

MONUMENTA MISSIONALIA

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Blas de



ROCCO VIVIANO, ED.

CHRISTIAN WITNESS IN A MULTI-RELIGIOUS WORLD

Asian Study Centre

Xaverian Missionaries – Japan

**CHRISTIAN WITNESS
IN A MULTI-RELIGIOUS WORLD**

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International Association of Catholic Missiologists
Sixth International Conference
Pattaya 2017

edited by
ROCCO VIVIANO

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INTRODUCTION

IACM BOARD

This small volume contains a selection from the Proceedings of the Sixth International Conference of the International Association of Catholic Missiologists, and the fact that we are able to publish it as an issue of the *Monumenta Missionalia* series produced by the Xaverian Asian Study Centre is meaningful and encouraging.

The Monumenta Missionalia series compiles unpublished works by missionaries, presenting achievements and providing ideas and resources for Mission. This makes the series available to a broader readership and offers each of the works as “missionary monuments.” *Monumenta*, “monuments,” are basically reminders of events, people, and, above all, ideals and goals that are worth pursuing. As such, they encourage the beholder to learn from history and exemplary people and to turn the mind, heart and life towards certain ideals, and pursue them.

With this in mind, and maybe with a touch of pride, we would like to think of this volume as a small but significant “monument” within the vast landscape of the Church’s mission in the world. It is like IACM itself, admittedly a small, but nonetheless

important contribution to contemporary mission, not just for its content, but also in its representation of the ideals and humble efforts of missiologists. Those missiologists, while engaging in mission across the continents, believe that theological reflection is essential for the work of the entire Church, and for their own work, in the service of the Gospel and of humanity.

The theme of the sixth conference and its location were chosen after careful consideration of the present world and the stimuli it offers to the Church. This Church wishes to offer its most precious treasure—Jesus Christ—to today’s humanity, so that all may have the opportunity to encounter Him, fall in love with Him and find in Him meaning and purpose for their lives.

The theme is self-explanatory. As a result of the present structure of the world, current Christian witness tends to happen in contexts that are, to a greater or lesser extent, characterized by the coexistence of adherents to different religions.

With regard to the location of the conference, Thailand seemed an appropriate choice because, as noted by former IACM president Andrew Reception in his message to the Conference participants, Thailand is a country where “in the spirit of freedom... men and women can freely practice their faith.”

The conference was held at the Mahatai Convention Centre, in Pattaya, located within the compound of the Redemptorist Centre, alongside the Fr Ray Foundation.

The Fr Ray Foundation provides education and professional training for less fortunate children, giving them hope and empowering them to live meaningful lives. Given the altruistic nature of the Fr Ray Foundation’s work, the participants were encouraged to appreciate its activities, and the 2017 Conference experience was duly enriched.

In terms of structure and methodology, the conference comprised three aspects: the main lectures, also open to the public, the immersions, and workshops reserved for the conference participants.

Each of the four lectures was followed by panel responses and open discussion. The four workshops were focused each on a particular sub-theme, namely: Christian witness, conversion and proselytism; Christian witness in a secular, multicultural and global world; Christian witness, conflict, violence and reconciliation; Christian witness and frontiers of mission in changing religious, cultural and social contexts.

The immersions were aimed at deepening the participants’ awareness of the context and, consequently, enabling them to contextualize their reflection and sharing of personal experience in the course of the conference.

For practical reasons, this volume contains only a selection of the texts. The breakdown of themes is as follows. The first section includes the four major lectures, while the third section presents the synthesis paper containing the reflection on the entire conference. It was not possible to include all the workshop presentations as that would have required efforts in terms of time and finances far beyond our present scope. Those papers will be available on the Association website. Instead, the second section of the volume

contains reports from three of the workshops. The appendix contains four subsections: a message from former IACM President, Fr Andrew Reception, to participants, the conference programme, the list of participants and, finally, the Statutes and Bylaws of the Association. These have been added as a reminder to members of our common purpose and also as a way of introducing IACM to new readers.

We would like to conclude by expressing our heartfelt gratitude to a number of friends: first of all, to members of the previous IACM Board who guided the Association from 2013 to 2017 and whose efforts made the sixth international conference possible. We would also like to thank all those who have contributed to the realization of this publication: the authors of the various contributions and our member, Prof. Theresa D'Orsa, IACM member and Continental Representative for Oceania, for the proofreading.

A special mention is due to Fr Tiziano Tosolini sx, director of the Xaverian Asian Study Center in Japan, who agreed to publish our proceedings as part of the *Monumenta Missionalia* series, which, together with the *Quaderni del CSA* journal and the *Asian Study Centre* series, is one of the Centre's publications. To Father Tosolini we offer our sincere thanks and a prayer that the Centre may continue to make an ever more fruitful contribution to the mission of the Church.

Fr Wojciech Kluj *omi*
Fr Markus Lubber *sj*
Fr Kevin Hanlon *mm*
Fr Rocco Viviano *sx*

CONFERENCE PAPERS

THE CONTEXT AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF *CHRISTIAN WITNESS IN A MULTI-RELIGIOUS WORLD*

INDUNIL JANAKA KODITHUWAKKU KANKANAMALAGE¹

It is a great pleasure to address the Plenary Assembly of the IACM and I bring to you the prayerful best wishes of H. Em. Cardinal Jean Louis Tauran and the entire staff of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue.

The evolution of the Church's modern missionary activity can be divided into three periods, namely: the period of Expansion (1492–1945); the period of Solidarity (1945–1989); the period of Globalization (1989–). Accordingly, since 1989 the history of the world is being shaped by globalization. It is no exaggeration to say that in the last analysis, local problems whether socio-economic, political, or religious, have global or international roots and consequences. Thus, we can say that globalization provides the context and historical background of the document *Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World: Recommendations for Conduct*.

In his work entitled *Many Globalizations, Cultural Diversity in*

1. The author is the undersecretary of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue.

the Contemporary World, sociologist Peter L. Berger identifies four “carriers” of cultural globalization: the international business elite, called the “Davos culture;” the intellectual elite, called the “Faculty club culture;”² “McWorld” or popular culture;³ and “Evangelical Protestantism” or large-scale popular religious movements⁴ There are three responses to this emerging global culture: acceptance, militant rejection (isolation from the global culture as seen in groups like the Taliban or ISIS) and a combination of acceptance and rejection (governments trying to balance global economic participation while resisting some aspects of global culture).

Is there a link between globalization and the rise of fundamentalism? In their book *Fundamentalisms Observed*, Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby argue that, today, religious fundamentalisms arise as a reaction to modern cultures. According to them, fundamentalists identify three principal threats of modern culture: “A preference for secular rationality; the adoption of religious tolerance with accompanying tendencies toward relativism; and individualism.”⁵ Assuming an attitude of inflexible superiority and making religion the only reference point in human life, fundamentalists oppose pluralism and totally reject anyone and anything outside their world vision. The followers of fundamentalism fight for the restoration of their religion, which they believe should also be imposed, at any price, as a political power. Very often, fundamentalists are in the vanguard of the anti-conversion campaign. Needless to say, fundamentalists also can be at loggerheads with one another, e.g. Christian fundamentalists vs. Buddhist fundamentalists.

This paper is divided into three main parts: the historical context of the world in which the *Christian Witness* document came into being; the origin and the evolution of the document *Christian Witness*; the current situation and concluding remarks.

THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE WORLD

We have already referred to the link between globalization and fundamentalism. The debate about religious conversion emerges as an offshoot of mismanaged globalization. As we now consider the context and the historical background of the document *Christian*

2. Cf. P. L. Berger, “Introduction, The Cultural Dynamic of Globalization” in P. L. Berger and S. Huntington eds, *Many Globalizations, Cultural Diversity in the Contemporary World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 4. Globalization also involves the promotion by Western intellectuals of the ideas and behavior that originated in the West, for example, the ideologies of human rights, feminism, environmentalism, and multiculturalism, as well as the politics and lifestyles that embody these ideologies,

3. The emerging global culture is even propagated among the masses by business enterprises (McDonald’s, Disney, MTV).

4. Some of the popular movements are linked to the “faculty club culture;” human rights, environment, feminist movements. “Evangelical Protestantism, especially in its Pentecostal version, is the most important popular movement serving as a vehicle of cultural globalization.” P. L. Berger and Samuel Huntington (eds), in *Many Globalizations, Cultural Diversity in the Contemporary World*, op. cit., 8.

5. M. E. Marty, R. Scott Appleby, *Fundamentalisms Observed* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1991), vii.

Witness, I will refer to the interreligious tensions caused by the way the press reported on so-called “unethical conversions,” mainly in Sri Lanka, but also in India.

The Conversion Controversy in Sri Lanka

At the beginning of the 1990s, there emerged in Sri Lanka a national debate, especially in the press, with regard to “unethical or forced” conversions. The following citations, along with some comments I add, can help us understand the origins and evolution of the conversion controversy in Sri Lanka.

Converting the Poor

1. “Some Christian organizations are engaged in missionary activities in our country... It is meant to take undue advantage of the poverty of the people in propagating their religion;”⁶

2. “Converting with money is a lie,’ says ex-director of Communication Unit of the National Christian Council and an executive member of the Baptist Church;”⁷

3. “The government would back a law punishing people who use ‘inducements’ for conversions. Over 7000 Hindu families have been converted to Christianity in the northern and the central provinces (Sri Lanka) in the last 10 years.”⁸

The Catholic Church and Conversion

1. “If the Catholic Church is not involved, they also must help to detect the culprit;”⁹

2. “It must be stated that the Catholic Church is not associated in any way with any of these sects. We do not support any of the measures, such as material enticements or undue pressures that are alleged to be made by these groups in order to carry out so-called unethical conversions. They pursue mostly our Catholics often with their own interpretations of the Bible;”¹⁰

3. The Catholic Church hierarchy and leading Buddhist priests sat together to address each other’s misunderstandings and fears. However, it can be asked whether these official meetings of Buddhist and Catholic clergy succeeded in greatly reducing the tension and hostility between them;

4. The Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Sri Lanka (CBCSL) states, “We totally condemn any attempt at unethical conversions, as they are completely opposed to the teaching of Christianity.”¹¹ The CBCSL goes on to insist, “However, we affirm unequivocally that any-

6. *The Island* 24 June 1993.

7. F. Premawardena, “Converting with Money is a Lie” in *Lankadipa Paper*, 13 September 1993.

8. *Daily News*, 29 December 2003.

9. *The Island* 14 August 1993.

10. Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Sri Lanka, “Our Catholic Stance on So-Called *Unethical Conversions*,” 15 December 2003.

11. Catholic Bishops’ Conference in Sri Lanka, “Anti-Conversion Bill,” 16 April 2005, 1.

one has the freedom to accept by his or her own will another religion... Any attempt to curtail this fundamental freedom is a gross violation of a basic human right.”¹²

Conspiracy Theories

1. “A secret programme is in operation to convert Sri Lankan Buddhists to Christianity. The Catholic and Christian churches cannot be accused of it. This is a conspiracy of C.I.A. and American state-sponsored organizations. The Catholic Church is dead set against this program;”¹³

2. “Missionary-sponsored Montessori schools carry out a sinister operation to confuse the child’s mind and thereby uproot Buddhist feelings;”¹⁴

3. “The ultimate end and aim is to convert the whole world to Christianity in preparation for the second coming of Christ;”¹⁵

4. “A secret discussion was held at the National Seminary, Kandy (Sri Lanka), with the participation of a Cardinal from the Vatican and also 170 priests from Sri Lanka.¹⁶ Newspaper reporters were barred from attending the seminar;”¹⁷

Island-wide Campaign Against Forced Conversion

In 1994, Buddhists conducted an island-wide campaign spearheaded by prominent Buddhist priests to curb the so-called “unethical conversion” of Buddhists. I attended two seminars held at the Sri Saranankara temple, which is only about fifty yards away from my house. The talks given by the two Buddhist monks can be summed up as follows: *a*) a conspiracy to eliminate Buddhism from this island is in progress; *b*) Christian sects convert poor Buddhists by giving them material rewards; *c*) many of these sects hoodwink the poor and the ignorant by their so-called healing power. If sickness can be cured through prayers, why should we have hospitals and doctors? Do not believe their hocus-pocus; *d*) what we need to do at this time is rally round the temple, resist these anti-Buddhist forces and preserve Buddhism, which has been in existence for 2500 years, and its culture; *e*) politicians are not interested in Buddhism or its culture; *f*) establish a programme to look after the poor in your village, who are easy victims of these Christian sects.¹⁸

12. Ibid, 1.

13. K. D. Thera, “Catholic and Christian churches are opposed to the conversion of Buddhists” in *Divaina*, 18 September 1993 (English translation from Sinhala).

14. C. D. S. Wijesundara, “An educational programme to uproot Buddhist feelings is operative in some Montessori schools” in *Divaina*, 27 September 1993 (translated from Sinhala).

15. *The Island*, 17 June 1999.

16. The Cardinal was Jozef Tomko.

17. The speech of Mr. Gamini Jayasuriya delivered on 2 July 1993 at the Prize Giving of the Ratmalana Young Buddhist Association Sunday School, in *Divaina*, 22 July 1993.

18. Cfr. I. K. Kodithuwakku, *Attraction of Catholics to Christian Fundamentalist Sects: A Sociological Study on Sect Formation*, (Unpublished BA Dissertation), Department of Sociology, University of Colombo, 1994, 103.

New Evangelization as Triumphalism

According to Fr Aloysius Pieris SJ, “The triumphalistic and aggressive way in which *New Evangelization* of the Catholic Church was launched in order to celebrate the 2000th birthday of Christ” was one of the causes of the rebirth of suspicion towards the Catholic Church.¹⁹

Counter-arguments against the Accusation of Unethical Conversion

1. The forcible conversion of an adult human being is in fact impossible. The most that can be extorted from him is an insincere outward conformity;
2. Evangelical Christian leaders reject material inducements to convert. They do not seek outward conformity, but rather inner conviction;
3. The unhappy and unacceptable by-product of hysterical allegations of unethical conversions has been organized attacks against Christians and Christian places of worship. Such action moves out of the realm of the unethical to the illegal;
4. The absurdly illogical, unsubstantiated and undocumented allegations of a lack of ethics with regard to conversion must stop;
5. “Crucifying Jesus Christ did not stop Christianity, the Roman Empire tried to crush it before it embraced it, the Communist iron curtain tried to eliminate it and history demonstrates that violence does not prevent the spread of the Christian Gospel.”²⁰

From the Press to the Grass-roots Reality

At this point, I think that it is appropriate to mention the situation that existed at the grassroots level in the late 1990s. I refer here to a sociological research project I conducted in 1999 and for which I interviewed thirty Buddhist monks in a predominantly Buddhist Province called Uva.²¹

*The Opinion Regarding the Proposal to Celebrate the 2000th Birthday of Jesus*²²

The result can be summed up as follows: two of the respondents had the correct idea, twenty-four had the wrong idea and four had no idea. The Buddhist monks who responded negatively were harbouring the following prejudices and fears: *a)* giving 50% of the country to Jesus as a birthday gift; *b)* having a church in every village by the year

19. A. Pieris, “Dialogue and Distrust between Buddhists and Christians: A report on the Catholic Church’s experience in Sri Lanka” in *Dialogue*, 1995, xxii: 118.

20. Cfr. H. Peiris, “Christian Conversion: An Ethical Judgement” in *Daily News*, 31 July 1999.

21. The Uva province is comprised of two districts namely Badulla and Monaragala. In the Badulla district in 2001, the Buddhist, Catholic and Christian populations were 71%, 1.6%, and 0.6% respectively, and in the Moneragala district, Buddhists 94.4%, Catholic 0.4% and other Christians 0.2%. See Department of Census and Statistics, *Census of population and Housing*, 2001: 27.

22. I. K. Kodithuwakku, *Buddhist-Christian Dialogue in the Diocese of Badulla* (Unpublished paper submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Baccalaureate in Sacred Theology, National Seminary of Our Lady of Sri Lanka, 2000), 23.

2000; c) promoting conversions in order to be able to offer Sri Lanka as a gift to God in 2000; d) fulfilling the Pope's desire to give Sri Lanka to Jesus as a present.

Pope John Paul II's Views on Buddhism

The views on Buddhism expressed by Pope John Paul II in his *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, edited by Vittorio Messori in 1994, provoked tension between Buddhists and the Catholic Church. The controversy came to a climax on the threshold of the papal visit to Sri Lanka in 1995. The Federation of Buddhist Organizations demanded that the Pope make a personal apology for having given a distorted version of Buddhism. If he failed to do so, they intended to organize a campaign to protest his visit.

Pope John Paul II and a Great Harvest of Faith in Asia

On 7 November 1999, Pope John Paul II delivered a homily on the occasion of releasing the Apostolic Exhortation, *Ecclesia in Asia* in New Delhi that drew the attention of the followers of other religions in Asia. Let me cite the part of the homily that became controversial in Asia.

Just as in the first millennium the Cross was planted on the soil of Europe, and in the second on that of the Americas and Africa, we can pray that in the Third Christian Millennium a great harvest of faith will be reaped in this vast and vital continent.²³

In fact, this controversial passage in the Pope's homily was an extract from his address to the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) in 1995.²⁴ The editors of the *Indian Express* expressed displeasure over the papal views and said that conversions "remain the cardinal objective of the church."²⁵ According to M. Rama Jois, "The Pope has committed himself to converting Asia."²⁶ A group comprised of twenty eminent persons published an open letter to the Pope in which they said that the expression "salvation comes only through Christ" implies that salvation cannot be attained through any other faith, and the term "evangelization" is nothing but a "dignified substitute" for its less dignified cousin

23. John Paul II, "Message at the concluding Mass of the Asian Synod, 7 November 1999" in *Insegnamenti*, XXI/2: 830, n. 4. John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Asia* (06 November 1999), in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 2000, 92: 449–528, n.1.

24. John Paul II, "Address to the Sixth Plenary Assembly of the FABC, Manila, 15 January 1995" in *Insegnamenti*, 1995, XVIII/1: 159. It is worth mentioning here the views of Pope John Paul II on evangelization and proselytism. "Evangelization must never be imposed. It involves love and respect for those being evangelized... Catholics must carefully avoid any suspicion of coercion or devious persuasion. On the other hand, accusations of proselytism—which is far from the Church's genuine missionary spirit—and a one-sided understanding of religious pluralism and tolerance should not be allowed to stifle your mission to the peoples of Asia" *Ibid*, 157–58.

