development at an economic, social and ecological level.



MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

1	Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger	<p>Target 1A: Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people living on less than \$1.25 a day</p> <p>Target 1B: Achieve Decent Employment for Women, Men, and Young People GDP Growth per Employed Person</p> <p>Target 1C: Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger</p>
2	Achieve universal primary education	<p>Target 2A: By 2015, all children can complete a full course of primary schooling, girls and boys</p>
3	Promote gender equality and empower women	<p>Target 3A: Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015</p>
4	Reduce child mortality rates	<p>Target 4A: Reduce by two-thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under-five mortality rate</p>
5	Improve maternal health	<p>Target 5A: Reduce by three quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio</p> <p>Target 5B: Achieve, by 2015, universal access to reproductive health</p>
6	Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases	<p>Target 6A: Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS</p> <p>Target 6B: Achieve, by 2010, universal access to treatment for HIV/AIDS for all those who need it</p> <p>Target 6C: Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases</p>
7	Ensure environmental sustainability	<p>Target 7A: Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programs; reverse loss of environmental resources</p> <p>Target 7B: Reduce biodiversity loss, achieving, by 2010, a significant reduction in the rate of loss</p> <p>Target 7C: Halve, by 2015, the proportion of the population without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation</p> <p>Target 7D: By 2020, to have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum-dwellers</p>
8	Develop a global partnership for development	<p>Target 8A: Develop further an open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system</p> <p>Target 8B: Address the Special Needs of the Least Developed Countries (LDCs)</p> <p>Target 8C: Address the special needs of landlocked developing countries and small island developing States</p> <p>Target 8D: Deal comprehensively with the debt problems of developing countries through national and international measures in order to make debt sustainable in the long term</p> <p>Target 8E: In co-operation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable, essential drugs in developing countries</p> <p>Target 8F: In co-operation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications</p>

17 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGs) PROPOSED BY THE UN OPEN WORKING GROUP

1 End poverty in all its forms everywhere

2 End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture

3 Ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages

4 Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

5 Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

6 Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

7 Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all

8 Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all

9 Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation, and foster innovation

10 Reduce inequality within and among countries

11 Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

12 Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

13 Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

14 Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development

15 Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification and halt and reverse land degradation, and halt biodiversity loss

16 Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

17 Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development

¹ Open Working Group (ed.) (2014): Open Working Group Proposal for Sustainable Development Goals. URL: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/focussdgs.html>



BREAD FOR **THE WORLD**

A Reformatory Idea for Justice **BY CORNELIA FÜLLKRUG-WEITZEL**

It can't go on like this – it was this deep-seated feeling which moved Martin Luther as he contemplated the accumulation of wealth and power, and the patronising of the common people through the imperial church of the late Middle Ages. For him, Reformation was essentially a “movement of liberation”: liberation from being compelled to be involved in dishonest activities and liberation from the delusion that life and salvation have to be earned. This was Christ's work of redemption, not ours; the liberation from teaching authorities and to the freedom to form an opinion independent of all authorities, owing to the direct access that one had to the revealed truth - liberation to serve both God and our neighbour, to hear and to do what is right, and to act responsibly on behalf of the Church and world.

It can't go on like this – this was also the deep-seated feeling amongst the Protestant churches of Germany at the end of the 1950s. Germany was on its way to becoming a prosperous society and people were feeling that the steep economic upturn was something that they had deserved. Forgotten was the gratitude towards God and towards the international community, which, among others, included the churches of the victorious nations, who had made this possible in the first place. In the course of decolonisation, it also became possible, for the first time, to view the extent of the worldwide deprivation which the former colonial rulers had left in India and in Africa, for example. The Protestant churches felt called to acknowledge their complicity and co-responsibility in this and to share the wealth, which had not been earned, with those who

had been made poor. With the clarion call “People are Hungry for Bread”, the foundations of the organisation “Bread for the World” were laid in 1958. The intention was to give all Protestant Christians and churches an opportunity to engage in active repentance, show gratitude, exercise sharing and experience a liberation from a blind striving after wealth and power, which had gained new strength. From its inception, “Bread for the World” was to perceive and understand the causal relations of - and make connections between - adopting a responsible lifestyle of one’s own in society, and the deprivation, injustice and lack of freedom encountered both in the global South and in global relations. As members of the body of Christ, Reformation churches across the globe share in the suffering of others, share in the joy of others, rejoice together in the Gospel, and share bread – and all that the bread stands for, according to Luther’s explanation of the request in the Lord’s Prayer. In the One World, which has been entrusted to the Church as a whole, all the churches together carry the joint responsibility for the welfare of people across the globe and they minister together in diaconal service – as ecumenical diaconia.

Since the beginning of the global missionary movement, the ideas of the Reformation have been far-reaching and foundational in global Christianity: Not only do the churches of the Reformation represent about 840 million believers worldwide (which amounts to about 12 % of the world’s population altogether). As has been the case in Germany, in many other countries, the reformatory faith has also caused a dramatic movement towards greater levels of education and has further inspired people to begin caring for the poor and undertaking social diaconal ministry, which includes health care and various other measures to facilitate the inclusion of the marginalised. Schools, universities, facilities for the disabled, hospitals and infirmaries etc. are virtually a distinctive mark of Reformation churches worldwide. Also the commitment to counteract discrimination and human rights violations, as well as to promote justice and peace, has many reformatory faces across the globe: for example, mention should be made of the Reformed Christian Beyers Naude, the Lutheran Dr Wolfram Kistner and the Anglican Desmond Tutu, all theologians from South Africa.

It can’t go on like this – this is what many churches and believers feel today, as they view the ever-increasing gap between the rich and the poor, a use of force which is deeply contemptuous of life, the immense streams of refugees, climate disasters and an endless thirst for energy, resources and goods, which has long exceeded the limits of the planet. Today, many individual Christians, church-

es and One-World-groups are committed to working for justice, climate justice and peace; pressing towards the great transformation of our lifestyles and economic management across the globe.

It is this which forms the background for a joint project between Bread for the World and the Association of Protestant Churches and Missions in Germany, under the banner: “Reformation – Education – Transformation. The Relevance of the Reformation Tradition(s) for the Work and Witness of the Churches in the Public Sphere”. Together with international ecumenical partners, which include the World Communion of Reformed Churches, the Lutheran World Federation and the World Council of Churches, two global consultations are being prepared in line with the theme of the year: “Reformation and the One World” (2015/2016). It is expected that up to 100 participants will attend from all over the world: from 19th to 24th November 2015 in the Lutheran School of Theology (EST) in Sao Leopoldo, Brazil; and from 18th to 22nd May 2016 in the Francke Foundations, Halle. They are to trace how the Reformation ideas, which began in the 16th century and which came out of Wittenberg and other centres of the Reformation movement, were spread by the missionary movement to many regions of the earth, where they have been independently developed.

The history of the Reformation ideas however, shows that they advanced in a manner which differed from Martin Luther’s own expectations. Today, some refreshing – and at times irritating – ideas and challenges are returning to us from the Reformation traditions of the ecumenical world.

The way ahead may be different today, but the ideas remain promising as the inner dynamics of the Gospel are still active in the reformatory ideas to which the churches bear witness. There will also be different and positive developments affecting the role of the churches within our society and across the world,

- if churches and congregations in Germany do not cease to embrace the global dimension of the reformatory processes,
- if they do not cease in their strong support of initiatives which vitally promote the education and transformation of (global) society towards a way of life – and a system of economic management which display greater justice and solidarity, and which seek to foster the special insights of Martin Luther,
- and if they remain receptive to – and are prepared to listen out for – reformatory insights brought to us by the churches of the global South.



IMAGE ON THE LEFT HAND SIDE:

The first Bread for the World placard was made by the graphic artist Rudi Wagner to mark the foundation of the organisation in 1959.



CORNELIA FÜLLKRUG-WEITZEL,
Pastor, Chair of the Protestant Agency for Diaconia and Development and President of Bread for the World – Evangelical Development Service.

GATES OF FREEDOM



The “World Reformation Exhibition” 2017
in Wittenberg

BY MARGOT KÄSSMANN

“Speak the truth to one another, render in your gates judgments that are true and make for peace.”

(Zech 8.16)

Martin Luther was very much confined to his region and the perception of developments within his context, or, as his biographer Heinz Schilling (2012) wrote: “strangely untouched by the new worlds”. However, the message concerning the freedom of a Christian, education for everyone, confessing one’s faith according to one’s own convictions and implementing it through personal responsibility in the world, is a message which went into all the world.

From 20th May to 10th September 2017, there will be a “World Reformation Exhibition” in Wittenberg. The project management team have deliberately decided not to speak of “the” Reformation in order to make room for diverse understandings of the Reformation within churches and religions, but also within government and society. It is clear that the Reformation is not a conclusive - or even concluded - event, but rather a continuing process. Also, the Reformation is not a purely Protestant process; rather, all churches have, time and time again, reformed themselves. The Roman-Catholic Church, compared, for example, to the way it was during the time of its disputes with Martin Luther,

is greatly changed. At the Council of Trent, it abolished the selling of indulgences, and at the Second Vatican Council, it introduced the celebration of mass in the language of the people. The Church of the Reformation has also needed a series of reforms, in its relationship with Judaism, for example, or in its opposition to the authorities, which has been at times necessary. Society and government are, frequently, in need of reform.

With this breadth of opinion and experience in mind, we have given the World Exhibition the title: “Gates of Freedom”. Whoever looks at the Old Town in Wittenberg, whoever imagines people entering the town to become a part of the Reformation experience in 2017, such a person will inevitably think of gates. There will be seven means of access to the inner city; they are the gates which people will use to enter Wittenberg. No, we will not liken Wittenberg to the holy city of Jerusalem; nevertheless, it is important to visit this place from which emanates such a special sound. Here, in this small town, thoughts were developed 500 years ago, which were able to develop so much power that they changed the world. Within these very gates,

the protagonists Philipp and Katharina, Martin and Elisabeth, would meet every day. This is the very place, from whose gates the message of Christian freedom went out; the gates from whence came the news that no-one need buy indulgences for money, but that God had promised us meaning in life, by grace alone. From here, Luther's writings went out into all the world.

FLING WIDE THE GATES

In the city, these gates are very real: There is the gate to the Cranach-courtyards and the gate to the prison, which is to become a scene of art and culture ... Gates were very important in ancient Israel. They protected the town (Deut 3.5), and possessing the gates of the enemy brought great power (Gen 22.17). Thus, there are gates of freedom and there are gates representing sovereignty. People gather before the gates of the city (Gen 23.10); and in the gates, judicial decisions are made (Deut 16.18; 17.8). This is why there are the gates of righteousness: "Open to me the gates of righteousness that I may enter through them and give thanks to the Lord." (Psalm 118.19)

We are admonished to administer justice in the gates: "These are the things that you shall do: Speak the truth to one another, render in your gates judgments that are true and make for peace." (Zech 8.16) Thus, gates of justice are obviously important. When the gates of Jerusalem were destroyed by fire, it was a most unsettling, traumatic experience (Neh 2.3), and the people were left exposed to the enemy without protection. At that point, guarding the gates became the main priority in order to protect the people; being a guardian of the gates was a most worthy profession (Neh 12.25). Gates of vigilance are needed.

And then, there is the hymn of praise, exhorting the listener to open the gates: "Lift up your heads, o gates! and be lifted up, o ancient doors! that the King of glory may come in." (Psalm 24.7) Gates which are open to faith, indeed, gates which are open to worship are needed, especially in a secular epoch. These are the gates of desire for God. Following the destruction of Jerusalem, the prophet Isaiah describes this beautifully: "Upon your walls, O Jerusalem, I have posted sentinels; all day and all night they shall never be silent. You who call on the Lord, take no rest, and give him no rest un-

til he establishes Jerusalem and makes it renowned throughout the earth." (Is 62.6f) This hope for God, for the presence of God, is indeed a longing in people today – we need gates of yearning for God.

However, one can also be trapped within the gates of a city, as David was (1. Sam 23.7), and this should not be underrated. Locked gates restrict freedom, they frighten people and give rise to injustice. In contrast, open gates are a vision of a peaceful future: "Your gates shall always be open; day and night they shall not be shut, so that nations shall bring you their wealth, with their kings led in procession." (Is 60.11)

The gates of Jerusalem were named after the twelve tribes of Israel, three gates per cardinal point. No, there will not be twelve gates here, and Wittenberg is not the heavenly Jerusalem. However, the gates will be given names. One gate is to be the Gate of Youth. Of course, there will be a Gate of the Ecumenical World and Dialogue of Religions, but there will also be a Gate of Spirituality and a Gate of Art and Culture. Also, the world's questions should find their position within the Gates of Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation as well as within the Gate of Globalisation.

I hope that Wittenberg will become a place of experience and adventure in which we discuss and wrestle, in which we marvel and dance, in which we reflect and fall silent. If it becomes obvious that we are able to view Reformation from an open and broad perspective, with an international and ecumenical horizon, as an awakening for the 21st century, then our objective will have been accomplished.



**PROF DR DR H C
MARGOT KÄSSMANN,**

Ambassador of the EKD Council
for the 2017 Reformation Jubilee.



CHURCH PARTNER SHIPS

Encounters with Unfamiliar Brothers and Sisters

BY RALF MEISTER

Church partnerships are established at various levels. When these partnerships lead to personal encounters, they are always inspiring and moving. Friendships, across the boundaries that have been established by language and culture, open up worlds of faith, worlds of the other's faith and worlds of one's own faith. On this matter, here are some remarks concerning a few days in South Africa.

ARRIVAL AT AN UNFAMILIAR PLACE

After a night flight with little sleep, we were picked up in Johannesburg and taken to the Lutheran Guesthouse, Kempton Park, in which we will stay for three nights. The guesthouse lies behind walls and a sliding gate made of steel. Gated community.

Flight to a different world. Arrival at an unfamiliar place. The familiar becomes uncertain. If they are to prove fruitful, church partnerships lead to uncertainty as well as to fascination. They open doors to new and unknown worlds. We live out our faith in cultural and historical conditions. The social situation, the political state of affairs, the history of a country – all of these elements shape our faith. The way in which we often take our faith tradition for granted is challenged through encounters with other Christians. What are the necessary elements of our descriptions of faith? Which attitudes and adaptations are specific to our culture? In the encounter between unfamiliar traditions, both sides discover new facets of that which is their own.

Following a gripping Bible study of almost two hours about "gender-based violence", we enjoyed an introduction to the topic "Reformation and Politics" given by a retired bishop who had worked as a theological supervisor in the ELCSA. It became obvious very quickly that our ways of thinking and approaching the topic were entirely different. My presentation about "Reformation and Politics" after lunch was far too academic and abstract for it to have aroused real interest.

Cultural differences also become visible in our treatment of the Bible and theology. Theology is always contextual theology. This becomes immedi-

ately clear when one gathers around a biblical text with Christians from other cultural regions. Everyone reads the text through their own eyes. Our own cultural interpretive patterns, as well as the social conditions in which we live at any given time, flow involuntarily into the textual work and interpretations. In theory, this has been well known through linguistic philosophy, and yet, it is a very different experience when the theory is replicated as we grapple with each other to better understand a biblical passage. In this way, the foundational theological truth becomes tangible: We do not own the truth, but together, we are journeying towards it.

AN EXPRESSION OF DEEP CHRISTIAN HOPE

In the afternoon, I take part in a meeting of the "women's league" in the village church. It is a weekly meeting of predominately senior women, who are dressed in black and wear a white collar over their blouse, which is fastened with a small, silver crucifix. In addition, they wear a white hat. These women of prayer usually meet in all Lutheran churches on a Thursday morning. On account of my arrival however, the time of their meeting has been changed. In this church, they also regularly visit older, former members of the group in their houses - the journey to the church having become too difficult - and celebrate the Lord's Supper with them. Whilst singing in the unadorned room, I studied some of their faces and contemplated what they might be thinking about? The life stories of the very old women in particular must be very moving, deeply connected, as they are, with the varied and painful movement of the land.

Faith is steeped in life stories; and life stories are steeped in faith. The style and liveliness with which services are celebrated here and with which community is lived out, touches me deeply. Perhaps, this vivacity is also the expression of a deep Christian hope. The telling privilege of hopelessness is a luxury which only rich societies can afford. No-one in the poor regions of the world, neither in the townships, nor in the favelas can afford

Hopelessness is a privilege and luxury of rich societies showing them up for what they are.



RALF MEISTER,
Bishop of the
Evangelical-Lutheran
Church of Hanover.

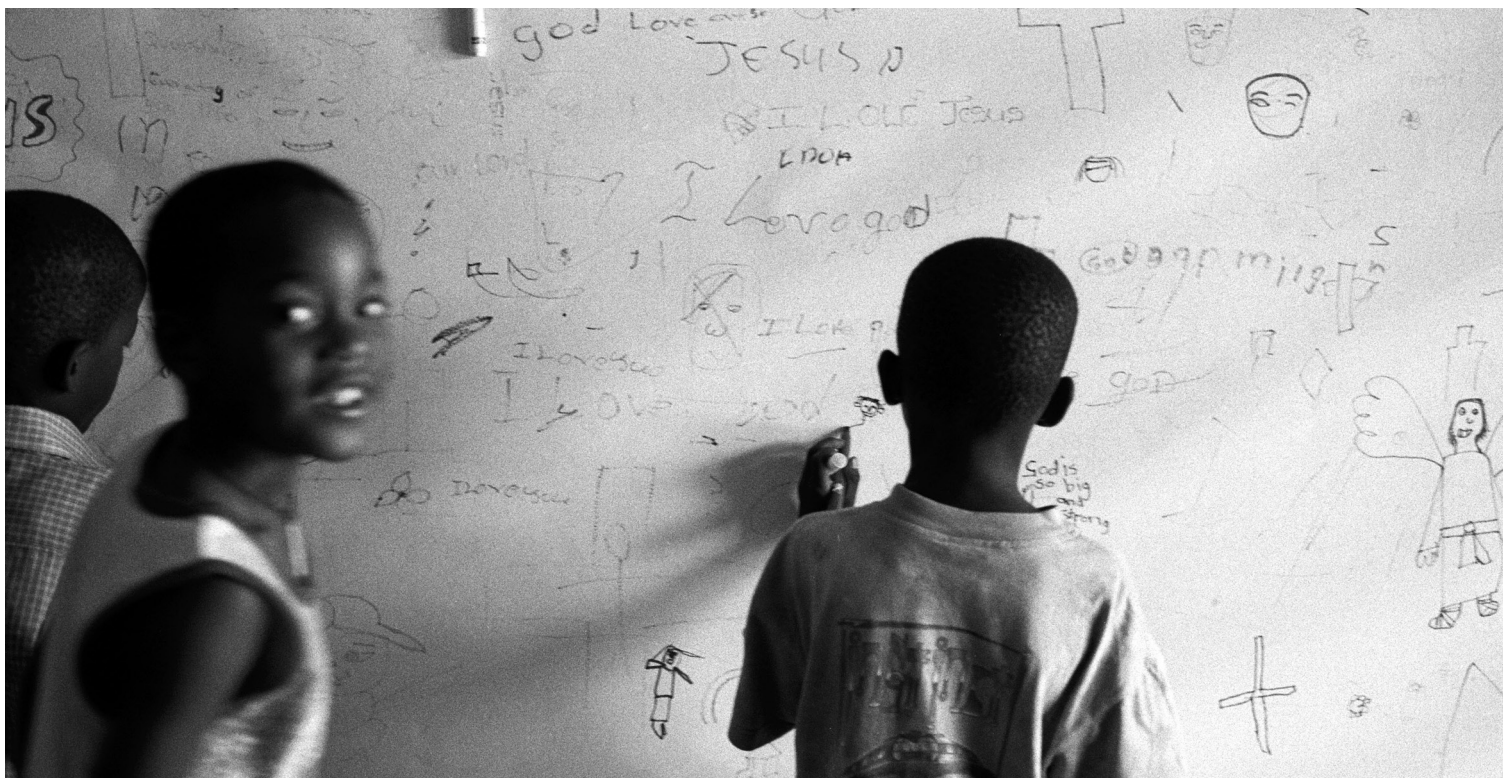
hopelessness. Christian hope is also to be found in the realms of the “nevertheless”. There is no better place to learn this than through such encounters.

