

**PARTNERSHIP IN MISSION:  
MISMEETING IN JESUS' NAME?**

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PARTNERSHIP IN MISSION:  
MISMEETING IN JESUS' NAME?

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## DECLARATION

I declare that PARTNERSHIP IN MISSION: MISMEETING IN JESUS' NAME?  
is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated  
and acknowledged by means of complete references.

Signed:  ( P. J. Knutson )

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## ABBREVIATIONS

AALC	All Africa Lutheran Consultation
AIC	African Instituted Churches
AIDS	Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ALC	American Lutheran Church
ALCW	American Lutheran Church Women
ASB	Assembly Study Book (LWF)
BEM	Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry
BFM	Board of Foreign Mission
BM	Berlin Missionary Society
BWM	Board for World Missions
BWMIC	Board for World Mission and Inter-Church Cooperation
CC	Church Council (ELCSA)
CCC	Commission on Church Cooperation
CCLF	Council of Churches on Lutheran Foundation
CIBL	Conference of International Black Lutherans
CI	The Christian Institute
CLM	Cooperating Lutheran Missions
CG	Church Growth Movement
CNM	Church of Norway Mission
CSM	Church of Sweden Mission
CWME	Commission for World Mission and Evangelism
DGM	Division for Global Mission (ELCA)
DWM	Department of World Mission (LWF)
DWMIC	Division for World Mission and Inter-Church Cooperation (ALC)
DWS	Department of World Service (LWF)
EC	Ecumenical Affirmation
ELC	Evangelical Lutheran Church
ELCA	Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
ELCB	Evangelical Lutheran Church in Botswana
ELCSA	Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa
ELCSA-N.T.	Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa - Natal/Transvaal
ELCSA-SER	Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa-South Eastern Region
ELM	Evangelische Lutherische Mission
EP	ELCSA Partners
ET	Evaluation Team (LWF)
FELCSA	Federation of Lutheran Churches in Southern Africa
FELM	Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission
DDR	Deutsche Demokratische Republik
GHM	Global Health Ministries
GLC	General Lutheran Conference
GM21	Global Mission Vision Document
HKI	Hendrik Kraemer Institute
HM	Hermannsburg Mission
IMC	International Missionary Conference
JCSA	Joint Committee on South Africa
KD	Kairos Document
LAC	Lutheran Advisory Committee
LC	Liaison Committee
LCA	Lutheran Church in America
LMF	Lutheran Medical Foundation
LWM	Lutheran World Ministries
LTS	Lutheran Theological Seminary

LUCSA	Lutheran Communion of Churches in Southern Africa
LWF	Lutheran World Federation
LWM	Lutheran World Ministry
NCC	National Council of Churches (USA)
NLC	Norwegian Lutheran Church
NLCA	Norwegian Lutheran Church of America
NMS	Norwegian Missionary Society
RVOG	Radio Voice of the Gospel
SA	South Africa
SACC	South African Council of Churches
SASO	South African Students Organization
SECC	South Eastern Cape Circuit
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UELCSA	United Evangelical Lutheran Churches in Southern Africa
UEM	United Evangelical Mission
UMA	United Mission Appeal
URC	Uniting Reformed Church
VEM	Vereinigde Evangelische Mission
WAvK	Wederkerige Assistentie van Kerken in Missionair Perspectief
WCC	World Council of Churches

## PREFACE

The focus of this study on partnership came out of experiences of living, working and growing up, in a missionary family, in and “between” South Africa and the United States.

In the 1980s I was placed as a pastor in the newly created resettlement area of Onverwacht (Botshabelo), in the then Orange Free State Province. There I encountered thousands of people who, though indigenous to the region, had been moved or removed through apartheid legislation and dumped onto the open veld with tents and sheets of corrugated iron for shelter.

Into this fragile and painfully unequal situation came a steady stream of visitors: family, tourists, university researchers, NGO fieldworkers, foreign television crews, ecumenical church partners from Germany and the USA, white South African Lutherans and Dutch Reformed groups, to name a few.

As an “insider” and “outsider” or a ‘resident alien,’ (to use a term from Hauerwas and Willimon 1989:12), I was able to listen to and observe many of these exchanges within and between local and visiting groups before, during and after the meetings. I experienced that I did not belong to either “side” and yet I was a part of both. The more I heard and saw the fewer photographs I took and the more difficulty I had to describe what was happening and not happening in these myriad encounters day after day over ten eventful years. I had the disturbing sense that my “modern Western” education and vocabulary were not able to carry the freight of the deep paradoxes, let alone solve them. Each year we were both closer and further apart.

At first I tried to ameliorate the situation by assisting the congregation, visitors and partners through providing more background information and translations. Later I realized that no matter what information was provided it was always interpreted through each individual’s “lenses” or perceptual grids.

What began to intrigue and trouble me as much as what was happening was what was **not** being said and **not** being done by the various interlocutors. Gaps and spaces are very much part and parcel of the encounter; something not even the newest camera can record. I became very frustrated and critical of the many “new” Lutheran partnership programmes funneling into Southern Africa from Europe and the United States. Coming after more than 150 years of

mission relationships the question arose, “Have we really met and will we ever meet as equal partners, as all the partnership contracts and agreements proposed?”

Increasingly I have been looking for words, models and language to describe and understand what I feel to be extremely important experiences but which I struggle to describe without doing an injustice to the people or that experience.

While studying at the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago in 1990 I wrote an essay entitled, *Partnership: Through the Eye of the Needle*, in which I tried to express the impossibility of partnership between rich and poor. The moral of the parable (Mark 10: 25) is that the camel can only pass through the eye of the needle if it is broken into minute particles. It is only through the complete dismantling of the system of pride and domination (Jesus’ death on the cross) and its reconstruction (Jesus’ resurrection) that salvation (shalom) is made possible. (I am indebted to my late father-in-law Willie Cilliers (d.1993) for this interpretation).

When I returned to South Africa in 1991 I was placed in an urban congregation in Port Elizabeth in a community which had also been displaced and which apartheid legislation had formally classified as “coloured.” These are people who have been cut off from their European and African roots; who are literally “betwixt and between.”

I became intrigued, through contact with colleagues in theology, philosophy and sociology, in the “postmodern” writings of Levinas, Derrida, Lyotard, Kristeva, Moore, Appiah, Bauman and others who were writing about **the spaces within and between words, people and worlds.**

Derrida speaks of “différance” and Lyotard of the “différend.” Bauman writes of the need to rediscover the “arcane art of mismeeting.” These new words (neologisms) suggested ways of speaking about the paradoxes of partnership and the ambiguity of identity.

The title of this study is “*Partnership in Mission: Mismatching in Jesus’ Name?*” In making use of the term “mismatching” (which I first encountered in Bauman 1993:159) I will argue that **all meetings are mismetings.** At first I spoke of “meeting” versus “mis-meeting” but now, in this study will argue that there are not “real encounters” as opposed to “mismetings.” The definition of mismatching in this study does *not* mean the absence or failure of a meeting but stresses the asymmetry, open-endedness and complex nature of every meeting.

Chapter One examines various missiological as well as historical materials which have taken up the question of partnership and the problematics of the encounter with the “other.” This chapter looks at some of the powerful perceptual “grids” or paradigms inherited from the past and specifically through what is called the “invention” or “covering” of America and Africa. Others have written about the development of the concept of partnership in the IMC and WCC over the years but the All African Lutheran Conferences are not as well known. Unfortunately even “new” models of partnership stress connection and do not go far enough in acknowledging difference.

Chapter Two examines or excavates in and around (to use Sponheim’s term 1993:25), the conversation(s) in books, reports and minutes which record the long process of negotiating and renegotiating relationships between Lutheran partners in the United States, Europe and South Africa. The main focus of this study is on the American Lutheran partners and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (ELCSA). Partnerships are growing in such a way that no structure can really coordinate what is no longer a program but a movement! What kind of movement this is, whether it further entrenches old colonial patterns, re-colonizes or liberates, bringing a paradigm shift in the way mission is perceived in and carried out by Lutherans in South Africa, is a central question in this chapter.

The first part of chapter two focuses on the period prior to 1975, (the year in which ELCSA was formed), while the second part looks at relationships, policies and actions since that time.

Chapter Three examines ecclesiological and theological models for partnership and includes a short biblical excursus exploring the concept of mismeeting in the gospel of Mark. The concepts of *communion* and *accompaniment* are becoming central to partnership discourse in the Lutheran church around the world over-against the discourse of partnership. ( cf. Buthelezi, page 169 below. While *communio/communion* has much to commend it as a model for mutual partnership this study argues that lack of attention to difference weakens the concept.

In reflecting on the first three chapters, the final chapter proposes that the ambiguity, asymmetry and open-endedness of Christian dialogue and communion with the other, can best be described as mismeeting in Jesus’ name, which includes three perspectives: past, present and future.

This study questions the frequently stated goal or purpose of partnership as that of overcoming differences.

In 1953 Herman Schlyter wrote in the final chapter of his book, *The History of the Co-operating Lutheran Missions in Natal 1912-1951*, “The future means that **the difference will no longer exist** between what has once been Swedish, Norwegian, German and American missions. Thus an African Lutheran Church of a universal character and solidity will be able to develop ...” (:88 - my emphasis)

By contrast Paul Sponheim writes in his book *Faith and the Other: A Relational Theology (1993)*, “... our very life is constituted by relationship: we live in, with, and before the other.” Sponheim speaks of “someone or something meeting us truly from outside - outside our skin, our thinking, our believing, our world” (:v). As Sponheim puts it, “In relationship two come together, but they do not cease to be two (:97). ... We are beings in relationships ... we live on boundaries ... **within these relationships connectedness and difference exist ... order and disorder ... in us and between us ... independence and interdependence ... (:97 - my emphasis)**. In addition to Sponheim’s “Relational Theology,” chapter four includes reflections on Theo Sundermeier’s concept of “konvivenz,” Miroslav Volf’s concept of “embrace,” and David Lochhead’s “theology of dialogue” as extremely useful tools in this excavation process in the field of relationships.

In order to gather material for this study visits were made to archives, libraries and mission/church offices at Luther Seminary, St. Paul, the ELCA Churchwide offices and archives in Chicago, as well as Berlin, Hermannsburg, Wuppertal, Leiden, Johannesburg, Kimberley and Umpumulo (Kwazulu/Natal). Interviews were conducted and correspondence entered into with a number of former and present mission executives, seminary professors, pastors and expatriate missionaries. A major difficulty encountered and which shaped the final outcome of this study was that archival material was spread among so many centres and not always readily accessible or properly organized. While most of the material is written in English, a complete survey of ELCSA’s history would require fluency in Zulu, Norwegian, Swedish and German at least. An in-depth survey of all the ELCSA partners and how they affected each other would have to be a matter for further study

Fr. Michael Lapsley has stated that “Every South African has three stories to tell: “What was done to me, what I did and what I didn’t do.” I believe the same is true for mission and partnership. There needs to be a multiple telling and a multiple listening; an ongoing conversation. We (I) did not personally start this long conversation but we meet and join in somewhere along the way. This study focuses on some of the conversations along the way.

The Bockelmans began the introduction to their book *An Exercise in Compassion: The Lutheran Church in South Africa* (1972) with the following intriguing words,

A word about this book: you may find the beginning in the middle. ... There’s no law that every book must be read from front to back. The traditional way to tell a story is to begin at the beginning and then step by step go through the events in chronological order. But that’s not the way you get acquainted with people. You don’t first read about the history of someone you meet and then meet him (*sic.*). You meet him as he is, in the middle of life, and then through a series of encounters you learn about his background and interesting items about his life (:7).

Some people refuse to read a review of a book or movie before reading or seeing it for the first time. The same can be said about receiving “orientation” before going to visit or live in another country or culture. Orientation at best makes one aware of the existence of different “grids” or perspectives but should not give recipes and short cuts to know and understand others. There is no “easy” entry or exit point, no clear or clean beginning or ending to life or any relationship. There is no neutral, objective or universal vantage point which can guarantee a correct or unambiguous perspective of a relationship, history or people. But that does not stop us from telling and listening to each others’ stories and attending to differences *and* connections.

This study presents various excavations in partnership relations which illustrate that Christian Mission can be better understood in part as the story of mismeeting in Jesus’ Name.