25. *Indian Express*, 9 November 1999.

26. *Indian Express*, 25 November 1999.

“conversion.”²⁷ Similar publicity was given to Pope’s homily in Sri Lanka. The *Report of the Sinhala Commission* cited the above passage from the Pope’s homily and made the following critical comment: “For they display a complete disregard of and an insensitivity to the feelings of the vast number of Asians who are followers of three of the world’s greatest religions, Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam.”²⁸

Religious Conversion in India

In his book *In Search of Identity, Debates on Conversion in India*, Sebastian C.H. Kim divides the history of Christian conversion in India into the following periods: Debates on Conversion under the British Raj, in the Indian Constituent Assembly (1947–1949); Debates on Missionary Activity and Freedom of Religion in Independent India (1954–1979); the Debate on Conversion among Protestant Theologians in India (1966–1971); the Catholic Debate on Conversion in the 1980s; World Evangelization, Hindutva, and the Debate provoked by Arun Shourie (1994–1995); the Debate on Conversion initiated by the Sangh Parivar (1998–1999). The 1998–1999 debate emerged mainly because of the conversion of tribal communities. “There was increasing competition between Christian organizations and Hindu societies for conversion or reconversion respectively.”²⁹ The Sangh Parivar adopted a programme of “homecoming” to counteract Christian missionary activities and also started schools and other social activities in the tribal areas. With the rise of systematic attacks on Christians, the debate turned violent. It took a new turn on 10 January 1999, when the former Prime Minister and the leader of the BJP, the Hindu fundamentalist party, called for a “national debate on conversion.” Thus, conversion became a major socio-religious and political issue that continues up to the present day.

Conversion Debate and Communication

In my mother tongue, Sinhala, there is a saying to express this kind of development: it is like pricking the eye of a person who already has other reasons to cry. In the debate about unethical conversion, positions were often poorly expressed and/or misinterpreted, thereby adding fuel to the fire. Consequently, we need to address the issue of communication.

Communication has three components: a messenger, a message and a recipient. Some views of the Roman Catholic Church (messages) expressed by Church leaders (messengers) fuelled controversies among some Catholics as well as believers of other faiths (recipients). Moreover, in this era of globalization, a message has a universal dimension. Even though the messenger/communicator intends to address his/her particular commu-

27. *Indian Express*, 8 November 1999.

28. *The Report of the Sinhala Commission* (Part II), 148.

29. S.C.H. Kim, *In Search of Identity: Debates on Conversion in India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), 156.

nity, the message also reaches the global community, thanks to the development of modern means of mass communication. Moreover, even within ecclesial boundaries, various recipients may receive the same message differently—negatively or positively, critically or uncritically. The same is true of the people of other faiths. An intelligent Buddhist may accept or reject a Christian message in a scholarly manner, whereas fundamentalist Buddhists may manipulate it to serve their own ideological purposes. It is even worse when the state-controlled and/or private media directly or indirectly favour the fundamentalists. Thus, the untruth, the half-truth, or the distorted truth, when widely disseminated, can appear to be *reality*.³⁰

Anti-Christian Campaigns through Anti-conversion Bills

The anti-conversion bills presented to the Sri Lankan parliament in 2004 and 2005 added a new dimension to the conversion debate. On 18 May 2004, Tamil Nadu State repealed the anti-conversion law that was enacted on 5 October 2002. The main cause for the abolition of this law was that it had been loosely interpreted to allow for personal vendettas. Anti-conversion laws remain in force in the states of Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, and Orissa in India.

“Forced Conversion.” A Critical Analysis

1. Some new Christian groups are responsible for provoking Buddhists and Hindus as well as other Christians through aggressive evangelization and “sheep-stealing,” thereby ruining laboriously built, ecumenical and interreligious relations;
2. The so-called “unethical conversion” has helped to awaken painful colonial memories, thereby leading to suspicion and fear;
3. The whole conversion debate was often based on mere emotional arguments, ignoring serious inquiry and an analysis of factual data;
4. Buddhists and Hindus often refer to all Christians as culprits. Consequently, genuine Christian mission, especially in rural areas, is hampered owing to false accusations of proselytism;
5. All new Christian groups have been accused *en masse* of being offenders, and all conversions are labelled as acts of proselytism carried out through immoral and fraudulent means.

With this background, now let us move into the second part of this presentation: the context and the historical background of the document, its origin and its evolution.

30. “The mass media, which has tremendous potential for building understanding and respect among religious believers, has sometimes promoted models of an alien lifestyle and perpetuated suspicions and prejudices.” FABC, *Social Communication Handbook Asia* (Manila, 1998).

THE ORIGIN AND EVOLUTION OF THE DOCUMENT *CHRISTIAN WITNESS*

Joint staff meetings between the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID) and the programme on Interreligious Dialogue and Cooperation of the World Council of Churches (IRDC) began in 1977. At these annual meetings, the members of both institutions share their activities and explore the possibilities of joint projects. At the meeting held on 27–28 June 2003 in Rome, one of the items of the agenda was “Hindu Christian Dialogue/Issue of Conversion/Proselytism.” Discussion on this topic led to a proposal to begin a three-stage project, a “Joint reflection on the presentation of the Christian message today.” It was agreed that the first consultation would take place in the latter part of 2004 or in 2005. A committee of four members was formed to move the project forward.

wcc Sponsored Meetings and the Issue of Conversion

A Theravada Buddhist-Christian consultation organised by the wcc in 2004 addressed the question of conversion in the following way:

Conversion has become a threat and tension for religious diversity and harmony. We need to understand that conversions take place in different socio-economic-political contexts for different reasons. It can happen due to dissatisfaction with one’s own religion, life-changing experiences, but also through the use of force and aggression... While some conversions may be genuine and spiritual, some others may not... We express our concern learning about increased tensions and expressions of intolerance and expressions of intolerance between Buddhists and Christians in some Theravada Buddhist countries.³¹

At the wcc conference in Geneva, “Changing the Present, Dreaming the Future—A Critical Moment in Interreligious Dialogue,” 6–9 June 2005, the issue of conversion also emerged.³²

On the eve of the first phase of the project Dr Hans Ucko travelled from Geneva to Rome on 9 March 2006 to finalise plans for the first phase of the Joint Project: “Interreligious Reflection on Conversion: From Controversy to a Shared Code of Conduct.” The following points were decided at the meeting: *a*) give more emphasis to “Listening to each other and learning from one another” rather than debating and arguing to prove one’s own point of view; *b*) the sole motive of these discussions is to arrive at the accurate understanding of each other’s experience/perception about conversion; *c*) the participants should be made aware that the purpose of the meeting is not to convert others to “my” point of view or “my” perception of conversion; *d*) the participants must bear in

31. The World Council of Churches, *A Theravada Buddhist-Christian Consultation: Towards a Culture of Religious Diversity and Communal Harmony* (Tao Fung Shan Centre, Shatin, Hong Kong, 2–6 July 2004). <<http://wcc.coe.org/wcc/what/interreligious/cd43-06.htm>>.

32. *Current Dialogue*, 2008, 50: 16.

mind that they are not invited to “correct the other” but to “listen to what others may have to say;” *e*) it is important to emphasise that the Velletri (Lariano) meeting is only the “first phase” of the entire project.³³

*The Interreligious Consultation on “Conversion-Assessing the Reality”
Lariano (Italy), 12–16 May 2006*

There were 27 participants at the multifaith hearing on conversion held at Lariano. They included staff members from both the WCC and the PCID. The following religions were also represented: Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and the indigenous religion, Yorùbà. *Current Dialogue*, number 50, has published some of the presentations that were made at this meeting. Let me sum up the salient features of these essays.

Wande Abimola, spokesperson and Ambassador for the Yorùbà religion and culture in the world, argues, “Historically, conversion has often been accompanied by large scale conquest and enslavement of indigenous peoples.”³⁴ He is totally against conversion because “Conversion is an evil and terrible thing that does no good to anybody.”³⁵ Abimola notes that

One hundred and sixty years of Christian evangelism and nine centuries of Islamic proselytization have not succeeded in wiping us out. As a matter of fact, most Yoruba Christians and Muslims still participate openly or clandestinely in our religious ceremonies and rituals. Our religion still remains strong and powerful and is spreading like wild fire in the Americas.³⁶

David M. Elcott points out that “Biblical Israel knew no conversion... For biblical Israel, as for rabbinic Judaism, entry into the covenant with God allowed no exit. Simply, once a Jew, always a Jew: Israel, even in sin, is still Israel.”³⁷ He also notes the relationship between colonialism and religion. “Christian and Muslim expansion as religious communities paralleled imperial conquests of nations and peoples throughout the world.”³⁸ With regard to conversion, he notes two problematic areas for Jews. The first is the use of power or coercion, both overt and subtle, to promote conversion. The second is surreptitious methods and non-transparent behaviour as a form of religious seduction, for example,

33. Cf. Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, *Nota d’ufficio*, 10 March 2006. (PCID Archives).

34. “Testimonies from a Multifaith Hearing on Conversion, Lariano (Italy), May 12–16, 2006: Wande Abimbola” in *Current Dialogue*, 2008, 50: 20.

35. *Ibid*, 21.

36. *Ibid*, 22.

37. “Testimonies from a Multifaith Hearing on Conversion, Lariano (Italy), May 12–16, 2006: David M. Elcott” in *Current Dialogue*, 2008, 50: 24. Elcott was the director general of U.S. Interreligious Affairs for the American–Jewish Committee.

38. *Ibid*, 25.

gaining admission to a high school or university.³⁹ He argues that “unethical conversion” is a transgression for any truly religious community. He further emphasises that “Such actions amount to following a false God. If the religious paths we offer are controlled by coercion and force, if one walked them with deceit and guile, then we model a false God.”⁴⁰

Rashied Omar stresses that Muslims need seriously to re-examine the restrictive traditional sharia laws on religious conversion from Islam. Referring to the consultation on “Christian Mission and Islamic Da’wah” in 1976, he cites the concerns of Bishop Kenneth Cragg in this regard:

We are not talking about freedom of belief, or of religious practice, but the freedom of movement of belief; and there is a radical difference between those two. A faith which you are not free to leave becomes a prison, and no self-respecting faith should be a prison for those within it.⁴¹

Omar says that “The prevailing view of classical and modern Muslim jurists regard apostasy (*riddah*), defined as an act of rejection of faith committed by a Muslim whose Islam had been affirmed without coercion, as a crime deserving the death penalty.”⁴² He then seeks Christian help to reform the exiting Islamic laws. “Strengthening the Muslim reformist case to reform traditional laws on apostasy will require some Christian help. Their Christian interlocutors might need to labour hard to calm aggressive Christian proselytization efforts.”⁴³ He highlights a visible contradiction between Catholics and evangelicals concerning “conversion.”

Anantanand Rambachan, u.s. based Hindu scholar, first analyses the reaction of any religion towards the converts. “If not all, some religious traditions, despise the convert.”⁴⁴ Why do people convert to another religion? According to Rambachan, “We find it much easier to think of conversion as the consequence of coercion, material inducement or seduction and not as reflecting anything problematic in our tradition or worthwhile in another.”⁴⁵ Yet, Rambachan goes beyond this standard response and points out that conversion offers an opportunity for a critical self-examination of our respective religions without putting the blame always on the convert or on another religion.⁴⁶ He notes that

39. Ivi.

40. Ibid, 26.

41. “Testimonies from a Mutlifaith Hearing on Conversion, Lariano (Italy), May 12–16, 2006: Rashied Omar” in *Current Dialogue*, 2008, 50: 27.

42. Ivi.

43. Ibid., 28

44. “Testimonies from a Mutlifaith Hearing on Conversion, Lariano (Italy), May 12–16, 2006: Anantanand Rambachan” in *Current Dialogue*, 2008, 50: 30.

45. Ibid., 30.

46. Ivi.

“The largest numbers of converts from Hinduism come from the so-called untouchable castes. Yet, Hindu responses to conversion do not reflect any significant self-critical reflection.”⁴⁷ He further notes that “Conversion presents a challenge and opportunity for religious reform and renewal. We need to be attentive to the complexity of factors that motivates persons to convert from one religion to another and not further demean the convert.”⁴⁸

Mission exists in Hinduism as well. Yet, the tensions crop up when “Aggressively proselytising religions such as Christianity and Islam entered... as partners in political empire building adventures.”⁴⁹

Report from the Interreligious Consultation on “Conversion-Assessing the Reality”

The Report from the interreligious consultation on “Conversion: Assessing the Reality,” held in Lariano, Italy in May 2006, stated among other things, that:

1. All of us believe that religions should be a source of uniting and ennobling human beings. Religion, understood and practiced in the light of the core principles and ideals of each of our faiths, can be a reliable guide to meeting the many challenges facing humankind;

2. Freedom of religion is a fundamental, inviolable and non-negotiable right of every human being in every country in the world. Freedom of religion connotes the freedom to practice one’s own faith without any obstruction, the freedom to propagate the teachings of one’s faith to people of one’s own and other faiths, and also the freedom to embrace another faith out of one’s own free choice;

3. We affirm that while everyone has a right to invite others to an understanding of one’s own faith, this right should not be exercised by violating the rights and religious sensibilities of others. At the same time, all should heal themselves from the obsession to convert others;

4. Freedom of religion enjoins upon all of us the equally non-negotiable responsibility to respect faiths other than our own, and never to denigrate, vilify or misrepresent them for the purpose of affirming the superiority of our faith;

5. We acknowledge that errors have been perpetrated and injustice committed by the adherents of every faith. Therefore, it is incumbent on every community to conduct honest self-critical examination of its historical conduct as well as its doctrinal-theological precepts. Such self-criticism and repentance should lead to necessary reforms, including reform related to the issue of conversion;

6. A particular reform that we would commend to practitioners and establishments of all faiths is to ensure that conversion by “unethical” means is discouraged and rejected by all. There should be transparency in the practice of inviting others to one’s faith;

47. Ivi.

48. Ivi.

49. Ibid., 31.

7. While deeply appreciating the humanitarian work done by faith communities, we feel that it should be conducted without any ulterior motives. In the area of humanitarian service in times of need, what we can do together, we should not do separately;

8. No faith organization should take advantage of vulnerable sections of society, such as children and the disabled;

9. During our dialogue, we recognized the need to be sensitive to the religious language and theological concepts of different faiths. Members of each faith should listen to how people of other faiths perceive them. This is necessary to avoid and remove misunderstanding, and to promote better appreciation of each other's faiths;

10. We see the need for and usefulness of a continuing and collective exercise to evolve a "code of conduct" on conversion, which all faiths should follow. We therefore feel that inter-religious dialogue.

*The Second Phase of the Project: "Towards an Ethical Approach to Conversion"
Toulouse (France), 8–2 August 2007*

As we saw above, the first consultation was interreligious. Leaders of other religions were invited to express their concerns and grievances in relation to the issue of conversion. The second consultation was ecumenical. It included 24 participants from Protestant, Orthodox, Pentecostal and Evangelical churches (invited by WCC-IRR) and 15 participants from the Catholic Church (invited by the PCID). The discussion focused on some issues that were likely to be addressed in the third and last consultation: family and community, respect, transparency and honesty, economy, marketing and competition, violence, politics, coercion and manipulation.

In his welcoming words, the Rev. Dr Hans Ucko briefly elaborated the motive of the joint project of the PCID and the IRDC and also gave a bird's-eye view of the prevailing context. He emphasized that for some of the member churches of the WCC, the topic of conversion in the context of interreligious relations is increasingly problematic.⁵⁰ He then explained how conversion has become a social problem. "There have been attacks. There were legislation proposals against conversion or stringent measures to be applied when a person wanted to convert from another religion to Christianity. In some countries, there were initiatives to reconvert Christians back to the religion of the land."⁵¹ He also said, "Often we would be tempted to say that it is those Pentecostals and Evangelicals who are to be blamed. We are only the innocent victims. But it wouldn't be true."⁵²

Now let us briefly sum up the different papers presented at the ecumenical consultation at Toulouse.

50. H. Ucko, "Welcoming Words to the Participants of the Conference, Towards an Ethical Approach to Conversion, Toulouse (France): August 8–12, 2007" in *Current Dialogue*, 2008, 50: 40.

51. Ivi.

52. Ibid., 41.

Father Fiorello Mascarenhas SJ is a Catholic priest from Bombay, India.⁵³ He describes the goal of the ecumenical gathering as follows: “It is hoped that we will arrive at some agreement among ourselves about how to carry out the Great Mandate, all the while respecting the dignity of every person (a fundamental tenet of interreligious dialogue).”⁵⁴ Referring to the Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*, and some documents of the Vatican II, he elaborates how the Church in Asia can share with Asian brothers and sisters, the Good News of Jesus Christ.⁵⁵ He then makes the following proposals for carrying out our mission with respect: *a*) we continue, with renewed energy and the anointing of the Spirit, to make every effort to bring the Good News to an ever more needy humanity; *b*) when preaching the wonderful Good News of Jesus Christ, we never stoop to belittle or condemn other religions (“for the purpose of affirming the superiority of our faith,” as the participants of the first meeting at Lariano put it); *c*) we never use unethical means of “inducing” people to convert to our faith, e.g. by offering financial help or other material benefits; *d*) as baptised Christians, we work in harmony with the pastors of other churches and denominations functioning in that geographical area, thus giving witness to true “Christian Unity” (*Jn 17:21*); *e*) we “evangelize” in a holistic way, and do not “proselytize;” that is, we commit ourselves to make efforts to foster interreligious dialogue and religious harmony in the local areas of our operation, and cooperate wholeheartedly in human welfare projects for the uplifting of all people in that neighbourhood.⁵⁶

In his paper entitled “A Threefold Cord: Weaving Together Pentecostal Ecumenism, Ethics, and Evangelism in Christian Conversion” Tony Richie offers a Pentecostal perspective on an ethical approach to Christian witness and conversion in a multi-religious world.⁵⁷ He bases his arguments on a paper of Cecil Mel Robeck Jr., who states that three factors—zeal, fear, and ignorance—contribute to the Pentecostal proselytism.⁵⁸ Pentecostal evangelistic zeal is often viewed by religious others as fomenting acts of betrayal and proselytism.⁵⁹ Fear, especially fear of losing distinctiveness and power, greatly contributes to the problem of indiscriminate evangelism. Ignorance of what God is doing among religious others is another clear contributing cause to the problem of proselytism.