We continue along the coastline of Durban towards the South and enjoy a brief stop at the harbour. We also stop unexpectedly at a church, in which Pat, a dedicated pensioner, is building a soup kitchen and a visiting service for the homeless. Surrounded by many black people, he welcomes us, and there are also some white people in the square behind the church. Food is brought out and placed on a table. Everyone waits patiently for it to be

South Africa, one learns that diaconia is a part and parcel of sharing testimony about one's faith, and one learns also that diaconia needs to enquire about the testimony of the faith.

THE CHURCH IS THE PEOPLE

As before in Pretoria, at the roadside, we see African Christians gathered around a white stone circle, celebrating one of these services that are strongly characterised by African spirituality. They are guided by the Old Testament and their services are celebrated on a Saturday, the “Sabbath”. All are dressed



JOHANNESBURG, children give expression to their faith in the church

given out. Pat emphasises that he started doing missionary work 15 years ago and quickly noticed that he was unable to help people without the diaconal activities. “We simply cannot concoct God's commission in a way that we happen to like” he says drily. This is how the evangelistic ministry came to be complemented by diaconal service, and all done in an honorary capacity.

With the advent of the welfare state, the diaconal profile changed completely. Whilst care for the poor has always been a traditional field of action for the Church, it is now done professionally and through the state. Nevertheless, our commission is measured by the role diaconal action plays within it. A large part of the acceptance that churches enjoy in our society can be traced back to their diaconal service. In congregational partnerships in particular, the diaconal profile can be strengthened. In

in white and the gatherings always occur in public places. Only the white stone circle marks their holy place.

This frugality fascinates me; that a white stone circle is enough to mark the place of a religious gathering. Faith requires places in which to gather. At the same time, this stone circle makes it apparent that there is no need for great cathedrals. Ultimately, the church is the people who gather in this bare stone circle. In places like this, one is reminded of an old Protestant truth. The faith in the good news of Jesus will make its own way, and the many forms it can assume are most strikingly seen in the context of church partnerships.



*"Dear
Lord, thank you for all
that you have done for us. We come be-
fore your throne with adoration and honor; we
are grateful for your love, our families, our friends
and the churches that we fellowship at. Lord, we ask that
today may you teach us to love one another to be unified in
the world, that, Lord, may we carry out the freedom to spread
the love of Jesus Christ in the World and the Gospel of truth that
you have given us to share and live by. We also pray that we
may have peace in our hearts always even in the most difficult
times, give us hope and care for one another. Thank you Fa-
ther. We ask this in Jesus Christ our Lord
and Saviour. Amen."*

Mahlatse from South Africa

CAP CAMP

An international meeting place for young adults

BY ANNEKE BARGHEER, ANTJE BRACHT AND THOMAS FENDER



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The CAP Camp offers international experiences for young adults from various partner churches in Africa and Europe. CAP stands for Comrades, Artisans and Partners. In a camp, which lasts three weeks, participants have the opportunity to get to know one another, to exchange ideas about their cultures and faith, and to work together on social projects. CAP was first established in 1983. It is usually held every other year in one of the partner nations. Far more than 500 young men and women from Africa and Europe have already participated. During the most recent camp, churches from South Africa (Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa), Rwanda (Eglise Presbytérienne au Rwanda), Belgium (Verenigde Protestantse Kerk in Belgie) and Germany (Evangelical-Reformed Church) were involved. In 2014, the CAP Camp took place in Germany for the first time. Under the banner "Seeds of Love and Freedom", 30 young people spent the summer together in Northern Germany. They looked into the historical background of colonialism, apartheid, holocaust and genocide, and discussed ecological and social justice.

Many who participated in the programme of the summer of 2014 experienced global Christianity for the first time. They learnt that, in spite of the many differences, they were surprisingly close to one another.

"What exactly it is that happens at CAP can hardly be put into words", is what many say. "It is a camp, in which there is a very concentrated co-existence, in which unfamiliarity and friendship, commonality and difference, are found side-by-side, and where "ecumenical" and "international" suddenly become terms which take on a deeply personal and emotional meaning."

By making it possible for such meaningful experiences to occur, the CAP Camp has been contributing to the promotion of intercultural and ecumenical relations for many years, and plays an important role in the establishment and strengthening of partnerships.

"Through personal encounter", one participant said, "through our living together, our discussions, I not only learnt new things about myself, but I was able to see the bigger picture and this gave me an idea of what is possible in our world."

*"Dear God,
Heavenly father, As the time
flies, we are blessed to be participants
on CAP 2014. We would like to thank you
for the time and people we were getting to know.
Please stand by us in the future, make us be the
seeds of your love. Give us the strength to spread
your words of freedom and peace. Let us be hum-
ble and guide us throughout our lives as young
adults. Amen."*

Yong-Wan from Belgium

*"I pray that the almighty God,
the Lord of peace will heal our world
and our churches. That he will continue to teach
his people that they are God's people and that everyone
has a value in the face of God. That the Holy Spirit will real-
ly guide everyone so we can be children of God. We pray that God
will help our church leaders to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ with
God's guidance so that Church will never be the tool of conflict as it has
been before and that God will fill love in our hearts as he said that he,
who does not love, doesn't know God for God is love. I pray that one day
friendship will be the heritage. I pray that like David we will be glad and
joyful to enter in the house of the Lord where we go to be healed and
not to be choked. I put churches before Jesus, who is the head of it,
and he can do everything to bring unity. We want to be one, so
we can be able to serve him fully and peacefully. Amen."*

Emmanuel from Rwanda

"BEING MADE WELCOME IN A FOREIGN LAND".

#CAP2014 #WELCOMETOGERMANY

"CAP CAMP IS A PLACE WHERE DIFFERENT CULTURES AND TRADITIONS MEET
AND LEARN A LOT FROM EACH OTHER" **#MANLERNTNIEAUS**

"DIFFERENT CULTURES AND TRADITIONS MEET AND LEARN FROM EACH OTHER"

#VIELFALT #NEUESLERNEN

"EXCHANGE IDEAS, EXPERIENCE CULTURES, SHARE SPIRITUAL LIFE"

#WIRHABENALLEWASGEMEINSAM

"RECOGNISING COMMONALITIES AND DIFFERENCES IN THE HISTORY OF OUR COUNTRIES"

#AUSDERVERGANGENHEITLERNEN #ERINNERUNGSKULTUR

"LIVING WITH CONFLICT AND SEEKING WAYS OF UNDERSTANDING"

#GEMEINSAMWEGEFINDEN

"EVEN THOUGH IT IS DIFFICULT FOR US, WE ARE ALL TRYING AND, IN THE END, WE ARE PROGRESSING"

#ZUSAMMENARBEITEN#GEMEINSAMETWASSCHAFFEN

"BY WORKING TOGETHER, GETTING TO KNOW NEW PEOPLE AND DISCOVERING A DIFFERENT WORK ETHIC"

#SOZIALEPROJEKTE

"TIME TO TALK WITH PEOPLE, PERSONAL INTENSE TIME FOR US TO JUST TALK AND GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER"

#FREUNDSCHAFT

"ONE CANNOT GET TO KNOW ONE ANOTHER WITHOUT TALKING"

#MITEINANDERINGSGESPRÄCHKOMMEN #KEINERWORTEKEINVERSTEHEN

"WE COME FROM DIFFERENT CULTURES... AND WOW! THE UNITY THAT WE HAD WAS JUST
OVERFLOWING, IT WAS JUST OVERWHELMING" **#WOISTDASPROBLEM?**

"THE LAUGHTER AND THE JOY – THAT JUST CAME THROUGH
AND THAT WAS SO COOL" **#ÖKUMENEMACHTSPASS**

"SOMETHING I THINK I WILL REMEMBER IN LIKE 100 YEARS"

#TRANSFORMINGLIFE





“THE CHURCH IS GLOBAL, WE NEED EACH OTHER”

Dr Fidon Mwombeki, General Secretary of the United Evangelical Mission and Member of the Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD), in conversation with Bettina von Clausewitz

VON CLAUSEWITZ: *The EKD speaks of the Reformation as a “citizen of the world”, the German Federal Parliament terms it an “event of global significance”; do you have the impression that the plans for the Anniversary, so far, really do have the world outside Europe in mind?*

DR. MWOMBEKI: Not enough, I would say. I am myself involved in the Council of the EKD, and we started planning years ago, but I have the impression that we are very much focussed on the events in Germany and the discussion between Protestants and Catholics; there is much less reference to the rest of the world.

VON CLAUSEWITZ: *In which ways should Christians from other continents feature?*

DR. MWOMBEKI: It is difficult for all of the others to contribute, because planning for 2017 started very early in Germany; many years ago, when people elsewhere were not yet thinking about it, that is the problem. Something like a Decade would be unthinkable in Tanzania or Indonesia! (laughs) There, people will probably start thinking in 2016 about how to celebrate 2017. At the moment, it is not being thought about. That is just the way it is.

VON CLAUSEWITZ: *When they are ready – what will the churches of the South contribute to the discussion, what can we learn from them?*

DR. MWOMBEKI: In the South, people are mainly thinking about Luther. In Germany, people are not thinking about him enough, it seems to me. I know that some say it is too much, we should not only be celebrating Luther, not only Wittenberg, we also need to include Catholics – but I know about people in the southern hemisphere. I know that they want to come to Wittenberg, Erfurt and Eisleben, they want to celebrate in these historical locations.

VON CLAUSEWITZ: *Is that the same for you?*

DR. MWOMBEKI: Yes, of course, I have already been there! In 1985 actually, when I came to Europe for the first time. Then, these places were still in the

German Democratic Republic. But I absolutely wanted to see where Luther had lived, and it was well worth the journey. I saw Luther’s church, his clothes, his grave – which meant a lot to me as an African. And some years ago, I went back to Wittenberg with my whole family, so that my wife and children could see the place. That just had to be done.

VON CLAUSEWITZ: *Some churches in the South have nevertheless said to the EKD: Why should we come, we achieved independence long ago, we can celebrate just as well at home. Can you understand that?*

DR. MWOMBEKI: Of course they will celebrate on their own as well, and only a few will come to Germany, but we also have requests from church leaders who want to visit the historical places here. Many Christians throughout the world are well aware that the roots of their faith lie here in Germany. On the other hand, I know that the Lutheran World Federation intends to celebrate the Reformation at its General Assembly in 2017 in Namibia; these plans have also been made.

VON CLAUSEWITZ: *Is this an expression of increasing self-confidence? Many churches in the global South are growing, especially in your home continent of Africa, while the European churches are becoming less important?*

DR. MWOMBEKI: Yes, that is true, but it does not diminish the mutual commitment. The churches in the global South are still looking for co-operation in partnership with the churches in the global North and this is very important for them.

VON CLAUSEWITZ: *For a long time, missions produced a kind of one-way street for theology and development from the global North to the South; today, we speak of a partnership on an equal footing. Is there also a process of learning from one another in relation to the Reformation?*

DR. MWOMBEKI: Yes, I can see such a learning process taking place, but progress is quite slow. >



“I hope to see the roots of the Reformation strengthened in the churches. I am not interested in large celebrations, which are quickly past, and that is why I am grateful for the Decade.”

It is my experience that the old roles have not disappeared entirely. The German churches are finding it difficult to receive something and the churches in the global South are finding it difficult to give. I have some doubts as to whether there are indeed a large number of Christians in Germany who expect to receive something from the global South - as a learning church. I have been here for ten years, and it has been my continual experience that this learning process is more easily accomplished at church-governing level, but many people in the congregations think that the churches in the global South are poor and we need to teach them what is right and what is wrong. Whenever, for example, we bring pastors from the global South into the congregations here, there are people who genuinely want to learn from them, but there are also many who believe that they come, first and foremost, to learn something themselves.

VON CLAUSEWITZ: *So what is it that we should be open to, that we could learn from?*

DR. MWOMBEKI: The Church of Christ is global and we need each other, we need our diverse ideas and we need inspiration. I do not believe that the Church in the global North has nothing left to give, because it is allegedly so weak and shrinking - this is just not true. However, I do have some ideas, some questions: Why do people here tend to speak more about the church than about God and Jesus Christ? How can one speak about one's own faith? Is it right to regard one's religiosity - prayer, for example - as a purely private matter, or can we, in all freedom, make it a public one? The German churches have strong structures and a strong constitution, but do they not need to think about certain things more intensely, about the paid life-long, full-time pastoral ministry, for example? What should it look like in the future? In my opinion, the pastor's status as a public official is not indispensable.

VON CLAUSEWITZ: ... *this would mean slaughtering a holy cow in our church!*

DR. MWOMBEKI: I know (laughs), but the pastoral office can be done differently. When we were discussing the imminent savings which need to be made in the Rhineland recently, I said: If we do not speak about the appointment of pastors as public officials (with guaranteed life-long employment), then these savings will not get us anywhere in the long run. This is a problem. I have also spoken to theology students, who think that pastors' appointment as public officials is not absolutely necessary, and who would also be willing to work as other employees. In South Africa, there is a small Rhenish church, which has survived for more than 60 years with about ten pastors, of whom only one or two

are full-time staff, the others work in the economic sector or in public service; this is the only way it can be done, since they do not have the money to do things in a different way. Another idea relates to the ecumenical relations between the United, Reformed and Lutherans in the EKD, the tension between them all is sad. The many discussions about structures, which are behind this, are to be found nowhere else in the world. And I am asking myself: Why are these processes so difficult in Germany?

VON CLAUSEWITZ: *The other side of the legacy of the Reformation - what would you suggest?*

DR. MWOMBEKI: It is a difficult legacy, but in other countries, they managed to overcome that. The German churches could learn a lot from these processes. If a church is in a minority situation, for instance, the situation is entirely different. In such a situation, people are much closer to each other than they are here, and this includes the Catholics. In Sri Lanka, for example, the churches got together and issued joint statements, because they all felt challenged by fundamentalist Buddhists. Then of course, one asks: Should the reasons for the insurmountable differences in Germany be attributed to the doctrine, the history or certain personalities?

“Why do people speak more about the church here than about God and Jesus Christ?”

VON CLAUSEWITZ: *Can there be mutual learning even in the interpretation of the Gospel?*

DR. MWOMBEKI: There are topics about which I don't hear anyone speaking in Germany, although they were common subjects during the Reformation, subjects like sin and the confession of sins. I myself am a member of the Church of the Rhineland and attend the main church of Unterbarmen in Wuppertal. In my church, the confession of sins is not something anybody speaks about, but in Tanzania, this is a natural part of the service. I would like to ask whether we could rediscover such essential topics. I do not know why people in Germany do not speak about sin. But I believe that it is wrong, since it is a fundamental doctrine of the Reformation: Justification, sure, but of what? The Gospel tells me, of course, that my sins have been forgiven. This is the good news!

VON CLAUSEWITZ: *What role do the migrant churches amongst us have to play in this learning process?*

DR. MWOMBEKI: If they are churches of a Lutheran or Reformed confession, and the only difference between them and the German regional church-

es lies in the language, then they should be much better integrated. However, if they are charismatics or Pentecostals and have a very different doctrine, then I would have concerns. Even in Africa or Asia, they are not part of the historic mainline churches. Therefore, one needs to look at each situation carefully and also do the same with regard to churches with migration backgrounds. There is another thing which worries me: The churches in the EKD call themselves “church of the people (volkskirchlich)”, but the people change very quickly. Whenever I am on the street, in a supermarket or in a train - everywhere, I see many different faces and skin colours. But this is not so in the churches. There, I am usually the only African in the congregation. If our churches mean to be churches of the people, then they need to reflect the people who live here today, but this is not yet the case.

VON CLAUSEWITZ: *You have been in Germany for ten years, what are the insights and experiences which you will take from here, from the “Land of the Reformation”, and apply to your faith, your theology, and your everyday-life back in Africa?*

DR. MWOMBEBI: I will only know the answer to this question when I have travelled back. I have definitely gained a lot of theological and organisational knowledge. The culture of organisation here has become important to me, I find the chaotic lifestyle, the unreliability and non-committal ways of decisions in our nations hard to bear. From a theological perspective, I have learned to appreciate the culture of discussion; this is lacking in our churches, where leaders often simply dictate what the people are meant to believe. The attitude is that we are the bishops, and this is why we make a declaration, and it is binding. Very authoritarian - but nowadays often, people do not follow them. Globalisation has already effected some changes as well. If I ever go back and am asked to take on a leading position, then I will do things differently, more democratically, there will be discussions about everything. Everyone can contribute to decisions.