*As we meet for the first time, in the present; it becomes evident that we have already met and, yet still have to meet*

## CHAPTER ONE

### IN A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE IS PARTNERSHIP POSSIBLE?

#### Our paradigms shape the questions

How can we be partners? “Is genuine partnership really possible between churches of unequal strength, resources and historical background?” James Scherer asked this question in his book *Gospel, Church and Kingdom* (1987:33).

This chapter looks at how partnership has been defined in some of the historical and missiological literature. While the need for and the importance of connectedness, interdependence and mutuality is stressed throughout the literature at the same time there is often an apparent unwillingness or seeming inability to acknowledge the enduring asymmetry, ambiguity and complexity of relationships. This study will argue that while partnership discourse goes to great lengths to initiate and sustain a meeting of equals it has been unable to step out of the “western” binary hierarchy within which it operates. As A. F. Walls (1996:149) puts it, “We hold onto our old maps too long long after new discoveries.

The historical perspective that this study takes is based on the view expressed by Bosch and others that modern mission is, a child of the enlightenment,” which was itself, “a child of Christianity,” as well as being the product of various other earlier historical paradigms (Bosch 1991:274,344). Following Hans Küng, Bosch (1991:181) described six epochs in the history of Christianity in his book *Transforming Mission* as follows:

1. The apocalyptic paradigm of primitive Christianity.
2. The Hellenistic paradigm of the patristic period.
3. The medieval Roman Catholic paradigm.
4. The Protestant (Reformation) paradigm.
5. The modern Enlightenment paradigm.
6. The emerging [postmodern] Ecumenical paradigm.

As “children of the Enlightenment,” the “western” understanding of reality has been based on what is called the “Cartesian dichotomy.” Bosch (1991:264-267) outlined seven elements of the Enlightenment paradigm:

- 1.) The priority and autonomy of reason .
- 2.) The subject-object scheme which focused on the parts rather than the whole.



- 3.) The elimination of purpose, assuming mechanistic, deterministic laws of cause and effect.
- 4.) The belief in progress and the ideal of modernization and technical solutions.
- 5.) The view that scientific knowledge was factual, value-free and neutral.
- 6.) The belief that all problems were in principle solvable.
- 7.) The belief in the freedom, priority, equality and autonomy of the individual.

This study is in agreement with Bosch (1991:312 ) and others that the modern missionary movement is linked to the economic rise and domination of large parts of the world by the West, and supports the realization of how “context bound” our models of church and mission were and are. As W. Bühlmann (1979:72) has put it, “We all were and we remain always children of our time.” Schreier (1976:xiv) also notes how mission trends are shaped by the relationships between context (the where), models (the how), people (the who) and goals (the whither) .

More recently, Schreier (1992:52-53) has outlined seven common ways of perceiving the other, which may often occur in various combinations : “To demonize, romanticize, colonize, generalize, trivialize, homogenize and vaporize the other.” In a similar way Theo Sundermeier (1996:73-75) describes three common but problematic models of encountering the other which variously stress similarity, difference or complementarity.

Charles Kraft (1979:29) writes, “The fact that as human beings we see reality *not as it is but always from inside our heads* in terms of such models means that ‘no direct comparison of model and world is possible’” (Barbour in Kraft: 29 - italics in original). We cannot, therefore, take our models (or our paradigms and world view) literally or absolutely. We must, however, take them seriously.”

This study makes extensive use of quotations in order to hear and compare the various vocabularies and perspectives or “grids” that have been used in the past and present in mission and partnership discourse and struggles with the question of how we can be more aware of underlying paradigms as we look, as Newbigin put it, “through, not at our lenses” (1989:38).

In this chapter a variety of views is presented with regard to partnership ranging from that of incommensurability to one of equality, “where difference doesn’t matter anymore.” (Quote by Dr. Johnette Cole, Spelman College s.a.) This and the following chapter of this study will relate how, no matter what is done or said, relationships have been and remain complex and ambiguous, and always, as Volf (1996:145) puts it, “fluid” and “non-symmetrical.”

For example, an ELCSA document on partnership prepared for a consultation of ELCSA Partners (EPs) in Berlin May 29-31, 1978, speaks of the “birth” of the idea of partnership and the “initiation” of this model of cooperation and brotherhood (*sic*) by churches in Germany as,

An ideal model of brotherhood (*sic*) in Christ through which new avenues of thinking and exchanging of ideas could be explored and realized in terms of church interrelations beyond racial, geographical and cultural boundaries (:1).

The introduction continues:

This new model of brotherhood was aimed at wiping out the old paternalistic attitude ... to regard the church in Africa, Asia and the Far East as grownups and therefore regard them also as their partners and equals (:1).

The introduction concludes optimistically saying,

With this in mind, a healthy relationship of sharing spiritual as well as material wealth can take place (ELCSA CC 1978:1 - my emphasis).

Another example which assumes direct contact is seen in the subtitle to a handbook on partnership edited by Klaus Wilken and entitled *Chancen und Grenzen von Partnerschaftsprogrammen*, published in 1986 by the Kirchlichen Entwicklungsdienst, viz. “Direktkontakte mit Partnern in der Dritten Welt.” (My emphasis.)

By contrast Anthony Pagden, in his study *European Encounters with the New World* (1993), looks at relationships and sees no possibility of direct connection and rightly says, “ ‘... the problem of the other’ is clearly a problem about relationships. ... The trouble - and it is the problem that faces any attempt at cultural understanding - was how to identify actual persons...” (:185). Pagden (:183) argues that since it is claimed that, “we ... do not merely respond to the inescapable presence of the other: we actually construct him or her there is no way to escape from the circle ... to an entirely unconstructed ‘other.’” For Pagden, the evidence points to, “...the ultimate inescapability of cultural incommensurability” (:187). As he puts it, “In a sense all failed and in a sense continue to fail. Modern ethnographic descriptions may seem ... more complex and more persuasive than their 18th century predecessors ... we have a different set of concerns, a different ‘grid’ through which we read the evidence but [a grid] is still as powerfully present as it was two hundred years ago” 186).

Sponheim (1993:25) begins by asking the question, “who are we human beings and how can we live faithfully and fruitfully on this globe we co-inhabit?” Sponheim (:27) replies cautiously, “Whatever else we may be, we are spatiotemporal beings ... We are beings in relationship. We live on boundaries.” At the boundary, Sponheim senses difference and connectedness as well, saying,

“If we dig beneath the boundaries of life we find relationships” (:25). Sponheim continues by saying, “At the base, from the beginning, to be human is to be with one who is other” (:53). Sponheim is speaking here of life in three senses: within the other (cosmology), with the other (sociology) and “before” the other (theology). Following Sponheim this study examines some of the ways in which mission relationships have been perceived and defined among Lutherans in Southern Africa.

This study proposes that to speak of “Mission as mismeeting in Jesus’ name” can be a way of remaining attentive to the ambiguity and complexity of mission relationships as an ongoing and risky process full of differences, connections, endings, beginnings, failures and future possibilities.

As Sponheim (1991:71) puts it, “We do live from the past, in the present toward the future, together, ... the self must not deny itself or its history ... something ‘new’ is ‘always already’ possible for the self through the other.” For Sponheim every meeting must be “live,” so that there is some sense in which every time is the first time (Sponheim 1998). This study seeks to become more aware of this as we listen to the voices and stories of various partners as well as some voices of those who were not heard, were forgotten or silent in the past.

Sponheim speaks of the gift and task of the other: “To recognize others is important but it is insufficient ... it is life with others ... it is life on boundaries but these boundaries also mark relationships that come together to constitute our being ... .” Sponheim makes it clear that for Christian faith the call is to become other *for, with and through* the other. Chapter one and two of this study will show how difficult this can be. In my view the call to live *through* the other is the most difficult of all.

Global shifts and struggles in economics and ideology are bringing new challenges and opportunities to present and future relationships in mission. Writing with the complex and violent Bosnian and Rwandan conflicts in mind, which were fueled in part by a desire for a world “without the other,” Miroslav Volf, in his book *Exclusion and Embrace* (1996:145-147), has outlined four features identifiable in what he calls a “successful embrace.” These are:

1. The fluidity of identities.
2. The nonsymmetry of the relationship.
3. The underdetermination of the outcome.
4. The risk of embrace.

As Volf (:145) puts it, "As individuals and communities we live in overlapping social territories." Volf presents two extremely important observations : "Nobody stands no where" and "Most of us stand in more than one place" (:207). Volf argues that, "Christians do stand somewhere ... in the world of the biblical traditions and the world of their own culture" (:208). Volf looks at the grand vision of the Pentecost community in Acts and the reality of disputes, injustice and failures but also the stories of small steps made in learning to live together through the practice of "double vision" and "embrace" (:230-231).

The following sections touch on some of the "baggage" we carry with us consciously and unconsciously every time we meet. The slates are not clean but full of memories, experiences, agendas, traditions, hopes and visions. This baggage includes perspectives on faith and mission, and the issues of culture, power and identity evident in Africa, Europe and America.

### **The "discovering" of Partnership : Gleanings from missiological literature**

While some kind of cooperation and mutual assistance have always been part of human relations the concept of partnership in mission and of equal partners is a relatively recent concept.

*Partnership in Mission: The historical development of a concept* is the title of the first chapter in the book *"Miteinander leben lernen"* by Lothar Bauerochse published in 1996 and based on his doctoral dissertation completed in 1995.

While it is not necessary to repeat what he has ably stated, it is helpful to summarize the outline he has provided. Bauerochse reminds us of the dilemma the early pietistic "church-less" mission societies inevitably found themselves facing, that of establishing and managing churches.

While the conversion of individuals was their primary aim ("winning souls for the Lamb") the growth of local churches had consequences which Henry Venn and Rufus Anderson sought to address in the latter part of the 19th century with the well known "Three-Self's" formula (Bauerochse 1996:32-33).

Bauerochse describes the major ecumenical missionary conferences starting with Edinburgh in 1910 with the dawning of what he terms the "Discovery of Partners." Up until that time the idea of cooperation or partnership was rare for most mission societies. Comity agreements were the

norm. The International Missionary Conferences (IMC) in Jerusalem (1928) and Tambaram/Madras (1938) are noted for recognizing the existence and validity of younger churches. "Two-way traffic" was still a new idea.

The concept of older and younger churches being partners in mission was firmly established at Whitby (1947) with the statement, "Partners in Obedience." (The slogan coined by some critics was "Pay and Pray"). Stephen Neill's subsequent book *Christian Partnership* (1952) and Max Warren's *Partnership* (1955), discussed at length in Baurochse (1996:75-84), are further evidence of the intense interest in developing partnerships in mission.

The definition of partnership was taken further with the broadening horizon of mission as expressed by the concept of "missio Dei" at Willingen (1952) and Achimota (1958) when the IMC tried to move beyond mere slogans of partnership to outline actual methods of reciprocal living and working together in obedience to Christ, renouncing terms such as "sending" and "receiving," and "older" and "younger" churches (Scherer 1987:99).

At New Delhi in 1961 the International Missionary Council (IMC) and the World Council of Churches were integrated into one body (Bosch 1991:370). The Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) met in Mexico City (1963) where the famous declaration was made that the missionary movement involved Christians in all six continents. At the same time the slogan "Missionary Go Home" was being heard around the globe.

The threat to partnership posed by the widening gap between the poor South and rich North is reflected at Bangkok (1973) and Melbourne (1981). Here the voices of the "2/3rds world" spoke to the unresolved dilemma of how to structure partnership between the powerful and powerless without compromising the integrity or identity of either. In the end they could only plead for more equitable power sharing and restructuring of relationships (Scherer 1987:124). The concept of *koinonia* (the ecumenical sharing of resources) as a necessary component of partnership was stressed at El Escorial (1986), San Antonio (1989) and Canberra (1991).<sup>1</sup>

A short and limited survey of selected missiological literature during the second half of this century reveals for this study similar developments regarding the themes and problems of mission relationships and partnership.

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<sup>1</sup> See Baurochse's thorough treatment of the IMC conferences in his book 1996:134-155

J. Merle Davis published his book, *New Buildings on Old Foundations: A Handbook on Stabilizing the Younger Churches in Their Environment*, in 1947, just after WW II ended. He drew on the insights of the “new” anthropology stressing the need for the missionary to understand the [other] people’s culture, values and environment in which they were rooted (1947:50).