Richie prefers “energetic evangelism” in place of “aggressive evangelism” since the latter carries a connotation of coercion. He also criticises some parts of the Lariano Report: *a*) it contains language that is excessive, and that Evangelicals would find offensive (e.g.,

53. Fr. Fiorello Mascarenhas is a Charismatic priest from Bombay, India.

54. F. Mascarenhas, “Christian Witness in a Multi-religious World” in *Current Dialogue*, 2008, 50: 42.

55. *Ibid.*, 44.

56. *Ivi.*

57. T. Richie, “A Threefold Cord: Weaving Together Pentecostal Ecumenism, Ethics, and Evangelism in Christian Conversion” in *Current Dialogue*, 2008, 50: 47

58. C. M. Robeck Jr. “Taking Stock of Pentecostalism: The Personal Reflections of a Retiring Editor” in *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies*, Spring 1993, 15/1: 35–45.

59. T. Richie, “A Threefold Cord: Weaving Together Pentecostal Ecumenism, Ethics, and Evangelism in Christian Conversion” in *Current Dialogue*, 2008, 50: 47.

healing from “obsession to convert”); *b*) it censures exploiting vulnerable people without carefully defining vulnerability; *c*) it says that evangelism that is intentionally unclear about its intentions is dishonest, and dishonesty is unethical. Yet, it is unfair to ask Christians to conceal their faith. That too would be dishonest.⁶⁰

He concludes, “Ecumenism ought to be ethical and evangelistic as well; ethics ought also to be ecumenical and evangelistic; and evangelism ought in addition to be ecumenical and ethical.”⁶¹

So far, we have heard the Catholic and Pentecostal views concerning mission and conversion. Now let us turn to the Evangelical perspective.⁶² Thomas Schirrmacher points out that the international “Lausanne Covenant” of 1974, while encouraging mission, nevertheless states in article 12:

At other times, desirous to ensure a response to the gospel, we have compromised our message, manipulated our hearers through pressure techniques, and become unduly preoccupied with statistics or even dishonest in our use of them. All this is worldly. The Church must be in the world; the world must not be in the Church.⁶³

The World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) is composed of evangelicals within the 140 national Evangelical Alliances. He notes “Evangelicals love the Bible and by using unethical means of evangelism, those who have used such methods were disobedient to God’s world, as the First Letter of Peter commands: (*1Pt* 3:15–17).”⁶⁴ Schirrmacher affirms that “The WEA is willing to use its influence in any way possible to ensure that mission stays away from any misuse of people and never violates their human rights and dignity.”⁶⁵

We can summarise the features that emerge from the view of Schirrmacher as follows:

1. Evangelical groups overall have the highest percentage of Christians who come from a non-Christian background and become Christians as adults or at least as teenagers;
2. They draw more attention and threats than the historic churches;
3. Many Evangelicals have often had the impression that any warning against “proselytism” is actually a veto against any kind of evangelism, or at least against evangelism by evangelicals;
4. In the past, it has seemed as if only evangelicals made mistakes in evangelism;
5. We need to distinguish between the groups meeting here, and certain of their factions that create problems within their own bodies as well as with outsiders;

60. Cf. *Ibid*, 51–52.

61. *Ibid*, 52.

62. T. Schirrmacher, “But with Gentleness and Respect. Why Mission Should Be Ruled by Ethics—An Evangelical Perspective on a Code of Ethics for Christian Witness” in *Current Dialogue*, 2008, 50: 55–66.

63. As quoted in T. Schirrmacher, 55.

64. *Ivi*.

65. *Ivi*.

6. WEA and Evangelicals in general are very upset about what some American tele-evangelists say from time to time about other religions;

7. Anti-conversion laws and the growing number of attacks against Catholics and Evangelicals should be responded to jointly rather than by pointing to the faults of another Christian confession;

8. If there are faults, we need to find ways to discuss them among ourselves, not through public press accusations and statements;

9. This discussion is solely for the purpose of coming up with a written code of conduct that will define for Christians the border line between acceptable mission protected by religious freedom and undue forms of trying to call people to conversion, especially through economic and political means;

10. Today, there are millions who, without any Christian background, become Christian out of pure conviction without any pressure.⁶⁶

The PCID in a written request asked the PCPCU and the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples to go through the second draft document and make their valuable comments on it.

The Third Consultation

“Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World, Recommendations for a Code of Conduct” was held in January 25–28, 2011, Bangkok, Thailand.

In 2011, the Secretary of State of the Vatican advised the PCID to avoid the term “Code of Conduct” since in some contexts it might have legal meaning.

CONCLUSION

This is the first time the Vatican, the World Evangelical Alliance and the World Council of Churches agreed on any document. It took over five years to complete it. The document has significantly influenced Christian mission around the world. The concerns and issues related to Christian witness have been discussed ecumenically and interreligiously.

Has the context in which the document was born improved over time? Our daily experiences would indicate just the opposite. Relations between Christians and Christians are still marked by disunity, and the relations between Christians and the followers of other religions are far from expressing the unity of the human family. Some examples: *a*) some religions advocate “conversion to” but oppose in very different ways “conversion from;” *b*) there are still differences among religions about the freedom to propagate religion and the freedom to practice one’s religion without interference from the other; *c*) not all are agreed on the difference between bearing Christian witness and improper proselytism.

The proposal approved by the *Global Christian Forum* (GCF) in 2013 entitled “Call

66. Cf. *Ibid.*, 58–60.

to Mission and Perception of Proselytism: A Global Christian Conversation” notes that “powerful emotions and deep wounds rooted in experiences, perceptions, or accusations of proselytism between churches—understood popularly as ‘stealing sheep’ from one Christian body by another Christian body—are widely manifest.” The Global Christian Forum in collaboration with the PCPCU, the WCC, the WEA, the Pentecostal World Fellowship, the Orthodox Churches, and the organizations of African Instituted Churches are working together to compose a statement on “Christian Witness in a World of Many Christian Families.” (The title is still provisional)

The controversy about conversion is not merely a religious issue – changing from one religion to another or from one denomination to another. Socio-political, cultural and economic factors are involved. Accordingly, for Buddhists and Hindus, which are the majority religions in Sri Lanka and India respectively, conversion brings up bitter memories of colonial oppression, ecclesiastical expansion, political manipulation, as well as conspiracy theories about the elimination of the local cultural heritage. For Christians, conversion facilitates social advancement, caste mobility, the search for justice. For Christians, Buddhists, Muslims, and Hindus alike, religious fundamentalism has intensified the debate about conversion.

Most of these issues are perennial. Religious freedom, mutual respect, proselytism, religion and violence, fundamentalism, the need to be sensitive to religious language and theological concepts in different faiths, all of these are still burning issues which require our constant attention and engagement.

LIMITS TO CHRISTIAN WITNESS IN RELIGIOUS, CULTURAL AND SOCIAL CONTEXTS

KLAUS KRÄMER¹

The document *Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World*, published jointly by the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, the World Council of Churches and the World Evangelical Alliance in Geneva in 2011, is the first-ever ecumenical code of ethics for the conduct of Christian witness around the world.² Its conscious focus on practical issues associated with Christian witness represents a remarkable paradigm shift in mission theology. This is underlined by the clearly accentuated contextual references to be found throughout the document. The point of departure for the collective effort was the common context of a multi-religious world which poses new challenges to the conduct of Christian witness. The document also tacitly faces up to the fact that in this multi-religious context the voice of Christianity makes itself

1. The author is the president of the Pontifical Mission Societies in Aachen, missio and the Kindermissionswerk “Die Sternsinger.”

2. Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, the World Council of Churches and the World Evangelical Alliance, *Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World Recommendations for Conduct*, Bangkok 28 January 2011.

heard in a variety of forms and tonalities. The realisation that there is a common responsibility for the perception of the Christian message in this pluralist context introduces a new dimension into the ecumenical dialogue. From now on, this dialogue is no longer directed solely inwards, towards the relationship between the denominations themselves, but also outwards—with a focus on the Christian message as a common concern which entails a common responsibility. At the same time, however, contextuality means that the document's objective must be clearly defined with respect to people's everyday lives and specific challenges. With that in mind, the recommendation that there should be an extensive process of reception is perhaps the document's most significant message. The denominations involved in drafting the document are explicitly invited to study the fundamental issues it addresses and to flesh them out in the form of ethical guidelines relevant to their specific context. This makes it crystal clear that the practical form of Christian witness must correspond to the respective social, cultural and religious context. It must therefore be varied and diverse if it is to match the wide variety of these contexts.

In the course of my presentation I will look in detail at this contextual aspect of Christian witness. On the one hand, the different contexts offer stimulating challenges as regards the specific form to be taken by Christian witness. On the other hand, they define the limits Christians must heed in the responsible conduct of their mission.

These can be limits restricting the circumstances in which Christian witness can unfold. That is the case, for instance, wherever there is little or no guarantee of religious freedom. This applies first and foremost to the various forms of discrimination or violence exercised by government agencies, intolerant social groups or violent religious fundamentalists. To a certain extent these "external limits" can be distinguished from "internal limits" which arise in certain contexts in the conduct of Christian witness. What is needed here, then, is an appreciation of the fact that an inherent element of Christian witness is that it should take sensitive account of certain social, cultural and religious contexts. Wherever such appreciation is lacking, limits are exceeded which render the witness itself implausible. In the rest of my presentation I will focus primarily on these internal limits arising from the respective contexts as well as on the criteria and methods that should be responsibly employed in conducting Christian witness in the light of the varying, context-dependent challenges confronting it.

BASIC STRUCTURE OF THE DOCUMENT

Let me first look briefly at the theological structure of the document, as this will provide a frame of reference for the criteria and methods to be employed. The document consists of three parts: following the preamble it first establishes the basis for Christian witness. Principles for the conduct of Christian witness are then set out and, in conclusion, a number of recommendations are made for practical implementation of the document.

The first part of the document lays out the theological foundations, from which

conclusions are then drawn for missionary practice. While the document—for good reasons—does not claim to offer a theological explanation for mission in its ecumenical diversity, a certain “minimum consensus” is nonetheless formulated in terms of mission theology. Of importance here is the embedding of mission in Trinitarian theology. Mission springs from God’s very nature: “Just as the Father sent the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit, so believers are sent in mission to witness in word and action to the love of the triune God.”³ The document leaves no doubt that it is the fundamental duty of every Christian to actively participate in the Christian mission in the world; it is not a matter of individual discretion. This duty continues to apply even when living and proclaiming the gospel is difficult, hindered or even prohibited.⁴ That said, the document scrupulously avoids any authoritarian tendency in outlining the missionary mandate. Drawing on the First Epistle of St Peter, it says that for Christians it is a privilege and joy to account for the hope that is within them and to do so with gentleness and respect.⁵ This is underlined by the marked Christological emphasis to be found in the document. Jesus Christ is the witness par excellence. His message of the Kingdom of God, his loving devotion to others and the mystery of his death and resurrection are the very essence of proclamation and at the same time the normative definition and model for the practical conduct of mission. The normative exemplary character of Jesus’ proclamation means that, whenever Christians engage in inappropriate methods of missionary work, they cast a shadow on or “betray” the Gospel itself as a message of joy and liberation. This entails the need for repentance and conversion. Thus, the missionary mandate is not an instrument of power which Christians can freely dispose of, but a commission and an aspiration to which they must subject themselves time and again. Another important fundamental theological statement is made in the special emphasis given to engaging in dialogue with people of different religions and cultures as part of the conduct of Christian witness in a pluralistic world. Mission and dialogue cannot, therefore, be played off against each other; they are indispensable aspects of the comprehensive missionary commission of all Christians.⁶

These theological foundations underpin twelve principles for the appropriate conduct of Christian witness, which are set out in the second and lengthiest part of the document. The principles examine missionary practice from three perspectives. Firstly, basic attitudes are derived in a very fundamental way from the message of the Gospel and the example set by Jesus; they are designed to uphold the inalienable dignity of others and to ensure respect for their personal freedom. The fundamental commandment to love one’s neighbour, an attitude of compassion and loving devotion towards others combined with humility and sincerity pave the way to fundamental respect for other people. A second important perspective is attributable to the fact that the document gives due

3. *Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World*, part 2: “A basis for Christian witness” no. 2.

4. *Ibid.*, no. 5.

5. 1Pt 3:15; *Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World*, part 2: “A basis for Christian witness” no. 1.

6. *Ibid.* no. 4.

consideration not just to the personal dignity and freedom of the individual, but also to the specific living conditions in which people find themselves. In the conduct of Christian witness we do not meet individuals in isolation; we must bear in mind that they are integrated into a social, cultural and religious network which must be approached with respect and sensitivity. The third perspective extends well beyond an attitude of respect towards other religions and cultures in that the document calls for the representatives of the Christian churches to cooperate in mutual respect with all people and, in particular, with the representatives of other religions so that they can pursue the cause of justice and peace in society and thus promote the common good.⁷ The document expressly urges all Christians to join with others in working to achieve a common vision and to engage in inter-religious relations.⁸

In the third and final part, the denominations involved in the elaboration of the document are called upon to study the issues addressed and, where appropriate, to formulate guidelines for conduct regarding Christian witness that are applicable to their particular contexts.⁹ Thus explicit contextual reference is emphasised once more by the observation that, above all in contexts in which years of tension and conflict have led to deep-seated suspicions and breaches of trust between and among communities, interreligious dialogue can provide new opportunities for resolving conflicts, restoring justice, healing memories, reconciliation and peace-building.¹⁰

CONTEXTS AS CHALLENGES AND LIMITS

One of the document's central insights is that Christian witness is borne in a distinct situation in life and is correspondingly different and varied. These varying contexts must, therefore, be recognised and accepted as an exciting challenge. At the same time, context-specific sensitivity is needed in order to recognise where we fail to live up to the Gospel's requirement that the proclamation of the faith should be appropriate in character.

a) Social Contexts

Christian witness can only exploit its potential where the Gospel is experienced as a joyful and liberating message which reaches people in their everyday lives. On the one hand, this is achieved by the fearless and prophetic denunciation of unfair and inhuman living conditions as well as of violations of human rights. On the other hand, the liberating power of the Christian message can be felt wherever people's lives are tangibly improved by means of practical endeavours and hands-on support. From the very outset there has always been a social element to missionary activity. According to the definitive studies

7. *Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World*, part 3: "Principles" no. 8.

8. *Ibid.* no. 12.

9. *Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World*, part 4: "Recommendations" no. 1.

10. *Ibid.* no. 2.

carried out by Adolf von Harnack on the spread of the early church, a marked social sensitivity and practical charity were crucial factors in the attractiveness of the Christian mission in late antiquity. In the missionary work performed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, too, the advancement of church structures went hand in hand with social measures in the fields of education, health care and comprehensive development.

The humanitarian potential of Christian mission is rooted not in tactical considerations of how to make mission successful, but in Jesus' message of the complete salvation of the whole person, which cannot be reduced to an isolated "salvation of the soul" but is designed to bring about a world in which everyone can lead a decent life. It is a direct continuation of the example set by Jesus and his devotion to the poor, sick and needy who, in encountering him, experience the saving God who wants salvation for all.

On the other hand, there is no place in Christian outreach for the exploitation of poverty and need. The document explicitly states that Christians should denounce and refrain from offering all forms of allurements, including financial incentives and rewards, in an attempt to win people over to the Christian faith. Special attention must be paid to respect for the freedom of others, particularly in pastoral ministry situations of this kind. Acute sensitivity is needed to recognise such situations of limited freedom. This is the case, for instance, when very subtle social pressure is exerted which turns a superficial attentiveness to the Christian faith into a sign of gratitude for the benefits received.

b) Cultural Contexts

The individual cultural context is of the utmost importance for the conduct of Christian witness. From the very beginning, Christian mission was at pains to give the faith an authentic means of expression in the respective culture. Endeavours to bring about a suitable enculturation of the Christian faith are first and foremost an act of recognition and respect for the culture concerned, for its richness and for the religious experience it has absorbed over generations. On the other hand, the Gospel adopts a critical approach to every culture, wishing to permeate it like leaven, to cleanse it of everything that constrains and limits people and thus to transform and renew the respective culture from within.

In other words, Christian witness must deal respectfully and sensitively with the culture it encounters. It needs to bear in mind that the content of the message can be explained differently and in an unaccustomed manner, but no less authentically, in the medium of the culture it engages with. The person bearing witness must be self-critical enough to realise that his own faith is influenced to a much greater degree by his native culture than he previously realised. The encounter with others can thus lead to a deeper understanding of one's own faith. Wherever this self-critical awareness is lacking, however, there is ultimately the danger of "cultural imperialism" exploiting the message

embedded in the faith to unthinkingly impose on others the cultural status this faith has obtained in one's own culture.¹¹

On the other hand, the values of the respective culture can unjustifiably be brought into play in order to justify social and cultural relations which are rightly criticised by the message of the Gospel. This frequently happens when human rights violations are justified by reference to the respective culture (see the discussion about the rights of women and sexual minorities as well as the cultural influence of the Indian caste system).

There is a need here to develop a differentiated set of criteria in order to distinguish precisely between justified cultural differences and the improper instrumentalisation of the culture to justify unjust structures.

c) Religious Contexts

Crucial importance attaches in this connection to the individual religious context. The ecumenical document on Christian witness is based on the realisation that it must be conducted in a multi-religious world. Consequently, relations with other religions and their public representatives as well as with individual adherents of other religions are deemed to be of key significance.

A wide variety of different contextual situations governs relations between the different religions. These range from peaceful or friendly coexistence between different religions in a specific setting to hegemonic claims to supremacy by a religion which accords only limited recognition to the right of other religions to exist and severely limits their scope for development (this mostly being manifested in bans on missionary work and conversion or in punishment for apostasy).

As regards the concrete conduct of Christian witness, there must be critical scrutiny, in particular, of aggressive mission strategies and methods that reveal a confrontational attitude towards other religions, distance themselves in a disrespectful manner from the religious convictions or practices they involve or reflect them in a falsifying manner.