VON CLAUSEWITZ: *You yourself come from a Lutheran church and hold Luther in high regard, but in other churches, it is the arrival of the first missionaries in the 19th century which is celebrated, and not Luther’s affixing his theses to the Schlosskirche door in Wittenberg?*

DR. MWOMBEBI: That is correct. I have just come from West Papua and was very impressed with the degree of enthusiasm with which the arrival of the first two missionaries, Johann Gottlob Geißler and Carl Wilhelm Ottow, was celebrated. One hundred and sixty years ago, in 1855, they arrived on the island of Mansinam, and this day was a national



holiday for the whole of West-Papua. Thousands of people came to celebrate. But Luther, Calvin and Zwingli are unheard of over there, except perhaps among theologians. In Germany, there is much critique of missions, but I wonder where that comes from. Do the Germans think that all these people are stupid for continuing to celebrate the arrival of these two young men, who were sent out by the Gossner Mission in Berlin? They celebrate the freedom that these two men proclaimed them. Ottow’s grave is a place of pilgrimage. He is a national hero, even if he only worked there for six years before he died.

VON CLAUSEWITZ: *What do you hope for, what is your vision for the Reformation jubilee?*

DR. MWOMBEBI: I hope to see the roots of the Reformation strengthened in the churches. I am not interested in large celebrations, which are quickly past, and that is why I am grateful for the Decade. I hope that people in Germany will speak more about faith and religion. People do speak about religion on account of the fundamentalists, but I would like the message of the Reformation and of freedom to be heard much more clearly. I would be sorry to hide away the good news of Jesus Christ and only to speak about the role of religion in society. The Gospel was never easy to proclaim, but we may not hide our message away in the name of kindness. Of course, we want the religions to be at peace with each other, and religious freedom is important, but this does not mean that we do not clearly proclaim our message.

VON CLAUSEWITZ: *Dr Mwombeki, thanks for this conversation.*



BETTINA VON CLAUSEWITZ,
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THE PILGRIMAGE

of Justice and Peace **BY SABINE UDOESKU**

Among our neighbours, there is much talk of Luther.” I recently read this phrase in a Swiss church magazine, the “Reformierte Presse”. In his contribution, the author of the article looks across the border to the German activities and events celebrating the Reformation Jubilee in 2017. He hopes that his country, which is also a homeland of the Reformation, will gather momentum and also become one of the hosts of the jubilee. The understanding that the Reformation is a European - or even worldwide - process and a desire to celebrate it as such, is spreading. Meanwhile, I have the impression that there is also much talk about Calvin and Zwingli in Europe and beyond. The European Roadmap, which will pass through about 60 cities, will contribute to the display of a diversity of voices involved in the Reformation. That the Reformation has become a world citizen will be shown, not least through the World Exhibition planned for 2017 in Wittenberg.

ENCOURAGEMENT TO START

On the websites of partner churches within the ecumenical world, such as the Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil or the Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Namibia, to name but a couple, suggestions and contributions regarding the jubilee are also being made. The reformatory insight that a person is saved by grace alone and accepted by God, and for this reason, is empowered by the Holy Spirit to do good deeds, has an important role to play in informing and shaping the ideas which the churches of the southern hemisphere have regarding the jubilee celebrations. They centre around the Reformation's contemporary relevance and the question as to how the proclamation of the gift of the Gospel, which is freely given to us, can be tangibly implemented in the world.

The invitation to join a pilgrimage of justice and peace, to engage in a new, worldwide movement, is both a challenge and an encouragement, as articulated in 2013 by the Tenth Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in Busan, Korea:

“We intend to move together. Challenged by our experiences in Busan, we challenge all people of good will to engage their God-given gifts in transforming actions. This Assembly calls you to join us in pilgrimage. May the churches be communities of healing and compassion, and may we see the Good

News so that justice will grow and God's deep peace rest on the world.” (From the Message of the 10th Assembly) This challenge is directed at the member churches and partners of the WCC, and includes people of other religions and non-religious convictions. The challenge involves walking together on a common quest and, through collaborative engagement for justice and peace, helping to heal a world in which conflict, injustice and pain are dominant. During the next seven years ahead of the next WCC Assembly, topics including the following will need to be addressed: climate change, an economy for life, non-violent peace-building and reconciliation, and human dignity.

The pilgrimage is understood to be both a gift and a shared task: Justice and peace are God's gifts for the world; they are a sign and foretaste of the Kingdom of God, which is to manifest itself vibrantly in concrete ways.

Many Christians joined the “Ecumenical Pilgrimage for Climate Justice”, an initiative which led up to the UN-Climate Conference in Paris in 2015 and involved numerous stages.

In 2015, at the UN-Climate Conference in Paris, a new, international climate protection agreement was adopted. The pilgrimage intended to draw attention to the global dimension of climate change in the run-up to the conference, and advanced the discussions regarding issues of justice. There, voices from the global South emphasised just how urgent the need for effective action has become.

An ecumenical alliance of Protestant regional churches, Roman-Catholic dioceses, free churches, Christian development agencies, mission agencies and youth associations invited all those who were interested to join this pilgrimage. It took place between 13th September and 6th December 2015, when people of good will from southern Germany and Switzerland walked from Flensburg via Trier to Paris. There were many opportunities to actively participate in the events, ranging from preparing a spiritual message to designing political action, from hosting pilgrims in a church community to actively walking together, either for a stretch of the way or for the entire length of route. More information can be found on the following website:

www.klimapilgern.de



SABINE UDOESKU,

Pastor, Head of the Project
“Pilgrimage of Justice and
Peace” in the Church Office of
the EKD.



BISHOP K. H. TING (1915–2012), CHINA

THE ORGANISER

Bishop K. H. Ting, or Ding Guangxun, is the central figure in the development of Chinese Christianity in the 20th century. Whilst he grew up and was ordained into the Anglican Church in Shanghai, he studied Theology in New York (Columbia University, Union Theological Seminary) from 1947 to 1951. He then returned to China, where he became General Manager of the Chinese Christian Literature Society and, shortly afterwards, the President of the Nanjing Theological Seminary. In 1954, K. H. Ting was one of the leading figures who signed the Chinese Christian Manifesto, which became the programmatic founding document of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM) with its key motto: self-governing, self-supporting, self-propagating. In 1955, K. H. Ting was consecrated as an Anglican bishop,

but lost his position during the Cultural Revolution. In the 1970s, he returned to prominence and was appointed President of the TSPM and the China Christian Council in 1980. He remained Principal of Nanjing Theological Seminary and was one of the founding members of a social and diaconal foundation (Amity Foundation), later becoming its President, and remaining committed to the foundation until his death in 2012. Bishop Ting's theology was principally characterised by his attempt to strengthen the indigenous, Chinese character of Chinese Christianity, whose members had, for a long time, been fighting the accusation that they were following a "Western, imported religion". His approaches to a "theology of reconstruction", which related to the requirements of and possible connecting factors

between the Christian message and the Chinese way of thinking and society, are still relevant today. Protestant ecclesiasticism, which rose within China's political arena in the years following the Cultural Revolution, was essentially given its organisational form, as well as its theological and diaconal direction, by Bishop Ting. In 1991, he served as the Head of the Delegation of the Chinese Christian Council, through which Chinese Christians were re-admitted into the ecumenical fellowship of the World Council of Churches.

BY DIETRICH WERNER

Prof Dr Dr h c Dietrich Werner is Theological Advisor at Bread for the World.



IN DISAGREEMENT YET GOOD TEMPERED

The Way the United Methodist Church Lives out its Global Fellowship

BY ROSEMARIE WENNER

"This is our Bishop."

This is how I was introduced, when asked to oversee the episcopal election for Sierra Leone on behalf of the Council of Bishops at a conference in West Africa. Although I was in an unfamiliar environment, I was accustomed to many of the conference procedures, as our church life is shaped according to the same constitution, doctrine and order. The services however, were not only longer, but also more animated and emotional than those at home. Only in our international churches, which attract many migrants from Africa, do I dance whilst placing an offering in the basket. Ever since the hymns which were written by Charles Wesley, one of the founders of the Methodist movement, were translated into many languages, there is an element that is typically Methodist, which connects us all across every boundary of culture and language, in the celebration of our services.

With nearly 13 million church members in its congregations, across four continents, the United Methodist Church is the largest member church of the World Methodist Council. Why is it organized as a worldwide church? The geographical regions of the Methodist Church called "conferences" emerged from the missionary work of the Methodist churches in the United States of America, and

banded together in 1968 to become the "United Methodist Church". The German name is "Evangelical Methodist Church" ("Evangelisch-Methodistische Kirche", EMK). Historically speaking, we are a US-American Church with missions across the globe. Some of these missions became autonomous churches, which today are affiliated to the mother church, as are, for example, the Methodist Churches in Latin America or the Korean Methodist Church. The majority of these conferences maintained an organisational unity with the American mother church and we are still in the process of

*"Though we cannot think alike,
may we not love alike? May we not
be of one heart, though we are
not of one opinion?"*

John Wesley



ROSEMARIE WENNER,

Bishop of the Evangelical
Methodist Church in Germany.

developing from an American church with international expansion, to a global church.

This process is being advanced by the fact that the church is growing strongly in Africa and Asia. In 1968, when the church was unified, 5.2 % of the almost 11 million members were living outside the

USA. In 2013, the figures had risen to 43 % of almost 13 million members. Similarly, there is an increase in the number of delegates from outside the USA who attend the so called General Conferences, during which decisions for the whole of the church are made.

Every four years, the General Conference convenes as the highest governing body of the United Methodist Church. The conference decides on "matters which concern the whole church". This includes issues of membership, the understanding of baptism and the eucharist, ordained ministry and episcopal oversight. Above and beyond this, the General Conference passes resolutions on fundamental social-ethical positions, which are termed "Social Principles". At times, in the midst of a discussion about an amendment to the motion for an amendment of the main motion regarding, for example, the requirements for admission to ordination, someone might raise their hand and say, "I promised my church in Nigeria to mention in the General Conference that we need a hospital in our region!" And suddenly, the delegates notice how we, who come from very different contexts, set different priorities.

Debates about homosexuality are fraught with tension. At present, our Social Principles say that all people, regardless of their sexual orientation, are welcome in the congregations because God's grace is there for everyone. Practising homosexuals, however, should not work as ordained ministers, and there should not be any ceremonies that are tantamount to the wedding of heterosexual couples. Many church members advocate an opening up of this position. Others regard it as a betrayal of Christian doctrine. For some church members from African or Eastern European nations, engaging in the debates themselves is already breaking a taboo. As yet, we have lived with these differences and continue to discuss such topics, since we are convinced that, as a globally constituted church, we can offer a unique contribution in a globalised world. "The mission of the Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world", this is the key message we want to implement in church life. We have set four priorities: Founding new congregations and revitalize the existing ones; training people to take on leading responsibilities in the church and in the world; working together with the poor to fight poverty and promote health care across the globe. It was the United Methodist Church that developed the campaign "Imagine no Malaria" and is implementing it, together with the

Gates-Foundation and the United Nations Foundation. In the western hemisphere, money is collected, and the churches in Africa are ideal places for advancing health care at grassroots level, where prevention programs can be implemented.

DIFFERENT WAYS OF THINKING, THE SAME LOVE?

Our global networking helps us to stand alongside migrants and the streams of refugees. When new congregations are established in our nation, because people want to worship in their mother tongue, their congregations are integrated into our structures, in just the same way as the German-speaking congregations. According to our church order, this is also possible for congregations which attract people from other Methodist churches. All members of the World Methodist Council see themselves as a missionary movement, connecting personal spirituality with a commitment to work for a more equitable world.

Ecumenical breadth, as well as the commitment to unity, have characterized us from our very beginnings. We take to heart what John Wesley wrote to a Roman-Catholic Christian in 1749: "Though we cannot think alike, may we not love alike? May we not be of one heart, though we are not of one opinion? Without all doubt, we may. Herein, all the children of God may unite, notwithstanding these smaller differences. These remaining as they are, they may forward one another in love and good works."



The United Methodist Church (UMC) (the German name is "Evangelisch-methodistische Kirche"; EmK) is an Evangelical Free Church, which emerged from a revival movement in England in the 18th century. Leading personalities at the beginnings of the movement were the brothers John and Charles Wesley. Through returning migrants from England and the USA, the UMC became established in Germany.

Since 1987, the Evangelical Churches in Germany and the EmK have enjoyed pulpit and altar fellowship and recognise the ordination of their clergy.

TAKING

A CONTRARY STANCE

“Resistance” in Confessional Texts,
from the Time of the Reformation until Today

BY UWE BIRNSTEIN

Oh dear, a lecture about a confession of faith which is nearly 400 years old, can this be at all interesting? It is very likely that the theology students in Aberdeen, Scotland, went to their venerable university without any great expectations on this particular spring day in 1938. In Europe, dramatic events are appearing on the horizon and a 52-year-old theology professor named Karl Barth arrives from Switzerland, wishing to explain an ancient text. Why would he want to do this? As if there was nothing that was more important in the world! Gradually, the hall fills up. Some students are aware that the professor, who had been teaching in Bonn, had been forced to resign three years earlier. The reason for the suspension was that Barth had refused to swear allegiance to Adolf Hitler. This act of resistance to the establishment, which had forced university staff to toe the line, cost him his job. Indignant, Barth moved back to his native city of Basel. From there, he travelled nearly 2000 kilometres to Aberdeen.

For his guest lecture of that day, Barth had chosen the topic: “Confessio Scotica”. It had been written by the Scottish Reformer John Knox and his fellow reformers in 1560.

Barth had chosen an intriguing title for his lecture: “The Political Service of God”. The students in the university lecture room in Aberdeen are surprised: Service of God? Surely, this is a spiritual matter, how then can it be political? Then, the man with the grey hair steps up to the lectern. Quickly, everyone realises that, in the midst of the frightening world of today, the old confession is strikingly relevant. Christians may not “be indifferent and retreat from the world”, Barth urges the students.

With its recommendation to show restraint in political affairs, Lutheranism intended to “suggest an acknowledgment of the independence of the secular empire from the kingdom of Jesus Christ”. This is not acceptable, Barth thunders: Ultimately, Jesus is not only the “Lord of the Church”, but also the “Lord of the world”! The professor’s speech becomes rousing. Indeed, worldly rulers are appointed by God – and given a clear responsibility, he quotes from the Scottish Confessio: “for the manifestation of his own glory and for the good and well-being of all men!” In this sense, political order is a form of service to God; it needs to make room for the Church, so that she can carry the good news further.

RESISTING TYRANNY

Barth reads from the Scottish Confession. Christians should honour “princes, rulers and superior powers” it says, “if they are not contrary to the commands of God”. Similarly - hear hear! - good works before God include “repressing tyranny”. God not only allows for resistance - indeed, he calls for it! In some circumstances, it can even be important to counter “violence with violence”, Barth says, “at times, resistance to tyranny, the prevention of the spilling of innocent blood, cannot be executed in any other way!”

After the lecture, the listeners are impressed with the weight of the words spoken by the Swiss scholar. This theologian had offered well-founded theological reasoning for his rejection of the Nazi-regime, and had acted deliberately as a Christian. He had done so, even against the mainstream of German theologians, who were sympathetic to



UWE BIRNSTEIN,
Theologian and Publicist.

the quasi-religious and misanthropic Nazi-ideology. Many of these referred to theological arguments as well; however, they lacked the astuteness and sagacity of “their” Reformer Martin Luther, whom they cited in order to justify their position as followers of the Nazi-regime. They argued that, since Luther had emphasised the distinction between the secular and spiritual kingdom, the Church should not interfere with political processes, and that the Church rather needed to show obedience to superior powers - in this case, even towards Hitler and his henchmen.

At the time, only a small group of discerning clergy cautiously protested against national socialism. In 1934, Karl Barth had helped them to formulate their own confession. Referring to some members of the clergy’s collaboration with the Nazis, the “Barmen Theological Declaration” states: “We reject the false doctrine, as though there were areas of our life in which we would not belong to Jesus Christ, but to other lords”. So how susceptible are Protestants to blindly obeying the authorities?

WHAT IS IMPORTANT IN THE WORLD

Today, the great time of the confessions seems to be over. In this modern world, Christians do not like to seek guidance from prescribed texts. The confessions emerging today are no longer as forceful as the confessions which arose in the time of the Reformation. In addition, in the hundreds of Protestant churches across the globe, they are no longer recognised as being binding. And yet, God knows that, in these present times, there are many reasons to put faith and its consequences for political action into words, time and time again. The South African Nederduitse Gereformeerde Sendingskerk, for example, did this in an exemplary fashion in 1982. The “Belhar Confession” explained that apartheid was incompatible with the Christian faith. In 2004, in the “Accra Confession”, the Reformed churches of the world committed to offering themselves, their time and their energy, to “changing, renewing and restoring the economy and the earth, choosing life, so that we and our descendants might live (Deut 30:19).”

Karl Barth would have probably been delighted at such new confessions. He would also have recommended them to his brothers and sisters in the faith today: “Please do take a look at the old Protestant confessions. They are much more interesting than you think. For it is there that you will find theological, moral support for that which is important in the world today!”

*“Give to the emperor
the things that are the emperor’s,
and to God the things
that are God’s.”*

The Gospel of Mark 12:17

*“We must obey God rather than
any human authority.”*

Acts of the Apostles 5:29

*“To act in concrete
responsibility is to act in
freedom, it is to decide and
to act without the backing of people
or of principles, and
to take responsibility for the
outcomes of one’s actions.”*

Dietrich Bonhoeffer in “Ethics”, DBW Vol. 6, Page 457.