He rightly pointed out that after 150 years of mission work only about 15% of churches were self-supporting and that this was more by default than by design, e.g. Korea, Burma and the Batak church (:150-165). He looked at obstacles and resources for self-support and gave suggestions for the development of a comprehensive parish programme similar to the “Nevius Plan” in Korea in the 1890s. While he affirmed that, “Each culture possesses its own peculiar store of powers and resources, Davis still looked at the younger churches with a western bias and maintained an optimistic belief in progress and development through training and management skills (:118). While he perceptively pointed out that the church was a social/cultural institution and that, “the Great Society could not be built without spiritual transformation in the hearts of individual men,” in his view lack of knowledge was, “the main obstacle to the majestic task of rationalizing, purifying and reconstructing a disintegrating, native world” (:42). Obviously Davis was ahead of many at the time but still there was no doubt for him about the superiority of western knowledge .

*Partnership: The Study of An Idea*, by Max Warren, was published in 1956 and begins with the striking sentence, “Partnership is an idea whose time has not yet fully come ... [but] ... the birth-pains have begun” (:11). For Warren, partnership is constituted by three factors: genuine involvement or commitment, the acceptance of responsibility and a readiness to accept all the liabilities and limitations which arise” (:12-13). Warren went on to say that, “The essence of partnership is that it is a [dynamic, living] relationship entered upon in freedom by free persons who remain free” (:13). However due to the asymmetry of relationships and the persistence of Sin in all people and relationships this study does not agree that such freedom can be maintained.

Warren’s theology of partnership has a trinitarian basis and includes the understanding that partnership, “ is “congenial to the very nature of God, ... God’s relationship with man and,... indicates the true relationship between man and his fellow-men” (:35). For Warren, the Christian Church is intended to be “an adventure in partnership.” Importantly he stressed the point that in this kind of partnership differences are not ironed out nor is individuality lost. Warren applied the concept of partnership to “The Christian Mission” and “the Multi-Racial Society.” He dealt at length with the problem of racism, especially in Africa, and the weakness of the church’s response. Warren gently prodded the church to be partners in Christ and through this “communion” to

endeavor to create as Paul did, a new relationship between people who are estranged by class and race (:125).

Warren's stated respect for differences and concern for the problem of and response to racism must be noted for its maturity.

In 1964 Peter Beyerhaus and Henry Lefever published, *The Responsible Church and the Foreign Mission*, in response to what they perceived as the liberal, secular and radical push for greater independence by churches and countries around the world. While they agreed that a "good deal of penitence for paternalism" was required, they were adamant that the aim of missions was not independence (self-rule) but Christ's rule (:111), the re-discovery of the priesthood of all believers and the acknowledgment of the responsibility of the local church for missionary outreach (:154). In a chapter entitled, *Daughter and Parent Church*, the authors rejected any withdrawal of missionaries (the word moratorium had not entered the vocabulary) and stressed (in my opinion rather arrogantly- in light of the paternalistic and colonial past) that the missionary is called to be obedient not to the young church but to Christ (:173). They believed the Whitby watchword, "Partnership in Obedience" ... gave the young Church the chance to restrict, and even to obstruct, the obedient 'older Church' in following its own call to Mission (:168).

In their conclusion the two authors agreed with Stephen Neill's statement that, "We have been guilty of creating the 'myth of the younger churches'" (:185). They went on to say that "two-way traffic" in missionaries was not a sufficient mark of maturity. "Responsible partnership must include the right to contract out of the association..." (:188).

While the point was clearly made by the two authors that mission is the responsibility of the whole church and every church, I have always been troubled by what seems to me to be a condescending and arrogant tone in this book which in my view brings into question the integrity and maturity of the writers who wished to speak with authority as part of the older, "responsible" churches. They do not sufficiently see themselves as part of the problem and always learners with respect to mission and partnership.

This reflects what Schreier (1991:xvi) calls the long held assumption that the people in the South could not evangelize themselves but needed outside help as well as the assumption that "the North would somehow re-evangelize themselves.

Two other books were published in the same year as Beyerhaus' and Lefever's book. James Scherer wrote *Missionary, Go Home!* (1964) and Ralph Dodge, *The Unpopular Missionary* (1964).

Scherer made a serious and careful attempt to respond to the issues arising from the ending of colonialist rule and the increasing calls for independence around the world. He wrote,

The younger churches cannot be blamed if they accuse western missions of prejudicing their future by saddling them with the institutional baggage of western Christianity (:101). ... Even the revered 'three-self formula' may prove to be a Trojan horse - doing more to extend the institutional pattern of Western Christendom ... than it ever did to promote real indigenization (:100). ... Western Christianity, having itself forgotten what a true church in the Biblical sense was, hardly qualified as the teacher of younger churches. It could not teach its child something that it did not know itself. This is another case of the children being condemned to pay for the sins of the parents (:102). ... Yet the younger churches are by no means only passive inheritors of a fading missionary tradition (:100) ... They are learning things on their own - under the Spirit's guidance - that their parents could not teach them. In some important areas ... they were also in a position to teach the parents something (:102).

In contrast to Beyerhaus' fears about the younger churches as stated above, it was quite a "revolutionary" thing to say, as Scherer (:123) did that, "Now the parent must learn from the child."

But dialogue was hampered or impossible when so often the "parent" refused to take the "child" seriously or expected a regurgitating of what the parent had already taught the child. Father Matembela (in Bühlmann 1979:49) spoke of the African church as "... not yet being a local church but merely a faded copy of the European church."

That was over 30 years ago. Have we learned and confessed and listened sufficiently? I think not. While the old colonial regimes have fallen, neo-colonial systems of wealth and power at local and international level continue to bring challenges to the churches which now see themselves as global partner-churches.

Dodge, a Methodist Bishop, for his part tried to give an honest and balanced picture of Christian missions in Africa from his own admittedly "European" perspective. He accepted the criticisms that the church, perpetuates colonialism, practices segregation, supports imperfect missionaries, preaches a limited Gospel, destroys culture, condones hypocrisy and encourages division." At the same time the church, "presents Jesus Christ, starts a revolution, helps educate a continent, encourages abundant living, builds bridges of understanding, and stands on principles" (:11). Dodge gave an outline of an "appropriate response." The Church must: "train



for responsibility, relinquish the reins, share the burden, conserve cultural values, proclaim the Gospel, strive for reconciliation and unite to witness” (:12). Dodge (:167) concluded his book with a call for “real commitment” but, in the view of this study, underestimated the ambiguity of the way forward by making yet another list or recipe for action without sufficiently analyzing the mind-set of those making and using the recipes.

James A. Bergquist and P. Kamar Manickam cooperated to publish a small book in 1974 entitled, *The Crisis of Dependency in Third World Ministries: A critique of inherited missionary forms in India*. While they did not use the term “partnership,” their concern about the ongoing uncritical acceptance of and dependence on inherited structures and practices irrespective of differing contexts is directly related to the problem of relationships.

However this study wishes to emphasize that this is nothing new in the history of the church. We all carry with us the inherited baggage of the past. In the 1990’s we are hopefully much more aware that **not** only the “Third World,” but also the “First World” is enmeshed in and “dependent on” inherited missionary frameworks or paradigms.

Johannes Verkuyl’s comprehensive book, *Contemporary Missiology: An introduction*, was first published in 1975. Chapters Six and Seven of his book examine the various motives and goals of mission. While this is an important exercise this study takes the view that our motives are always mixed and not simply “pure” or “impure,” as Verkuyl (:163-174) implied in his book.

In Chapter 12, entitled, *The Vision of Missions in All Six Continents and the Summons to Mutual Assistance among the Churches*, Verkuyl underlined the need for a new relationship between churches. He (:311) saw the impact of the young churches finally coming through at the Mexico City Conference in 1963 with the “mission in six-continents” concept and the slogan used by Newbigin, “The homebase is everywhere.” Verkuyl (:313) reported on the gradual reforming of paternalistic relations towards bilateral and multilateral relationships. He repeated the criticism by some ecumenical bodies that “confessional families” in many ways block efforts to express interdependence” (:314). Verkuyl looked at patterns of personnel and administrative assistance as well as various exchanges. He gave considerable attention to the “touchy” subjective of financial assistance and quoted Dr. Philip Potter of the WCC who boldly stated that,

There is something demonic about a powerful rich sending agency negotiating with poor people and poor agencies. How can there be real ‘partnership’ between poor and rich?

Partnership was a nice word which we fell into the habit of using, but now we have become afraid of using it because we know what it all came down to in practice (Potter in Verkuyl :320).

Verkuyl (:321) noted that, “In some instances foreign missionaries were earning six and even ten times as much as their native colleagues.” That was and still is the case today! (More about the salary issue in chapter two of this study, page 96ff.) Verkuyl gave some criteria for consideration regarding the financial and salary issue but agreed that not just stewardship programs but global change was ultimately needed. He reminded the West, “that we must keep the question of financial assistance to young churches on our agenda as long as world prosperity has not reached an acceptable level.” Verkuyl (:322) stated his belief that, “In the meantime these churches have a complete right to appeal for help ... as an undeniable implication of the biblical idea of the interdependence of churches.

In 1977 Jansen Schoonhoven of the Hendrick Kraemer Institute (HKI) in Leiden edited the results of a six year study on partnership in a book entitled, *Wederkerige Assistentie van Kerken in Missionair Perspectief (WAvK)*.

The report concluded with twelve statements which were not given as final solutions but for “clarity” (:172). These are summarized as follows:

1. In the problems of WAvK the dialectic between local and universal church is played out.
2. WAvK does not only have relevance for relations between North and South but also between churches in the same area. (North-North and South-South).
3. WAvK moves us to the basic questions. What is church? What is human? What is the Gospel?
4. WAvK asks for one ecclesial-mission understanding and one missionary-church understanding.
5. WAvK must be understood as a dynamic process, a continual struggle to move from church-centered to being Christ-centered.
6. Assistance belongs to the Confession of the Gospel. If one member suffers, all suffer... (1 Cor.12:26)
7. Mutuality is the crucial point. How can giver/receiver mentalities be overcome?
8. WAvK is problematic for three reasons including the historical imbalance of power in church and world.
9. WAvK is paradoxically both obstacle and evangelical power.
10. WAvK calls for radical changes in mentality and structures.
11. WAvK can give new meaning and direction to missionaries. [While missionaries can be seen as a sign of the presence of the universal character of the church this study sees this presence also as a sign of dependence and imperialism - PJK.]
12. WAvK asks the question of the missionary character of the local congregation and its structures. (My translation.)

The writers discovered that “WAvK” (mutual assistance) was experienced as a much bigger problem by the “younger” churches and the missionaries than by the churches in the West (:170).

In the report, Verstraelen ( 130) spoke of the irritation of some Africans of the “neo-colonial enrichment” of the Northern partners through trips and studies, with little heard afterwards by those in the South.

It was also found that while the concept of WAvK was supported by all as a valuable concept, structural inequality (imbalances of power and resources), blocked the realization of the ideal of mutual partnership and exchange (:171). But the reporters boldly supported the paradoxical formulation that while WAvK may seem to be a “structural impossibility” in the present situation, it is also a vision, an evangelical hope with transforming power (:187 ).

In an interview with Professor A. Van Burg of the Hendrik Kraemer Instituut in Leiden (10 February 1997), twenty years after the WAvK report, it was clear that the same problems continue in Reformed church relations.

For example, Gert de Jong did an evaluation in 1994 of a two-year exchange programme between Reformed churches in Dordrecht in the Netherlands and in Rwanda. The title of the report is intriguing: *“Het zelfde of het andere?”* - (The same or different?). The report found little consensus and lack of clarity about the specific goals and benefits of reciprocity even though most who responded to the questionnaire were supportive of the programme (:69).

He concluded, “Maybe we see only in part. **We see what we know already.**” (Kampen/Leusden 1994, ZWD 94/1994). (My translation and my emphasis.)

The HKI material on partnership shows an in-depth and interdisciplinary analysis. Very importantly the study pointed out that if one takes WAvK seriously it moves one to ask the most basic questions: What is human, what is church, what is mission? (cf. Point 3 above). However the WAvK study may have been too optimistic when it asserted that the most important contribution the younger churches can give to Christianity is that of “ont-ideologiseren” (:177). That the younger, poorer, colonized or indigenously instituted churches have the key to “de-ideologize” Christianity is not as easily said now as it was in the 1970s. That each voice must be heard in the conversation is however no longer in doubt.