However, given that religious affiliation and religious belief form a special part of an individual's personal identity, major importance attaches to respect for the freedom of others. It is essential to point out here that the basic right to religious freedom should be understood not only as a right to freedom granted by the state, which guarantees a fundamental area of freedom for the exercise of a religious conviction. Moreover, the limits to one's own religious freedom are not determined solely by the religious freedom of the adherents of other religions. It is of central importance, too, that religious freedom should be affirmed on the basis of one's own understanding of religious communities and have an influence on one's own missionary activity. The practical consequence of this for the conduct of our Christian witness is that we must unreservedly respect the religious freedom of the persons addressed. This finds expression first and foremost in full respect for

11. *Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World*, part 3: "Principles" no. 9.

the freedom of others—in particular with respect to a potential conversion.¹² As regards other religions, this positive recognition of religious freedom is manifested in recognition of the right to exist of other religions and in endeavours to get to know these religions through the way they see themselves. This requires intensive contacts which help to build up friendly relations “so as to facilitate deeper mutual understanding, reconciliation and cooperation for the common good”.¹³

MISSION AND DIALOGUE

So far, we have looked at the limits to Christian witness stemming from social, cultural and religious contexts. But this does not mean that Christians should renounce—wholly or in part out of consideration for external hindrances or the convictions of others—the task arising from Jesus’ missionary commission of bearing witness to the truth. We are not talking here about abandoning or modifying the missionary mandate. Rather it is a question of how this missionary mandate can be carried out in an appropriate manner.

In my view, the key to answering this question lies in a dialogical understanding of mission. Dialogue thrives on respect for the freedom of others whom we encounter on an equal footing. In dialogue, convictions and positions are introduced into the discussion, the purpose of which is to convince those addressed but without exerting any pressure on them. Application of the dialogue paradigm to conduct of the Christian mission does not represent a concession to the spirit of the times or a qualification of the claim to truth that is inherent in the Christian faith. Rather, the dialogue paradigm matches the way in which God presents himself to human beings. The whole of salvation history can thus be seen as a dialogue of salvation between God and human beings which begins with the Exodus event and culminates in the saving action of God in Jesus Christ.

If our relationship with God is structured dialogically, then it is only logical that witness to this faith should likewise be conducted in a dialogical manner. This does not connote any fundamental renunciation of the truth to which the Christian faith lays claim in the self-revelation of God in Jesus Christ. This claim is not asserted in any authoritarian way, however. Rather, it is incorporated in the dialogue through the bearing of witness. It is a hallmark of witness that its bearer does not assert his own position but the claim of another. The bearer throws light on what he has experienced himself, what constitutes the essence of his identity, what has touched him and what he thrives on, what his mission is and wherein he sees the meaning of his life. Bearing witness means adopting a standpoint, explaining the claim to which the bearer has freely committed himself, illuminating the reasons which prompted him to do so and thus voluntarily opening up for the person addressed an area he can enter in order to see for himself whether he wishes

12. *Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World*, part 3: “Principles” no. 11.

13. *Ibid.* no. 12.

and is able to make these reasons his own. Of crucial significance here is the area of freedom which emerges between the two dialogue partners as a result of the witness borne. The person addressed must not be restricted in his freedom. The message is simply an offer which cannot be imposed on him from outside. Only in the openness of this area of freedom can there be an encounter with God. This openness is an attitude which does not involve renunciation of one's own fundamental decisions but is nonetheless prepared to countenance fundamental and far-reaching corrections. It is an attitude which entails a willingness to accept that, in dialogue with others, new and deeper insights are possible which can pave the way to personal progress.

Consequently, mission and dialogue need not contradict each other. On the contrary, dialogue is rooted in God's salvific movement towards man. For that reason a fundamental affirmation of dialogue does not constitute relativism, which would entail renunciation of the claim to truth asserted by the Christian faith. This claim, however, is introduced into the discussion in full respect for the freedom of others. Mission perceived as a dialogue must therefore eschew any form of religious fundamentalism. Hostile dissociation from those with different views is no more reconcilable with a fundamental preparedness to engage in dialogue than are aggressive mission methods or the use of violence even, so as to force others into conversion. On the other hand, there is no contradiction between an honest dialogue and the desire to persuade others of one's own religious convictions. Christian witness, therefore, also has a place in a situation in which it is not primarily a question of convincing others of one's own standpoint but rather of pursuing common goals.

In the course of my presentation I have explored the limits to Christian witness in social, cultural and religious contexts. Sensitive recognition of these limits is of crucial importance for the conduct of witness. Dialogue can make it possible to repeatedly transcend these limits and thus to generate relationships that enable positive and transformative processes to be initiated. Hence it is consistent with the internal logic of the document that it should set such great store by the instigation of reception processes at the local level. Agreement on the practical conduct of missionary work lends a new quality to ecumenical relations between Christians of different denominations. However, it is important that we should not rest content with this situation but resolutely engage in dialogue with other religious communities. This will enable us to make a contribution towards peaceful coexistence between people of different religions and cultures in our multi-religious world.

RELIGIOUS CONFLICT: CAUSES, PREVENTION AND RESOLUTION

FRANCIS-VINCENT ANTHONY¹

Christian witness in a multi-religious world cannot evade the thorny issue of religious conflict, for religions can be a source of conflict, as well as a resource for conflict prevention and resolution. To put it more directly, can Christian witness in a multi-religious world give rise to conflict? Can Christian witness contribute to conflict prevention and conflict resolution? In responding to these interrogatives, we rely particularly on the findings and conclusions of two empirical researches undertaken in the multi-religious context of India.

Almost every year of the decades before and after the passage to the new Millennium was marred by violence related to religions in some part or other of the Indian subcontinent: Ayodhya (1992), Mumbai (1992, 1993, 2008), Coimbatore (1997, 1998), Gujarat (2002), Hyderabad (2003), Jagatsinghpur (2004), Kandhamal (2007, 2008), etc. Our volume on *Religion and Con-*

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flict Attribution,² presents the results of the quantitative research (with data collection in 2003–2004) among Hindu, Muslim and Christian college students in Tamil Nadu. The findings bring to light the causes of religious conflict and suggest strategies for conflict prevention. The conclusions of the qualitative research *Taming the Violent: Narratives of Conflict Resolutions* edited by Michael Amaladoss on behalf of the Institute of Dialogue with Cultures and Religions (IDCR), follows the Coimbatore riots (1997, 1998) and advocates strategies for conflict resolution.³

We shall refer to these researches while dealing with the causes of interreligious conflict and the religious factors that influence them, before elaborating on conflict prevention and conflict resolution. Although all religions are in some way caught up in the surge of conflict, here we focus our attention on how Christian witness in a multi-religious world entails conflict prevention and conflict resolution.

CAUSES OF INTERRELIGIOUS CONFLICT⁴

Generally, rival interests give rise to conflict among religious groups. In this sense, causes of religious conflict refer to four spheres: socio-economic, political, ethnic-cultural and religious. In the first two spheres, conflicts arise from competition for scarce resources. While rival interest in economic and political wellbeing can be the main source of conflict, the disparities themselves, for example with regard to job opportunities and living standards, may be factual or a matter of perception.

In the ethnic-cultural and religious spheres, competition is not a necessary condition for conflict; group identification itself is sufficient to cause conflictive attitude and behaviour. In other words, group identification is sufficient to lead to in-group favouritism and out-group discrimination. Such intergroup attitudes depend on the cognitive perception underlying group identification.⁵ They are usually manifested in the public domains of economic, political and socio-cultural life. It is the intertwining of identity construction and group interest that ignites interreligious conflict. In the Indian context, for instance, the close link between national identity and Hinduism may be perceived as a threat to the identity of minority groups (Muslims and Christians). Conversely, some Hindus may see the loosening of the link between national identity and religion as a threat to the definition of being Hindu.

In the socio-economic sphere, when one group (especially a minority group) is economically successful, this is likely to lead to intolerance on the part of the less successful group (often the majority group). When such groups are defined on religious lines,

2. F.V. Anthony, C. Hermans and C. Sterkens, *Religion and Conflict Attribution. An Empirical Study of the Religious Meaning System of Christian, Muslim and Hindu students in Tamil Nadu, India*, (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2014). <DOI: 10.1163/9789004270862>.

3. M. Amaladoss ed., *Taming the Violent. Narratives of Conflict Resolutions*, (Chennai: IDCR Publications, 2010).

4. See Anthony et al., *Religion and Conflict Attribution*, op. cit., 25–27, 168–173.

5. H. Tajfel, *Human Groups and Social Categories* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

economic rivalry between them can easily turn into interreligious conflict. Conflictive situations may also arise when economically disadvantaged groups are oppressed on religious grounds, as in the case of the Hindu caste system. On the other hand, religions may appear to be a source of conflict when they motivate their followers to engage in transformative actions to change socio-economic conditions of injustice.

In the political sphere, although Hinduism traditionally presents itself as a tolerant religion, it can adjudicate the phenomenon of conversion to another religion as a sensitive political issue. For example, when in 1981 a group of *dalits*, the most oppressed caste in the traditional system, converted to Buddhism, it led to some agitation among Hindu nationalists. According to Appadurai, decreasing group membership can create “an anxiety of incompleteness” about the sovereignty of the majority in the national polity. In other words, minorities “remind these majorities of the small gap which lies between their condition as majority and the horizon of an unsullied national whole, a pure and untainted national ethnos.”⁶ Violence can erupt when anxiety of incompleteness is accompanied by feelings of uncertainty about their status or about access to resources.

In the ethnic-cultural sphere, when religion functions as a vehicle of ethnic identity construction, it can reinforce feelings of superiority among majority groups and inferiority among minorities. Besides, religion can intentionally support rebellion against a dominant cultural set up, for example, against the modern liberal state. The latter, to the extent it refrains from specific moral norms could be viewed as the cause of moral vacuum or even of moral decadence, triggering the alienation of some groups from their own religious identity.⁷

In the religious sphere, insofar as religion is a response to the dialectical experience of the sacred that represents both an overpowering presence (*tremendum*) and fascination (*fascinans*), it can be the source of love or hatred, with the potential to build or destroy. While religion can motivate people to fight for justice in the name of God, acquiring and maintaining power can also be perceived as a proof of the truth of one’s religion. Likewise, the enmity or opposition of others to one’s religion can be taken as an offence to the sacred. In this vein, religious codes and metaphors can turn a power struggle into a “just war”, a “holy war”, a “cosmic struggle” between good and evil. Such a vision can even encourage self-sacrifice as an extreme and ultimate expression of religious identity.⁸

Our research findings⁹ based on the theoretical framework—synthetically presented above—add some new features to the causes of interreligious conflict. Factor analysis

6. A. Appadurai, *Fear of Small Numbers. An Essay on the Geography of Anger* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 8.

7. M. Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God. The Global Rise of Religious Violence* (London: University of California Press, 2003); E. Darmaputera, *Pancasila and the Search for Identity and Modernity in Indonesian Society. A Cultural and Ethical Analysis* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 1997).

8. Cf. M. Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, op. cit.; L. Steffen, *The Demonic Turn. The Power of Religion to Inspire or Restrain Violence* (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2007).

9. See Anthony et al., *Religion and Conflict Attribution*, op. cit., 179–93, 233–34.

of the 15 items representing the four spheres of conflict reveals two scales that we have labelled “force-driven motives” and “strength-driven motives”, making reference to Hanna Arendt’s political theory of power, force and strength.¹⁰ The causes represented by the eight items of the first scale—with a good reliability coefficient—imply the use of some form of force against members of other religious groups. They hint at actions that take away other people’s power to act or speak. They refer directly or indirectly to socio-economically, politically, ethnic-culturally or religiously motivated violence. In all cases, increasing power of one group coincides with making other groups powerless.

The strength-driven religious conflict scale consists of two items, which do not imply disempowering the other; instead, they focus on strengthening one’s religion, both in terms of human rights awareness and affirmation of one’s own religion in a multi-religious context. Although the actions formulated in these two items are not direct sources of conflict, it is possible to perceive religious identification as contributing to conflict. When awareness of human rights is promoted in a context where these rights are violated, it can provoke further conflict. Likewise, when one’s religion is affirmed, other religious communities may feel threatened. This scale consisting of just two items has low reliability and hence has not been taken up in the subsequent statistical analysis. Further research in this case is opportune.

Our analysis reveals that there are no significant differences between Christian, Muslim and Hindu students’ agreement with force-driven motives for interreligious conflict. All three groups tend to agree strongly with these causes. It means that young people irrespective of their religious affiliation perceive force-driven motives as sources of conflict between religious groups in the multi-religious Indian context. This perception needs to be addressed when evolving strategies for conflict prevention and conflict resolution, taking into account—as we shall expound below—also the religious factors that may contribute to the perception of force-driven motives as source of religious conflict.

RELIGIOUS FACTORS INFLUENCING RELIGIOUS CONFLICT¹¹

As discussed elaborately in our research study, prescriptive beliefs (i.e. beliefs about contingencies and expectations concerning the self, the world and the relation between them) and descriptive beliefs (i.e. beliefs about the nature of the self and the world) can be assumed to affect the extent to which people attribute interreligious conflict to force-driven motives. Our findings bring to light the impact of two prescriptive beliefs, namely, institutional religious practice and vertical mysticism, and two descriptive beliefs, namely, models of interpreting religious plurality and religiocentrism.

Religious institutions tend to control believers’ practices as a means of resisting

10. H. Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 203.

11. See Anthony et al., *Religion and Conflict Attribution*, op. cit., 27–29, 211–14, 222–30.

changes in their tradition. Hence, our expectation was that students who engage in *institutional religious practice* agree with force-driven religious conflict. Our findings confirm that in the case of all three religious groups, namely, Christians, Muslims and Hindus, interreligious conflicts are attributed to force-driven motives when students display higher levels of institutional religious practice.

Religions can favor personal mystical experiences of union with a higher reality. Such experiences are possible for believers of all religious traditions, independently of respective religious institutions. It implies that *vertical mysticism* may relate negatively to the attribution of interreligious conflict to force-driven motives. In other words, students who agree with vertical mysticism can be expected to agree less with force-driven religious conflict. Our analysis shows that this is particularly true in the case of Hindu students: those who report less experience of mystical union with the ultimate reality agree more strongly with force-driven religious conflict.

Factor analyses confirm three models of interpreting religious plurality: monism, commonality pluralism and differential pluralism. Monism refers to belief in the absolute validity of one's own religion. It is likely that agreement with monism can induce a belief that coercive force is at the root of interreligious conflict. However, our findings show that Hindu students who disagree rather strongly with the belief that there is absolute truth in their tradition are more inclined to attribute religious conflict to force-driven motives, perhaps due to the perceived radicalism of other religious groups. Commonality pluralism lays stress on the underlying universal aspects shared by all religions, whereas differential pluralism views differences between religions as avenues for growth and development. Believers who agree with either form of pluralism can be expected to show less agreement with force-driven religious conflict because of their open attitude towards other religious traditions. Contrary to our expectation, we found that Muslim students who agree with commonality pluralism show greater agreement with force-driven religious conflict. In the case of Muslims, commonality seems to undermine their religious identity. Instead, Christian students who disagree with differential pluralism agree more strongly with force-driven religious conflict. It means that differential pluralism makes space for a more open attitude toward other religions.

Religio-centrism includes a combination of positive in-group attitudes and negative out-group attitudes. Positive in-group attitudes mean that positive characteristics like faithfulness, goodness or the ability to speak meaningfully about God are associated with one's own religious group. Negative out-group attitudes strip other believers of their moral qualities and place them in a bad light (e.g. by declaring them intolerant or sanctimonious). Our expectation that positive in-group attitudes would correlate negatively with force-driven religious conflict was corroborated in the case of Christian and Hindu students. On the other hand, we expected negative out-group attitudes to increase the likelihood of attributing interreligious conflict to force-driven motives. This was confirmed for Hindu students in the specific case of their negative out-group attitudes

towards Christians, but not in the case of their negative attitudes towards Muslims. It means that in a multi-religious context out-group attitudes cannot be generalized and that their impact has to be verified with reference to specific religious traditions.

CONFLICT PREVENTION AS CHRISTIAN WITNESS

Knowing the causes of religious conflict and the religious factors that have predictable impact on them can help prevent conflicts. Although the research study included three religious groups, our concern here is to examine if Christian life and witness in a pluralistic world may contribute to conflict and to its prevention and resolution. In the first place, our findings brought to light that underlying the socio-economic, political, ethnic-cultural and religious spheres of religious conflict, there are the force-driven and strength-driven motives. We found that Christians—like Muslims and Hindus—are strongly in agreement with force-driven motives underlying interreligious conflict.

Examining the predictors of force-driven religious conflict for Christians students,¹² we found that institutional religious practice predictably increases the attribution of interreligious conflicts to force-driven motives, while differential pluralism and positive in-group attitudes tend reduce it. It means, while ensuring the genuineness of institutional religious practices, Christian students need to reflect critically on the potential roles religious institutions and religious authorities may play in interpreting conflict. Instead, differential pluralism, that is evaluating religious plurality as something positive, even as “part of God’s plan to save the world,” produces lesser agreement with force-driven motives for interreligious conflicts. We also found that in the case of Christians positive in-group attitudes reduce attribution to force-driven motives. Insofar as positive in-group attitudes are a sign of commitment to one’s own religious group, it is seemingly more difficult to see religion as intertwined with or even responsible for conflict. Therefore, by promoting positive in-group attitude, namely, esteem of the authentic aspects of Christian life, as well as by encouraging differential pluralism, namely, considering the differences between religions as a possibility for mutual and critical enrichment, we can prevent recourse to force-driven motives for interreligious conflict.

Taking stock of the religious factors influencing the attribution of force-driven motives for religious conflict, following strategies¹³—among others—can be employed in the educational context with the view to conflict prevention: being attentive to violence in the Christian traditions, fostering critical thinking, and promoting cosmopolitan citizenship.

In the first place, we need to be attentive to violence in the Christian traditions.¹⁴ There

12. *Ibid.*, 216–21.

13. *Ibid.*, 237–50.