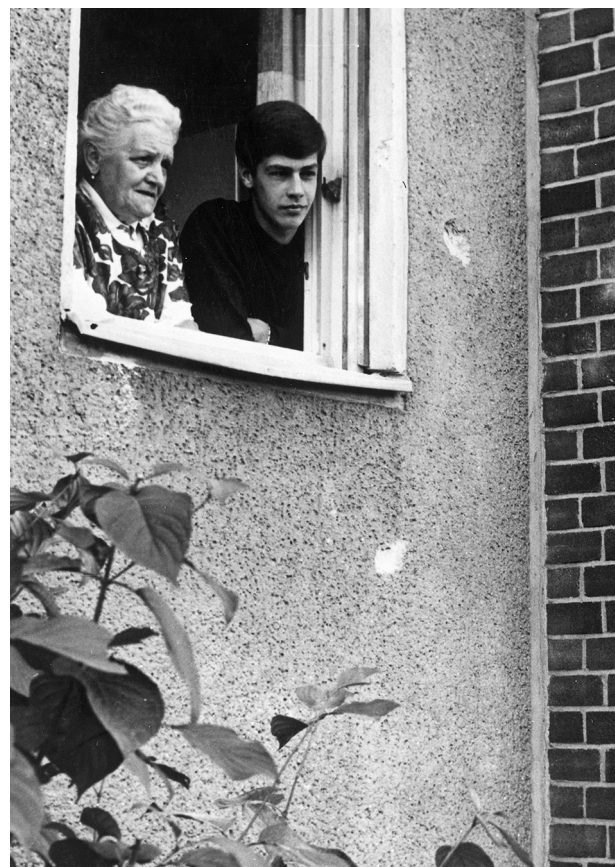
“HERE I STAND, I CAN DO NO OTHER”

In a voice thick with emotion, the American civil rights campaigner Martin Luther King Jr. cites the Reformer Martin Luther, who hails from Wittenberg. It is the evening of the 13th September 1964. St Mary's Church in Alexander Square, Berlin, is crowded with people. There is not even enough room for the interpreter to stand in the pulpit. The people of Berlin witness how a word, which many will connect with the reformer from Wittenberg, returns to Germany. This phrase “Here I stand, I can do no other” points to the steadfastness of the reformer. Now, spoken in broad American English, from the lips of a black Baptist pastor, the familiar phrase sounds as if it is coming from far away. In the course of the evening, these words will become increasingly relevant.

In the third year after the wall was built, the divided city seems unable to come to a point of rest. Today, the atmosphere is extremely tense. This morning, a 21-year-old man from Berlin tried to escape to West-Berlin. Hit by the gunfire of the border guards, he collapsed. Only the intervention of some police officers and an American soldier saved the young man's life. King visits this segment of the wall, and allows others to explain to him what happened. He had planned to visit the east of the city.

At about 7.00 pm, King appears at Checkpoint Charlie. The US-authorities had retained his passport, allegedly for security reasons. The border guards recognise the prominent American, who offers them his American Express credit card as a substitute for his passport. Following some deliberations, it is accepted. When King reaches the Alexander Square, St Mary's Church is already overcrowded. Spontaneously, a second appearance is agreed upon in the Sophia Church.

As Martin Luther King steps up to the pulpit, the choir strikes up the spiritual “Go down Moses”. The phrase “Let my people go!” is repeated over and over again. “May I say that it is indeed an honor to be in this city, which stands as a symbol of the divisions of men on the face of the earth”, King offers. “For here on either side of the wall are God's children, and no man-made barrier can obliterate that fact.” Christ performs his ministry of recon-



13.09.1964: Martin Luther King talking to people in Berlin

ciliation wherever men are “breaking down the dividing walls of hostility”. King speaks of the civil rights movement in the USA, of Rosa Parks, the unplanned protest against the segregation between black and white people, and of the liberation of “our people”. He means the black citizens of his nation. The people of Berlin are aware of their oppression.

Subsequently, he speaks of a great disappointment which began when the liberation of black people progressed at a slower pace than had been expected. When seeking an explanation for this feeling of “being gripped”, there is only one response - the one originally given by the great Reformer “Martin Luther: ‘Here I stand, I can do no other, so help me God.’ And so our movement began ... by one of the mighty acts of God. Men were



HENNING KIENE,

Pastor, working in the EKD
Project Office: Reform Process.

Martin Luther King Jr. on 13th September 1964 in Berlin **BY HENNING KIENE**



- he is told to recant his theses and writings. After a brief time to consider how he will reply, the reformer states in front of the Imperial Diet that popes and councils might get it wrong. He, Martin Luther, is captive to the Word of God. To go against conscience is neither right nor safe. "God help me. Amen!" he concludes.

Martin Luther King draws upon the reformer's address. In two hundred cities located in the south of the USA, students learnt that it is better to "go to jail in dignity than to accept segregation in humiliation." It is the conscience of the individual that faces up to emperor and empire, that is what is important. He is concerned about the women and men who wish to end their oppression. King speaks about the USA; the people of Berlin feel that he understands them. They trust him when he says that it is "faith which has given us a way when there seemed to be no way." Many of those who experience his speech this evening, intend to embark upon this very path. Two days later, in Berlin, a prominent newspaper (Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, FAZ) summarises the atmosphere: "... the desire to encounter a man who combines revolution and philanthropy - a leader who renounces violence as well as ideology, a man of legendary stature - was tangible (and this description of prominence is not merely journalistic licence)."

In the "Guest House on Friedrich Street", pictures are taken late into the evening. They depict the American visitor with Berlin clergy. The conversation at the table is complemented by beer, wine and thick cigars. By the time King retrieves his American Express card at Checkpoint Charlie, the sermon on the other side of the wall has left positive impressions. Many have gained a new hope and a new confidence. They follow the civil rights activist and his translation of the statement "Here I stand. I can do no other". Years later, some of the listeners go to Prague - wishing to see the reforms of the "Prague Spring" with their own eyes. In the autumn of 1968, they will respond to the military intervention in the same manner spoken of by the US-American civil rights activist.

merely called to respond in obedience" King speaks of the sacrifices made by the people of Montgomery, whose suffering provided a fresh impetus.

"Now we have left the Egypt of slavery", the days of private spirituality have long since passed. "This is the faith I commend to you Christians here in Berlin. A living, active, massive faith that affirms the victory of Jesus Christ over the world." About four thousand people from Berlin, predominately young people, follow Martin Luther King's speech this evening.

They experience how a statement from the time of the Reformation returns and is interpreted anew. The people of Berlin hear the old "Here I stand, I can do no other." Many have a mental image of the reformer. They see him in the city of Worms

SEARCHING FOR TRACES

Students of the Ernst-Reuter-Secondary School and the Rosa-Luxemburg-Grammar School went looking for traces of King's speech, in June 2013. On the website www.king-code.de, they present their results. The students invite us all to visit the historical venues in Berlin which Martin Luther King Jr. went to see. QR-Codes have been posted along the "King-Tour", offering access to further information.

MATERIAL

for lessons in school and church ministry (age range: 12-18):

Film: **"The King-Code. Martin Luther King in Berlin"**

available through:

www.eikon-nord.de/shop.html





RÉSISTER! OFFER RESISTANCE!

BY BARBARA RUDOLPH

When the small group in the big crowd at the demonstration strike up a song, it is not a hymn from the Protestant hymn book which is sung,

*Wehrt euch, leistet Widerstand,
gegen die Raketen hier im Land,
schließt euch fest zusammen,
schließt euch fest zusammen.*

*(Fight back, raise resistance,
against the rockets here in the land,
band firmly together
band firmly together.)*

However, it is being sung by Protestant Christians, which is clearly recognisable from the banner which they carry. It reads "Swords to Plowshares" and shows a picture of a man who forges a plowshare from a sword on an anvil. The picture originates from the peace movement of the German Democratic Republic, the text originates from the Bible and the singing group originate from Bonn. Made up of elderly people, they had offered resistance during the time of the National Socialist regime and were doing it again at the time when the young Federal Republic was considering re-armament. During the time of the peace movement in the 1980s, they were supported by young people: This is a picture of 20- and 80-year-olds together, on their way to demonstrate, protest and offer resistance.

IMAGE:

View of the demonstration march in the inner city of Bonn during the peace demonstration on 10th June 1982.

PROTESTANTS PROTEST.

This is true. But it is not always true. The Protestant pastor Martin Niemöller confessed:

"When the Nazis came for the Communists, I did not speak out; because I was not a Communist. Then they came for the Socialists, and I did not speak out; because I was not a Socialist. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out; because I was not a trade unionist. Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out; because I was not a Jew. And then they came for me, and there was no one left to speak out for me."

Nevertheless, this resisting, passionate and vigilant readiness to protest has been running through history up until today; ever since Martin Luther is said to have declared, before the Imperial Diet of Worms, "Here I stand, I can do no other. May God help me. Amen." The verbatim record of the Imperial Diet says that Luther would only recant "if the witness of Scripture and clear reasonable grounds proved him wrong". Still today, conscience, biblical interpretation and plain reason are important criteria for the protest of Protestants across the globe.

In synods and during national church conferences (Kirchentage), at international general assemblies and during conferences of a world communion, debates are public and transparent. There is protest among Protestants. Protestant Christians prefer this to the "silence of the graveyard". Nobody is easily called a heretic in the Protestant church; we would rather have controversy than be muzzled, irritation than manipulation, protest than obedience. The Evangelical Church even engages in self-criticism and is quite good at being hard on itself:

"WE HAVE GONE ASTRAY ..."

it says in the "Darmstadt Statement" of 1948. The Protestant Church is aware of the possibility that

God himself might protest against his own Church; the critical words of the prophets in the Hebrew scriptures are words directed at themselves. The Church is prepared to be challenged.

Our justification by grace alone opens up the ability to examine one's own failure, and the possibility of a new beginning. In Protestantism, repentance may take many forms including that of the organisation "Action Reconciliation Service for Peace", which has been sending volunteers to 13 countries since 1958. This organisation shows what the way forward can look like for a protesting church, a Protestant church; a church that will not resign itself to failure, but sets an example for new beginnings. Through meeting survivors of the Holocaust and their descendants in Poland, Ukraine or Israel, young people learn something essential: their own responsibility.

Young Christians in the far east of the great Russian nation are also fascinated by this. In a small, Lutheran congregation in Khabarovsk, only a few kilometres from Vladivostok, people are particularly interested in studying the Bible, as well as in Bach's music. Their own opinion matters, there is no priest who celebrates a fixed ritual, rather, the mind, heart and faith of every church member is important. "We are not familiar with the kind of practice where we simply discuss matters with a pastor. Whenever we speak about biblical texts, and everyone is allowed to express their own thoughts, we feel alive." At the other end of Russia, in Pskov in the far west, the fact that the foremost centre in the country for people with a disability has been established here, is also a sign of this vitality. "People with a disability do not count for much in Russia; as they were not prolific producers, they were not important in socialism. That people are accepted just as they are has left a new (reformatory) mark," observed the Protestants who initiated the project.

In Cleveland, in the USA, American congregations of the United Church of Christ have experienced something similar. Their distinguishing mark is a "comma", which - red and noticeable - is worn by church members on their lapel. Their motto is: "Never place a period where God has placed a comma." In their congregations, the members offer a home to those with chequered biographies, who cannot fit into America's increasingly restrictive ecclesial landscape. This welcome is extended to people who are in homosexual relationships, single mums, people with disabilities, and those with different colours of skin ...

The same idea is also manifested in the quiet and inconspicuous protest of North African Protestant congregations, who support refugees from Africa and - from nursery to high school - offer

education and training, illegally and courageously: Protest does not come cheap.

The greatest power of protest is hope. In the Namibian liberation movement against the unjust Apartheid system, Dr Zephania Kameeta prayed psalms in his context. The hope which they speak of is at the same time a protest against the oppression which he and his people experience:

As smoke is driven away by the wind, as wax melts before the fire, this is how racism, oppression and exploitation pass away, wherever God is present ...

God, who lives in slums and locations, looks after orphans and protects widows ...

Sing to God, you children of Africa, sing songs of freedom to our liberator! Proclaim his power! ...
(adapted from Psalm 68)

Whenever the Protestant Development Service "Bread for the World" helps people other than those in acute hardship, but supports, for example, those in protracted court proceedings, such as indigenous groups in the Amazon region, it is the same spirit of hope which inspires and expects God's justice to prevail.

The most beautiful - and, for a religious community, not necessarily obvious - form of protest is our sense of humour; laughing at oneself. This is also a part of Protestantism, the tongue planted firmly in the cheek, ready to make fun of oneself:

What is it that makes me so carefree and light-hearted? It is because my God teaches me to laugh at the whole world. (Hanns Dieter Hüsch)

In southern France, during the 38 years of her imprisonment, Marie Durand (1711-1776), a French Huguenot, scratched on the stone wall of her prison a single word: "RESISTER"; and it still informs Protestantism today: "Resist!"



BARBARA RUDOLPH,

Reverend, Member of the Governing Body of the Evangelical Church in the Rhineland, Head of the "Ecumenical Relations" Department.

Nobody is easily called a heretic in the Protestant Church; we would rather have controversy than be muzzled, irritation than manipulation, protest than obedience.



JAN HUS being burned at the stake, etching

COUNCILS CAN ERR

TRUTH PREVAILS!

Jan Hus and his condemnation
at the Council of Constance

BY HOLGER MÜLLER

Astonishingly diverse initiatives commemorated the person, life, and work of the Czech reformer in the course of the year marking the 600th anniversary of his death. Ever since Jan Hus was burned at the stake, he and his motto “Truth prevails!” have been claimed by a whole plethora of quite disparate religious, philosophical, and political movements. This was also the case in Constance in 2015: “We are Jan Hus! We don’t want any religious terror, regardless from which religion!” – thus ran the motto of a demonstration convened for July 5 in Constance. But is it really plausible to connect, indeed, maybe even identify Jan Hus with the ideas of the groups that issued this invitation? After all, it is only by falsifying history that freethinkers, humanists, irreligious persons, agnostics, people unaffiliated with any religion, and atheists can make the claim “We are Jan Hus!” – or maybe not?

BUT WHO REALLY WAS JAN HUS?

- A convinced Christian and servant of the church, the head of which is solely Jesus Christ himself
- An uncompromising academic theologian devoid of diplomatic intuition and skill
- The creator of the written Czech language still in use today
- A vernacular preacher of legendary popularity among all sectors of society
- A sharp-tongued critic of the church and state of his time.

Hus sought fervently to reform his native Bohemian church and, necessarily along with it, the entire western Roman Church – but by no means did he wish to abolish them. Hus’s motto “Truth prevails!” is susceptible to misuse if one does not study his works or does not understand what the truth is

for him: not a philosophical term, but the embodiment of the Biblical message, of the gospel, in other words: Jesus Christ in person.

Hus was a pawn sacrificed by the imperial politics of King Sigismund and by the church politics of his time, which sought to thwart long overdue structural reforms of the church by orchestrating a heresy trial and relegating these reforms to a never-ending odyssey through official church channels. Foremost among those pursuing this approach was the Parisian preacher, author of devotional works, professor, and cardinal Jean Gerson. While the council earnestly committed itself to a “reformation in head and members,” this soon became a “conciliar process” stretching over decades and leaving no big losers, since all were intent on protecting their vested rights.

Hus was implacably accused of heresy and executed on the initiative of antagonistic Bohemian theologians, by a Pope-less conciliar assembly anxious to affirm its legitimacy and authority, with the consent of the German king, at the hand of local political institutions – but perhaps in the final analysis against their will! Quite a few of the parties involved, both religious and secular, realized with increasing disquiet in the course of the heresy trial that, against all expectations, Hus was showing himself incapable of recanting anything he had preached, taught or written, and that his death would have dramatic consequences for both church and state.

DISCUSS OR OBEY?

The heresy trial that began in Constance in November 1414 proved practically impossible to stop once it was unleashed, especially since the council, should it choose to do otherwise, had to fear a crisis of authority on account of its “synodal composition”: it had deposed John XXIII for fleeing from Constance; Benedict XIII, however, refused to stand down as long as he lived, and it was not yet foreseeable that Gregory XII would resign precisely on 4 July 1415. In view of this looming fatal outcome, some of Hus’s most ardent opponents begged him in tears to avoid death out of pastoral responsibility for his congregation, but rather to save his life by recanting and submitting unconditionally to the authority of the church in the form of the council.

His opponents had not reckoned with a conscience that was alarmingly free when faced with the visible authority of the church, yet at the same time unconditionally bound to God and to his word. Like all three Popes and the assembled council, Hus had appealed to Jesus Christ as the highest authority. Instead of appropriating Christ’s author-

ity for himself, as they had done, Hus accepted Jesus Christ as one who corrected error and in whose critical light he also placed himself. Again and again Hus offered to submit to better arguments at any time, if these could be presented to him from Scripture. Throughout the trial this offer was passed over in silence. What was demanded of him was not to discuss, but to obey – as would be demanded of Luther again in 1519 in Worms.

The decision to condemn Hus, in recognized with hindsight as tragically flawed, was aptly commented on by Luther some one hundred years later: “Even councils can err.” Of course, we cannot change history retrospectively and write it anew. What are we to do, then?

Some would have liked the Roman Catholic Church to rehabilitate Jan Hus. Others have demanded his beatification. He is already considered a saint by the Old Catholic Church and the Orthodox Churches.

The 28 March 2015 issue of the Reutlinger Nachrichten newspaper quoted the initiators of the demonstration mentioned above: “A council decreed the murder; only a council can revoke it – in fact, a democratically elected council.” An ecumenical council with representatives delegated authoritatively would indeed be welcome. However, Luther’s reservations concerning councils would hold true for it just as much as they did for the Council of Constance and all other councils.

Without Hus’s espousal of a theological vision of the church, based on that of John Wyclif and developed further – a vision against which one must compare and, if necessary, change the visible church – without emphasis on the Bible as the foundation of all church theology and practice, without binding his conscience to God in defiance of all earthly authorities, without his insistence that insight into faith and persuasion of faith must be of a personal nature – in short: without Hus – there possibly would not have been a Europe-wide Reformation one hundred years later nor would freedom of conscience have developed, a freedom we need to cherish, exercise convincingly, and defend courageously today.

Let us pay tribute to Jan Hus and his legacy by approaching one another and dealing with one another in a spirit of reconciliation, in the spirit of the “truth in person”: The sermon Hus addressed to the assembled council but never actually preached, and based freely on Matthew 10:12-14, had as its title “Peace be with this house!”

Without Hus there possibly would not have been a Europe-wide Reformation one hundred years later nor would freedom of conscience have developed.



DR HOLGER MÜLLER,
Pastor of the Evangelical Church in Baden, appointed to represent the regional church at the celebrations of the 600th anniversary of the Council of Constance.

ENERGY TRANSITION OF LOVE

Inspiration for a Sermon **BY MICHAEL MEYER-BLANCK**

Freedom – spirit – faith – hope – justice – love: Gal 5:1–6 is not only a manifesto of Protestant freedom, but also a compendium of Pauline theology. There is barely a topic which is not mentioned here. Whilst this is fascinating for a theologian, it is challenging for a preacher. It is difficult to say anything better than these concepts for they already sound very good; and terminological exegesis, which follows the gist of the text and examines it further, does little for the expectant listeners – not to mention the topic of circumcision, which one may address in passing, but is not suitable as the focus of a sermon. What then should one do?