In line with this, Lesslie Newbigin (1994:186) wrote, “Globalization of human society has naturally and properly led away from a one-directional model of mission to a model that emphasizes sharing, listening, dialogue ... yet there is the danger ... that all this interchange and dialogue takes place in one of the languages of Europe. ... The most difficult and important missionary frontier is not crossed. [i.e. the challenge to modernity - PJK.] There is the great danger that the [modern]

assumptions that underlie the use of these European languages are not questioned and its unique power to erode and neutralize the Christian faith.”

James B. Vigen submitted a Master’s Thesis to the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago entitled “Partnership in Mission: A Missiological Concept” in 1978. He explored various possible biblical bases for mission and partnership in the Old and New Testaments and emphasized the Eucharist as a model for partnership in life and mission.<sup>2</sup> He also looked at partnership as a concept in missiology and asked the question, “Is partnership really possible?” (:36) He quoted extensively from the writing of Paulo Freire who pointed out that both oppressed and oppressor are caught in a web partly woven by themselves (:35 - my emphasis).

Vigen included a case study of the Lutheran Church in the Malagasy Republic, where Lutheran mission work began after a visit by Hans Paludin Schreuder in 1867 (cf. Board of Foreign Missions Year Book 1943-1944:81). Vigen believes that, “If we are to be partners we must find a way to join in the struggle,” which for Vigen includes having to make constant choices in ambiguous situations (:70). Vigen concluded by saying that “perfect partnerships will only exist in the coming Kingdom of God,” but the “... struggle continues with God as primary Partner with all people everywhere” (:76). The point Vigen makes about the ambiguity and enduring imperfection of all partners and partnerships is one that this study endorses as well as the belief in the continuing involvement of God as “Primary Partner.”

The World Evangelical Fellowship (WEF) Missions Commission organized a conference with 95 participants from 35 countries in Manila in June, 1992 with the theme, “Towards Interdependent Partnerships.” The results of the conference were published in a book entitled, *Kingdom Partnerships for Synergy in Missions* in 1994, where “synergy” is defined as occurring when, “the output is greater than the sum of the inputs” (:6).

As a main speaker at the conference Patrick Sookhdeo presented the following views under the heading, *Cultural Issues in Partnership in Mission*:

I want to argue that we must go beyond dwelling on previous mistakes and the guilt of the past. ... We should seek an alternative to a Marxist dialectic in our interpretation of the world and, in particular remove the conflict element. Our conflict should never be with each other. The only conflict should be between biblical absolutes that exist in permanent conflict with the world, the flesh and the devil. ... We need to rediscover biblical values which we all share, which transcend culture, which affirm culture, and which judge culture. We need to rediscover our biblical identity as the children of God over against our cultural affinities. .... We need to consider biblical koinonia - partnership - and the principles that

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<sup>2</sup> Vigen’s Eucharistic model of partnership is very much in line with the Lutheran shift from partnership to communion as discussed further in chapter three of this study.

determine our working relationships, and then go on to consider other obstacles to misunderstanding and how they can be removed (:50).

The view of Sookhdeo that conflict should not occur between partners, that misunderstanding, dialectical and conflict elements should be removed from the analysis is a denial of difference within and between interlocutors. The response of Paul McKaughan to Sookhdeo did take up this point to a limited degree.

In his response, McKaughan, writing as a North American delegate to the conference, affirmed Sookhdeo's "biblical basis of partnership through baptism into the one Body of Christ" (:69). He went on to say that, "productive Christian partnerships are not natural" as opposed to the usual use of partnerships for personal gain (:70).

It is the view of this study that he is correct to differ with Sookhdeo by arguing that, "cultural differences must not be eliminated but brought to the fore, so that assumptions can be examined. ... It is in the diversity of the body of Christ that we have its unique giftedness. ... We do see things differently ... This is part of our divine corporate and individual giftedness, not a mere result of our sinful natures" (:72-73).

McKaughan quotes a "wise man" who said, "We did not have 'personality conflicts' [but] conflicts of 'unmet expectations'" (:74). He goes on to say that, "In international partnership, these agendas or expectations are rarely articulated by either partner And when expectations are not met there is a tremendous sense of betrayal [and] bitterness" (:74). We need to recognize and verbalize our expectations, "in such a way that will enable us to harmonize our differences and create common expectations" (:74 - my emphasis). But in the view of this study the problem and solution to partnership is not just a matter of better communication, as McKaughan seems to think.

McKaughan is not clear on the subject of "harmonization" and contradicts himself on the following page of his article saying, "So in partnership we do not strive for a homogenized 'Christian' culture, but rather we strive to allow the Holy Spirit to express Himself through the diversity of our cultures ..." (:75 - my emphasis). He outlines five areas which require agreement although he admits that the answers to these, "being culturally conditioned," will not be easy.

1. Appropriate leadership
2. Purpose of the Partnership
3. Agreed-upon process
4. Division of Labour
5. Relational Style

McKaughan hastens to add a “note of reality” by saying that, “... it is not partnership which will bring about the evangelization of the world and discipling of the nations, but rather it is a sovereign act of God’s grace ...We could form all kinds of partnerships, vertically and horizontally integrated, and still have little more than complex structures costing ever-increasing amounts of money. and time” (:86).

In this book there is a chapter on *Control in Church/Missions Relationship and Partnership* by Jun Vencer who advocates developing shared vision, values and plans (:110). Another chapter, *Confidence Factors: Accountability in Christian Partnerships* by Alexandre Araujo makes the point that trust, flexibility and open communication rather than control make for effective partnerships (:121).

The conclusion, by the editor, William D. Taylor, ends with the sentence, “Just do it! Obviously not without consensus, prayer, preparation and counting the cost May God give us the grace to move ahead as we should. Just do it!” (:242).

In the view of this study these concluding words are unfortunate and though obviously intended to inspire the reader, contradict some valid points made in the book. The slogan “*Just do it*” has been popularized by the *NIKE* brand of sports equipment; a company which like many other transnational corporations has been accused of exploitative practices around the world. While the enthusiasm for mission and partnerships is clear throughout this book the lack of consistency and many contradictions reveal just how ambiguous the concepts and practices of partnership are and remain.

Theo Sundermeier remarked in his book, “*Aus einer Quelle schöpfen wir : Von Afrikanern lernen,*” published in 1992, that “partnership” had become a kind of slogan in the world and that it was not without its critics. Here he mentions Buthelezi by name. (See chapter three of this study for Buthelezi’s views on partnership, page 171.)

According to Sundermeier the meaning of the term partnership is typically defined to include equal status, rights, and obligations as well as commonly held goals. Quite correctly, as he pointed out, when one looks [for example] at rich churches in Germany and churches in Africa and Asia we are speaking of partnership between “unequal partners” (:117). There is no easy route or short cut to

direct communication according to Sundermeier. Partnership is a “long term concept” of which the final goal is “friendship

Sundermeier’s *“The Ten Commandments of Partnership”* (1992 :113-132) include the following points:

1. God is the Liberator who makes us free for Life and for Partnership. Partnership lives out of the [Biblical] liberation story where God in Christ is the originator, centre and goal ...
2. Often we create partners in our own image. Partnership does change people but not at the expense of their [God given] identity. We meet as strangers (fremdes) (:122).
3. The third commandment calls us to speak the truth and respect different ways of communicating meaning...
4. The Sabbath is a day given and blessed for common and communal celebration and solidarity...
5. Honour father and mother speaks of mutual respect ...
6. Help each other to live speaks of mutual help without dependence ...
7. Be true to each other speaks of the life-long relationship of trust that is required.
9. Speak good of each other includes respecting the otherness of the other as gift and the need for mutual conversion ...
- 8 & 10. You shall not covet relates to the fact that partnership and life is a gift not our possession. We all come with empty hands, not as those who know already what the other needs. By learning from each other about our deficits and gifts we can all share with each other. ... (My translation.)

Sundermeier is correct in saying that partnership is a gift but this study asks if we come with “empty” hands? (cf. Paragraph 8 & 10 above). Is one of the problems not that we come with our hands already full of baggage? Blind maybe, but not with empty hands. Is partnership possible? Can one speak of progress if the blind lead the blind and if so how and who shall provide the verdict as to direction and destination? (See the discussion on “accompaniment” in chapter two of this study, page 194

In the conclusion to his book, Bauerochse made it clear that he does not reject the concept of partnership but argued that the learning possibilities that partnership presents are not being adequately used in the participating congregations and churches (1996:400-402). His main criticisms are that structurally, partnership still maintains a one-way, north-south bias, with little expected by those in the north from the partners in the south. There is no clear goal, the focus on financial assistance and projects continues dependency, the superficial expression of friendship *“Heute sind wir Partner”* (Today we are partners) (:412) hinders the understanding of the Other as Other. Ultimately the exercise has little impact on the congregation/church as a whole since it is not specifically designed as a road to renewal of church and congregation. Bauerochse also observes that, while historically partnership was closely connected to the mission task, this

connection is now being lost. Neither the older vision of mission as evangelism, baptism and church planting or the more recent participation in the “*missio Dei*” feature much in the work of partnership groups where “meeting not mission” is the main concern (:288).

Twenty years earlier Walbert Bühlmann in his book, *The Missions on Trial* (1979) stated that he did not intend to excuse the mistakes made in the past but also made the point that one, “...cannot blame the church that Vatican II did not happen until the early 1960’s and that [for example] penicillin was not discovered earlier” (:72). He included the following statement: “This much, however is beyond dispute: Africa would not be where it is at the present time were it not for the educational work of the Christian missions” (:86). He concluded his case “inconclusively” by having his “council of elders” resolve, “to postpone judgment on the missions indefinitely,”... with the statement that, “In the year 2000 one will be able to state with greater authority than we can at present what the missions were and are and whether the missions should determine what Africa will look like in the future” (:158).

One observer of mission at the turn of the millennium, Jon Bonk (in Bediako 1995:146), has responded to the way power and money have functioned in western churches and missions during this century by saying that, “The affluence-based mission of the western Church may prove to be a much less vitally Christian spiritual force in the future.”

While the previous section has observed that partnership in mission is a relatively recent concept, perceptions of the self and the other, of differences and connections, have their complex roots further back in history as the next section will show.

### **Mission and the Invention or “Covering” of America**

Enrique Dussel in his book, *The Invention of the Americas: Eclipse of “the Other” and the Myth of Modernity* (1995), argues cogently that Columbus did not “discover” America!<sup>3</sup> It is a well known fact that Columbus died believing that the islands he saw were part of Asia. The people Columbus encountered were therefore categorized as “Indians.” As Dussel puts it

This Indian was not discovered as Other, but subsumed under categories of the Same ... and so denied as Other or *covered over*” (:32, italics in original). “The Other was not dis-covered but ... in fact covered over in its alterity (:36).

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<sup>3</sup>The phrase, “the invention of America,” Dussel (:32) points out, was first used by Edmundo O’Gorman in 1957.



Dussel describes the process of invention, discovery, conquest, colonization, spiritual colonization and encounter in the Americas which brought Europe from the periphery to the center of the modern world (:38-57). Dussel argues that, “the experience not only of discovery but especially of conquest, is essential to the constitution of the modern ego.” Dussel speaks of, “the Myth of Modernity which pretends to bring emancipation through reason but perpetuates a giant inversion by advocating violence as the means of including the Other in the communicative community” (:67).

Tsvetan Todorov also sees 1492 as the “beginning” of the modern era. He writes, “The entire history of the discovery of America ... is marked by this ambiguity: human alterity is at once revealed and rejected (1984:49-50). To illustrate this, Todorov describes the attitudes or perceptions in Columbus’, Las Casas’ and other Europeans’ encounter with the Indians. The one approach was to see the Indian as human like himself, as equal and identical, which resulted in assimilationism and the projection of his own values on the Other. The other approach was to see the Other as different and inferior [never superior], denying the existence of the other in his/her own right except as an imperfect state of oneself (:42).

Todorov (:191) is very critical of what he describes as the “ambiguity of Christian egalitarianism. Todorov (:168) asks, “Is there not already a violence in the conviction that one possesses the truth oneself ... and that one must impose that truth on ... others?” He (:168) argues that, “... precisely because [Las Casas] was a Christian his perception was poor.” Todorov poses the challenging question, “Can we really love someone if we know little of his identity, if we see a projection of our ideals?”