14. L. Steffen, “Religion and Violence in Christian Traditions” in M. Juergensmeyer, M. Kitts and M. Jerryson eds., *Violence and the World’s Religious Traditions. An Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 108–39.

is no gainsaying that during the course of history, Christians have come into conflict with other Christian denominations and other religious traditions. The bond between Christian authority and political power, especially in Europe, had led to legitimizing force against perceived enemies both within (heretics) and without (pagans). Besides being aware of the violence that has marred Christian history, conflict prevention would require that we take note of the symbolic representations of violence in the Christian tradition and the effect these inadvertently may have on the believers' approach to other religious communities. For example, one can think of the statue of *Santiago Matamoros* (in the basilica of St. James) of Compostela, Spain.

Secondly, preventing interreligious conflict entails that we foster *critical thinking*. Even when there seems to be ample evidence regarding the causes of interreligious conflict, one should critically evaluate whether the attributed motives apply in specific cases. It means that attributions should be checked against facts. Moreover, young people should be challenged to be critical about the use of coercive power as a means of achieving the economic, political or socio-cultural goals of religious groups. They should be helped to evaluate force-driven motives against the normative criterion of human dignity, which implies that different people live together as free individuals with the power to speak and act in concert.

Thirdly, today there is an urgent need for a *cosmopolitan citizenship*. The finality of education, in the broad sense, is to empower persons in their search for the meaning of life and its fullness for all. In the Christian perspective, human and Christian, social and ecclesial aspects of the educational goal are correlated and complementary. Traditionally such a goal was specified as "forming good Christians and honest citizens."¹⁵ The recent development in the educational and pastoral spheres suggest that such a goal can be reformulated as "forming generative and responsible cosmopolitan citizens". Taking cue from H. Arendt, we can describe the core aspect of citizenship as the ability "to live and act in concert".¹⁶ Cosmopolite—as the Oxford dictionary indicates—is a citizen of the world; one who feels at home in all parts of the world; one who can go beyond national attachments or prejudices. Among the varied ways cosmopolitanism can be understood, there is some convergence on the ethical and moral responsibilities that it implies for one's own community and for the world at large. Conflict prevention requires that Christian witness be founded on such ethical and moral responsibilities and promote authentic human rights. In the last analysis, it is a question of playing one's role to generate "fullness of life", transforming the Church-society-cosmos into the Reign of God, New Humanity, New Heaven and New Earth!

15. J. A. Ramos Guerreira, *Teologia pastoral* (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristiano, 1995), 35; C. Floristan, *Teologia pratica: teoria y praxis de la accion pastoral* (Salamanca: Ediciones Sigueme, 1991), 109.

16. H. Arendt, *On Violence* (San Diego, New York and London: Harvest Book, 1970), 52.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION AS CHRISTIAN WITNESS

Insofar as religious conflict arise from force-driven and strength-driven motives in the socio-economic, political, ethnic-cultural and religious spheres—besides historical memory and media power—conflict resolution must also operate at all these levels “through different agents and appropriate methods, but in collaborative and cumulative fashion.”¹⁷ Our concern here is to specify how Christian witness can engage in conflict resolution at all these levels. Making reference to the *Narratives of Conflict Resolutions* edited by Michael Amaladoss, we may highlight the following strategies: subjective consciousness, objective awareness, handling anger, articulating the endured violence, and peace making.

In the first place, overcoming the cycle of violence requires that we identify the shadows, the energy in the unconscious, at the personal, communal and human level. As Ambrose Jejaraj specifies, the dynamics of violence is rooted in projection, scapegoating, prejudice-labelling, wounded memories, distorted images, and irrational scripts.¹⁸ Conflict resolution entails that we *be conscious* of the projected and collective shadows often linked to the religious traditions themselves.

Secondly, referring to the Gujarat carnage, Cedric Prakash underscores that conflict resolution necessitates *awareness*.¹⁹ Generally, there is a tendency to ignore, deny or negate the communal violence that has taken place. Being aware of the violence that has been caused helps the perpetrators to take a step towards acknowledging the crime, while gradually enabling the victims to take the difficult step of forgiving and reconciling. It was difficult for a significant section of people to acknowledge that Gujarat carnage did really happen. Acknowledging what took place and standing for truth is not easy, for it could again place persons at the mercy of power play. Remorse and guilt felt by the perpetrators should help them seek justice, particularly for the victims. This could be the way to build up confidence in a shattered community.

A third strategy proposed by Emmanuel Arockiam looks into the nature of anger-driven conflict and how it can be transformed.²⁰ *Anger* rooted in fear and arrogance makes persons less effective in problem solving, since it can lead to misperceptions and wrong attributions. To a great extent, perpetrators of violence, the victims and the rescuers may all be affected by anger that may further ignite the cycle of violence. There is then the need to explore how anger can be channelled to transforming and building the society, taking into account the many choices available for dealing with anger. Largely, conflict management is anger management. As a long-term goal, young people and chil-

17. M. Amaladoss, “Hindu–Muslim Conflict in Coimbatore: 1997–1998. An Analytical Look” in M. Amaladoss ed., *Taming the Violent. Narratives of Conflict Resolutions* (Chennai: IDCR Publications, 2010), 27.

18. A. Jejaraj, “From Shadows to Light: Getting out of the Cycle of Violence” in M. Amaladoss ed., *Taming the Violent*, op. cit., 76–91.

19. C. Prakash, “Communal Violence and Social Healing” in M. Amaladoss ed., *Taming the Violent*, op. cit., 45–49.

20. E. Arockiam, “Handling Anger in the Context of Social Violence” in M. Amaladoss ed., *Taming the Violent*, op. cit., 66–75.

dren should be helped to control and express anger in ways appropriate to their age and development.

Bella Das focusses on the situation of women caught up in communal violence and proposes a fourth strategy for conflict resolution.²¹ While physical and economic damages are part of conflict, emotional damages occur during and continues after conflict. This calls for a healing process centred on the victim during and after the conflict. Workshops based on role-play, role reversal, psychotherapy and group counselling can be in the *articulation* of the experience of violence, a necessary step towards healing and conflict resolution.

Amaladoss sums up the discussion on conflict resolution by tracing some paths to *peace building*, founded on truth and justice.²² Peace making or reconciliation may itself be celebrated through symbolic actions by perpetrators of violence and their victims. Peace is only realizable if conflicts are settled by non-violent means of dialogue, protest and struggle within an ethical framework. Peace building would imply facing honestly the force-driven and strength-driven motives underlying interreligious conflict in the socio-economic, political, ethnic-cultural, and religious spheres.

Amidst ongoing cycle of violence—we may conclude—Christian witness should uphold the path of *forgiveness*, for the Church's mission is one of reconciliation.²³ The *Truth and Reconciliation Commission* led by Bishop Desmond Tutu gave an African expression to the possibility of reconciliation in the dramatic situation of apartheid by acknowledging *ubuntu*, namely, the humanity of the perpetrator of violence.²⁴ Likewise, in the volume *Forgiving the Unforgivable*, Master Charles Cannon with Will Wilkinson present the true story of how survivors of the Mumbai terrorist attack answered hatred with compassion.²⁵ Assuming a profoundly Asian sensitivity, they bring to light how a certain state of consciousness gives rise to forgiveness naturally and effortlessly. Generally, people have no access to that deeper way of knowing. "They are imprisoned, so to speak, within their limited conceptual reality, which is conditioned by the past. So Jesus's words—"They know not what they do"—refer to the lack of that deeper dimension of knowing, where we see ourselves in the other, are aware of the sacredness of all life, the oneness of all things. This is where empathy, compassion, and love arise."²⁶

21. B. Das, "Violence of Victims of Communal Violence: A Feminist Perspective" in M. Amaladoss ed., *Taming the Violent*, op. cit., 34–37.

22. M. Amaladoss, "Building Peace in Coimbatore" in M. Amaladoss ed., *Taming the Violent*, op. cit., 145–70.

23. S. Arokiasamy, "Forgiveness, Reconciliation and Healing in the Christian Perspective: Relational and Societal Dimensions" in M. Amaladoss ed., *Taming the Violent*, op. cit., 128–44.

24. J. Dreyer, Y. Dreyer, E. Foley and M. Nel eds., *Practicing Ubuntu. Practical Theological Perspectives on Injustice, Personhood and Human Dignity* (Zürich: LIT Verlag, 2017).

25. M. C. Cannon, *Forgiving the Unforgivable* (Mumbai: Yogi Impressions, 2011).

26. E. Tolle, *Foreword*, in M. C. Cannon, *Forgiving the Unforgivable*, op. cit., xii.

CHRISTIAN WITNESS AND RECONCILIATION IN THE CONTEXT OF WOMEN IN CONFLICT SITUATIONS

GENNIE KHURY¹

In society, women are often portrayed as more vulnerable and fragile compared to men because of their physical and psychological differences. Women can be treated as subordinates according to the cultural and structural practices in their society. This is even more pronounced during conflicts, as women are targeted as victims through various forms of violence. Their dignity is often taken away simply because they are women.

These circumstances prevent women from being empowered and self-reliant and thus able to contribute their services in building a better society. Not only are women left physically or emotionally disadvantaged, but such situation leads to spiritual impoverishment, as Pope John Paul II wrote in this letter to women on the eve of the Fourth World Conference in 1995:

Women's dignity has often been unacknowledged and their prerogatives misrepresented; they have often been relegated to the margins of society and even reduced to servitude. This has

1. The author is assistant field officer of UNHCR in Myanmar.

prevented women from truly being themselves and it has resulted in a spiritual impoverishment of humanity.²

WOMEN IN CONFLICT SITUATION

If we look at the global trend, according to the statistics of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 65.6 million people worldwide are displaced and out of these 50% of the population is women and girls. If put together in one place, the global population of displaced persons would be more than the population of many countries. In Myanmar, decades of conflict have created different episodes of displacement. In 2017, there are still 1.3 million people inside the country who are affected by the ongoing conflict, which leaves women and girls, who are often unaccompanied, pregnant, heads of households, disabled or elderly, in a most vulnerable condition.

Conflict in Myanmar is very much related to the identity and ethnic issues that emerged since the British colonial time and remains unsolved until today. The country has eight major ethnic groups, but counting all the minorities that speak different ethnic dialects, the total is more than one hundred (one hundred and thirtyfive according to the government, but there is a long debate over this issue). Ethnic regions are under-developed and are found to have the highest percentage of people living in poverty, with limited basic services. Literacy levels are the lowest in ethnic states. The incidence of drug abuse is highest among ethnic youth and some claim that this is a deliberate strategy by the government to weaken the youth and prevent them from joining insurgencies. Although a hydropower plant is located in the ethnic region, there are still many villages with no electricity, proper roads and other basic infrastructure. Ethnic grievances also include the lack of recognition of social and cultural rights, inequality with regard to political rights, land grabbing and land confiscation, and higher incidence of human rights violations.

For many ethnic minorities, it is more important for the individual to be identified according to his/her ethnicity than to be a Myanmar national. The sense of belonging is much more favoured by the ethnic minorities. When I was out of the country for my studies, I often had the dilemma when people asked me if I am a Burmese and if my country is called Myanmar or Burma. I belong to a minority ethnic group and I always felt uncomfortable to be addressed that I am a Burmese because Burmese for us means the Burman majority who ruled us, and we do not belong to it. This is just to give an idea that Myanmar is still in the process of building both the state and the nation. The historian Thant Myint-U once said that Myanmar is unfinished nation.

Looking at the map of Myanmar, we can see that minority ethnic populations inhabit the border and mountainous regions. The majority ethnic group are the Burmans or Bamar, who are from the central valley of Myanmar. Civil war started as soon as Myan-

2. John Paul II, *Letter to Women*, 29 June 1995.

mar achieved independence in 1948, because of the unequal distribution of power and resources and because of weak institutions. Sixty-nine years of conflict have caused the death and displacements of tens of thousands of people. Currently out of the 19 armed ethnic groups, 8 are included in the nationwide ceasefire agreement, 6 remain with a bilateral ceasefire agreement and 5 are still combatants in northern Myanmar.

Given this situation, I would like to reflect on the role of women in contributing to the identity of a community.

In fact, women are not only vulnerable during conflicts but they are also subject to cultural barriers even in normal situations. In many ethnic cultures of the country, women are often limited in terms of access to education, community participation, and land and property rights. In some ethnic cultures, a woman who has been raped is obliged to cleanse the village to purify it because of the shame she brought on the community. While the “productive” role belongs to men, women are considered more responsible for the “reproductive” role. It means that women are socially obliged to be in supporting roles, such as being in charge of the household, caring for the children and the elderly family members, while men play leading roles, which in many cases generate major income. Social networking and public relations are more accepted as men’s tasks. The literacy rate for males is thus consistently higher than for females in Myanmar. According to the 2014 census, 25.6 per cent of young people aged 15–24 are not in education, employment, or training (NEET). NEET is more than double for young women (34.9 per cent) compared with young men (15.8 per cent). Only $\frac{1}{4}$ of women are in the labour force and half of this population are in vulnerable employment, meaning that they are either self-employed, in unstable employment or work without pay or are underpaid. In some cases, especially in the private sector, working women are not entitled to maternity leave.

As a consequence, conflict and cultural barriers lead women having limited access to public space. When the country is in transition towards democracy, freedom of participation in politics is open to all citizens. In the first term of quasi-civilian government (2011-2015), there were just 53 women out of 1,153 members of the union and state level parliaments, in which women represented 4.6 per cent of the elected seats. The number of female representatives increased in the 2015 election to nearly 10 per cent but 90 per cent of the parliamentarians are male even if Myanmar has a de facto female leader, Aung San Suu Kyi.

In the nationwide peace process, which resumed in 2011, the negotiations were also male-dominated, as those who represent government, mediators and the ethnic armed groups were mostly males. A few female representatives are actually not in the decision making positions. The reason given is that the majority of women lacked opportunities to acquire skills in policy making, policy analysis, public relations, negotiations, leadership and management, which I suppose is linked to long years of structural exclusion of women from access to education and participation in public affairs. This indicates that recognizing the role of women and uplifting them is crucial to the country’s development.

However, there is one exception. In 2011, women's representation in the judiciary system is promising, as more than half of the 1,107 judges nationwide are women. Overall, however, in terms of women, community resilience is still a big question.

A REFLECTION ON CHRISTIAN WITNESS AND RECONCILIATION

In Myanmar there are sayings about women and one of them is: "Yay myint tot kyar tint," meaning that when the water level is high, the lotus is more dignified. It helps me reflect how women can contribute to a better society.

I come from Loikaw, Kayah State in Myanmar. The Loikaw Diocese is a small diocese in Myanmar. Kayah State has a total population about over 300,000, and Buddhists and Christians are the two main groups. Most of the population belong to the different minority ethnic groups. Before the missionaries arrived, the natives practiced traditional animism. The first Italian missionaries (PIME) arrived in Kayah State in 1868. The Loikaw diocese was established in 1989. The Catholic faith is actually very new to us, having been there for only three or four generations. Across the past 150 years, both the Catholic faithful and the non-Catholics suffered together extreme poverty and different stages of conflict. My house is very near to the Cathedral and I grew up in a Catholic environment. Different associations of men, women, youth and children in the diocese are very active in the parishes. I realize that Christianity makes a huge impact in the communities and through Christianity there are many women in my diocese and in my country who have something in common. They have a strong community spirit and despite all the hardship they face in their life, with their "faith," they continue to "hope" and they continue doing good deeds in the society by "loving one another."

In the Apostolic encyclical *Mulieris Dignitatem*, Pope John Paul II explained the role of women in the society that God has in mind since the beginning of time.³ After creation of man, God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him" (*Gn* 2:18). The letter stated that

The creation of women is thus marked from the outset by the principle of help: a help which is not one-sided but mutual. Woman complements man, just as man complements woman: men and women are complementary. Womanhood expresses the "human" as much as manhood does, but in a different and complementary way.⁴

From the very beginning, in the first and smallest society, woman is created to contribute harmony in that society and her task is to complement man and vice versa.

3. John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem. Apostolic Letter on the Dignity and Vocations of Women on the Occasion of the Marian Year*, 15 August 1988.

4. John Paul II, *Letter to Women*, 29 June 1995.

The challenge today our society is facing is the absence of this recognition and respect of mutual complementarity. Whenever I reflect women in difficult situations, Mary comes in as a figure that helps me to understand more about those circumstances.

I also found some characteristics of women that I observed and would like to share with you.

First Characteristic: Women are Receptive

When I reflect on this word of Mary, “May it be done unto me according to your word,” her “*fiat*,” I realize that women are particularly receptive to the call even if they may suffer, and that women endure. I grew up in the society where there had been extreme poverty due to more than six decades of armed conflicts. Some communities were left with women leading the majority of households. In the Ward where I live, many women experienced that their husband or sons fled to the border after the students’ uprising in 1988. Many took arms to fight for democracy and some for ethnic rights. Years later, many mothers lost their sons again for other reasons. Many youth who had no hope and prospect for their future easily fell into the wrong paths. At that time, universities were closed and there were no job opportunities. The country had suffered in various ways. At those difficult times, the suffering was borne in total silence by numerous women. Instead, they continued to lead the household, protecting their family members and serving the needy around them.

I met a woman from the Karen ethnic group—I belong to a different one—whose husband and son were detained during the 1990s. She was a teacher and the government sent her to a very remote place because her family members were engaged in politics. In the end, she had to leave her job to be with her detained family members and other children. She was not only protecting her family but also us, her friends and students by hosting us at her house when we were a group of high school students from different ethnicities, in need of educational support and accommodation. At that time I experienced that when there is a spirit of maternity, there is no distinction of race, religion or culture. The woman is now in her late 70s. Her husband became a chief minister of one region and she is with her husband fulfilling her task to serve many more people with whom she is entrusted. Many ladies like her persevered during the time of suffering and were able to transform the suffering into positive things by loving others. Aung San Suu Kyi once wrote in her book, *The Voice of Hope*, that when she was asked what she had learned from the daily suffering in the years she was in prison, she answered that in suffering she learnt about the best from those who are able to stand up to that suffering without being broken in spirit.⁵

5. A. San Suu Kyi, *The Voice of Hope. Conversations with Alan Clements* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2008).