It's best if we start at the end. In verse 6, we find the beautiful expression of faith "working through love". In Greek, the phrase means that faith is launched by love – "energoumene" (participle). Love is the energy of faith and faith is the impetus for love. Both have the same origin (present participle). To ask whether faith or love is primary, is the wrong question. Faith without love cannot exist, and love without faith, though pleasant, will run out of energy and dry up in the long term. Without faith, love will suffer "burnout"; without love, faith is weak. We are thus dealing with a bipropellant: Faith and love producing energy by their interaction. Paul warns: Everything else is secondary and may not take the place of the believer's relationship with Christ. Christ himself is nothing else but a person like us, but one who is full of faith, full of love and full of energy.

Along the lines of the Sermon on the Mount, Paul impresses upon the reader: "I, Paul, am telling you" – do not jeopardise your freedom (v.2) and re-enforces this by means of an energetic repetition in the phrase: "For freedom Christ has set us free." (v.1) It is akin to saying: be loved to have love, be believed to have faith, have hope through having hope placed in you. And yet, this doubling has a deeper meaning: Christ does not merely convey information, he himself is the guarantor of that which he proclaims. Previously, in Augustine's writings and then in Luther's works, we find Christ identified as both, "sacramentum" and "exemplum". Jesus Christ does not only speak about freedom, he is freedom; and, at the same time, he offers a concept of freedom which acts through love and not

through spiritual regulations, however helpful these may be. It is not necessary to polemicise against circumcision, nor against fasting, meditation or any other spiritual exercises. However, they are no guarantee of the energy which love and faith generate. This is connected with the very understanding of life itself. Faith and love propel people towards the living other and bring them closer to the Christ who is alive in the other. Spiritual exercises can as-

GALATIANS 5: 1–6

- 1 *For freedom Christ has set us free.
Stand firm, therefore, and do not
submit again to a yoke of slavery.*
- 2 *Listen! I, Paul, am telling you
that if you let yourselves be circumcised,
Christ will be of no benefit to you.*
- 3 *Once again I testify to every man
who lets himself be circumcised
that he is obliged to obey the entire law.*

sist in this. However, they can also drive us to cling to what we have achieved, thus standing in the way of freedom and of moving into that which is new. They can feed the all too attractive error that religion can be manipulated. By way of contrast, the Gospel comes alive at the revelation that we cannot manipulate, because we are in the hands of the one who, time and time again, desires to set us free for freedom. In failing to understand this, one is in danger of "cutting oneself off" from Christ (v.4), who is the one who goes ahead of us (Phil 3:13–14), and also goes behind us.

The spirituality practised through spiritual exercises can – and should – become the energy generated by love and faith, which constantly drives us forward. Therefore, from a Pauline perspective, this concept is the very energy transition of love which provides the thrust to lift us away from ourselves and on towards the one who sets us free for freedom.



PROF DR

MICHAEL MEYER-BLANCK,

Professor of Practical Theology
at the University of Bonn.

“FOR FREEDOM CHRIST HAS SET US FREE ...”

Sermon outline **BY CHRISTOPH MARKSCHIES**

When, more than a year ago, the EKD-Council published a foundational text entitled “Justification and Freedom”, not everyone agreed with the heading. Some thought a connection had been made with a key concept of modernity, from which one should have broken away: that of a limitless freedom without obligation to anything or anybody. Surely, this could not be the banner under which the Protes-

- 4 *You who want to be justified by the law have cut yourselves off from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.*
- 5 *For through the Spirit, by faith, we eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness.*
- 6 *For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything; the only thing that counts is faith working through love.*

tant Church was wishing to publicize its celebration of the Reformation jubilee? An intelligent Roman Catholic theologian and cardinal told me he was pained to see that, yet again, the Protestant Church was attempting to present itself as a ‘church of freedom’ at the expense of its Catholic sister church - after all, his generation had re-introduced this term into theology within the context of the Second Vatican Council, and he himself was just as much Catholic as he was Protestant.

“Freedom” is thus a controversial term. When using it, one needs to explain what “freedom” means and, at the same time, be mindful of the ideas which one should associate, and not associate, with it. It is likely that almost everyone who hears the section of Paul’s letter to the Galatians regarding “freedom” will associate the keyword with other surrounding issues; and even more so considering its emphatic position at the very beginning of the chapter. The fear that many will only hear the first sentence of the text: “For freedom Christ has set us free”, and then their thoughts will begin to

wander, may well be justified. No doubt, many will feel a desire for freedom, but the longing may be for very diverse kinds of freedom: “The freedom to stay out late at night”, might be what someone hearing Paul’s phrase in a confirmation class might be thinking. “The freedom to be able to lead a self-determined life”, might be what someone who has just moved from their parents’ house into their first flat is thinking about. “The freedom to get off the treadmill of work” might be what those who have worked to the point of exhaustion in the week may be longing for. If it is conceivable that many people will be thinking many different things when they hear Paul’s introductory phrase and this may well prove worth thinking about when preparing a sermon on this passage. For Paul, freedom - similar to the underlying understanding of the foundational text of the EKD-Council - is closely linked with justification through faith alone: We are justified, he writes, through a divine word, for which we must - and can - hope. Similar to the way in which the word of a judge sets the accused free, instructing the police to take off his handcuffs even in the courtroom, the divine word sets us free in a radical way. One can do nothing to gain such an acquittal; as Paul puts it: “We await”.

According to Paul, freedom is not limitless freedom to do whatever we happen to feel like doing, but a freedom which is active in love. It is a freedom which is given by faith and which becomes engaged in serving others out of love, for example, by doing good to them. Sometimes, however, such service consists simply in doing oneself some good. Someone who is worn out cannot help anybody. We cannot acquire such a special freedom by our own efforts, but can only receive it as a gift and accept it by faith.

I enjoy hearing about this particular kind of freedom in sermons, especially when this message is not accompanied by polemics opposing other concepts of freedom. I enjoy it especially when, instead, an invitation is given to people to discover this special kind of freedom of the gospel - together, of course, with our Catholic sisters and brothers - and preferably in a way in which the confirmation candidates recognise that the opportunity is also open to them.

“Liturgische Bausteine” (liturgical building blocks) for a service on the occasion of the anniversary of the Reformation in 2015 can be found at www.reformation-und-die-eine-welt.de



PROF. DR. DR. H. C. CHRISTOPH MARKSCHIES,
Professor of Early Church History
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TRACES OF THE ONE WORLD

Ideas for Lessons BY DIRK OESSELMANN

“Even before my flight I knew that our planet is small and vulnerable. But only in that very moment when I saw it from space in its unspeakable beauty and fragility, I realised that it is mankind’s most important task to keep it and preserve it for future generations.”

(Sigmund Jähn, Astronaut)

In this volume, we speak of “One World” – and yet, what do we mean by it? Astronauts, who gain a different perspective of planet earth from space, are overwhelmed by its beauty and fragility. The countless details dissolve into an image of the cohesion of all life. “Seeing this has to change a man, has to make a man appreciate the creation of God and the love of God”, said the US-American astronaut James Irwin, in 1971.

Few people experience such a perspective of the earth from outside. Residents of earth stand in the midst of a vast connectedness which they cannot fully comprehend. Their perspectives are bound up in specific contexts and only allow them limited access to the world beyond their own sensory perceptions; and this is both true from the viewpoint of an individual’s biographical development and from a viewpoint informed by culture, society and history.

Although it is therefore impossible to keep everything in view, having a “One World” perspective is necessary. It is only this perspective which points to the big picture overall, making the life of the individual possible. It is only against this backdrop that meaning is revealed and we see how individuals and separated beings are integrated into what is the ground of life itself.

As a guide to action, the idea of “One World” would be expecting too much, since it points to a complexity and an ambivalence, which not even the most widely travelled person is able to analyse. As an interpretive framework, “One World” would simply be mental overload. Even the accumulated wealth of knowledge, gathered from all the bodies of knowledge to which one has access, for instance through the internet, would not be sufficient.

TRAILS OF THE REFORMATION

How can a person refer to the “One World”? How can he or she be sure that they are responsibly helping to shape this “One World”? At first glance, it appears that this would only be possible if an individual refrains from declaring their own, limited perspective to be the overall perspective; only if he or she remains open-minded to a diversity of perspectives; only if he or she continues to be a seeker.

The reformatory movement has opened up a viable, holistic view regarding the context of life, which is based on the basic, underlying emotion

of the individual. The image of humankind as being “simul iustus et peccator” (righteous and at the same time a sinner) is thereby central: Peccator refers to the basic human condition as being one of imperfection, limitation and fallibility. Iustus adds to this the possibility of being protected and sustained in the ground of life. Regarding these simultaneously, it is possible to see that, in spite of our limitation, a relationship with the ground of life is possible.

By following this trail, it is possible for the individual to establish a relationship with the “One World”, not only in bringing together diverse perspectives and insights, but also by means of being in contact with the source which brings, creates and sustains life - with God. Even the complex variety of life thus becomes conceivable from the viewpoint of the ground of life, which supports every single person.

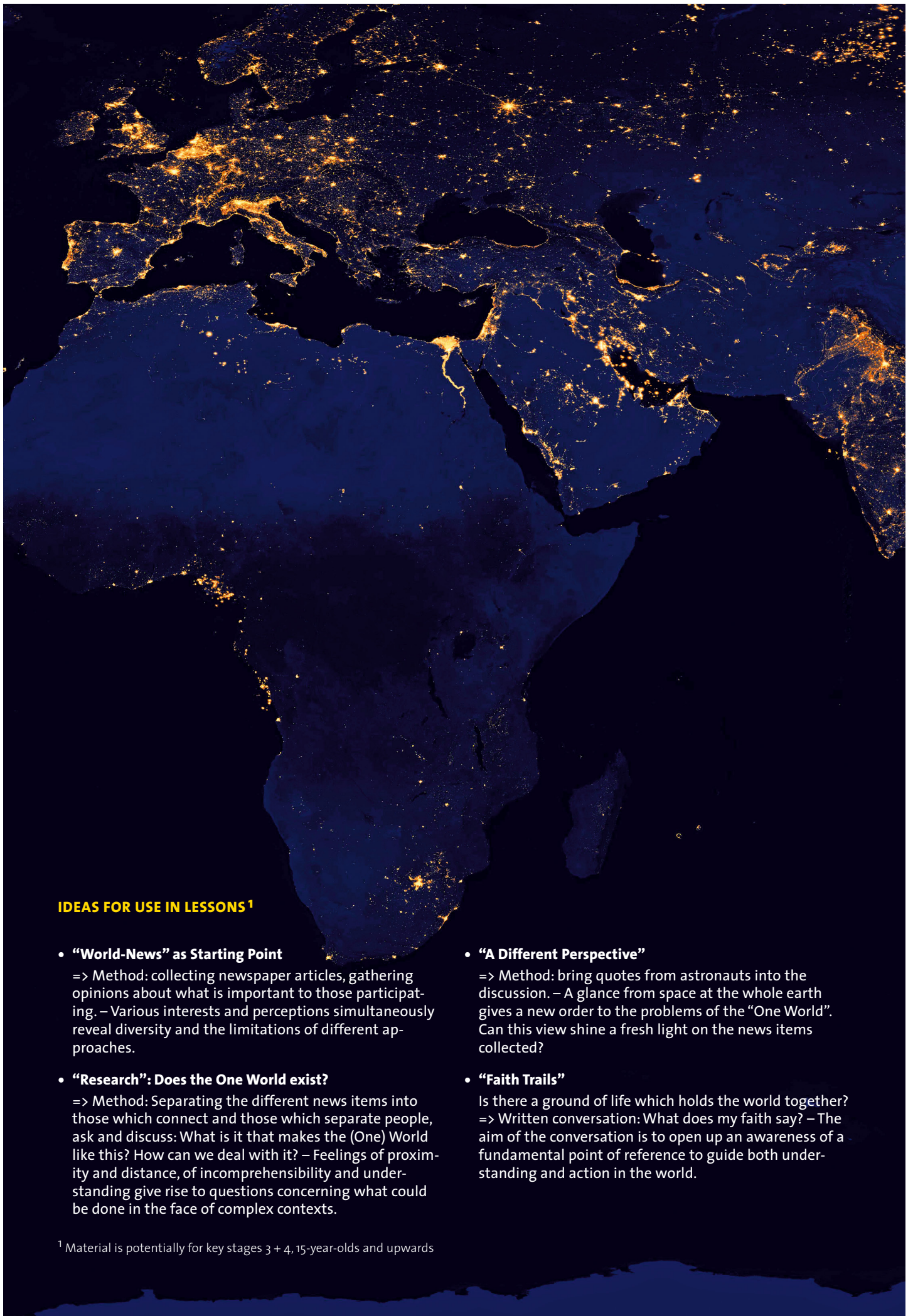
Luther experiences such a contact with the ground of life in his interaction with the Bible. In it, there are stories and testimonies of a quest for the ground of life that are several thousand years old. In Scripture, people who are hurt, fragile and torn, experience encounters and receive promises which convey to them a fundamental sense of being protected and sustained. Herein lies a chance to understand the “One World”, in its basic relationship to life itself and to that which preserves it. When we are unable to perceive and act; when we are faced with unreasonable demands and mental overload, all of the above open up into an insight about and a trust in that which holds everything together.

An understanding of the “One World” is diverse, and opens up very different - even contradictory - approaches. Whilst this is all a part and parcel of human limitation and freedom, it is also the starting point of the necessary responsibility which every person needs to take for their actions. According to reformatory understanding, a touch of God leads the individual into a connection with other people, as well as to an implicit respect for natural resources.

Understanding the “One World” from its ground of life, means to consciously perceive its complexity, contradictions and diversity, and to integrate these in their connecting and binding contexts.



PROF DR DIRK OESSELMANN,
Professor of Christian Education
at the Protestant University for
Applied Sciences in Freiburg,
with the foci Global Learning
and Community-Based Diaconia.



IDEAS FOR USE IN LESSONS¹

- **“World-News” as Starting Point**

=> Method: collecting newspaper articles, gathering opinions about what is important to those participating. – Various interests and perceptions simultaneously reveal diversity and the limitations of different approaches.

- **“Research”: Does the One World exist?**

=> Method: Separating the different news items into those which connect and those which separate people, ask and discuss: What is it that makes the (One) World like this? How can we deal with it? – Feelings of proximity and distance, of incomprehensibility and understanding give rise to questions concerning what could be done in the face of complex contexts.

- **“A Different Perspective”**

=> Method: bring quotes from astronauts into the discussion. – A glance from space at the whole earth gives a new order to the problems of the “One World”. Can this view shine a fresh light on the news items collected?

- **“Faith Trails”**

Is there a ground of life which holds the world together?
=> Written conversation: What does my faith say? – The aim of the conversation is to open up an awareness of a fundamental point of reference to guide both understanding and action in the world.

¹ Material is potentially for key stages 3 + 4, 15-year-olds and upwards

FROM SIERRA LEONE TO HAMBURG

Travelling with the Bible **BY PETER SORIE MANSARAY**

Though I was born in Sierra Leone, I emigrated, along with my parents and siblings, to Liberia whilst still a child, on the occasion of my father accepting a position as veterinary assistant there. We had to leave our familiar surroundings and that's when my migration history began, even whilst in Africa.

I grew up in a Catholic family. As my parents were very faithful to the Catholic doctrine, I was baptised as a baby and later went to communion. Morning and evening prayers were my constant companions each day. The Bible also played a central role in our family life. My father gave us an illustrated children's Bible, from which we read daily with great joy. I was a youth when I first purchased my own Bible; a Good News Bible.

For me, the Bible is the story of God's love for us. It is the light unto our path. I was so fascinated by the Word of God that I was desperate to proclaim it one day. Therefore, after my time at school, I decided to study for the priesthood.

In order to continue the theological studies which I had begun in Liberia and Sierra Leone, in 1992, I came to Germany with a scholarship of the Schönstatt Institute of Diocesan Priests. I was glad of the opportunity to follow Jesus Christ's commission and proclaim the good news in Europe, and especially in Germany. The Bible was my constant companion. However, after a year, I began to struggle with my faith. I asked some critical questions about the faith and searched for answers. After a period of intensive prayer and serious examination of the Bible, Catholic priesthood, and the matter of celibacy in particular, it became even clearer to me that God had put a different calling in my heart from what I had so far assumed. My eyes were opened and I gathered the strength to announce my resignation from the fellowship.

For "personal reasons", I changed my place of study and moved to Berlin in October 1995. I had been offered a place to study political science at the Free University, where I graduated some years later. However, I knew that the longing to proclaim God's Word would never be extinguished. In all the highs and the lows, the Bible was my constant companion.

One day, I made the acquaintance of Pastor Mustapha at the Free University. We would meet quite frequently to speak about God and the world. During one visit, he told me about his idea to found a new church in Berlin. Since he knew I had studied Catholic theology, he wished to win me over to his idea. It made sense to me and I decided to support him in establishing the church. Thus, I became one of the seven founding members of the United Brethren in Christ Church (UBC) in Berlin.

In the beginning, the church was only a prayer group which met once a week, in the flat of one of its members, to sing, pray and have fellowship. We all knew that our faith in Jesus Christ was the connecting factor between us. We did not try to focus on the differences between our denominations. Our intention was to come together and worship God in our language. In so doing, no dogma was important; the Bible was - for all of us - the infallible revelation of God and was therefore given the highest authority.

After twelve years of pastoral ministry, I left the UBC and took up a responsibility in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Northern Germany, as the pastor responsible for co-operation with people of African origin in Hamburg. Wherever I am, the Bible is still my constant companion. Over the years, I have learnt that it always needs to be understood in relation to its respective context. In this way, it remains the light unto all my paths. _____



PETER SORIE MANSARAY,

Pastor at the African Centre in Borgfelde and Commissioner of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church District of Eastern Hamburg, responsible for co-operation with people of African origin.

FROM VIETNAM TO BRUNSWICK

Travelling with the Bible **BY THI MY PHUONG TRAN**

“Vergessen Sie nicht Ihr Gebäck!”¹
(Don't forget your cakes!)

For several weeks I have been looking at the advertising slogan of a cake manufacturer whilst waiting for the tram to take me to work. The large advertising poster is always in view. Invariably, I think of my bags and check whether I have brought the purse containing my season ticket. I feel relieved and safe when I find that my money and ticket are with me.