While the student of Western expansionism in history cannot avoid seeing the link between the ‘cross’ and the “sword” nor the valid criticisms leveled at the Christian missionary enterprise, the critique cannot stop there.<sup>4</sup> The point must be made that not only Christians’ but humans’ perception is poor, to put it mildly. No matter how long or short one’s view of history is, the astonishing point this study wishes to underline is (and here I agree with Todorov completely, 1984:247), that “the other remains to be discovered.” (Chapter four of this study argues that we have already met, and yet still have to meet.)

In his book *The Birth of Missions in America*, Charles L. Chaney sees the roots of American mission in pietistic and evangelical revivals of the mid-18th century which in turn have roots in the

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<sup>4</sup> cf. Goodpasture H. McKennie. (ed). 1989. *Cross and Sword: An Eyewitness History of Christianity in Latin America*. Maryknoll: Orbis.

Reformation and English Puritanism. He emphasizes that the dualistic wilderness and paradise motifs were central to their experience (1976:3). The theology of the Great Awakening emphasized the depravity of humanity, that is, “the wilderness within” (:115).

As De Kock (1993: 4) writes,

The notion of decolonizing knowledge ... relies on an inquiry into Western ways of objectifying and domesticating its Others and their worlds from a central point of humanist influence. i.e. Europe. It involves the recognition that language was employed ... as discourse to gain mastery over the worlds of Europe's Others. There needs to be both a history of experience and a history of the consciousness of experience ... but the history of meaning is prior to the history of experience (:5).

As Pagden (1993:5-6) puts it, “ the term ‘discovery’ derives from the Latin word to uncover, to reveal, to expose to the gaze what had an existence prior to and independent of the view. (We will see in chapter two of this study that Manas Buthelezi makes a case for the “rediscovery” of certain important elements if a new vision for mission in ELCSA is to be developed - Page 174ff.)

But if “we only see what we know” as stated above (page 12) how can we find or discover what is lost or hitherto unnoticed and even more significantly that which is new? As Pagden (1993:10) puts it,

“ ‘Discovery’ was only the first moment, what followed was the slow and painful process of assimilation, to transform the ‘new’ world into a likeness of the Old.”

Especially since the Bicentennial of the Declaration of Independence in the United States in 1976 and during the last decade with the focus on the quincentenary of the arrival of Columbus in the Americas, new voices have induced a marked shift in vocabulary and perspective from the patriotic descriptions of “The Discovery of America” or the “Discovery of Africa,” to that of the “Invention or conquest of America” (Todorov, Dussel) and the “Invention of Africa,” (Mudimbe, Appiah). Joseph Barndt (1991:61-63), in his book *Dismantling Racism: The Continuing Challenge to White America*, confronts the blatant and subtle “myths and lies” handed down from generation to generation by white Americans not only about people of colour but about “[them]selves.”

What the conqueror, explorer, missionary, settler, traveler encountered did not fit his language or frame of reference and had to be constantly reshaped /renamed/ translated to fit. Simon (in McLaren and Giroux 1994:137) puts it well,

In Europe prior to 1500 the ocean was a sign signifying the unknown as well as a physical barrier preventing knowledge. Crossing the barrier initiated a process of revelation - a revealing of a reality not immediately available in experience but requiring mediation through representation. This meant the telling of stories,... the display of artifacts (including people made objects) ... rendering what was not known into text and image - a practice always limited by existing epistemological frames.

Similarly, Sundermeier (1996) describes the ways the other -- "Den Fremden" has been encountered, seen, thought about and communicated with by Europeans through various ethnological, artistic, philosophical and communication theory perspectives.

The rush of North American settlers westward (from 1606-1820) spurred the churches to bring the Gospel to both Indians and immigrants, and to make or reshape the wilderness, into "the garden of God" (Chaney 1976:128). But, as R. Pierce Beaver (1977:276) observed, "...missionaries, as creatures of their own cultures and history were among the most destructive forces in the disintegration of Indian society."

As Palmer points out, the warfare with and destruction of the indigenous peoples of North America was based on the premise of scarcity, that there was not enough to go around (1981:103). By contrast Palmer explains, "Jesus inverted the problem of scarcity, toppling conventional wisdom with a spiritual paradox - the individual is incomplete (scarce) without others" (:40). In total contrast to the ideal of rugged frontier individualism the Gospel creates a "company of strangers" to use Palmer's term, because, "Alone there is abundant fear" (:100).

The period 1820-1920 is called the "Third Century of Protestant Mission in America." With the taming of the wilderness complete, the task was now not "offense" but "defense" and the "cultivation of the garden and the perfecting of paradise" (Chaney 1976:259).

America was seen as the new Israel. Full of confidence, the United States entered a new period in the 1920s which carried through to the 1970s. Now the mission field was "out there" in "foreign" lands. The churches enthusiastically joined the great crusade to make the world free for democracy and to build the new "City of God" (:298).

All Lutherans came to North America in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries in much the same way, writes E. Clifford Nelson, in his book *The Lutherans in America* (1980:39). They were both "emigrants and immigrants." In the words of Todd W. Nichol, in his book, *Church Roots*

(1985:164), “They are people who decide to leave home. They must decide what to take and what to leave.

The decision of what to take and what to leave is an extremely important question not only for settlers but for partners, long-term coworkers and visitors. What kind of mental and material baggage is taken or left and why?

Most Lutherans in North America were of German or Scandinavian descent. Early settlers and later arrivals for all their differences shared a common hope of building a new and better life for themselves in America (Nelson 1980:147).

In Nichol’s words,

[The Lutheran immigrants from Norway ] sized up America rather quickly and astutely. Rather than attempting to recreate the Church of Norway on American soil ... they followed a pattern borrowed from their American neighbours. In Norway you had two choices: the established church or dissent. In America you could multiply churches from one extreme to the other and then choose” (:169). Being white and Protestant they were, in the end, “Good Americanizers” (:166).

While this is true it must be noted that this process was much slower and difficult for Scandinavian and German Lutherans in the Midwest compared to Americans of English descent. In 1920 60% of all sermons were still in German, Swedish and Norwegian in many Lutheran synods. But by the 1930s English had taken over almost completely (Nelson 1980:422).

Nelson gives a detailed and nuanced account of Lutherans in the United States, their reasons for emigrating and the struggles induced by language, doctrine and geography.

As Nelson points out, on the whole, a largely rural Lutheranism was content with its inherited theology and its traditional view of the proper relationship between itself, society and other churches (:381). Preoccupation with internal issues limited interest in foreign mission prior to 1900 (:369).

The two world wars brought different rural and urban American communities, , into closer contact and widened horizons. “Victory” in the war and economic growth fueled the sense of confidence among the growing middle class. And yet there were deep divisions and destructive controversies.

By the 1960s, according to Nelson, Lutherans faced an identity crisis similar to that in the early 19th century as growth tapered off and Lutherans were at loss as to what their unique role and

future was to be (:515). “Lutheranism was in danger of becoming what its theology did not allow, a culture-religion” (:526). Scherer commented (in Nelson:538), “It is an unpleasant but undeniable fact that Lutheran identity today consists mostly of the cultivation of Lutheran adiaphora... .”

As Stephen C. Knapp put it (in Beaver 1977:152) in *American Missions in Bicentennial Perspective*, “The missionary movement has been part of the whole ‘project’ of modernization. We are not as free from confusing Christianization and civilization as we think we are” (:157). Speaking of the traditional distinction between mission and evangelism as emphasized already by Gustav Warneck, Shenk (in Hunsberger 1996:76), points out that this was based on, “the assumption that the church knows its own culture profoundly.”

In the 1960s modern sociology was seen as a boon to enlightened missiology. James Scherer (1964:144 ), reflected this notion when he wrote, “The handmaiden of mission is not the explorer’s telescope but the sociologist’s microscope.”

Professor Guy Butler of Rhodes University stated in a radio interview that, “ to be Eurocentric or Afrocentric is equally problematic.” He made the point that all cultures are “multicultures” which “borrow and steal shamelessly from each other other.” It is Butler’s contention that “your country is where your consciousness was born, far more than a geographical location” (SAfm 24.3.97). McLaren and Giroux (1994:37) in *Between Borders* observe similarly that, “We are now witnessing in the US the emergence of a new racism and politics of cultural difference. ... As American life becomes more hybridized the distinctions between ‘original and alien cultures’ have become more difficult to maintain theoretically and politically.”

Similarly as Walls (in Carpenter and Schenk 1990:8) put it, “American missions are thus both products and purveyors of American culture. Americans have displayed a curious political naiveté, not recognizing the political implications of their presence.” William Hutchison, in *Errand to the World* (1987:29), points out that, “Virtually all mission work suffered from cultural arrogance .. and yet differences in awareness could be astonishing. ”

Rufus Anderson’s campaign to reverse the civilizing emphasis in missions, to “plant and let go,” sounds “modern” but according to Hutchison (1987:86) stemmed more from a desire to streamline functions than from cultural sensitivity: Hutchison observed that, “In Hawaii handing over control did not promote autonomy but actually perpetuated subordination.” In certain respects this can be said about ELCSA as well, as will be seen in chapter two of this study. (See page 139 below.)

Hutchison also makes the important observation that in spite of the divisions between liberals and conservatives in the late 1960's and 1970's -- Uppsala (1968), Lausanne (1974) -- foreigners found the spectrum of American missionary attitudes and practices indistinguishable from what they or their parents had known earlier in the century, "Plus ça change, plus c'est la meme chose." (:195).

A similar example can be seen in that while the different ELCSA partners from Europe and America are keenly aware of their own differences in terms of history, style and resources the view of the overseas partners from "below" is more monolithic as will be seen in chapter two of this study. (See page 64 below.)

Hutchison posed the question, "Why the resurgence of conservative mission activity in the 1980s?" In his view, "The fact is the old ideological debates continue and often in forms reminiscent of the 19th C." Hutchison suggested that, "religious impulses do not disappear but 'relocate.'" He gives two examples: "Many [mainline] Protestants are now spread throughout the world not as missionaries but in other agencies," and, through "indigenization," the work once carried on by Western missionaries is now "located in national churches and agencies" (:201).

With Hutchison this study agrees that there is an ongoing *relocation* of impulses. The rapid growth in partnership programmes is part of this relocation process as will be seen in chapter two of this study. (See page 198 below.)

Hunsberger and van Gelder (1996:xiii) begin the introduction to their book, *Church Between Gospel and Culture*, by saying, "There is a crisis in the life of the churches of North America." Hunsberger (:17) writes, "The Christendom experiment has run its course and is over, but our images and instincts are still formed by its memory." He calls for the church to, "...pay attention to the culture, to the gospel and to each other" through a new range of ecumenical partnerships, "for to assume we know has cost too much" (:24 - italics in the original).

Bosch (1991:365), reflecting on the "end of the modern era" and the "postmodern" crisis facing western civilization, saw mission in a time of testing and asked, "How can the church repent of past mistakes?" Bosch (:366) opposed a reactionary return to the past or a revolutionary alternative that purports to start with a "clean slate." Rather, in the third part of his book (1991:349-518), he suggested a paradigm shift which maintains a *creative tension* between apparent opposites which he described as "*Elements of an Emerging Ecumenical Missionary Paradigm.*" Bosch correctly pointed out that, "The new paradigm is ... still emerging and it is, as

yet, not clear which shape it will eventually adopt. For the most part we are, at the moment, thinking and working in terms of *two* paradigms” (:349 -italics in original). This study also agrees with Volf (1996:207) that we are standing in more than one place at the same time. A binary or dualistic description of reality is too limited and in fact untrue.

S. Bercovitch (in Hutchison 1987:208) observed that recent ‘encroachments of history’ including the civil rights struggle and the Vietnam war dealt a severe blow to American myths of chosenness and innocence. Hutchison saw a growing acceptance by Americans of a new status as a people among peoples, and not as God’s only chosen people. Hutchison expressed the hope that as a result, missionaries, instead of merely being “chaplains to the old imperialism” would focus on, “maintaining Christian effectuality within the new religious and cultural pluralism” (:209).

And yet in the 1990’s the United States is still seen by many as playing the role of “policeman” and “salesman” to the world especially with the end of the Cold War. The US is still captive to its civil religion and battles to accept that it is one of the largest mission fields itself (Hunsberger 1996:3).