Second Characteristic: Women are Prayerful

Women endure suffering without being broken in spirit and I believe it is because of their constant prayers. In rural areas of Myanmar, daily masses are celebrated as early as 6 am or 6:30 am. It is just my personal observation that women, especially middle aged and older are more present in daily mass and in the Eucharistic chapel or rosary time. Spiritual strength is an indispensable value that women try to acquire to respond to the call of each moment and to be able to bear all its consequences. Being receptive and faithful to the call in suffering are values which are very Marian and found also in many women today because Mary remained faithful even at the time of her desolation at the foot of the Cross. Through prayers, women came to Him, all with their labour and burdens as the Gospel says, “Come to me, all of you who labour and are burdened, and I will give you rest” (*Mt 11:28*).

Third Characteristic: Women are like Messengers

When reflecting about the miracle at the Cana wedding, I see that women are also like messengers. I grew up with my widowed mother because my father disappeared after he fled to the Thai-Myanmar border after the students’ uprising in 1988. She was still in her early thirties. Since then, I was mostly surrounded by women, my mother and aunts. I noticed that women by nature have such sensitivity and intuition to the needs of their relatives, neighbours and society. They are like messengers who could bring messages to the right people because of their sensitivity, and eventually respond to needs in the way they can by assisting some to get employment, education, or medical treatment etc.

I remember once, my mother called me and said that she was bringing a patient from a remote village because she had a heart problem and may need an operation. She brought her to my house because I stayed in the city near to the good hospital. The patient had never been to the city and as an ethnic woman from rural village, she did not speak the language well. She indeed needed to have a major operation. Her husband and relatives did not agree to go through an operation as they were scared and did not have much knowledge of health. For them, dying naturally is better than having a serious medical operation. At last after several counselling sessions from the doctor and encouragement received from us, they agreed and she underwent her operation. The surgery was successful. Now she is well and, through her experience, she was able to help another person in her village who was in the same condition as she. This experience helps me remember Mary who intuited that the wine was about to finish during the feast of the wedding at Cana and let her son Jesus know about the situation.

Fourth Characteristic: Women Bridge Relations

But like Mary, women do not only bridge gaps in terms of material needs but also did so with relationships. Her motherhood was particularly highlighted when Jesus said to her and to the apostle John, from the cross: “Mother, behold your son; son, behold your

mother” (Jn 19:26-27). Mary, a woman, was uplifted and entrusted to be the mother of the Church. Being chosen by God and with all her virtues, her fortitude in embracing the realities around her, the suffering, the desolation, Mary is an ideal for all women to imitate and to live like her in our daily life.

At this point, I would like to go back to the identity and ethnic issue that my country is facing. Thinking of societies that are struggling in search of identity, I realize that that was not an issue for Mary, the disciples and early Christians because Christ was the source of the common identity that they had found. In Christ, identities are no longer the most important issue but all became one, as He prayed at the Last Supper: “Father, may they all be one” (Jn 17:11). The role of Mary then was to generate Jesus, whose love has conquered the world. In Him peace and unity are reborn leaving ethnic divisions behind. Mary, therefore was the generator of peace. She was the generator of unity. And thus, she is the reconciler, too.

In the real world, from micro-level conflict up to the larger, if given more equal opportunity to education and empowerment, space and time to develop the talents women have, there is no doubt that they can play a significant role in bridging the gaps and minimizing tensions in our society. Many women who involve themselves in the parishes and in conflicted communities are mothers, educators, service providers, reconcilers and peace-builders for their family and for the communities. They visit the families who are suffering in the communities. They help the needy. Through prayer, they serve the community with love, accompaniment and friendship. They are animators of the Church.

Last but not Least: Women Need to be Truly Themselves

But there is one condition. Chiara Lubich, the founder of the Focolare movement once said:

In order for women to truly be themselves, they need to reconsider where they stand in relation to Jesus. Today too they need to make the experience of a profound encounter with him, to discover him, just as those fortunate women of Palestine did in their day.⁶

I understood that in relation to Jesus, the perfect God-Man, it is very important how much a woman loves the persons around her as Jesus did, and how much good she can offer in her day-to-day life to be able to transform the world she lives in.

If women are recognized as they are, if they are given the opportunity, and if they are deeply rooted in the love of God, they fulfil God’s purpose in creating the feminine, as Pope John Paul II wrote on 29 June 1995:

6. C. Lubich, *Essential Writings* (London: New City Press, 2007), 197.

When the Book of Genesis speaks of “help,” it is not referring merely to acting, but also to being. Womanhood and manhood are complementary not only from the physical and psychological points of view, but also from the ontological. It is only through the duality of the “masculine” and the “feminine” that the “human” finds full realization.⁷

CONCLUSION

Amid all the tragedies which have emerged out of pride, injustice, and greed, many communities in the world are in need of a Marian presence. It is a time that calls for recognition of women and their dignity, in their uniqueness both in being and action, so that they can truly realize their role as helpers fit for humanity. As stated in *Mulieris Dignitatem*, “Christ speaks to women about the things of God, and they understand them; there is a true resonance of mind and heart, a response of faith.”⁸

All we need in many societies today is to give women a chance because they deserve to participate in constructing a civilization of love.

The lotus needs to be dignified with the higher level of water.

7. John Paul II, *Letter to Women*, 29 June 1995.

8. John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, no 15.

WORKSHOP REPORTS

CHRISTIAN WITNESS CONVERSION AND PROSELYTISM

MARKUS LUBER¹

FIRST PAPER PRESENTATION

Andrew Recepcion, “*On John 14:6.*”

Conversion and Proselytism are two important consequences of proclamation. But what does it mean to proclaim Jesus as “The way, truth and life” (*Jn 14:6*) while respecting all that is holy and true in other religions (*Nostra Aetate*)?

The saying cannot be separated from other texts in *John 13* and *14* on his betrayal and washing of feet. Therefore, the key to understand who Jesus is, is the new commandment of love—which is highlighted in the washing of the feet. Jesus announces not only his farewell, but also his mandate—the last discourse, betrayal, and washing of the feet—where love makes the disciples see and understand who He is.

Discipleship is a process of knowing Jesus in person. Jesus calls everyone to make a personal journey, moving from acquaint-

1. Based on notes taken by Charles Bertille

tance to friendship, from outsider to insider, from fascination to commitment. We become not only like Him but also Jesus for others. Proselytism contradicts the witness of disciples journeying with Jesus. Today religious symbols being replaced by digital revolution, and globalization. People need to encounter Jesus not through the pulpit of stones but living stones of Christian witnesses. In a multi-religious world, each one of us becomes “the way.”

SECOND PAPER PRESENTATION

Roberto Catalano, “*Interfaith Conversation after Nostra Aetate*.”

Focusing on Pope Francis implies being aware of the important role of the previous popes: John Paul II (dialogue for peace), Benedict XVI (dialogue of charity in truth).

The keyword for Pope Francis is friendship. He stresses three moments.

First, interreligious dialogue is a duty. It is not negotiation (“to get your slice of the cake”), but seeks the common good. Interreligious dialogue is a necessary condition for seeking peace (*Evangelii gaudium* 250, in line with Benedict XVI).

Second, interreligious dialogue requires a clear identity. It has to be seen in the intellectual attitude of “incomplete thought,” as intriguing element, because God ceaselessly surprises. Francis portrays the interlocutor as restless and with a readiness to listen without rushing to respond.

Third, interreligious dialogue depends on empathic persons. Out of a disposition of shared humanity arise openness, fraternity, and hospitality.

These elements lead to a culture of encounter. The dynamic of dialogue is expressed in the metaphor of the pilgrimage (already used by John Paul II). It demands persistence, patience, and intelligence. Francis underlines that in life we have to walk together and avoid stop walking alone. Facing conflict is part of the process. We are invited to embrace conflicts while being aware that we do not possess truth but truth possesses us.

THIRD PAPER PRESENTATION

Kevin Hanlon, “*Missionary Motivation Before and After Vatican II*.”

Ad extra missionaries follow the footsteps of St Paul who had his team whom he would send out. We do as he did, but we face new challenges. Some of these challenges come from within the Church itself.

Prior to the Council, the main thrust of mission was very clearly founded on Mt 28, known as the missionary mandate. The focus is ongoing in Jesus’ authority, teaching and baptizing. Likewise, in Mark’s version of the mandate (*Mk* 16) Christ simply says: “Go into the whole world... whoever believes will be saved. Whoever does not believe will not be saved.”

Then the Council happened and dismissed the notion of saving souls. *Lumen Gentium*

states that divine economy does not deny grace necessary for salvation to those who do not know him. They can be saved by the dictates of their conscience. This took the zeal or wind out of the sails of missionaries. The Council fathers did not seem to foresee this impact. From then on, mission literature began to change. It spoke of human development, and missionaries as working for human liberation, for reconciliation, dialogue, building bridges. We have never reclaimed the rigor that was there. John Paul II affirmed in *Redemptoris missio*, rather late, that missionary activity today as always retains its power and necessity. But what is needed also is to address the doctrinal question of salvation out of pastoral concerns. The scripture and Christ speak of salvation and condemnation, but there is a lack of understanding of how our missionary activity works for salvation. The question is crucial because people want to have certitude. For example, in Latin America Pentecostal Churches proclaim the surety to be saved by leaving the Catholic Church and joining them, whereas Catholics do not have a clear answer regarding the question of salvation.

CHRISTIAN WITNESS
IN A SECULAR AND GLOBAL WORLD

ROCCO VIVIANO

The second workshop was attended by twenty participants, six of whom presented papers. Group discussions followed each paper presentation.

FIRST PAPER PRESENTATION

Florence Oso spoke on the topic “*Youth Formation in a Multi-Religious Society*.” Among other aspects she described the general situation of schools in Nigeria with regard to the interaction between Christian and Muslim students. She drew attention to the enormous potential of young people within Nigerian society and advocated the need to prevent that potential from being channelled into radical fundamental movements and, on the contrary, the need to harness it towards constructive dialogue between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria. This is an area to which the Catholic Church in Nigeria should give priority.

SECOND PAPER PRESENTATION

The title of Patrick McInerney's paper was "*Bigger than our Imagination.*" He pointed out that the Church's mission in the contemporary multi-religious world would greatly benefit from a deeper awareness that what we are used to consider our "home" (ie, the world), God and God's dealings with others greatly surpass our imagination.

THIRD PAPER PRESENTATION

Jin Ok Lee presented a paper entitled "*The Mission of Korean Young Lay People.*" She explained that the present-generation Koreans have become quite disconnected with the strong tradition of faith that once characterised the Catholic Church in her country. One of the reasons is the fact that after the Second World War, in a great effort to reconstruct the nation, society has become more result-oriented, whereby imposing on the young people success as the main goal that must be pursued at all cost. This has affected Catholic families as well. She insisted that in order to survive and thrive, the Catholic Church in Korea must find effective ways to proclaim the kerygma to young Catholics once again and reconnect them to their Christian history.

FOURTH PAPER PRESENTATION

In his presentation, "*When the Gospel Meets the China Dream,*" Chiaretto Yan discussed in more detail some of the ideas he had expressed during the panel discussion on the first day of the conference. Among other aspects, he found that the values of harmony and fraternity-friendship pursued by China's present policy, have some resonance with fundamental Christian values, and can be a starting point for constructive engagement.

FIFTH PAPER PRESENTATION

With his presentation entitled "*Religious Pluralism and Islam in Europe,*" Lazar Thanuzraj presented some of the important issues in relation to the present-day encounter of Christians and Muslims in the European context, drawing attention to the question of the relationship between religion and geography. In the contemporary world, the identification of one particular religious identity with a particular nation or geographical region is misleading and must be challenged in order to achieve a more realistic understanding of the context that the Church's mission is addressing today.

SIXTH PAPER PRESENTATION

Franciszek Jablonsky gave a detailed presentation of the "*Programme of Missionary Formation for Families,*" which he follows as director of the office for marriage and family in

his diocese. The programme places great emphasis on the mission of the family, i.e. the domestic church, understood as full participation in the mission of the universal church in all its aspects (ad intra, ad extra and ad gentes). He suggested practical ways whereby the family can become a true witness to the Gospel and contribute to the universal mission.

CONCLUSION

Lively discussions followed all the papers, enabling the participants to share both ideas as well as experiences from their particular contexts.

Ideally, it would have been interesting to hear from all participants their reason for joining in this particular workshop. However, that would have required a different methodology, for example omitting the presentation of papers. In this regard the fact that only six people out of twenty were able to give presentations should be taken into account in view of the next assembly. Maybe not everyone can afford the time to write a full paper, but perhaps a larger number, if not all, would be able to prepare a one-page explanation on the reason why they chose one particular workshop theme and how that topic relates to their particular interest and work.

All things considered, I believe the participants would agree that this workshop was quite a successful moment in our conference.

CHRISTIAN WITNESS
AND FRONTIERS OF MISSION IN CHANGING
RELIGIOUS, CULTURAL AND SOCIAL CONTEXTS

WOJCIECH KLUIJ

In our group we heard five presentations, after which followed discussions. The first one was on Tuesday (July 11), next two on Wednesday (July 12), and the last two on Friday (July 14).

FIRST PAPER PRESENTATION

M.D. Thomas, “*Interactive Dynamics of Christian Mission.*”

In the discussion that followed this presentation it was underlined that we have to keep in mind that Christian mission is essentially grounded in a desire of being “like Christ.” This reality is never a one-way traffic. It is necessarily interactive in its dynamics. It evolves in multisided processes, involving oneself, the others and God in faith. It is a relational entity like “one body, with many parts.” It is a celebration of the “spirit of togetherness” with people of all faiths, ideologies, perspectives and cultures.

SECOND PAPER PRESENTATION

Anthony Kalliath, *“Christian Witness and Frontier Missions in the context of Missiology.”*

In the discussion it was repeated that we have to look at missions from the perspective of the people. The missionary has to cross many cultural borders in order to present Jesus also to those who are not Christian. It may require an attempt to create Buddhist or Hindu “Christologies,” perhaps even using traditional concepts from other religions. One has to keep in mind that we do not “possess” Christ. He is a patrimony of the whole of humankind. One cannot look at Him in a narrow way. One enters into relation with Him in real life. As Buddha, Jesus showed the “way” rather than presenting written statements.

THIRD PAPER PRESENTATION

Joseph Shaji, *“Biblical Evidence for Dialogue with Cultures and Religions.”*

It was underlined that in the Old Testament there are many “pagan” stories. Evangelization, therefore, must take into account this rich heritage of pluralism of cultures and religions through a genuine inter-religious and intercultural dialogue. We also notice cultural openness in the entire Wisdom literature. Wisdom books repeat sometimes common wisdom of humanity presented also among the neighboring peoples.

FOURTH PAPER PRESENTATION

Alexander Jebadu, *“The Assault of Unfettered Global Neoliberal Capitalism on the Poor & Environment as the Church’s New Mission Frontier.”*

This good sociological analysis brought the attention to the threat of modern economic systems, that has become a nightmare, bringing death to the poor and ecocide to the earth’s life support system. We are not able to change the economic world, but one could start working with local peoples.

FIFTH PAPER PRESENTATION

Wojciech Kluj, *“The Septuagint as a study case of inculturation of non-Christian text.”*

When trying to approach important texts from other religions as a study case one may take an example of the Septuagint. Even though it was a book of Jews, it was accepted by the first Christians as inspired and included into the canon of holy books. God is always talking to the people. Looking at the issue of inspiration, it might be good to regard peoples as inspired, rather than texts. It becomes clear in the process of life.

CONFERENCE SYNTHESIS PAPER

*CHRISTIAN WITNESS
IN A MULTI-RELIGIOUS WORLD*

JOHN PRIOR¹

For its sixth International Conference, the International Association of Catholic Missiologists (IACM) meeting in Pattaya, Thailand, from 9–15 July 2017, took up the theme, “Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World.” The sixty-six participants represented eighteen countries from five continents, and almost all had significant cross-cultural experience in mission. Substantial informal networking among participants was naturally one of the more important fruits of the gathering.

CHRISTIAN WITNESS IN A MULTI-RELIGIOUS WORLD

In their keynote presentations, Indunil Janaka Kodithuwakku Kankanamalage, undersecretary at the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID), and Klaus Krämer, President of Missio Aachen, explored aspects of the document “Christian

1. John Prior is a Divine Word missionary who has worked in Indonesia since 1973.

Witness in a Multi-Religious World: Recommendations for Conduct.” This unique ecumenical text was drawn up jointly by the PCID, the Programme on Interreligious Dialogue and Cooperation of the World Council of Churches (IRDC), and the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) at the end of a five-year consultation process. This study was unprecedented, engaging as it did both interfaith and ecumenical collaboration, concluding with a first-ever practical ecumenical guide for conduct on Christian witness around the world for consideration by Catholic, Orthodox, Reformation and Evangelical Churches.

GLOBAL CONTEXT

Today’s context is truly exceptional: the rapid globalisation of the economy and of cyber-communications has left nowhere isolated. The de-terrorisation of cultural domains has undercut previously held local and regional consensus in social and cultural values. Mass worldwide migration has turned everywhere into multicultural and multi-religious fluidity. Meanwhile, the model of globalisation is that of “casino capitalism” where the rapacious and the unethical win, and where the gap between a minute minority of super-rich and an ever-enlarging majority of the poor is producing an increasing number of unwanted “losers.”²

Losing out economically while unable to transform their situation politically, bereft of both dignity and identity, understandably some of the displaced retreat into cultural, ethnic and religious enclaves, and a few turn to criminality and so to religious violence. Treating the earth as a seemingly unlimited source of wealth is destroying the earth as the common home of humanity, for the earth is not a collection of objects, but rather a communion of subjects. In this unprecedented context, the PCID, IRDC and WEA drew up the 2011 recommendations for conduct on Christian witness. Over the past six years the situation has intensified rather than diminished.

LISTENING

In line with this exceptional ecumenical document, we have come to see the evangeliser first of all as a listener who attends with “the ear of the heart” (Benedict of Nursia) to the convictions, values and motivations of our partners from other faith traditions. Listening leads to learning and mutual appreciation of each other, and so in free encounter we can arrive at a more accurate understanding of each other’s experience and perceptions about mission and conversion.

2. Russia has the widest rich-poor gap in the world, where 1% control 66.2% of the country’s wealth, Thailand comes second where 1% control 55.5%, and Indonesia third where 1% control 50.3%.