It reminds me of the time I escaped from Vietnam as one of the “Boat People”. Then, I had no bags with me, let alone cakes. I possessed only what I stood up in. At the time, I was not a believer. I did not know who God was. Yet, I was grateful to the power which had helped me survive the dangerous crossing, involving three pirate attacks and four weeks of aimlessly wandering on the ocean.

In October 1979, the state of Lower Saxony kindly took my family and me in, as well as other Vietnamese people. This is how we came to live in Brunswick. As a 13-year-old, I started school in Year 7 - before doing my A-Levels and going on to study pharmacy. Although I was now able to live in a peaceful country and learned German relatively quickly, I often felt torn between two cultures. During my studies, I came to know my husband and, through him, the Christian faith. We regularly went to services at a Baptist church. Through the sermons, and the songs which underlined the message we had heard, God's Word gradually opened up my heart and touched it. After three years, I accepted the Christian faith and went forward for baptism.

Unfortunately, my faith did not grow and mature for a period after that. I continued to go to the services, but my faith had begun to dry up. For ten years, my life resembled a walk in the wilderness. Compelled by the condition of my son, who was diagnosed with an autistic defect in 2004, I sought out a Protestant Vietnamese Tin-Lanh-Church. I was hoping that my son might make friends with Vietnamese children of the same age in this church. Instead, I got connected with God and His Church again. I was needed there.

As a volunteer, I “have to” occupy myself with God's Word. When preparing services for children

and young people, I discover much good news for my own life in the Bible. Through reading about biblical events and how God revealed himself in them, I learn to pay attention to his work in my own life, and do so consciously. I can barely cease marvelling at and thanking him for it. I marvel, for example, at the fact that, despite his handicap, my son has managed to do his A-Levels and is now studying at university.

Through faith, I have found a home. Though I might remain an outsider in my outward appearance, I am no longer a foreigner in Germany. Whether I am considered to be Vietnamese or a naturalised German, my identity is in Christ. In him, I have been chosen and am loved. I am grateful and joyful for this, and happy to show my true colours.

This happens, for example, as I find time to spend with sick people and listen to them, or support Vietnamese brothers and sisters during visits to the doctors or the authorities. It is also important to me to build a bridge of communication between generations and between peoples.

Meanwhile, in our services, we celebrate regularly with our German brothers and sisters, and also do so interculturally, with Christians from all over the world. Indeed, with God's Word in my bag, I will continue life's journey with courage and joy. It is more precious and sweeter than honey and more precious, for that matter, than any cakes! _____

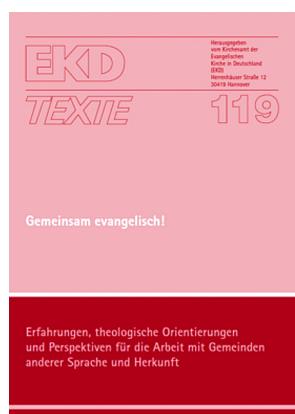
¹ Annotation: The word Gebäck in German is an allusion to the rhyming word Gepäck which means baggage.



THI MY PHUONG TRAN,
Pharmacist in Hanover and Volunteer
at the Evangelical Vietnamese Tin-Lanh-Church.

WE ARE THE ONE WORLD!

Being Protestant Together **BY THORSTEN LEISSER**



RECOMMENDED READING:
“GEMEINSAM EVANGELISCH”
 (Being Evangelical Together)

Only available in German.

Sunday morning in Germany. People flock to their services. Up and down the country, the whole Lord's day long, there is everything a believer's heart might desire. Into early evening, worship and sermons about judgment follow on from one another, games and Bible studies take turns, organs resound and drums roll. Churches and community halls are full, and now deserted factory halls and club houses are much-frequented.

Indeed, Germany is a country informed by Christianity – thanks to its immigrants! And this has not only been since 2007, when those in authority finally comprehended that immigration must be designed and given shape. No, for many decades, Christians from the “One World” have been settling here, becoming a part of the country, paying their taxes and getting actively involved in the local community – some have even become German nationals. They come as refugees, immigrants and “expatriates”, seeking either refuge or work, and bringing not only their very own stories and will to survive, but also their energy and creativity – and of course their faith.

Over the decades, the ecclesial landscape has also become more colourful. Alongside the widespread Protestant denominations and the Roman Catholic Church, brothers and sisters from all possible streams of global Christianity have made Germany their home. In the conurbations of the Ruhr or of the Rhine-Main area, in particular, there are communities of all colours; but the churches known as “churches of diverse languages and origin” (in EKD-jargon) also live out their diverse lives of faith in Eastern Friesland and in the Black Forest.

The “One World” is here. It is not only outside our (church) doors, but it came inside long ago. Many of the churches are either guests of local church congregations or rent rooms for their services and church events. In some places, the initial rental relationship has developed into close collaboration. When, for example, in Bremen, young people from the local church congregation and a Nigerian congregation come together to prepare for a joint confirmation, it is a milestone on the road to a brotherly and sisterly way of living and

working together. Here, the political commitment to an inclusive co-existence gains an ecumenical dimension. For brotherliness and sisterliness are merely the ecclesial translations of “integration”, for which the established churches have been calling, not only since the introduction of the Intercultural Week, but for decades.

Thus, the Ad-hoc-Commission established by the EKD Council to facilitate co-operation with churches of diverse languages and origin, recently made the matter of establishing sibling relationships, in which brothers and sisters are on an equal footing, as the paradigm for the future life and work with such migrant churches.

The “One World” is here. This is good, but it also means work, since the colourful co-existence of Christian traditions raises questions such as: How can we establish a sibling relationship on an equal footing, where the financial and material means of the congregations differ significantly? Who decides what is “Protestant”, what can be termed reformatory in the wider sense and what is non-negotiable in ecumenical dialogue? How can a discourse be shaped so as to recognise that theological thinking and believing is informed by the respective cultures of the participants? The way in which Christians read and understand Holy Scripture is just as much related to their own context in terms of their culture and history of thought, as their view of the world in which their faith is manifest. The challenges presented to us in Germany by the Christian diversity of the “One World” are revealed when, for example, in some (not only neo-Pentecostal) West African churches, “spiritual warfare” is practised using curses with a specific target in mind.

All of these issues deserve our attention since, as it is with siblings: We cannot choose them. God's family is very big – as big as the “One World”. —



THORSTEN LEISSER,
 Senior Member of the EKD
 Church Office; Theological
 Consultant for Human Rights
 and Migration in the Church
 Office of the EKD.

A HOME FOR A TIME

German-Speaking Congregations Abroad

COMPILED BY DINE FECHT

The Evangelical Church in Germany sends ministers out into approximately ninety churches across the globe. Their aim is to support German-speaking people who are living abroad, either temporarily or permanently, for professional or other reasons, through the proclamation and ministry of the Gospel. In other words: German-speaking people living abroad find a religious and cultural home in these congregations. There are about two million of these Christians and

they have been sent out by commercial enterprises, international institutions and development agencies, as diplomats or teachers, for an average of three to four years (expatriates). In addition, there are the German “retirement migrants” who have taken up residency abroad, either for a time or indefinitely. Four voices from Egypt, Thailand and Spain give an account of the work of the German-speaking congregations abroad.



DINE FECHT,

Senior Member of the EKD Church Office; Head of the “Ministries Abroad” Department in the EKD Church Office.

CALCULATING, LOVING AND PRAYING

Spain is a country with an incredible wealth of churches, but as far as Protestant churches are concerned, the number is much smaller. However, the opportunity to visit a Spanish Protestant church and to participate in the life of that church, exists for Germans - at least for those in Madrid. Without question, one would receive a warm welcome.

And yet, Germans only occasionally take advantage of this opportunity. Much more frequently they travel thirty or forty kilometres on Sunday to join the service of a German-speaking Protestant church. Why should this be so?

In prayer, a person presents his whole self before God including the entirety of his multi-faceted inner life. Even in our mother tongue, it is no small challenge to find the right words to express what we would like to say to God, which is why prayer requires our full attention. Even such a beautiful language as Spanish can thus become a stumbling block, if one has not yet mastered the language to a level which far exceeds that which is necessary for everyday life. It is not usual for non-natives to

have attained this level, even for Germans who have lived in Spain for many years. On certain religious occasions such as weddings, baptisms or ecumenical services, one accepts the obstacles posed by a foreign language, but one would not be happy if this was a constant impediment.

In addition, language is not only a means of communication, but also has emotional significance. The sound of prayers in one's mother tongue, or of songs which one already sang as a child, are part of one's identity and an indication as to which tradition one belongs.

There are many other good or even better approaches than one's own way of conducting or participating in a service - and this is in no way a value judgement - but for all native speakers including ourselves, the one form in which we feel at home and which suits us best, is the form which helps us pave a way to God and to one another. Therefore, there is indeed some truth in the saying: Calculating, loving and praying - are best done in one's mother tongue! _____



CHRISTIANE BOROWSKI,

Reader in the Peace Church, Madrid.

THE LEGACY OF THE REFORMATION IN THE INTERFAITH MOVEMENT

I am standing in front of a number of pupils who attend the German Protestant School (Deutsche Evangelische Oberschule, DEO) in Cairo and who have lined up in an orderly fashion. It has all gone quiet in the school yard and they are waiting for the daily ritual of the “Biledi”, the Egyptian national anthem, which they sing together. For them, it is a normal day; some are looking forward to Halloween parties in the afternoon. I am standing next to the head and take hold of the microphone. “Today, we remember a day without which the German Evangelical School would not exist”. The students give me some irritated glances. “Today, nearly 500 years ago, the theologian Martin Luther triggered a very important discussion in Germany, from which the Protestant Church developed after decades of debate. Nearly 350 years later, Protestant Christians from Germany founded a church community in Egypt, and soon after that the first Protestant school in Cairo. It is still here today. It is your DEO.” Two years ago, on Reformation Day, I began a talk about the events of 1517 in this manner. Many parents and pupils knew very little about this piece of history or about the significance of the word “Protestant” (“Evangelisch” in German) which is part of the school’s name. Therefore, a small exhibition about Martin Luther and the Reformation stood in the schoolyard for two weeks.

Last year, additional resources and lesson plans were developed on the topic of the translation of the Bible. In the school’s worship service, during which the children gather each Sunday, the Reformation was also celebrated. These are steps which were taken to make the legacy of the Reformation relevant, in a context in which the majority of the school community is Muslim and most of the Christians are Orthodox Copts. The implicit effect

of the reformatory spirit at the school becomes visible in the co-operative Religious Education lessons, which the students enjoy from Year 11 onwards. There, the students look at topics from a Muslim, as well as a Christian, perspective and are taught by both Christian and Muslim teachers. Since in Islam, the Koran features as a starting point for discussion about many topics, Christians feel moved to take a closer look at the Bible. The principle of “sola scriptura” seems much more naturally appropriated in Islam than it is in Western Christianity.

The different ways of interpreting the significance of Jesus Christ also causes the students to think more carefully about their own standpoint. What does “solus Christus” mean in this context?

A dialogue with Islam emerges from such encounters: In the staff room, in the school yard, during afternoon P.E. lessons and at private parties – everywhere where cultures and religions meet. Relationships develop and people are challenged to speak about their own faith. The reformatory objective of achieving maturity in the faith is lived out naturally every day in a German School Abroad such as the DEO. Here, each day, a religious environment is tangible; an environment in which to take a secular - or even an atheist - stance is almost inconceivable. Many pupils begin to ask questions about their religious roots here. In such a setting, even unchurched teachers from Germany find themselves being challenged to think about faith.

At the same time as feeling at home in a practising Islamic culture, members of our congregation also feel positively encouraged to define their own faith and to find the words to speak about the legacy of the Reformation.



**NADIA EL KARSHESH
AND STEFAN EL KARSHESH,**
Pastors sent by the EKD to Cairo.

THE GERMAN PROTESTANT CHURCH IN THAILAND IS A CHURCH IN TRANSITION

Until recently, the German-speaking, Protestant Church in Thailand was a classic “expat”-church with a centre in the capital city of Bangkok. Here, business people, diplomats and teachers at the SWISS School gathered along with their families.

Today, the German community in Thailand has a different make-up. The proportion of classic expat-families has decreased. There is a larger num-

ber of singles, generally of a comparatively young age and who, on average, move on after one or two years. However, even for families, Bangkok is often only one posting in a long series of locations abroad. This situation has the knock-on effect that such people never settle for long. Contact with the church is limited to using the services which are needed: baptisms, confirmations, weddings and at times, counselling, since no other advisory servic-

es conducted in German, exists. Even if many of these global nomads no longer see why they should become formal church members – they do like to identify with “our German church”. Meanwhile, the proportion of German-speaking elderly people (95 % of whom are men), who retire to Thailand, is growing continually. They usually settle near the sea, in Pattaya in particular, but also in Hua Hin and on the island of Phuket. Many of them have a small pension with which to budget.

Whenever the rate of the euro plummets, their situation deteriorates dramatically. For these reasons, some cannot afford health insurance. As a consequence, all kinds of social problems ensue: loneliness, alcoholism and untreated, protracted disease are widespread. A high suicide rate among foreign-born pensioners reveals that, when the dream of retirement under the palm trees has evaporated, many see no alternative. For these reasons, four years ago, a community centre for social and diaconal services was built in Pattaya using EKD project funds. Together with a retired German pas-

tor, a small group of volunteers is responsible for the varied programmes on offer. The centre has since developed into an attractive second community hub for our church ministry. We are convinced that a number of our experiences due to the background conditions here, merely anticipate what will become a challenge for the established churches of Germany in the near future.



ANNEGRET HELMER AND ULRICH HOLSTE-HELMER,
Pastors sent by the EKD to Bangkok.

CAR BOOT CHURCH

Spain is still the German people's favourite holiday destination. Therefore, the Evangelical Church in Germany has focussed its tourism chaplaincy here; and not only in the Balearics and the Canary Islands, but also on the coast of the Spanish mainland such as the Costa del Sol. According to the German Embassy in Madrid, it is estimated that nearly 100,000 German people live on the Costa del Sol, especially during the cold time of year. Many of them do not like to miss out on church services during this time, and it is only here that some discover that the church can offer them a sense of familiarity; a little piece of home. The weekly services are therefore well attended. The only thing that our chaplaincy possesses is a staff car, whilst the accommodation and church rooms are rented. There are no paid staff working alongside the pastor. It is due to a committed group of volunteers that the “Car Boot Church” is so popular with the German-speaking residents on the “Sunshine Coast”. Tourists who are only visiting for a short time often join us as well. Our tourism chaplaincy is a temporary church. As such, it also proves an attractive location for tour groups. Devotions which feature the voices of Andalusia, which speak

about Judaism, Christianity and Islam, encourage visitors to reflect on their own impressions of travelling and to connect them with the ways in which they practise their own faith.

Living out the unity of Europe amidst the diversity of cultures is one of the most important challenges of our time. The history of Andalusia shows how this worked well at times, in the Middle Ages for example. We consider it our responsibility to point this out to tourists, as well as pointing them to the refugees who are driven to our shores as a result of their hardship. For them also, we would like to be a piece of home in a foreign land! _____



CHRISTOF MEYER,
Pastor sent by the EKD to the Costa del Sol.



CHALLENGES & **CHANGES**

ALEPPO, July 9th, 2013

BY NAJLA KASSAB

One trait that can be highly valued in the Reformed tradition is the challenge to the Church to continually reform and re-evaluate its role in proclaiming the Good News in different contexts. This part of the Reformed identity has equipped the Reformed Church in Lebanon and Syria to face the immense challenges that the various wars in the Middle East have presented to it.

The ministry of the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon started in as early as 1824. The Reformed Church, although a minority church, had none the less a pioneering role in various services and outreach at the level of education, mainly in educating women, where, through the ministry of the Reformed Church, the door for educating women was opened. The role of the laity in church leadership presented a non-hierarchical paradigm, different from all other surrounding churches.

The wars in the Middle East, and mainly the recent one in Syria since 2011, have posed several challenges and produced changes in the ministry of the church. The centrality of teaching in the church has been replaced by the introduction of diaconal services: feeding the poor, providing fuel, shelter and orphanages for children, and meeting other basic humanitarian needs. Hungry stomachs are not satisfied with words! People who had made a commitment to give to the church became in need of humanitarian aid themselves. One pastor claimed that since the war started his job description was changed from spending his time preparing sermons to showing solidarity by visiting people who had lost their homes and loved ones. He discovered that that was a better way of preparing good sermons.

The war has also strengthened the role of the laity. They have become greatly involved in different tasks in the church, starting with reaching out to refugees and distributing humanitarian aid. Then, when some pastors had to leave the country, they were replaced by trained elders. Such cooperation between pastors and elders has presented a great model of the priesthood of all believers, in which all Christians feel equally responsible for building up the body of Christ.

The situation has also inspired young people to be more involved in the life of the church. Despite all the difficulties and pain around, a great spiritual commitment has developed. The church has come to be seen as a shelter. The number of people at-

tending church activities has increased. Refugees, who looked for their physical needs to be met and for the basics of daily life, have also found their spiritual needs met at a time when life has become fragile and the future has looked gloomy. Spiritual strength has been necessary to bring wholeness and hope.

One of the main challenges facing the churches today is emigration. Many families have been forced to leave the country because of the insecurity. Also, we are a minority church and the increased number of displaced persons has threatened the continued existence of the church in Syria. For example, our churches in Aleppo and Homs have been bombed and their congregations dispersed. Also, whole congregations have had to leave their villages, such as the churches in Gasanieh and Kharaba. That is discouraging to church members who are concerned about their continued existence. It takes great determination and spiritual strength to believe that a minority is light and salt, quite apart from numbers, and that minorities are strong, however small their numbers, if they focus on the role they have, not on their numbers, and find joy in the role they are playing in the community. This has always been a source of strength in the Reformed Church in Lebanon and Syria, and it has had a great impact on the community and the nation as well.

The Reformed Church has historically played a great role in strengthening ecumenical encounter and in inter-faith dialogue. As a small church that holds up a paradigm where diversity is respected and that practices a non-hierarchical style of relations, we have a great role to play in reconciliation in the Middle East. We are equipped to be a minority that brings reconciliation. We believe that that is an important role that the Reformed churches have played in the past and are still playing today. Through our institutions and ministries we strive to light a candle and bring healing where possible.