Braaten (1977:134) wrote passionately in his book, *The Flaming Centre*, that, “The future of Christianity in America cannot be left to Americans alone What is needed is a disclosure of the real powers that grip the souls of the American people.”

Americans and others as well have a lot of “baggage” that needs to be constantly sorted.

The task of deciding what to take and what to leave is an ongoing process especially as Christians respond to the call to global discipleship and mission in Jesus’ name.

Clearly no continent or people can be left alone to define themselves or the meaning of the Gospel (See page 266 below.

### **A belated but important response to American settler history**

Importantly the ELCA has started to formally address some of these issues with a rereading of American and mission history, taking into account previously silenced voices.

At the second Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA held on September 2, 1991 a resolution was adopted entitled, “1992: *Year of Remembrance, Repentance and Renewal.*” The church made an undertaking to,

understand more fully the historical context and the impact of the coming of Columbus on the indigenous peoples who populated the Caribbean and the North and South American

continents, to respond to issues related to treaty rights, racism and poverty, to acknowledge the contributions made by Native Americans, Asians, African-Americans and Hispanics to the life and culture of this country ... and to build and improve relations with them.

In a pamphlet issued by the ELCA in 1991 entitled, "*A Time to Remember, Repent and Renew*," Marilyn Sorensen-Bush (a Sisseton Sioux by descent) wrote that,

The churches of Europe and now later America must acknowledge their guilt and participation in the conquest and colonization of Native people; the colonization that meant not only the loss of language and the power of self-government but the loss of ritual and spirituality labeled deviant by white Christian colonizers.

[Sue Edison Swift wrote in the same document], "I learned that, like most non-native people, I am ignorant of my ignorance (:3).

The ELCA also made available a publication, "*A Resource Guide for Congregations, Observing the 1992 Columbus Quincentenary*," which included five maps of the United States from 1492 to 1977 showing the loss of native American land to the settlers over that period. (See chapter two, pages 75 & 110 regarding land, identity and mission.)

In January 1997, the Division for Global Mission of the ELCA put forward a mission strategy for Latin America after extensive consultations with churches in Central and South America which critically looked at the historical context of colonialism, politics and economics. The statement stresses that, "The fundamental key to strengthen a coordinated mission process is to be found in "accompaniment," which is defined as walking together in a solidarity that practices koinonia, interdependence and mutuality (ELCA 1997b:19). This approach includes:

1. Affirming the diversity of viewpoints that exists among sister churches.
2. ...Questioning each others' priorities and practices
3. Being transparent, honest and sincere in dialogue.
4. Moving beyond traditional relationships of the past between North and South and South to South.
5. Sharing decision-making with those affected
6. [To]... be in solidarity ... in weaknesses, struggles and mission (:20).

To be an American Lutheran now means having one's feet in several of these worlds, cultures and issues at the same time. Volf (1996:40) speaks of cultivating "Distance and Belonging." He also agrees that, "... there is no neutral standpoint located in a power-free zone" (:249). "Ideally we should see things from everywhere ... This is how God sees human beings."

In the meantime, Volf (:253) proposes the use of what he calls "double vision," seeing things "from here" and "from there" ... "that will approximate God's view from everywhere." He also makes the important point that, "The truth is that the self of the other matters more than my truth



and the truth will make you free free to make journeys from self to the Other and back” (:272).

But this process is not easy for Americans and Europeans who are children of the Enlightenment and raised to defend the rights of the individual and the presupposition of each person or group having its own “turf” as Philip Hefner (1998: 273) describes it. Globalization means both greater integration and disintegration making the journeys which Volf is speaking of difficult but necessary.

## **Mission and the Invention or “Covering” of Africa**

As part of the ancient Mediterranean world the African continent did not come into the western world view as abruptly as did the Americas. Since the fifth century and especially during the middle ages Africa’s impact on the Mediterranean and European economies through the trans-Saharan gold trade was apparent (Davidson 1968:65). It was the lure of African gold that spurred on Arab traders in the Indian Ocean and the Portuguese on the Atlantic side (Mostert 1992:18). The African continent and various peoples were described by early European explorers and sailors with a mixture of fascination and disgust. Mostert, (:107) writing of the early encounters at the southern tip of Africa, remarks, “Around the shores of Table Bay in those early days before the establishment of the large-scale transatlantic slave trade, the basis of a contempt was created that was to become ineradicable from Europe’s outlook on Africa and its peoples.”

This study agrees that after centuries of ambiguous and often one-sided contact and exchange we are only at the beginning of dis-covering the “real” history of Africa.

When and how did Christian mission or partnership in mission begin in Southern Africa? The early journeys and “first” encounters in Southern Africa with the indigenous people by “explorers” and missionaries have gained almost epic and mythic status.

De Kock refers to figures like David Livingstone and what he calls “the absurd delusion of discovery.” De Kock makes the point that, “For most Europeans, Africa was perceived as devoid of history. Victoria Falls came into existence when seen by a western eye. The land was textually created as it was ‘discovered’” (1993:227). It is a perception which still haunts us today. De Kock also points out a “colonial paradox” that economic growth and progress in the colony would not rest on *free* labour but on its opposite (:45 - italics in original). As de Kock puts it, “ ‘Civilizing the barbarians’ was a deeply paradoxical process” (:45). Norman Etherington (in

Christensen and Hutchison 1982:195), referring specifically to the Zulu Kingdom, observed that, “Missionaries made little headway until the legal and economic supports of the traditional society were knocked away.”

In the scramble for Africa, as with the conquest of the Americas, colonists and colonialists, as V.Y. Mudimbe (1988:1) explains, “have all tended to organize and transform non-European areas into fundamentally European constructs.” Mudimbe speaks of the domination of physical space, the reformation of the *natives*’ minds, and the integration of local economic histories into the Western perspective (:2 - italics in original). He goes on to argue that explorers and anthropologists did not reveal otherness but “commented on the distance separating savagery from civilization [between Same and Other] on the diachronic line of progress” (:15 & 81).

In the past, history books written by and for mission societies assumed that it was with the coming of the explorers such as the Portuguese and settlers such as the Dutch that the light of the Gospel and civilization were introduced to a dark and heathen subcontinent. So much of mission policy and practice were shaped by this subject-object, (I-It) perception (cf. J.H. du Plessis 1911:7-11).

Du Plessis (writing in 1911) asked what the actual results were of the contact between “white civilization” and “black heathendom” and admitted that, “Looked at from the point of view of the native races, that contact produces results both evil and good, both hurtful and helpful” (:262). Nevertheless du Plessis was of the optimistic opinion that, “Colonialization ... though it has been and still is attended by many evils ... is destined in the good providence of God, to bestow inestimable blessings upon the native races of South Africa” (:265).

As the Comaroffs (1991:37) put it, “The evangelists ... had been exposed to conventions of African reportage well before they left Britain and their writing became part of a long-established tale that post-enlightenment Europeans told each other about the march of civilization into the dark places on earth.”

For example, Lutheran missionary and scholar Dr. Andrew Burgess’ book, *Unkulunkulu in Zululand* (1934), meaning “God in Zululand”, was dedicated to: “Our Torch-Bearers in Dark South Africa.” The clearly stated goal of the book was: “to win the heart of Africa, by showing the needs of the groping, unshepherded masses that still await His message. (:12).

For many years, in the NLCA/ELC in America, mission work in “Africa” was identified as mission work among “the Zulus.” What these words actually meant was not questioned and served to emphasize the distance and exotic nature of mission.

This study takes note of efforts to address stereotypes exemplified by a background paper by the *Africa Policy Information Centre* (November 1997) analyzing the use of the term and concept of “tribe” as follows:

- > *Tribes* has no coherent meaning... [since] identities in Africa are as diverse, ambiguous, complex, modern and changing as anywhere else in the world (:1).
- > *Tribes* promotes a myth of primitive African timelessness obscuring history and change (:2).
- > In the modern West, *tribe* often implies primitive savagery and ethnic conflict (:3).
- > Social theories of *tribes* resonated with classical and biblical education e.g. the twelve *tribes* of Israel (:5).
- > *Tribes* became a cornerstone idea for European colonial rule in Africa (:5).  
According to the authorities the ‘bottom line’ problem with the idea of *tribe* is that it is intellectually lazy ... [and] tries to make messy reality neater than it really is (:3 - my italics).

The Comaroffs, in their study of mission history in South Africa say that, “The flood of writings by colonizing whites conveys much that was unintended, Texts are polyvalent and convey far more than they mean to say. In subtexts that disrupt their major themes, the voice of the silent other is audible through disconcerted accounts of his ‘irrational’ behavior or resistance ...” (1991:37).

Lamin Sanneh has tried to balance the evidence by speaking of the links and tensions between mission and colonialism (1989:116). The question of western mission in Africa is still being debated not only by missiologists and academics but now also by primary school children of all races in South African schools! The all new Grade Six history book, *Looking into the Past*, published for South African schools in 1996, presents the case as follows,

The missionaries who came from Europe to southern Africa came to tell African people about Christianity. The missionaries wanted to convert Africans to Christianity. (Convert means to make people believe in the god that you believe in.) ... They also taught Africans to live like people in Europe lived ... (:70-71).

Under a work-section entitled “Debate about missionaries,” the writers say,

“Historians do not agree about what the missionaries did in southern Africa. Some ... say that the missionaries did good things. Other historians say that the missionaries did much more harm than good ... What do you say about the missionaries?” (:73).

A response to the previous question about missionaries requires that we explore the texts, images, stories and ideology which have characterized and shaped our mission theology and praxis. As

de Kock points out, “Missionaries were preeminently agents of cultural change and influence ... theirs was the domain in which signs were most assiduously contested and the imperialism of a European version of ‘truth’ about a Christian ‘violent hierarchy’ most forcefully practiced” (:44).

### **A Long and Ambiguous Conversation**

Throughout this study on partnership I wish to emphasize the “long conversation” and the “two faces” that the Comaroffs refer to. In addition I would like to stress that not just two but several faces were/are present since identities and needs are complex, fluid and contradictory, not static or monolithic.

As de Kock (1993:13) points out, “Two systems of thought did not merely collide but real people negotiated their way through life by makeshift improvisations.” Chapter two (page 96ff.) of this study provides ample evidence of this, especially with regard to negotiations around the “salary issue.

Bredenkamp and Ross, in *Missions and Christianity in South African History* (1995), emphasize that the process of “naturalization” was neither a simple nor an uncontested process. Christianity was not merely imposed on an unwilling population (1995:3). A. F. Walls (1998) puts it well when he argues that Christianity is always “translated” and not merely “transferred.” It is a process that has not been well understood by all the sides in the conversation. This study agrees that the problems around partnership are related to this difficulty or confusion.

Quite rightly the Comaroffs concur in their book, *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism and Consciousness in South Africa* (1991:7), that it is not enough to ask simplistically, “Whose side were [the missionaries] on?” De Kock also warned against an approach which overlooks the complexities and contradictions on either side ( 1993:15).

The Comaroffs argue that, “...the missionary encounter must be regarded as a *two-sided* historical process, a dialectic that takes into account ... the consequences for, *all* the actors - missionaries not less than Africans. ... [A] comprehensive study of that encounter ought to begin in Europe” (:54 - italics in the original).

In their study the Comaroffs examine,

...the images of Africa that were to shape the British sense of their engagement with the heathen ... [and] show how these highly ritualized meetings of Europeans and Africans ... set the terms of the 'long conversation' to follow" (:11). ... In this exchange of signs and substance each party was to try and gain some purchase on, some mastery over, the other: the churchmen to convert the Tswana ... the Tswana to divert the potency of the church men to themselves (:11).

They also speak of key "misrecognitions" in the relationship with regard to things such as notions of time, work, and property.

In chapter six of their book, entitled *Conversion and Conversation*, the Comaroffs speak of the "two faces" of the conversation. Alongside the overt exchanges, "... there occurred another kind of exchange: an often quiet, occasionally strident struggle ... to gain master over the terms of the encounter" (:199). They show that, "the southern Tswana could not avoid internalizing the terms through which they were being challenged (:213). ... In their long conversation ... whether they knew it or not, [the missionaries] purveyed [the] axioms [of a hegemonic worldview] in everything they said and did" (:310).