CONVERSION

For a Christian, conversion is first and foremost *metanoia*—a change of heart and direction (*Mk* 1:15), a turning to God, to God as revealed in our interfaith and intercultural conversations, a God who is greater than our heart (cf. *1Jn.* 3:20), greater than any particular linguistic, cultural or religious articulation. In listening we come to a deeper, more profound understanding of our own faith, as do our partners, which leads not only to mutual understanding but further, to mutual conversion, as we are then able to rediscover and so re-appropriate aspects of our individual traditions previously dormant. In genuine dialogue, a profound mutual conversion is possible as we face each other as fellow human beings, as sisters and brothers, and so become more truly human.

Cut off in cultural or religious enclaves we become ever more narrow and shallow, while open to others we find that our religious convictions unite and ennoble us as we re-vision and re-appropriate our Gospel faith with ever greater insight. And so we begin to understand and practise our faith in the light of our core principles and ideals, recognising them in the life and community of our partners.

FREE CHOICE

Living dialogue as *metanoia* acknowledges and upholds the freedom to practise, propagate and change one's religion as a fundamental, inviolable and non-negotiable right of each and every human being everywhere. At the same time evangelisers need to heal themselves from any obsession to convert others to their own religious institution, in particular by unethical means. Therefore there needs to be transparency in the practice of inviting others to one's faith.

SELF-CRITICISM

In interfaith conversations we are led to an honest self-critical examination of the historical conduct of our own tradition. Such self-criticism and repentance should lead to necessary reforms, including reform related to the issue of conversion. Humanitarian work undertaken by faith communities needs to be conducted without any ulterior motive. What we can do together, we should never do separately. No faith organization should take advantage of vulnerable sections of society, such as children and the differently abled. We also recognize the need to listen to how people of other faiths perceive us. This is necessary to avoid and remove misunderstanding, and to promote better appreciation of each other's faith traditions.

MISSION IN DIALOGUE

Dialogue is the way we do all aspects of our mission, not simply as a strategy but more as

a spirituality embedded in our experience of God: we live our convictions. For the Triune God is divine relationships, a communion of love: Creator, Word and Spirit. Divine love overflowed giving birth to the universe, a universe that expresses who God is. The more we understand the universe, the more we understand its creator who has engaged humanity in a prolonged dialogue through the Divine Spirit, through God's dealing with humanity in every age, culminating in the Incarnation of the Divine Word. Consequently, the whole of history can be seen as a dialogue of salvation, a conversation between God and creation, beginning at the moment of creation, continuing with a chosen people, culminating in the saving action of God in Jesus Christ. God's mission is, therefore, dialogical of its very nature, and we are called to play a part in this ongoing conversation (cf. *Mk 16:15*).

SOCIAL, CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS CONTEXTS

God meets us, and we encounter each other, in specific social, cultural and religious networks which we must approach with respect and sensitivity. Hence, rooted in fundamental ethical values, we collaborate in promoting greater social justice and work for peace and reconciliation in society. We are called to a fearless prophetic denunciation of inhuman conditions and violations of human rights, and to witness to the liberating power of the Christian message where people's lives are tangibly improved through practical endeavours. Here, the Gospel is experienced as a joyful and liberating message of hope which reaches people in their everyday lives.

Mission is achieved when faith becomes the soul of culture. From within local and global contexts we seek to express our faith authentically, and yet in inter-cultural dialogue, we also adopt a critical approach, aware of each culture's limitations and contradictions. Inter-cultural mission leads us to transform and renew cultures, including our own, from within.

INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

As regards the concrete conduct of Christian witness, there must be critical scrutiny in particular of aggressive mission strategies and methods which reveal a confrontational attitude towards other religions, and which distance themselves in a disrespectful manner from the religious convictions or practices of others, or reflect them in a falsifying manner. For dialogue thrives on respect for the freedom of others whom we encounter on an equal footing.

In dialogue, convictions and positions are introduced into the discussion, the purpose of which may be to convince those addressed, but always without exerting any pressure on them. Bearers of the Gospel throw light on what they have experienced themselves, what constitutes the essence of their own identity, what has touched them and what they

thrive on, what their mission is, and where they see the meaning of their life. Bearing witness involves adopting a standpoint, explaining the claim to which the bearer has freely committed him or her self, illuminating the reasons which prompted them to do so and thus voluntarily opening up for the persons addressed an area they can enter in order to see for themselves whether they wish, and are able, to make these reasons their own. Of crucial significance is the area of freedom which emerges between the two dialogue partners as a result of the witness borne. Persons addressed must not be restricted in their freedom. The message is simply an offer which cannot be foisted from the outside.

CONFLICT, VIOLENCE AND RECONCILIATION

The second pair of plenary presentations took up the issue of conflict, violence and reconciliation. Francis-Vincent Anthony, of the Pontifical Salesian University in Rome, presented a detailed analysis of two in-depth empirical research programmes on religious conflict and conflict prevention in India. As became apparent in both panel and plenary discussions, profound insights from these particular studies gave new light on a host of different situations as diverse as Fiji, the Philippines and Burundi.

LABELLING

We were stunned when made aware that every one of the conference participants came from an area that is experiencing some form of upheaval involving the label “religious conflict.” However, the research presented by Francis-Vincent indicates that while ethnic and religious labels adhere to much violence, underlying rival socio-economic and political interests, actual or perceived, are a pivotal trigger of communal conflict. “Perceived realities” and “perceived history” easily become reality. Where majorities feel threatened by seemingly successful minorities, where the future looks increasingly uncertain and uncontrollable, those threatened often fall back onto their ethnic and religious identity.

As scholars and practitioners of mission, we need to analyse the facts on the ground, and be aware of majority/minority dynamics. Religion is not often the key cause of conflict, but rather unjust economic, political and cultural issues. When we label we reduce people to a single identity and violence to one issue. Recognition of our common humanity is the basis of reconciliation, for when we rediscover our own humanness, dialogue is able to emerge.

FORCE VERSUS STRENGTH

Religion contains the potential both to heal and to destroy, to love and to hate. Conflict in itself is not necessarily a negative as long as it is managed appropriately. The research data shows that there are no significant differences between Christian, Muslim and Hindu

respondents' agreement with force-driven causes of interreligious conflict. "Force-driven religious conflict" is to be distinguished from "strength-driven religious conflict." Force is characterized by a capacity for violent action, which imposes coercion in a social sphere and involves a certain level of violence. Force exercised by one group implies absence of the power to act and speak in another group. Strength is characterized by an increased possibility to act and speak inspired by one's convictions, while leaving the integrity of all individuals and groups in society intact. Actions are characterized by strength if an individual finds ways of coping with violence. This calls us to be attentive to violence in Christian traditions and foster critical thinking while promoting cosmopolitan citizenship.

WOMEN IN CONFLICT SITUATIONS

In her plenary presentation, Gennie Khury, of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees at the Myanmar Field Office, took up a key issue in conflict situations in our patriarchal world, namely the role of women. Conflict has displaced over 65 million people worldwide, more than half of whom are vulnerable women. The presenter focused on Myanmar where conflict has been triggered by an unequal sharing of resources and weak civic institutions. Gennie Khury noted how conflict and cultural barriers result in women having limited access to the public sphere, and so have little or no voice.

Despite the crucial role of women in reconciliation, peace processes are almost inevitably dominated by men. The voice of women is not heard where a majority of women have lacked opportunities to acquire skills in policy making, policy analysis, public relations, negotiations, leadership and management. Recognizing women, both their contribution and their disempowerment, is crucial. In conflict their dignity is undermined, and yet they are usually the first to come forward to work courageously for an end to fighting.

MASS MIGRATION

Both conflict and the globalisation of the economy have led to mass migration, the underbelly of which is human trafficking. Stability and "normality" among the uprooted is in the hands of the women. Often it is the women who develop strategies and long-term plans; they develop self-esteem and no longer feel lost, and in the absence of the men take charge of the family. The underlying cause of mass migration is poverty, and so to tackle conflict we need to tackle poverty and confront the capitalist model of globalisation that is producing it.

RE-READING THE BIBLE

The Catholic Church needs to hear female voices in theology and in biblical interpretation. In truth, we are called to re-read the Scriptures from a woman's perspective. Both

the presenter and participants referred to the creation myth in Genesis Two, where the earth creature (Hebrew *adam*, created from *adama*, red soil) is put to sleep and God creates a woman, a “helper.” There is no indication of subordination here, for half of the references in the Hebrew Bible to “helper” refer to YHWH, God.

Mary of Nazareth is a model for both women and men in her “*fiat*,” which was clearly receptive but also astounding. As a teenage girl engaged to Joseph by her family, she had no right to respond to the angel Gabriel. But rather than first consulting her father, brothers, uncles and fiancé as both cultural and religious norms demanded, she took up her future in her own hands: “Let it be done to me...” (*Lk* 1:38). Receptivity, courage and self-reliance are one. Yet again in the *Magnificat* (*Lk* 1: 46-55) Mary, the voice of the silenced, yearns for a cultural (v. 51), political (v. 52), and economic revolution (v. 53).

GENDER EQUALITY

Gender sensitivity, gender justice and gender equality are crucial in these times of upheaval and ongoing conflict. There will be no lasting reconciliation without gender justice. The oppression of women demands advocacy to bring about social change so that women and men, in both Church and society, can be clearly co-responsible. If truth be told, what would have happened if the women at the tomb, while trembling with amazement, “said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid” (*Mk* 16:8, the original ending of Mark’s Gospel). Today, also, women are pioneering Christian witness in conflict situations.

THE CROSS

One word that we did not hear during these five days was “success” in mission, for Christian witness leads to the cross: “When we are weak, then we are strong”, declared Paul of Tarsus (*2Cor* 12:10). While a political prisoner, Aung San Suu Kyi learned from those able to stand up to suffering without being broken in spirit. In a similar spirit of solidarity, conference participants acknowledged those suffering discrimination, persecution or martyrdom in many parts of the world, and those falsely accused of engaging in forced conversion. The Spirit of Jesus gives us the grace and the courage to forgive the unforgivable, recalling that daily we ask God to forgive us only as far as we are willing to forgive others (*Mt* 6:12). That in a nutshell is Christian witness, a witness of hope.

FACING THE FUTURE

And so the sixth IACM conference called us to re-invent ourselves as practical missionaries and as academic scholars engaged in mission. We need to develop skills for dialogue, and to witness to our faith with an inclusivist mentality. The plenary papers, panel and

plenary discussions provide us with much material with which we can re-read our experience, and so face the future as listeners and learners with a stronger sense of history. Key terms emerged in our sharing such as advocacy, empowerment and awareness building. For this to become reality, there is a need for pastoral and catechetical material to arouse our Christian communities.

A LIVING PARABLE OF MISSION

Throughout these five days, we have been immersed in a living parable of mission by residing among the students and staff of a Fr Ray community. We learnt of former student and now staff member, Meuchai, who is armless, and uses his feet with incredible dexterity whether for threading a needle or driving a car. We heard of blind students who play goal-ball at international level with their ears, with a sharpness of hearing way beyond what the rest of us are capable of. Similarly, in deep listening and profound learning from “the other” we are able to re-imagine our Christian faith in ways impossible without ongoing interfaith and intercultural encounters. In Fr Ray’s communities for the differently-enabled, students are brought to accept their physical and possible mental limitations while nurturing their spiritual and physical abilities. Thus, self-trust, self-worth and self-belief are ignited and a creative future becomes once again imaginable, and then reality. Only after reaching adulthood and ready for a self-reliant life, are alumni allowed to consider changing their religious allegiance if they so wish.

And so for five days we have been immersed in this living parable of mission, where the physically-challenged witness to the attitudes and dispositions we ourselves need as Christian witnesses in a multi-religious and multicultural world. Facing an unprecedented situation of communal conflict and ecological and environmental destruction, we are being called in “bold humility” (David Bosch) to re-imagine Christian witness as strangers in another’s home, and be open to embrace a new paradigm of mission.

For truth is not primarily a formula or a teaching, but rather a person, “the Way, the Truth, and the Life” (*Jn 14:6*). It follows that truth is discovered in relationships. The Cosmic Christ is at the heart of the Divine Trinitarian Community, at the heart of creation, at the heart of the human community, present in each person’s heart (cf. *Col 1:15-20*). We encounter the Risen One in each individual and in each culture, indeed in the whole creation: “May the Triune God live in our hearts and the hearts of all humanity. Amen.”

APPENDIX

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE FOR THE IACM
SIXTH CONFERENCE AND GENERAL ASSEMBLY
PATTAYA, 10–16 JULY 2017

ANDREW RECEPTION

Thailand is a country of the “free people.” It is in the spirit of freedom, that men and women of all religions can freely practice their faith. Though Christianity is a minority in this country in which majority are Buddhists, Christians do find welcome in society. It is a blessing indeed that Thailand welcomes us warmly for our Sixth International Conference and Plenary Assembly.

During the Fifth International Conference and Plenary Assembly in Nairobi, Kenya, in 2013, we have reflected contextually on the missiological dimension of *missio inter-gentes*. Some of the papers from the workshops, edited by Prof. Therese D’Orsa and Dr Jim D’Orsa, have been included in this booklet.¹ In Nairobi, it was decided to hold the next International Conference and Plenary Assembly either in Asia or in Oceania. In the meeting of the IACM board in Rome, Italy on 2015 during the International Symposium on the 50th anniversary of Vatican II’s

1. This message was included in the booklet distributed to the participants at the IACM Sixth Conference.

Ad Gentes, that we co-organized with Urbaniana and Missio, Thailand was chosen as our host country for this year's conference and assembly.

We hope that as we gather from different countries and from different areas of research and mission contexts, we can work together in deepening missiologically this year's conference's theme: Christian witness in a multi-religious world. May this conference and assembly provide not only insights and fruitful workshops but also an opportunity to build our community of Catholic missiologists.

Let us celebrate mission!

Rev. Fr. Andrew Recepcion, D. Miss.
President

PROGRAMME

Day 1: 9 July

18:00 Eucharist (Main Chapel) – Presider: Bishop Selvester
Ponunumuthan, Punalur, Kerala (*India*)

19:00 Dinner and fellowship

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

Day 2: 10 July

8:00 WELCOME

Fr Andrew G. Reception, IACM President

8:15 ORIENTATION

Sr Nzenzili Mboma FMM, IACM Vice-President

Fr. Francis-Vincent Anthony SDB, Moderator

Fr Mike Picharn CSSR, Director of the Redemptorist Centre

9:00 IMMERSION 1 – Visit to the diocesan orphanage, Fountain of

Life Community for exploited women, and the school for the blind run by the Redemptorists

12:00 Lunch (Redemptorist Centre)

14:30 IMMERSION 2 – visit to different initiatives for children, differently abled, etc. within the complex of the Redemptorist Centre

16:30 Visit Fr. Ray's Children Village

18:30 Eucharist (Main Chapel) – Presider: Andrew G. Reception

19:15 Dinner and fellowship

Day 3: 11 July

8:30 Introduction

8:45 FIRST PRESENTATION: *The Context and Historical Background of Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World* – Indunil Janaka Kodithuwakku Kankanamalage, undersecretary of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue

9:45 FORUM

10:00 Break

10:30 ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

Panel

Lazar Thanusraj SVD (*India and Rome*)

Chiaretto Yan (*China*)

James Kroeger, MM (*USA and Philippines*)

Moderator

Bryan Lobo SJ, Pontifical Gregorian University (*Rome*)

11:30 FORUM

12:00 Lunch

15:00 WORKSHOPS

18:00 Eucharist – Presider: Fr Anthony Kalliath (*India*)

19:00 Dinner

19:30 Visit to Pattaya (optional)

Day 4: 12 July

8:45 SECOND PRESENTATION: *Frontiers of Christian Witness in Religious, Cultural and Social Contexts* – Dr Klaus Krämer, President of Missio Aachen, Germany

9:45 FORUM

10:00 Break

10:30 ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

Panel

Markus Lubert SJ (*Germany*)

Roberto Catalano (*Italy*)

Kevin Hanlon MM (USA)
Sr Florence Oso (Nigeria)

Moderator

Paul Steffen SVD, Pontifical Urban University (Rome)

- 11:30 FORUM
12:00 Lunch
15:00 WORKSHOPS
18:00 Eucharist – Presider: Fr Wojciech Kluj OMI (Poland)
19:00 Dinner

Day 5: 13 July

8:45 THIRD PRESENTATION: *Religion and Conflict Prevention and Resolution* – Fr Francis Vincent Anthony SDB, Pontifical Salesian University (Rome)

9:45 FORUM

10:00 Break

10:30 ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

Panel

Edgar Javier SVD (Philippines and American Samoa)

William LaRousse MM (USA and Philippines)

Marc Nsanzurwimo, MAFR (Burundi)

Moderator

Mario Francisco SJ – Ateneo de Manila University (Manila) and Pontifical Gregorian University (Rome)

- 11:30 FORUM
12:00 Lunch
13:30 EXPOSURE AND DIALOGUE – Visit to Buddhist Monastery
18:00 Eucharist – Presider: Fr Kevin Hanlon, MM (USA)
19:00 Dinner

Day 6: 14 July

8:45 FOURTH PRESENTATION: *Christian Witness and Reconciliation in the Context of Women in Conflict Situation* – Ms Gennie Khury, Assistant Field Officer of UNHCR in Myanmar

9:45 FORUM

10:00 Break

10:30 ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

Panel

Socorro Moralina (Philippines)

Paul Hwang (South Korea)

Wojciech Kluj OMI (Poland)

Moderator

Sr Miriam Loretto Ifeoma Okoli, “Blessed Iwene Tansi” Major Seminary (Nigeria)

- 11:30 FORUM
- 12:15 Lunch
- 15:00 WORKSHOPS
- 17:00 SYNTHESIS PAPER PRESENTATION – John Prior SVD (*Indonesia*)
- 18:00 Eucharist – Presider: Fr William Larousse MM
- 19:00 Dinner

IACM GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Day 7: 15 July

- 8:00 FIRST SESSION
 - Secretary General's Report – Francis-Vincent Anthony SDB
 - Treasurer's Report – Kevin Hanlon, MM
 - President's Report – Andrew G. Reception
- 9:30 FORUM
- 10:30 Break
- 11:00 Elections of the IACM Executive board – Nominations
- 12:00 Lunch
- 14:30 SECOND SESSION
 - Elections of the IACM Executive board – Vote
- 16:00 Continental group meetings and election of continental representatives
- 18:00 Eucharist – Presider: Fr Wojciech Kluj OMI, newly elected IACM President
- 19:00 Dinner and cultural programme

Day 8: 16 July

- 8:30 Eucharist
- 9:45 Departure for optional tour
- DEPARTURES

PARTICIPANTS

A total of sixty-six members and other guests attended. Indicated is also the country of residence.