NAJLA KASSAB,
Preacher (National Evangelical
Synod of Syria and Lebanon).



IN THE MINORITY

Protestant Churches in other
Cultures of the World

BY ANDREAS FELDTKELLER

The global spread of Protestant churches, through mission and migration, has led to the existence of Protestant minorities in numerous countries across the world; and they all face the challenge of communicating the legacy of the Reformation in their respective culture, often in an environment which is strongly influenced by the presence of a different religion.

How this is worked out practically is different in each local situation. An important focal point however, in almost every case, is the use of the Bible, which, according to reformatory understanding, facilitates a direct encounter between ordinary believers and the written Word. In the Arabic world, Protestant churches are part of a culture that is strongly influenced by Islamic religious practice and Islamic terminology, and one in which the Orthodox churches, of diverse cultural and geographical backgrounds, are the predominant and oldest form of Christianity.

The idea that ordinary believers should speak out and repeat God's Word is common to both the churches of the Reformation and Islam. For Muslims, reciting from the Koran is part of the obligatory form of prayer. Paragraphs from the Koran are memorised and recited, so that a treasure trove of Koran surahs are available for believers' prayers; depending on the believers' training. In the Orthodox churches of the Arabic world, however, the Bible was, for a long time, reserved for liturgical use by the clergy and for reading in the monasteries.

With the objective to put words into believers' mouths, Protestant missionaries of the 19th century brought in something which, whilst it resonated with the Islamic prayer practice, was, by and large, new to the Orthodox Christian churches. At first, the

missionaries were not primarily concerned with founding their own Protestant churches, but rather, they meant to encourage the Christian churches that were already in existence to live out the gospel message and to testify to people of other faiths. It was only due to conflicts between Arab Christians, who had been inspired by the missionaries' teachings, and their church governing bodies, that Protestant churches were founded. As was often

In the Arab world, Protestant churches are part of a culture which is strongly influenced by Islamic religious practice and Islamic terminology.

the case, the innovations sometimes came with attitudes which, from a modern perspective, appear arrogant.

It is interesting to note that Protestants, with their ideal of making the Bible available for all believers to read, were the first in the Arab world to develop an aesthetically attractive print. In Islam, with a stronger emphasis on memorising words, only hand-written copies of the Koran had been used up until this point. Arabic printing was already in use in Europe. However, all the letters were printed at the same line height, which, according to Arab opinion, looks atrocious. In 1839, through close co-operation between American Protestants, Arab experts in calligraphy and a German printing press from Leipzig, an entirely new font was developed which allowed the letters to be staggered at different heights; thereby creating an appearance closer to that of the Arabic script.

ARAB FORM OF PROTESTANTISM

All editions of the Koran printed in the Islamic world, all printed Arabic books for use in Orthodox and Catholic churches and, of course, all secular printed books in Arabic were ultimately based on the further development of this type face, which emerged out of inter-cultural and inter-religious co-operation. Once introduced, within a few years, the printing press had completely changed the ways of handling the religious and secular knowledge of the Arab world. It also brought the ways in which Muslims and Christians (of various denominations) interact with the Word of God, closer together. For a long time now, it has been a widespread practice for Muslims and Orthodox Christians to own a printed Koran or a printed Bible and to use

it as an aid in their conversations with people of other faiths.

This example shows clearly that the significance of the Protestant churches in the Arab world far outweighs the number of their members: Their presence has effected lasting change within the culture – and, at the same time, has been instrumental in the development of a specifically Arab form of Protestantism.

A very different story could be told about Protestantism in India. Here, the Protestant churches were particularly attractive to people who had been excluded from the traditional social system, the Dalits, who were considered unclean on account of the work which was assigned to them, and with whom contact was avoided. The same applies to the "Adivasi": people who claim to be the earliest inhabitants of India and who have been marginalised en masse by the majority of society. The Gossner Evangelical-Lutheran Church is one of the churches in which the majority of its members belong to the "Adivasi". Their ecumenical connections with the Protestant world has become the basis for the Adivasi people's ability to communicate their identity in both oral and written forms, in a way which enables them to be heard in India as much as on an international stage. This is important, in order to ensure that the intrinsic value of their culture and habitats is respected, and hopefully that thereby, the destruction of their environment through the exploitation of resources can be stopped.

Compared with the Arab world, there are many more facets of Protestant culture which clearly stand in opposition to the majority culture of India. Protestantism testifies to the dignity of every individual, regardless of their origin; an insight which can be gleaned, amongst other sources, from the Reformation's message of justification, notwithstanding the fact that there is still room for improvement in this area within the native countries of the Reformation.



PROF DR ANDREAS FELDTKELLER,
Professor of Religious Studies and Intercultural Theology at the Faculty of Theology, Humboldt- University in Berlin.

The glass door to the chapel is wide open. The rays of the morning sun shine through the milky glass of the window front designed by Johannes Schreiter. The artist has cast a verse from the Gospel of Matthew (chapter 24, verse 27) in glass: "For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man."

The lightning is captured within a broad, white space. Underneath is an orderly line of blue arrows. It ends with a single arresting arrow pointing to the sky. Any unsettling thoughts are immediately dispelled. This is the impression that the window - indeed, the chapel - has upon me. I enjoy starting my working day with this view.

I discover a carefully folded, grey blanket and a small, yellow cushion on the window sill. It seems that somebody has spent the night here. The overnight visitor is, however, nowhere to be seen. Perhaps he has already taken his connecting flight or has boarded the first train from the main-line station. For a limited time, the chapel has been a welcome place of rest; a place of refuge.

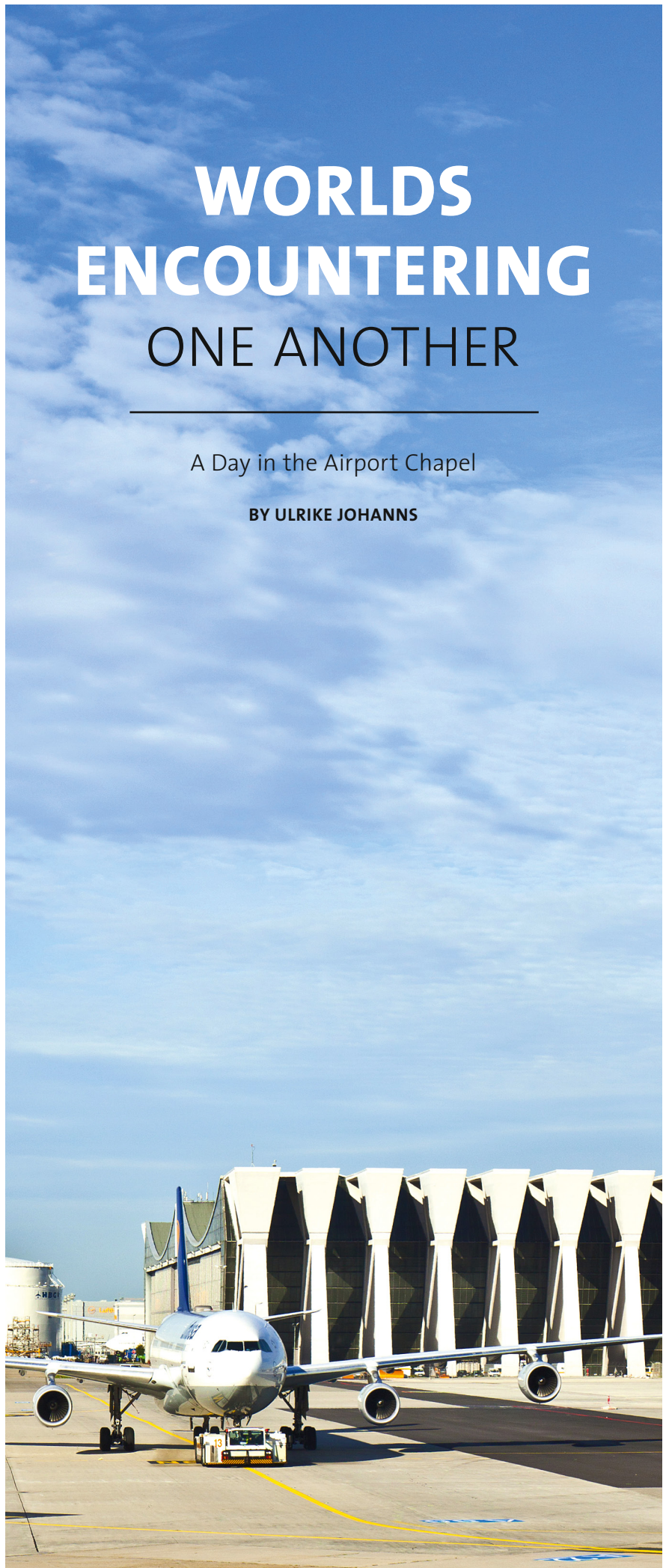
In a moment, air passengers and staff will gather here for the daily Catholic mass. The arrival of him who was, and is, and is to come, satisfies the hunger for comfort and company. The "mystery of faith" is alive in the worshipping community at the airport.

After this, we are expecting the visit of a school group. The pupils wish to learn about the work of an airport chaplaincy. Some young people read from a book of intercession and prayer requests. They are touched by the seriousness of some of the entries. They become conscious of the fact that people are afflicted, sometimes by having a full diary, sometimes by having a deep crisis; by having to say goodbye to a loved one, by the loss of employment, by sickness, by worrying about a daughter or a son. Next to these are entries expressing thanksgiving and delight. One pupil summarises this experience brilliantly: "This is a breath-taking room, even a room for tears, simply a room to gain strength." Before the school group leaves, we go together to the

WORLDS ENCOUNTERING ONE ANOTHER

A Day in the Airport Chapel

BY ULRIKE JOHANNIS



nearby Jewish and Muslim prayer rooms; the respective “rooms in which to gain strength” of the other religions. For many years, there has been a vibrant interfaith culture at Frankfurt airport. The pupils are really appreciative that once a year, there is a peace festival incorporating contributions from various religions. “The peaceful co-existence of religions works well here, and that might be aided by the fact that everyone here - Jews, Christians and Muslims - are people on a journey” is the contemplative conclusion of one pupil.

In the meantime, our team began to prepare the chapel for today’s lunchtime concert and set up a small reception area, with a tea trolley on which are

The arrival of him who was, and is,
and is to come, satisfies the hunger
for comfort and intimacy.

laid out soft pretzels, biscuits, tea and coffee. The wonderful prospect of lunch-time refreshments after the concert becomes a reality. After all, the event bears the title: “The Alternative Lunch-break”. The happy hubbub of voices, warm-hearted laughter and today’s musicians announcing their arrival are audible. We know each other well. The “FRAnds-Acoustic Group” has a considerable fan club. Today, the chapel might as well be double its size. My colleagues are looking forward to the performance of the musicians they would usually listen to at work. The motto of today’s concert is: Pop Songs about God. “If God was one of us. Just a slob like one of us ...” The sound of the well-known song by Joan Osborne soon fills the chapel. Tapping toes. Reflective faces. God – “just a stranger on the bus ...” or a stranger on the delayed flight to London Heathrow? The chapel – a concert room. The concert – a room in which to get closer to God. Loud applause. Relaxed faces. With a cup of coffee or tea in hand, some of the guests stand together in small groups and are deeply engrossed in conversation, when a woman with a suitcase on wheels enters the chapel. She is looking for something. I go up to her. “Do you have a moment?” she asks. We sit down in a quiet corner of the chapel. She tells me about her life, her family, a conflict which burdens her each time she visits Germany. When it is time to go to the gate, I say goodbye to her with a blessing. The chapel is also a room of blessing between two worlds.

The concert party has vanished. The vacuum cleaner is now being used. The team is once again

clearing everything up, when my mobile rings. I now need to make another mental switch. One of the heads of the airport, who is responsible for events, is on the phone and requesting a conversation. In the next week, he would like to organise a memorial event for a late colleague in the chapel. Some hours later, we stand before the commemorative plaque in the airport chapel on which the names of the deceased have been written for whom a farewell service has been conducted in this place. The commemorative plaque acts as a home for the deceased members of the “Airport Community”, and is, at the same time, a signpost towards the home which is yet before us. I have personally known many of the deceased. There is also a story connected with the colleague of whom we are now speaking. I am sad. After we have discussed everything that needs discussing, I remain alone in the chapel. I need a moment of peace. Next to the book of prayer requests, I come to a halt. In the course of the last few hours, several entries have been made: “Thank you for this quiet space”, reads one. “Dear God, help my Dad arrive safely”, “O Lord, thank you 4 everything you do for me”, “Give me the strength to live with my diagnosis”. People have lingered here for a moment, have poured out their hearts to God and entrusted themselves to him. I sit down in the first row. My gaze wanders to the cross and then to the window. I take a deep breath and close my eyes. The events of the day pass by before my mind’s eye. I will go home now. It is good that God neither sleeps nor slumbers, as it says in the Psalm, but is there for everyone, both day and night. The door of the chapel remains open. Who knows who will find refuge here tonight? _____



ULRIKE JOHANNS,
Pastor, Head of the Evangelical
Chaplaincy at Frankfurt Airport.



WINDOW FRONT of the Airport
Chapel in Frankfurt, designed by
Johannes Schreiter

IMAGE:

Model of the House Of One



THE ONE WORLD & THE **HOUSE OF ONE**

The Berlin House for Prayer and Teaching **BY GREGOR HOHBERG**

“This is the great new problem of mankind. We have inherited a big house, a great “world house” in which we have to live together – black and white, Easterners and Westerners, Gentiles and Jews, Catholics and Protestants, Moslem and Hindu; a family unduly separated in ideas, culture, and interests, who, because we can never live without each other, must learn, somehow, in this one big world, to live with each other.”

Martin Luther King said this during his Nobel Lecture, given in connection with the Nobel Peace Prize which he received in 1964. The problem of humankind, to live with each other as a family, in spite of all our differences, in a world house, which is our earth, is more topical than ever in times when the world is increasingly moving closer together. People’s longing for peaceful co-existence is great. It is great, because the news that we hear every day, are very different.

Reports of battles and wars in so many locations on our planet directly enter our living rooms via the media and touch our souls. These battles affect people who are just like us, who were born like us, and who, like us, are children of this earth. The peace that God has promised is for all of us, as we read, for example, in Psalm 133:1: “How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity.” (NRSV). This promise is not limited to those in one’s own circle, one’s own church, one’s own confession, one’s own religion; such an interpretation would spoil the message.

The fact that people around us have a different faith or that the majority of the population consider

themselves to be non-religious, does not diminish the significance of the scripture for us and its hope of a peaceful co-existence.

THREE GREAT RELIGIONS UNDER ONE ROOF

In recent years, ideas for new ways in which to intensify dialogue between people of different faiths, and between religious and non-religious people, have been discussed in Berlin. In St Peter's Square, in Berlin's historic city centre, a house of prayer and learning for Berlin is to be built. According to the history of the city, this was one of the birthplaces of Berlin in the Middle Ages. On the very foundations of the former St Peter's Church, a new sacral building is to be established. The Evangelical Church of St Peter's & St Mary's however, is not planning to rebuild a Christian Church. Rather, it has developed an idea to establish a house of prayer and learning, of which the three great monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam - will be the first occupants. Each religious community will independently conduct worship services and prayers, following their respective traditions, in three separate designated rooms. The festive calendar of each of the three religions will be maintained and each one will inform people about their relevant faith and rituals. Daily devotions will be open to all visitors and during project days, school groups will gain an insight into how each of the different religions are lived out. Together, we will carefully seek new ways of living and working in co-operation. In a single house therefore, the familiar faith life of one's own religion will unfold within view - and calling distance - of a less familiar, perhaps even disconcerting faith praxis of one of the other faiths. The immediate proximity will serve to broaden people's outlook and help foster an understanding of each other.

In the House of One, the three rooms which are designated for worship services are grouped around a shared, central room; the common room. In this room, an encounter between all the religions will take place, we will learn from each other and practise respectful ways of communicating with one another. At the same time, this fourth room is the door into the predominately secular, urban society. Together, the three religions will also invite people who have a different faith or a non-religious focus. Here, the hosts will accept all questions and hope for intense debates. As the initiators representing the three religious communities and the city of Berlin, this indeed is our hope. Our work together on the development of the House of One is being undertaken as an association: the Bet-und-Lehrhaus-Verein Petriplatz (Association

for the House of Prayer and Learning on St Peter's Square). The name House of One was introduced during the process of the internationalisation of the project, sits within the initial framework of the crowdfunding campaign (worldwide fundraising initiative conducted through the internet) and is guided by the words of M. L. King quoted in the first paragraph.

Dialogue between the different religions needs to be conducted in many locations; in the heart of Berlin however, it will find a prominent position.

CONSTANTLY GROWING TRUST

In all of this, the association in aid of the House of Prayer and Learning does not see itself as being in competition with existing churches and initiatives. Rather, we mean to serve the churches, mosques and synagogues that are already in existence - and their communities - by establishing contact between them and visitors to the city centre. In view of the fact that joint building and managing processes offer diverse groups and milieus a multitude of opportunities to contribute, a shared House is our goal. In addition, a high degree of commitment in our interaction with each other will be required, as well as a constantly growing trust. In this, we follow an initiative of Kofi Annan, who called for new efforts to be made in the exchange of ideas following the attacks of the 11th of September 2001. In a manifesto which he commissioned, it says that we now need to strive for a dialogue in which we seek shared advantages and interests, until we arrive at a status of co-partnership. "There is no better way to achieve this status, than to build something together, across the divides. Then, we each have a stake in what we built, and together we need to protect and nurture it." (Taken from: Brücken in die Zukunft – eine Initiative von Kofi Annan; Frankfurt a. M. 2001, p.169)

However, the process of understanding and rapprochement began long ago and, for us, carries as much weight as the significance of the House itself. We are already journeying together and praying side-by-side for peace, discussing theological issues, bringing a positive view of religions into society, and are perceived by others as a sign of hope. Similar initiatives in Jerusalem and Rwanda are meanwhile our co-operation partners; and most recently, we were visited by a multi-religious group from Bosnia. For all of them, but also for many churches, schools and associations in Germany, our project gives confidence to dare to engage in - or extend - dialogue in their regions and countries. Do help us and join in the building process!

www.House-of-one.org

"How very good
and pleasant it is
when kindred live
together in unity."