The Comaroffs also point out that,

The long conversation proceeded at two levels from the very beginning, overtly to convert, (and at another level) to reform the indigenous world into the shape of European culture. These two modes did not occur together as intended. They rarely do. Colonized people often reject the message yet are powerfully affected by its media (:311). ... The European colonization of Africa was often less a directly coercive conquest than a persuasive attempt to colonize consciousness, to remake people by redefining the taken-for-granted surfaces of their everyday world (:311).

Elphick (1992:15) refers to mutual incomprehension, selective hearing and the struggle over meaning. Similarly, although speaking of the Americas, J.H. Elliot (1993:40), in his review of James Lochhart's, *The Nahuas After the Conquest*, quotes Lochhart as follows, "...these non-european peoples have learned to manage two worlds simultaneously not necessarily, as is so often assumed, because this is the only way of resisting the intrusion of an alien and unwanted European world but because each of the worlds has something important and distinctive to offer." Lochhart argues that, "each side remained essentially more concerned with its own internal affairs and conflicts."

Richard Elphick (in Bredekamp and Ross 1995:20) supports the model of translation as described by Sanneh for explaining Christianization in South Africa which, though ambiguous and contested, gives credit to the Africans and to the unique power of the Gospel message. Sanneh (in Bediako

1995:120) looks at the two processes at work - historical transmission and indigenous assimilation - and argues that the latter is more significant.

C. Peter Williams (1990:127), in *The Ideal of the Self-Governing Church: A study in Victorian Missionary Strategy*, concludes that while the Church Mission Society (CMS) missionaries at the turn of the century accepted Henry Venn's ideal of an indigenous church and recognized the problem of dependency, self-rule was continually postponed. Williams observed that, "An unpredicted difficulty was lack of enthusiasm from indigenous Christians who saw advantages to strong Western links..." (:261).

Lamin Sanneh (in Carpenter and Shenk 1990:303) continually makes the point that the Gospel and the agency of the other should not be underestimated. He contends that, "Whatever the motives, missionaries let loose forces that set societies on a new unalterable course. Motives, stated and unstated and actions did not always coincide." For example, Enquist (1990:58) writes about the Rhenish Mission's policy statements, (that mission and colonization be held apart), as being "purely formal." Enquist observes that in Namibia in spite of official indifference to politics the mission proved to be a highly effective political agent. He refers to Hendrick Witbooi (died 1905) as a clear example of the varied fruits of pietist faith. Using literacy he read and interpreted the Bible for himself and his people, the Nama (:34). It is also significant to note that some of the most outspoken and vigorous opposition to the Apartheid regime came from the Lutherans in Namibia in the 1970s and 1980s (:91).

German and Scandinavian Lutherans in the 19th and early 20th centuries on the whole retained their European individualistic, middle class, theological and cultural ties. Early American Lutheran mission work in South Africa also sprouted out of European connections. (See chapter two of this study, page 69ff.) What needs further and ongoing investigation is how present ideas and practices of church and mission in South Africa are influenced not only by the all pervasive American and European ideology and theology but also out of the long conversation with partners and critics in Africa. (See the section on the AALC in this chapter, page 41ff.)

For example, the American Lutheran Church (ALC) stated in 1975 in the preamble to an agreement with the newly established Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (ELCSA) that,

The following [partnership] agreement is based on the fact that the churches in Southern Africa and the churches/missions overseas **through history belong together** and believe

that they are entrusted by God with a joint responsibility of bringing the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all nations and are facing this task together..." (ALC BWMIC Report 1975, Exhibit E. - my emphasis).

When and how did this relationship start? What kind of history brought these people together? Chapter Two looks specifically at Lutheran encounters and negotiations in Southern Africa. Looking back after ten years or even several hundred years of mission history the evidence remains ambiguous. We are both closer and further apart.

Mbukeni Mkhwanazi from the ELCSA South Eastern Diocese in Natal went to Bremerhaven in Germany in 1977 through the Church of Hannover's partnership programme as part of developing the "two-way traffic" system. After language study he worked in the parish but felt all along that African missionaries were only regarded as "probationers" who came to the west in order to collect knowledge to be used in the home country. He concluded, "I cannot say whether western congregations welcome African missionaries ... I can neither recommend nor discourage this 'two-way system' (AALC 1980:223). This ambiguous answer by Mkhwanazi should not be seen as sign of defeat or confusion but a clear example of the asymmetry of partnership. The asymmetry as well as the connections are there but cannot be completely managed, controlled or fixed into any permanent pattern or grid. Some are always "more equal than others" no matter the documents and statements say. James Scherer (1982:38) conceded, "Obedience has become more complex as the world becomes more complex.

## **Identities and Cultures**

Identity and culture have always been notoriously difficult to define as Luzbetak (1970:4) and others have admitted. However two essential questions that make up any effort to define identity and culture must be: "Who do I belong to and who belongs to me?" But as Craig van Gelder (1996:46) has pointed out, "defining the centre" and "finding boundaries" is even more of a challenge in a post-modern and post-Christian context. As Philip Hefner (1998:273) puts it, "The planet is a sphere, ... Every tribe's turf ultimately runs into every other tribe's turf."

In South Africa descendants of English settlers are having to face the fact for the first time that they are in Africa. Their parents and ancestors originally came as colonials to an outpost of the British Empire of which apartheid was a later extension. The drawing of Africa's colonial borders at the conference of Berlin in 1884-1885 still has repercussions today for the definition of insiders and outsiders (Davidson 1968:244).

As Schreiter puts it in *Constructing Local Theologies* (1986), “To restructure boundaries is to restructure identity” (:65). He explains that boundaries are “dangerous” because of their ambiguity and because they represent power that has not been marshalled into the signs and codes of “internal” and “external reality” (:66). According to Schreiter, “Boundaries are often supervised by specialists, seers, shamans and priests who know the territory and have experience of passing over and returning safely (:66). ... Jesus rearranged the boundaries of the Kingdom and therefore who belonged to it. Consciousness of boundaries is tied up with consciousness of identity” (:72).

No wonder then that Tite Tienou (in Van Engen 1993:241) wrote that, “One of the greatest crises in Africa is an identity crisis. Culturally alienated from themselves It causes [Africans] to define their identity in relationship to foreigners ... perceived as assimilated Europeans or the ‘opposite’ of Europeans.” Mudimbe (1988:185) also observes that modern African thought [is] basically a product of the West. He writes, “...the search for an African authenticity raises the most fundamental questions of black identity ... what is an African ... and to what authority does one turn for possible answers? (:153).

For Attie van Niekerk (1992:83), one way of interpreting apartheid is that it was, “an attempt to establish a European way of life *in* Africa but *separate from* Africa ... Apartheid was proof that the Afrikaner wanted to be European and not part of Africa - although some [of them] even spoke of [having] a calling in Africa” (His italics - my translation).

While the misunderstandings and conflicts have been immense, van Niekerk and others will not give up seeking for an identity in and a relationship with Africa.<sup>5</sup> Van Niekerk (1992:91) sees the missionary’s search for a relationship with Africa still today [after 200 years], as a search to understand the presence of God. While this study does not deny the seriousness of this search by van Niekerk and others the mixture and ambiguity of other motives and perceptions remain part of past and present relationships.

A celebrated image for many settlers of English descent in South Africa was the arrival of the “1820 Settlers” in Port Elizabeth from England. In the eastern Cape, monuments, parks and highways were named in their honour. In the school history books, white South Africans were taught that the arrival of the settlers in the Cape coincided with the southerly migration of “Bantu tribes” from the north. The rationale was that the land was not fully occupied or utilized and

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<sup>5</sup> An example of this search for identity is the book, *Wit Afrikane? 'n Gesprek met Nico Smith*, edited by M. Hofmeyr, Kritzingen, K & Saayman, W. (eds). 1990. Bramley: Taurus.



therefore settler occupation of the land was justified. Similarly North Americans of European descent do not see themselves as settlers in America anymore although they proudly speak of the pioneers, their ancestors and their lands of origin. However the militant slogan used in South Africa by Africanist militants during the anti-apartheid struggle, “One settler - one bullet,” tells another side of the story.

Habelgaarn, the Moravian President of FELCSA, said at the 20th FELCSA Executive Committee meeting, after 14 years of failed unity talks between Lutherans, “We must learn to understand ourselves” (FELCSA 1980, Par.8).

Clearly the uncovering of the other and of the self has just begun and remains an ongoing process if we are to be partners in mission.

### **African identity and the European Gaze**

Kwame Appiah (1992:71) writes of the “recognition that a specifically African identity began as the product of a European gaze.” Chapter four of his book is entitled, *The Myth of an African World*. Appiah is critical of what he calls *racialism*, the view that there are heritable characteristics, a sort of racial essence,” that account for “more than the visible morphology” (:37).

Appiah writes,

There is no African metaphysical solidarity. This is a myth ... (:82). ... [There are] so many traditions with their complex relationships - and as often their lack of any relationship (:80). ... The language of empire continues ... center, periphery, identity-difference (:72). It is too late to escape from each other ... (:72). ... The question, what it is to be modern, is one Africans and Westerners may ask together ... neither of us will understand until we understand each other (:107).

Appiah decries the commodification of Africa which “requires” (his quotation marks) maintaining the exotic. Suleri (in Appiah :156-157) has said, “[Africans] are always at risk of becoming Otherness-machines. As Appiah puts it, “the real battle [for identity] is not being fought in the academy.” He argues that, “We cannot change the world by reasoning alone neither without it

What the academy can contribute is a disruption of the discourse of ‘racial’ and ‘tribal’ differences” (:179). For Appiah, “the inscription of difference in Africa today plays into the hands of the very exploiters whose shackles we are trying to escape.

Appiah’s main point is that,

Because the value of identities is relative, we must argue for and against them case by case (:180). ... African identity is for its bearers only one among many ... one we must continue

to reshape (:177). ... The peoples of Africa are extremely diverse, we do not share a common tradition, culture, language, religion or race (:26). ... There is one race and we all belong to it ... the human race (:27).

While the commonality of a shared humanity is true, Maluleke argues that Appiah goes too far again in stressing “difference.” Interviewed in 1997 Maluleke argued that while there are many differences among Africans there are also important common experiences, connections and struggles.

An aspect that Bediako deals with at length is the issue of power in Africa, especially with relation to what he calls the second liberation struggle for democracy following the struggle for independence. For Bediako the emphasis on solidarity in African society can result in a tendency to authoritarianism (1995:239). He observes that the tendency to sacralize authority can put it on a mystical plane beyond criticism or revision. As Bediako explains,

By his cross Jesus desacralizes all worldly power, relativising its inherent tendency in a fallen universe to absolutise itself (:245). ... [For Bediako] the way of Jesus is the way of non-dominating power, which liberates rulers to be human among humans (:247). ... It desacralises but does not de-spiritualise. The African world continues as a spiritual world, what changes is the configuration of forces”(246).

The issues of power, authority, unity and diversity are also present in the church and mission partnerships. Schreiter (in Jenkinson 1991:177) focuses attention on, “The problem of leadership in an egalitarian movement.” He recalls that the initial emphasis on the priesthood of believers in the Reformation was replaced by ordered ministries. Schreiter asks how unity can be maintained and pluralism affirmed? Likewise Gaiser stresses the need to distinguish between offensive division and essential difference (1998:111). These issues are the heart of the negotiations around partnership relations as will be seen in the following chapters of this study.

Aylward Shorter (1988:9) writes about the evolution of the Church’s understanding of culture. The classic view was that there was only one normative culture, all else was barbarism. As Shorter puts it, “Missionaries became experts in linguistics and cultures but were hampered by their theology which was reactionary and (here he refers to Catholics) neo-thomist in stressing the dichotomy between natural and super-natural. The Council of Trent in 1545 set out to counter the Reformation by imposing a rigid unity and uniformity, “establishing timeless truths” just at the time when the world was “opening up” (1988:154). Similarly to counter this static and rigid view of culture, J.W. Hofmeyr in his introduction to *A History of Christianity in South Africa*,

“strenuously resists the assumption that early peoples of Southern Africa had fixed, timeless, unchanging ideas about deities, the world and their own identities” (1994: xiii).

Jean-Marc Éla (in Shorter 1988:247) observed that Protestant missionary societies’ expansion in the nineteenth century encouraged the proliferation of local churches through the promotion of the Three-self’s but what has resulted at best in his view is “second rate inculturation, a tame hybrid, neither fish nor fowl, harmless, non-controversial ... how can we express our belonging to God in a continent that does not belong to itself? ... In practice modernization creates dependency....”