1. ABAD, Wilma – *Philippines*
2. AMAN, Evelyn – *Philippines*
3. ANTHONY, Francis-Vincent – *Italy*
4. ARENAS, Josephine – *Philippines*
5. BELTRAN, Dennis – *Philippines*
6. BERTILLE, Charles – *Malaysia*
7. BHOKA, Fransiskus – *Indonesia*
8. BRUNO, S. – *Myanmar*
9. CATALANO, Roberto – *Italy*
10. CERENO, Rizalina – *Philippines*
11. CHIARETTO, Yan – *China*
12. DE VERA, Leonardo – *Philippines*
13. ESCAROS, Melinda – *Philippines*
14. FRANCISCO, Jose Mario – *Philippines*
15. GALVE, Rafael – *Philippines*
16. GUARDA, Fe – *Philippines*

17. HANLON, Kevin – *USA*
18. HINTERSTEINER, Norbert – *Germany*
19. HWANG, Paul – *South Korea*
20. KODITHUWAKKU KANKANAMALAGE, Indunil Janaka – *Vatican City*
21. IWENOFU, Sr. Mary Joan – *Nigeria*
22. JABLONSKI, Franciszek – *Poland*
23. JAVIER, Alicia – *Philippines*
24. JAVIER, Edgar – *Philippines*
25. JEBADU, Alexander – *Indonesia*
26. KALLIATH, Anthony – *India*
27. KHURY, Ma Gennie – *Myanmar*
28. KLARA, Csiszar – *Germany*
29. KLUJ, Wojciech – *Poland*
30. KRÄMER, Klaus – *Germany*
31. KROEGER, James – *Philippines*
32. LAROUSSE, William – *Philippines*
33. LAZAR, Thanuzraj – *Italy*
34. LEE, Jin Ok – *South Korea*
35. LOBO, Bryan – *Italy*
36. LUBER, Markus – *Germany*
37. MANUNGA, Godefroid – *Congo DR*
38. MARFORI, Domingo – *Philippines*
39. MARQUESES, Antonio Gilberto – *Philippines*
40. MBOMA, Nzenzili – *Italy*
41. MCINERNEY, Patrick – *Australia*
42. MEES, Luc – *Philippines*
43. MELO, Luisa – *Italy*
44. MIJARES, Manuel – *Philippines*
45. MORALINA, Socorro – *Philippines*
46. NELLAS, Suzette – *Philippines*
47. NGUYEN, Michael – *USA*
48. NSANZURWIMO, Marc – *Burundi*
49. OKOLI, Miriam Loretto Ifeoma – *Nigeria*
50. OSO, Florence – *Nigeria*
51. PONNUMUTHAN, Selvester – *India*
52. PRIOR, John – *Indonesia*
53. RAYMOND, Kyaw Aung – *Myanmar*
54. RECEPCION, Andrew – *Philippines*
55. SABUD, Hermes – *Philippines*
56. SHAJI, Joseph – *Italy*

57. SOTELO, Donald Rey – *Philippines*
58. STEFFEN, Paul Benedikt – *Italy*
59. THOMAS, M. D. – *India*
60. TUSINGIRE, Frederick – *Uganda*
61. VELLGUTH, Klaus – *Germany*
62. VIVIANO, Rocco – *Japan*
63. WANG, Zhanbo – *China*
64. WAWRZYNIAK, Julian – *Poland*
65. YOUNG, John – *Philippines*
66. ZAW, Doi – *Myanmar*

IACM GENERAL ASSEMBLIES
AND INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES

FIRST GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND INTERNATIONAL
CONFERENCE

17–21 October 2000, Rome (ITALY)
Constitutive Assembly of the IACM

SECOND GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND INTERNATIONAL
CONFERENCE

30 September–3 October 2004, Cochabamba (BOLIVIA)
Sharing Diversity in Missiological Research and Education

THIRD GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND INTERNATIONAL
CONFERENCE

28 August–2 September 2007, Pieniężno (POLAND)
Sharing the Good News in the Interaction of Cultures
SUB-THEMES: Mission perspectives of integral healing and reconcil-

iation; cultural globalisation and asserting identity: migration; intercultural communication in the church.

FOURTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

27 July–2 August 2010, Tagaytay (PHILIPPINES)

New Life in Jesus in the Aeropagus of a Globalized World

SUB-THEMES: proclamation and witness; dialogue and religions; religious and secular fundamentalism; human rights and eco-justice; indigenous people.

FIFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

15–21 July 2013, Nairobi (KENYA)

Missio Inter-Gentes: Challenges and Opportunities

SUB-THEMES: *Missio intergentes*: theologico-missiological foundations; healing and reconciliation; interreligious encounter; mission education and formation.

STATUTES OF THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION
OF CATHOLIC MISSIOLOGISTS

ARTICLE I

The Name of the Association

The name of this society shall be “The International Association of Catholic Missiologists” (to be known also by the acronym: IACM).

ARTICLE II

The Purpose of the Association

The IACM exists for the purpose of promoting missiological research, studies and educational activities and encouraging collaboration among Catholic missiologists. Although the Association and its members affirm their specifically Roman Catholic identity, the IACM seeks to promote the unity and common witness of all the disciples of Jesus Christ, to foster true dialogue

with all people, with their own religious and cultural traditions, and to participate in interdisciplinary approaches to understanding human beings in their relations to God, to each other and to all of God's creation. The Association is at the service of missionary activity in its specific sense, as it has come to be understood since the Second Vatican Council, without, however, losing sight of the missionary dimension of other activities of the Church.

The specific objectives of the IACM include the following:

1. To foster fellowship among Catholic missiologists, thus encouraging them to contribute personally and collectively to the fulfillment of the objectives of the Association;
2. To promote scholarly studies of questions relating to the missionary nature and activity of the Church, encouraging theologians in their delicate work of developing an inculturated theology, carried out with courage, in faithfulness to the Church's tradition and in full ecclesial communion (cf. *Ecclesia in Asia*, 22);
3. To contribute to the content and quality of missiological education and formation, not only in Catholic academic Faculties and Institutes dedicated to this specialization, but also in programs for the initial and continuing formation of the clergy, religious and laity in the local Churches;
4. To be at the service of the diverse local Churches in their mission of evangelizing all peoples and all human situations;
5. To identify, investigate and analyse the missionary challenges present in both per-during and newly emerging human contexts;
6. To further biblical, theological, historical, pastoral, religio-cultural and social science studies related to the evangelizing mission of the Church;
7. To promote mutually enriching relationships with other Christian missiologists and with other scholars dedicated to mission-related studies;
8. To organize academic encounters (scientific congresses, symposia, workshops, etc.) on missiological questions of current and fundamental importance;
9. To cooperate with existing missiological reviews, by means of articles produced by its members and eventually publish its own Bulletin or Review.

The IACM shall work in close collaboration with other international, regional, national missiological societies.

ARTICLE III

The Members of the Association

1. There shall be two types of Members: individual and corporate;
2. Individual Members shall be those who hold a graduate or post-graduate degree in Missiology (a Doctorate, Licentiate or or Master's, or the equivalents of these degrees) or

in related disciplines, who actually are engaged in missiological education and research, who adhere to these Statutes of the IACM and share in its activities;

3. Corporate Members shall be Catholic missiological Faculties or Institutes that offer graduate programs in this specialization, as well as other centers that engage in missiological research and publication;

4. The Executive Board of the IACM may also designate as Honorary Members those persons who have made a notable contribution to the advancement of the discipline of missiology;

5. It shall be the task of the Executive Board to lay down the particular norms for membership and to admit new Members upon the recommendation of one or more persons who already are members;

6. Associates of the IACM shall be students who are candidates for a graduate degree in missiology. These become full members upon earning their degree and upon the recommendation of their moderator, in keeping with the norm above stated;

7. Members shall contribute to the continuing operations of the Association through the payment of an annual membership fee to be determined by the Executive Board.

ARTICLE IV

The Leadership of the Association

1. The leadership of the IACM shall reside in an Executive Board composed of the President, Vice-president, Executive Secretary, Treasurer, and a number of Continental Representatives.

2. The duties of the officers shall be as follows:

a. The President shall be responsible for convening meetings of the entire Association and of its Executive Board and for presiding at these meetings.

The President shall be the ordinary official representative of the IACM before other entities. The President shall work closely with the other officers, particularly the Executive Secretary. The President shall exercise a particular responsibility for maintaining the Association's faithfulness to its purpose, shaping its evangelizing thrust, animating its spirit, fostering its unity, and for channeling its activities towards a truly effective contribution to the mission of the Church.

b. The Vice-president shall take the place of the President in those cases to be determined by the Bylaws of the Association.

c. The Executive Secretary, personally or with the aid of appointed assistants, shall keep an accurate record of the membership, keep the minutes of its meetings, send out mailings in coordination with the President and the Executive Board and perform other duties incumbent on this office.

d. The Treasurer shall be in charge of receiving and disbursing the funds of the Associ-

ation, solicit membership dues and perform other duties of a financial nature. A financial administrator may be appointed by the Executive Board to assist the Treasurer.

e. The Continental Representatives shall promote the objectives and activities of the IACM in the continents. Each continent will have regional groups organized according to their needs for networking.

The Continental Representatives will communicate the apostolic experiences, activities or concerns of these regions in meetings of the Executive Board as well as in other instances.

f. The Executive Board shall have two types of meetings: reduced operative meetings of certain officers on a regular and frequent basis and plenary meetings of the entire Board to be held at times established by the Bylaws of the IACM or otherwise decided by its appointed officers.

3. For the purpose of relating the IACM to other entities and other aspects of effective leadership, the seat of the Association shall be the habitual residence of the President, normally where an academic institution can offer the needed infrastructure for efficient operations.

ARTICLE V

Meetings of the Association

1. The Association shall have a plenary Assembly in which all Members have the right and duty to attend, normally at intervals of every four years.

2. This plenary Assembly shall elect the Executive Officers of the IACM, make decisions relating to its Statutes and modifications of the same and establish the major policies, which guide the operations and activities of Association.

3. The Executive Board shall meet at times and places established by the Bylaws otherwise decided by its President and Executive Secretary in a process that involves proper consultation and dialogue with the other members of the Board.

4. The President and Executive Secretary shall meet on a regular and frequent basis to ensure the most effective and properly coordinated operations of the association.

ARTICLE VI

The Election of the Officers of the Association

1. A full majority (more than 50%) of the Members present at the plenary Assemblies of the Association shall elect the Executive Officers of the IACM. The Bylaws of the Association shall determine the quorum needed for elections and other decisive actions of the Assembly.

2. All individual Members shall have an active vote in these Assemblies; the modality and weight of the votes of corporate Members shall be determined by the Bylaws. Associates do not have the right to vote for Officers, approve or modify Statutes or determine the major policies of the IACM, but shall otherwise be able to participate actively in the deliberations and activities of the Association as determined by the Bylaws.

3. A Nominations Committee may be asked to prepare “straw ballots” or employ other means to present the names of persons or slates of persons to be voted on as Officers of the Association.

4. The detailed modalities of elections and the manner of filling vacancies shall be determined by the Bylaws of the IACM.

ARTICLE VII

The Committees of the Association

The Executive Board of the IACM may designate “Standing Committees,” for Missiological Faculties or Institutes, for Publications, for Nominations and for the organization of scientific missiological congresses or similar encounters. “Ad hoc” committees may be named to carry out specific tasks.

ARTICLE VIII

The Approval and Modification of the Statutes

The formal approval and modification of the Statutes are the competency of the plenary Assembly of the Association.

APPENDIX

The Bylaws of the Association

A point that should enter into the Bylaws of the IACM:

The normal operating language of the IACM shall be English, with particular attention given to the need to facilitate the full participation of its members of continental areas where another language (e.g. Spanish) is widespread.

Recapitulation of other items to be included in the Bylaws:

1. The determination of those cases in which the Vice-president shall take the place of the President (IV, 2,*b*).

2. The determination of the frequency of the plenary meetings of the entire Executive Board (IV, 2,*f*; V, 3).

3. The determination of the modality and weight of the votes of Corporate Members in the Assemblies (VI, 2).

4. The determination of the modalities for the participation of Associates in the activities of the Association (VI, 2).

5. The determination of the detailed modalities of elections and the manner of filling vacancies (VI, 4).

6. The modalities for the designation of the “Standing Committees” of the Association (VII).

Recapitulation of Matters of Policy to be Established by the Executive Board

1. The determination of the particular norms for membership and the admission of new Members (III, 5).

2. The determination of the amount of the annual membership fee to be paid by the Members of the IACM (III, 7).

These Statutes were approved by the First Plenary Assembly of the Association in Rome (21 October, 2000) and revised the following day by the “ad hoc” committee charged with this task on the basis of the amendments recommended.

Here are included the modifications approved by the Third Plenary Assembly of the Association in Pieniezno, Poland (1 September, 2007). Cf. Report of the Third Plenary Assembly, Pieniezno, Poland, 1 September, 2007.

THE BYLAWS OF THE ASSOCIATION

(Updated at the 5th General Assembly, Nairobi, 20 July, 2013)

1. Bylaws are made by the Executive Board and can be changed with the consent of the Executive Board.

2. The normal operating language of the IACM shall be English, to facilitate the full participation of members of continental areas. Particular attention shall be given where another language (e.g. Spanish, French) is widespread.

3. The Vice-president shall take the place of the President (Statutes IV, 2, *b*) when he or she is delegated by the President to represent the Association, when the President is not able to be present at a board meeting or assembly. When the President is no longer able to fulfill the duties of the President, the Vice-president will act as President until the end of the term of the Executive Board.

4. There will be six Continental Representatives on the Executive Board representing: Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and Caribbean islands (2013 update), North America and Oceania (Statutes IV, 2, *e*)

5. Ideally the plenary meetings of the entire Executive Board shall be held at least once a year (Statutes IV, 2, *f*; V, 3)

6. Associates of the IACM can participate in all activities and missiological deliberations of the Association. They may not participate in elections, in the modification of the Statutes or in any major policy decisions (Statutes VI, 2). Associates can be, for example, students invited to attend the conference.

7. Those who gather for an Assembly constitute the quorum needed for elections and any policy decision of the Association (Statutes VI, 1).

8. Elections:

a. Those to be elected at the full assembly are first the President, second the Executive Secretary, third the Vice President, and fourth the Treasurer (Statutes VI, 4).

b. Ideally, President, Vice President, Executive Secretary and Treasurer of the executive board serve no more than two consecutive terms in the same position. However, the association recognizes the need for continuity in the Executive Board and may make exceptions. The regional representatives have no limit of terms. (2013 update)

c. An Ad Hoc Nominations Committee of three (3) should be appointed by the Executive Board. This Committee will be responsible for the gathering of the names of candidates for each position. The committee will actively solicit nominations to ensure that there are proposed candidates for each position (Statutes VI, 3).

d. The process of nominating candidates: any three (3) persons can nominate a person for any position. The name of the nominee is written on a piece of paper with the signatures of the three people who propose that candidate. They should ask the person to be nominated if he/she will accept the nomination. A nominator can be a nominator for a number of candidates for the same position if they so desire. Any member can be nominated simultaneously for any number of positions (Statutes VI, 4).

e. The closing time for the nomination shall be decided by the President (Statutes VI, 4).

f. Voting at the assembly will be by written ballot (Statutes VI, 4).

g. If after two ballots no one has a majority, only the two top names will be included in the third ballot. If the third ballot results in a tie, the ballot will be repeated (2013 update).

h. The Continental Representatives will be chosen by the members present at the Assembly who are from those Continental areas.

9. If any vacancies occur during the term of the Executive Board, the Executive Board will appoint any member to fill out term of the vacant position except for the president who will be replaced by the vice-president (Statutes VI, 4)

10. Applications for new Individual and Corporate Members are presented to the Executive Board (Statutes III, 5). Applicants should have the required credentials as stated in the Statutes (III, 2, 3). At least one Member of the Association should recommend an applicant. The Executive Board will approve the applications for membership. The Executive Secretary will inform the applicant of the decision of the Executive Board.

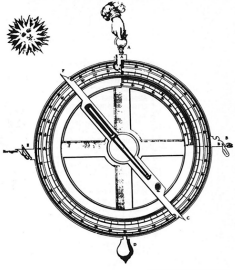
11. Associates of the IACM need to apply in the same manner as those who apply for membership. The Statutes state there are only two types of members, Individual and Cor-

porate. Associates will be accepted by the Executive Board in the same manner as members and they will be notified by the Executive Secretary of their acceptance as Associates.

12. The Standing Committees shall have a convener and members. The number of persons for the Standing Committee shall be decided by the Executive Board (Statutes VII). The Standing Committees could be viewed as study groups.

13. The annual membership fee to be paid by the members of the IACM (Statutes III, 7) will be \$30.00 (USD) per year for individual members and \$150.00 per year for Corporate Members. Associates will pay an annual fee of \$10.00 (USD).

14. As in any international Church-based association there is the need to uphold the moral integrity of its members, hence in case of grievous ethical misconduct the executive board shall review the membership of the person concerned. (2013 update).



CHRISTIAN WITNESS IN A MULTI-RELIGIOUS WORLD

This volume contains a selection from the Proceedings of the Sixth International Conference of the International Association of Catholic Missiologists, held in Pattaya, Thailand, on 9–16 July 2017.

The theme of the conference, *Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World*, was chosen after careful consideration of the present world and the stimuli it offers to the Church, as she seeks to offer its most precious treasure—Jesus Christ—to today’s humanity. Nowadays, Christian witness tends to happen in contexts that are, to a greater or lesser extent, characterized by the coexistence of adherents to different religions. For their witness to be effective, Christians need to reflect on such multi-religious context.