Psalms 133:1



GREGOR HOHBERG,
Pastor of the Evangelical
Church of St Peter's & St Mary's
in Berlin, Board Member of the
House of One.



Experiences of Protestant scholarship-holders

DREAMING IN GERMAN

Protestant scholarships are more than merely a way to finance one's studies. Protestant scholarships facilitate the exchange of opinions between churches and cultures and promote mutual encounter and dialogue. If there were no institutions, there would be no scholarships, and yet, people are at the heart of Protestant scholarships. Here, scholarship holders from China, Russia, Rumania and Brazil recount their experiences.

BY MARTIN ILLERT

"THE FOOD AND THE LANGUAGE", is the answer given spontaneously by Chinese student Ying Huang (33) in response to a question about what she found difficult to get used to in Germany. Ms Huang is an expert in the cultural transfer of ideas: She is working on Dietrich Bonhoeffer's understanding of religion and examining whether the theologian's thoughts have particular relevance for today's Chinese society. Ying Huang knows how important it is to settle in the culture of a host country. Only in this way can a fruitful exchange of ideas develop. In Ms Huang's opinion, this is an area for which Germany is best located: "Germany lies in the middle of Europe. Here, the West and the East meet each other", she says, adding immediately that she is fascinated by its 'discussion culture'. Academic work, especially in the field of theology, is not authoritarian, but dialogical in nature.

THAT THE SCHOLARSHIP, first and foremost, opens up a new perspective on one's own thoughts, which have, so far, been taken for granted and never reflected upon, is the opinion of Maxim Sorokin (31). The Russian theologian acquired fresh and different ways of looking at his own church whilst undertaking a doctorate on church history: "In Germany, the churches are not only places for prayer, but also spaces for encounter, small islands which act as a home from home and which make the lives of people from Russia, who are living and studying here, so much easier." This experience has affected him greatly, Sorokin says. In response to a question about the other churches, Sorokin emphasises the diversity of the diaconal and charitable projects undertaken by Protestants and Catholics.

NOT DREAMING IN one's mother tongue, but in German, was a new experience for Stefan Toma (38). Amongst other new impressions, the Rumanian-Orthodox deacon cites the "unconventional life outside the Orthodox Church". Toma reports that bridge-building and mutual understanding are also novel: His most memorable experience in Germany was attending a reception of the EKD Council in Berlin Cathedral on the occasion of the visit by the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomaios I to Germany: "Although I was a member of the Orthodox delegation, I was also part of the German delegation, thanks to the scholarship. This feeling of belonging to both delegations was very special to me". Dialogue and belonging are also topics which are examined in Tomas' research: At the Theological Faculty in Kiel, he is working on his post-doctoral

studies looking at Christian and Islamic dialogue at the time of the Patriarch Gennadios Scholarios (15th century).

"NO DIFFICULTIES", was Scheila Janke's response at being asked how she had settled into life in Germany. Together with her husband Daniel Kreidlöw, the 31-year-old Brazilian pastor became good friends with people from the local church community: "We have a place of refuge there", she says, "in which we can listen to the Word of God and, time and time again, strengthen our hope. We feel bound together in faith". Ms Janke is taking a doctoral degree in Göttingen on the "resilience" of German emigrant communities in Brazil. It examines what made the emigrants so resilient in a foreign land that they could meet the respective challenges, not only as individuals, but also as a community - and a community before God. Scheila Janke knows that such questions are new to academic theology. If one takes a look however at the scholarship holders, it becomes clear very quickly that for all of them, the question of their identity and their spiritual resources is one of the focusses of their stay in Germany.

ALL OF THE scholarship holders praise the academic standards here, including the thorough methods, the efficiency and the free exchange of ideas. However, the personal support offered in the ecumenical community means just as much to them: "It is important that the Church has open doors and room for all people", summarises pastor Francile Sander (32) from Brazil as her most significant learning experience in Germany, immediately adding that "the visible signs of tolerance shown by the German population at the demonstrations against the anti-Islamism-movement" are among some of her most memorable experiences of her time in Germany. No less comprehensive is Stefan Toma's definition of what has been most significant during his stay: "Ecumenical experiences and friends whom I want to keep for the rest of my life", are the things he wants to hold on to from his time in Germany.

An overview of all the Evangelical scholarship programmes is available via the internet portal www.evangelische-stipendien.de



DR MARTIN ILLERT, Senior Member of the EKD Church Office, Secretary for Orthodoxy, Scholarships and General Ecumenical Affairs in the EKD Church Office.



IS THERE A FUTURE FOR PROTESTANTISM?



The Opportunities and Limits of its Internal Contradictions

BY SERGE FORNEROD

Protestantism can report growth across the globe – except in its original mother soil of Europe. Even though science and technology have made great progress, global levels of education have risen and living conditions have been improved in many countries, faith in God is, for an increasing number of people, indispensable. This increase can also be observed, to varying degrees, in other denominations and religions. Upon closer inspection however, it becomes clear that this growth usually occurs at the margins, or even outside, the established churches.

So what is the future likely to hold for Protestantism? What are the achievements, but also what are the deficiencies which might prove important for future developments?

THE OPPORTUNITIES

Evangelisation - and thus growth - both of which are intrinsic to Protestantism, are particularly closely linked to two of its main features, which will be decisive for its future:

- The first key feature is the ability to inculturate. By placing particular value on the Word of God being read by everyone, and thus the availability of the Bible in one's own mother tongue, Protestantism demonstrates its great ability to adapt to local contexts and cultures. Inculturation can take on the most diverse forms and express itself in the most diverse ways, as is clearly visible when comparing, for example, Protestantism in South America with Protestantism in Central Africa or China. Cultural and social codes have an

important role to play in all of these locations, as Protestantism becomes rooted in a culture and, in turn, becomes itself an important cultural element. In this regard, the erosion of the churches in Europe can also be interpreted as an indirect consequence of Protestantism, since generally speaking, Protestant churches only have minor theological objections to living in secularised or lay societies. Some even hold the view that secularisation itself, as a consequence of the age of the Enlightenment, can be traced back to Protestant thinking, which contributed to the demythologisation of the world and the Church and to the achievement of a clear division of roles and responsibilities between the state and the Church.

- The second key feature is Protestantism's strong individualistic tendency: The central message of the Reformation: justification by faith alone, has eliminated the need for any mediator between believers and their God. In addition, the paradigm shift which occurred through the emphasis on the priesthood of all believers, has strengthened an awareness of the value of every individual, regardless of position and function, within the Church. A greater appreciation of an individual's conscious mind is connected with this individualism, which has since developed in Western societies. This aspect proves also to be a victory for the future of Protestantism, since the current trend of our globalised societies is developing in the direction of a growing individualisation of lifestyles and preferences ("I like"), as is expressed in many areas of life.

THE LIMITS

The previous considerations clearly show that, alongside the above-mentioned advantages of Protestantism, there are also disadvantages, with regard in particular to its fragmentation and lack of global unity. Often, an understanding of what the Church is, stops at the steeple of one's own village. In a world, in which visual media play a particularly prominent role, the lack of a recognised and clearly recognisable figure to represent the Protestant churches, proves to be a great disadvantage. This lack of certainty also applies to the broad spectrum of opinions held among Protestants on nearly every important topic, including theological matters.

In addition, the demythologisation of the world and that which is holy, which has led to a loss of God's "visibility" on earth, has produced some negative effects on Protestantism and jeopardises healthy growth. In this respect, a temptation to which the churches might succumb, which deserves a particular mention, is to adopt moralising attitudes, to ideologise and to engage in self-secularisation. A striking example of such distortions of the fundamental message of the Reformation is the "prosperity gospel", which links economic success with the quality of an individual's faith or behaviour; sectarian fundamentalism also belongs in this category.

In spite of all this, Protestantism is still well-placed to meet the challenges of the postmodern and postsecular age, which has recently dawned; most certainly in Europe. In several articles, Jürgen Habermas has described these challenges as being those on the threshold of the 21st century. By way of a conclusion, the most significant elements are hereby summarised:

- Religion and science are no longer in competition with one another. Religion has been accepted as an important element of life from the perspective of society and anthropology, and this recognition is free from the inference that it must wield great power in society, or greatly influence the development of the sciences.
- The complete respect of religious freedom (even on the side of the churches) is an indispensable precondition for the internal cohesion of a society which is becoming ever more pluralistic, multi-religious and multicultural.

- The authority of the state needs to be legitimised on grounds which are neither religious nor ideological, but are agreed upon from a purely "technical" and "pragmatic" sense.

These three premises give rise to requirements, on the part of the churches, to be able to find their relevant position within our societies and successfully develop their presence within the public sphere. In order to permanently secure this presence, churches need to consider the following:

- That they no longer wish to exclude or limit the legitimate right of other denominations and religions to persist and be active in their spheres.
- That they accept the superiority and monopoly of the sciences (meaning "knowledge" in the broad sense of the word) and their language, in determining the organisation and order of secular society.
- That they accept the fundamental legitimacy of the authority of the state within a secular system of morals and values.

For their part, societies and states need also to ensure that they adhere to the following principles:

- That science and knowledge must remain neutral and may neither become a worldview nor an absolute position.
- That the denominations or religious traditions, which have existed for thousands of years, have great potential in terms of symbolism, expressions of thought and the development of emotions; all of which are beneficial for the co-existence of individuals. A lay and secular society needs to remain attentive and open-minded towards this potential.

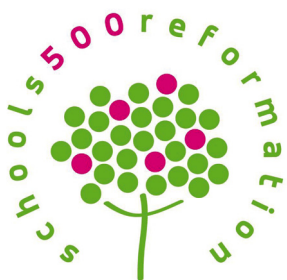


SERGE FORNEROD,
Pastor, Head of External Relations and Project Manager "500 Years of Reformation" of the Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches.

SCHOOLS 500 REFORMATION

The Reformation moves a Global Network of Evangelical Schools

BY BIRGIT SENDLER-KOSCHEL



Laughing pupils in colourful school uniforms carry saplings in their hands. By the beginning of the Reformation Jubilee of 2017, 10,000 new trees will be flourishing. On the designated website of the project: “500 Protestant Schools worldwide celebrate 500 Years of Reformation (abbreviated title: ,schools500reformation’), the director of the “Lutheran Junior Seminary Morogoro in Tanzania” shares his thoughts about the initiative involving Protestant schools worldwide: “Our school joined the worldwide network of ,schools500reformation’ with a big tree-planting-project. On Friday 28th March 2014, we planted the first 1,000 trees. The whole city was involved. Everyone was able to experience why planting trees is a sign of the Christian hope we have taken on from Luther”.

With the planting of a tree and a worship celebration, hundreds of Protestant schools worldwide are joining the initiative. Where these schools are located can quickly be found using the world map on the project’s website: www.schools500reformation.net.

The logo of the project is a cross in the form of a tree of life. Some see, in the logo incorporating the colourful fruits, a person juggling with diversity. Many schools have sketched out or printed the logo on school doors, posters and T-Shirts.

By the spring of 2015, only 16 months after the project began, the global school network had grown to more than 500 participating schools and nearly 400,000 pupils. The entire breadth of Protestantism is represented here.

And the network is continuing to grow. Access to other Protestant schools, churches and contacts across the globe is attractive to teenagers and teachers alike. Will the initiative have reached more than double the 500 schools by 2017? On the website, the project topics for 2016: “Take responsibility and speak up – locally and globally” can be explored in four different languages. The website also contains suggestions for activities which enhance the quality of schools and promote education for all, as well as



EDUCATION MOVES: School boy in Cameroon

solidarity with other Protestant institutions. In the co-operation of international schools, not only do people experience an exchange of good ideas between schools but also develop contacts which are personally enriching.

In time for 2017, and under the auspices of the EKD, an international steering group is planning a Reformation pilgrimage across a consortium of educational institutions on every continent. Many schools are not only taking part themselves but also providing hospitality and thereby enabling others to be moved: The young Reformation, now, as in its origin, is moving people. The final destination of the pilgrims’ paths is Wittenberg where the project will reach its conclusion with school groups from every continent in June 2017. But will it really be concluded? No, it will be transformed into a Global Protestant Education Network for schools and other educational institutions. A vibrant church and a globalised world need well-educated, committed and globally networked Protestants from Evangelical schools.



**REV DR
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schools500reformation.net.

ENGAGEMENT IN THE ONE WORLD?!

Voluntary Services are a Good Opportunity

BY BARBARA KRAEMER

Within the context of the Evangelical Church, voluntary services play an important role as a form of engagement in the “One World”. Young adults, in particular, have diverse opportunities to actively participate in social services, peace services, areas of global learning, ecological action, missionary ministries and humanitarian emergency services, for at least a year. Three catchwords are important in the abundance of programmes offered by the different organisations for Evangelical voluntary services in Europe, Africa, Asia, North- and South America:

- **Voluntary:** “to live with freedom”; Voluntary service involves making oneself and one’s time available, and requires the preservation and maintenance of educational settings.
- **Service:** “taking on responsibility”; Volunteers take on board responsibility by doing something for others, in Germany, Europe and across the globe.
- **Evangelical:** “daring to have faith”; Evangelical voluntary services make it possible to experience the Christian faith as a source of strength, as well as being a compass for one’s own life and ways of living together. They offer a sense of community - even across national boundaries - and work for peace, justice and the integrity of creation (taken from the “Leitbild evangelischer Freiwilligendienste”).

In co-operation with local partners, each organisation designs the different building blocks which pertain to that particular voluntary service: selection process, form of ministry, preparation, interim evaluations, follow-up and pedagogical support. Each organisation also attends to the administrative framework (visa, legal regulations, health care). You can find an overview of the organisations operating within the framework of the Protestant Church at: www.ein-jahr-freiwillig.de (website including placement vacancies).

In addition, there are three umbrella organisations for Evangelical voluntary services, where one can find general information about the programmes:

- www.agdf.de – Action Committee Service for Peace (Aktionsgemeinschaft Dienst für den Frieden, AGDF). The associated organisations promote engagement for peace and justice.
- www.ev-freiwilligendienste.de – Evangelische Freiwilligendienste is an amalgamation of Protestant organisations that offer voluntary service programmes both within Germany and abroad in the field of youth work, diaconia and other ministries.
- www.emw-d.de – The Association of Protestant Churches and Missions in Germany (Evangelische Missionswerke in Deutschland, EMW) offers opportunities for voluntary services within the framework of their long-term relationships with churches and partners abroad.

Just as people from Germany can do a voluntary service abroad, people from abroad can also do a voluntary service placement in Germany.

Many of the providers associated with the umbrella organisations also offer incoming-services as part of the above-mentioned frameworks - often working together with church partners and within international networks. In addition, national voluntary services in Germany are open to people from other nations. Since there is a wide range of diverse programmes, some of which are linked to co-operations with particular regions, it may well be worthwhile thoroughly researching the opportunities available and requesting specific information from the active providers.

We would be happy to assist you with any information and advice which you may require. Please contact: info@kef-online.org.



BARBARA KRAEMER,
Secretary of the Servicestelle
(service point) for International
Voluntary Services of the
Conference of Protestant
Volunteer Service Organisations
(Konferenz evangelischer Freiwilligendienste, KeF).

SELECTION OF FILMS ON THE TOPIC OF “ONE WORLD”

Compiled by Bernd Wolpert, Head of the Evangelical Centre for Development-Related Films
(Evangelisches Zentrum für entwicklungsbezogene Filmarbeit, EZEF)

The films can either be rented from the media centres of the respective German Protestant regional churches (Evangelische Medienzentralen; www.evangelische-medienzentralen.de) or purchased at EZEF (www.ezef.de).



THE IMAM & THE PASTOR

In many African countries, arguments between Christians and Muslims are the order of the day and often end in violent conflict, as occurred in Kaduna, Northern Nigeria. The film tells the extraordinary story of a turnaround; a peacemaking partnership between two courageous protagonists who were once hostile towards each other. Pastor James Movel Wuye and Imam Muhammad Ashafa belonged to two enemy militia groups. Imam Ashafa witnessed the murder of his close relatives by Christian militia; Pastor Wuye lost one of his hands when Muslims tried to kill him. It is hardly surprising that each saw the other as an enemy; especially as they were leading men in their respective militia groups. How they subsequently rethought their positions, and overcame mistrust, hatred and fear, as well as the disparities between each other's cultural values and religious formation, and eventually found common ground, is the story of this film.

Director: Alan Channer, GB/Nigeria 2006, Documentary film, DVD, 40 min.



PRAY THE DEVIL BACK TO HELL

This film tells the story of the resistance of Liberian women – amongst whom was Leymah Gbowee, who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Their action significantly contributed to the achievement of peace for their country, as it was torn apart by civil war. The war against the corrupt regime of Charles Taylor had destroyed the country, traumatised the civilian population and forced them to flee to the capital city of Monrovia. The victims were predominately women and children. Initially, Leymah Gbowee organised the protest of Christian women against the civil war in Liberia. Soon however, Muslim women joined the non-violent action. As a result, President Taylor could no longer continue to ignore the women of peace.

Director: Gini Reticker, USA 2008, Documentary film, DVD, 60 min.



MILLIONS CAN WALK. JAN SATYAGRAHA – THE MARCH FOR JUSTICE

This documentary charts the story of hundreds of thousands of Indian citizens, landless farmers and indigenous people, who set off on a journey to claim their rights. They demanded that they regain control over the resources which were most essential for their survival, in particular land, forest and water. The mining of natural minerals and large-scale infrastructure projects had led to forced displacements and thus robbed them of their livelihoods. This protest march was organised by Rajagopal, who sees himself as a follower of Gandhi. He is the president and founding member of Ekta Parishad, an organisation which follows Gandhi's path of non-violent resistance and tries to improve the living conditions of the Indian rural population within the situation of tension between wealth and poverty, power and powerlessness.

Director: Christoph Schaub and Kamal Musale, Switzerland 2013, Documentary film, DVD, 88 min.

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**Worship Service on the Occasion
of the Reformation Jubilee on
the ZDF Channel**
30th October 2016 | 9:30 a.m.



**The new Luther-Bible will be published
on 30th October 2016 and first presented
in St George's Church, Eisenach.**

In a festive service, the revised Luther-Bible will be introduced to the public. The ZDF channel will broadcast this service, in which the EKD Council's Special Envoy for the Anniversary of the Reformation, Margot Käßmann, will give an address, and the Chair of the Steering Committee, Christoph Kähler, will hand over the Bible to the Church.



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