Already in the 1960’s Scherer (1964:100) observed that, “The younger churches are peculiarly the children of western Christianity. They cannot deny their parentage or eradicate ... [inherited policies and structures].” He even referred to the three-self formula as a “trojan horse.”

Walls (1996:7-8) makes a distinction in Christian history between what he calls the indigenizing principle (particularism) and the pilgrim principle (universalism). The first accepts people as they are and makes them feel at home while the second transforms people and culture. According to Walls the major debate among African Christians now is the nature of the African past in the light of the tension between these two principles.

I agree with Maluleke’s critique of those who espouse “beyond theologies” when, “For the majority of people things have either remained unchanged or changed for the worse” (1997:28).

What I hear Appiah calling for, is not a move beyond black consciousness to a post-black consciousness era, but for a multi-dimensional approach something like Denise Ackermann (1991:100) describes in her article, *Towards a Relational Anthropology*, which is “transformative rather than demanding equality,” which, as she puts it, “... characterizes liberal terminology. The latter is seen as merely gaining access to structures and ideas which have been formed by male norms and where the social order itself does not change.”

Appiah (1992:136) puts it this way, “ We will only solve our problems if we see them as human problems arising out of a special situation we shall not solve them as African problems generated by our being somehow unlike others.

Bediako (1995:167) argues that there are no absolute centres or peripheries:

Every center is a potential periphery and vice versa. It requires openness on all sides....  
Missiology is not just learning to communicate the Gospel to other peoples and cultures but also [undergoing] an exercise in self-understanding.

He recalls and rephrases Mbiti's words, "We have eaten theology with you will you eat theology with us?" (:167).

Noel Mostert in his book *Frontiers: The Epic of South Africa's Creation and the Tragedy of the Xhosa People* (1992: 954-955), writes in a chapter entitled, *Where are the English who learn?*, "[The] whole [Xhosa] nation's despair might be said to have been summed up in a remark made by one Xhosa to the Scottish missionary James Laing in the mid-nineteenth century, 'We learn. The English do not learn. Where are the English who learn?'" (Italics in original.) Mostert continues, "Laing's Xhosa questioner equally well might have asked where were the missionaries who learned?" Mostert agrees that, "One cannot generalize about the missionaries themselves. They were much too different in individual character. Some were greatly respected by the Xhosa, many were despised, and some were loathed unreservedly." As de Gruchy (1979:7) pointed out in his book, *The Church Struggle in South Africa*, "Race proved more powerful than religion." This study holds that acknowledging the ambiguous legacy of the past is an important step in the learning process. (See the acknowledgments in GM21, page 194 below.)

Dr. S. Bengu wrote about the contradictions of Africanization in 1976,

Some Africans have diagnosed their post-independence problems as arising from what has been called, for want of a better term, self - colonization. More important than economic independence is the independence of the mind ... some Africans have continued to look outside their society for solutions. ... This low self - worth evaluation some Africans have of themselves manifests itself in their ready acceptance of foreign development models without relating them to local conditions ... (:156). ... But even Africanization is full of 'contradictions ... and superficial ...' (:160).

Schreiter (1986:145) focuses on a very important issue for partnership in his chapter on *Tradition and Christian Identity*. He outlines seven problems encountered when local tradition meets Christian tradition and four problems when Christian tradition meets local theology. To make it more complicated, as Volf (1996:207) puts it so well, "Nobody stands no where" and "Most of us stand in more than one place. Schreiter describes three kinds of syncretism and three kinds of dual systems and asks, "Are there limits to contextualization?" He concludes that, "The conversion process is much slower than we first thought" (Schreiter 1986:158). I would add that the learning process is slow for everyone, for people in the North and in the South.

In the case of partnerships among numerous Lutheran partners in Southern Africa we have increasing traffic across many boundaries. This may be variously experienced as liberating or oppressive as for example when an American missionary tries to encourage the use of a drum in an African congregation which has a long tradition of singing German based hymns. Walls (1996:51)

is helpful in drawing attention to the difference between making *proselytes* who must become imitations of the original as opposed to participating in the process of mutual conversion.

The question to ask is when and how have missions, missionaries and churches really listened to the voices of the victims and confessed? Representative from many South African churches met in November 1990 at the Rustenburg Conference, ten months after the release of Nelson Mandela from prison on 11 February 1990. De Gruchy (in Chikane and Alberts 1991:118) made the point that, "We have not taken sin seriously enough in ourselves, in our churches and in our society." Church leaders in *The Rustenburg Declaration* included in their confession: Western colonialism, apartheid, misuse of the Bible, complicity, silence, claiming to be one body but living in separate worlds, and issued a call for justice, peace, restitution and action. Unfortunately there was little or no concerted follow-up to the conference by the churches afterwards.

In October 1997 a number of churches made submissions to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission together with other religious bodies. The Lutherans were conspicuous by their absence.

Clearly there is still a long way to go to achieve reconciliation within and between churches. In some ways the church has barely begun and lags far behind other institutions in civil society.

In the conclusion to his address to the AALC in Monrovia (1980) Mbiti stated that

...The church in Africa seems to have an incomplete picture or understanding of mission. ...They have done no serious thinking about the mission of the church in Africa, the mission that emanates from Africa and not from overseas ...The process of conscientizing the church to reflect on its own participation in mission must be accelerated ... so that the whole people of God participates ... (1980:196).

But who does have a complete picture? Terence Ranger observed (in Prozesky 1990:13), "African Christianity, as it evolves, corresponds neither to missionary nor indigenous hopes or expectations." Has Mbiti underestimated the African understanding and contribution to Christianity and mission? Bediako (1995:207) writes about what he calls the "surprise story of African Christianity in the 20th Century," "It is not what Western missionaries did or did not do but what Africans did, and have done with the Gospel that is proving to be the more enduring element ..." The question asked by Lesslie Newbigin (1986:9), and increasingly by others now, is, "How then, can there be a genuine encounter of the gospel with this [Western] culture...?"

John Mbiti (in Bediako:118) made a significant point when he affirmed the missionary endeavor but without making the (western) missionary central. Mbiti emphasized, "They did not bring God, rather God brought them.

Lamin Sanneh (in Bediako:120) also weighs up the two processes of “historical transmission” and “indigenous assimilation” and finds the latter more significant. Kiernan (in Prozesky 1990:13) has observed that, “Christianity has modified the African world view, on the other hand, Africans have reinterpreted the Christian message.

E.A. Ayandele ( in Bediako 1995:123) says, “Even if you ... came and did not preach the Gospel in all its purity that has not prevented us from receiving the Gospel.” Bediako stresses the point that, “... Christianity ... [is not] a western religion ... it is a non-western religion” (:123). Likewise Walls (1998) has emphasized that Christianity is “not progressive but serial” since it does not belong to one culture, place or time.

Buthelezi (1995:6), does not reject the contribution of the early European missionaries, but is now calling for indigenous African Christians to remember that “the missionary did only part of the pioneering: there is still more pioneering to be done.” Buthelezi calls for a new vision of mission. in the midst of paralyzing contrasts. While this can be interpreted as a pro-active move this study asks whose or what “mantle” is being picked up now by the Lutheran churches in Southern Africa and why? This issue is revisited in chapter two of this study (Page 171ff).

While the European gaze may be more diffuse now, the ascendancy of the global American “Mc-gaze” is a matter of growing concern in the South.

### **An Ecumenical American response to the “Covering” of Africa**

A self-conscious response to this history was made by the National Council of Churches of Christ, USA, when it issued a draft *Policy Statement on Africa* in June of 1987.<sup>6</sup> The document admits to adopting a critical yet optimistic view of the Church, Africa’s future and their relationship as [American] Christians to Africa.

The documents states that, “Despite long-term involvement, we Americans must admit frankly that we are ignorant about Africa” (:3). The document describes some of the ethnocentric images, stereotypes and assumptions from the past and often still perpetuated by the media. Pre-colonial and colonial history is sketched in brief including, pre-colonial African society, the slave trade, in which 10 - 20 million people were captured or killed, economic exploitation oriented to the north, the “Scramble for Africa” and the resulting arbitrary colonial boundaries, the struggles for

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<sup>6</sup> The last NCC policy statement with regard to Africa was made in 1956 when much of Africa was still under colonial rule.

independence, the sudden end to colonial regimes and the legacy of underdevelopment resulting in continuing dependence and structural violence and instability (:8).

The document also assesses *The Church in Africa* (:21). The Mission Church is seen as being both successful and a failure despite many positive contributions. Dependency on western theology and structures negatively affected both foreign missionaries and African members.

The growth of Independent Churches is seen as a response to these problems (:22). The Postcolonial Church is characterized by disappointments and growth. "...regardless of how hard we tried to be partners with African churches, we were bound to offend" (:24). The call for a moratorium in 1974 was perceived by many in America and Europe as ungratefulness rather than a legitimate call for real equality. The document goes on to say that with regard to relationships, while many strides have been made, "There is ... still a long way to go. ...we have not yet learned to be equal partners" (:24).

The statement calls for, "...all American churches to undertake the painful process of self-criticism with the support of our African sisters and brothers. The real challenge is to work in partnership to discover a definition of mission that is liberating to us and to Africans" (:27).

In Section VI the statement proposes a number of *Principles for a New (Ecumenical) Relationship with African Churches*. These are (in summary form)

1. Ecumenical partners have an equality of relationship. (Equality requires the belief that each one has something vital to offer the other and legitimacy as institutions.)
2. Ecumenical partners seek each other. (Take the risk of forming relationships at all levels.)
3. Ecumenical partners allow tasks to flow out of their relationships. (Do not decide for each other.)
4. Ecumenical partners promote solidarity. (Share joys and sorrows, are critical and supportive.)
5. Ecumenical partners undertake together the work of the Church. (:29-30).

The document calls for a new orientation for mission, which means learning that overseas partnership and mission are not the same thing (:30).

Regarding money and ecumenical partnership the document states, "We will share money with Africans, not give it to them. ... Healthy ecumenical partnerships will lead to appropriate levels of sharing of money" (:31).

The Conclusion to the statement speaks of,

...visions which we intend to follow toward the future, for the Church universal, for churches in Africa and churches in the United States and individual American Christians which includes open dialogue, justice, economic and social transformation, a prophetic stance in our own nations and in the world, a new self-image that is more humble, sharing,

sacrificial, open and trusting, [and] more integrated into the worldwide community of Christians (:33).

**“Now everyone is being colonized!”**

Much of what is being written now by Western writers emphasizing interdependence and mutuality may seem to echo the African ideal of ubuntu as expressed in the well-known “South African” saying which in Sesotho is expressed as, “Motho ke motho ka batho.” (A person is a person through other people) and “Matsoho a hlatsana” (One hand washes the other). But the experience by Africans of mutual partnership with their European and American partners has not always been a humanizing or empowering one. Eboussi Boulaga (in Isichei 1995:10) declares that, “dominance [is] intrinsic to all missionary situations” and he therefore critiques its “middle-class Christianity” where “faith has become divorced from love.

As Schreier (1992:53) writes, “The oppressor colonizes the victim. ... A long term relation of violence [read also dominance] can make the victim romanticize the oppressor as too strong to be resisted.” There is a crude but still a common saying in South Africa, “The dog does not bite the hand that feeds it.” It was my experience in the resettlement area of Botshabelo and more so of the “homeland” area of Thaba Nchu that often those who are dependent do not seek to become independent but to make their dependence more profitable for themselves.

It is the view of this study that we have not entered the “postcolonial” period in Africa. Rather we are living with several paradigms at the same time. As Appiah (1992:145) puts it in a chapter entitled, *The Postcolonial and The Postmodern*, “What we have seen is not the triumph of Enlightenment rationalization and reason but the incorporation of all areas of life into the money economy ... We have not seen the triumph of secularization - the end of religions, but their commodification. This is the phenomenon of recolonization through globalization.”

The struggle against apartheid was, as Wolfram Kistner puts it, “the struggle for decolonization” (:3).

In the previous decolonization struggle the colonized people could identify their enemy ... Now it is not so easy. This new type of colonialism is thoroughly totalitarian. It covers the whole globe and it involves everybody. We may complain a lot about it but we must be aware that we are part of it. ... Some of us are beneficiaries and victims at the same time. ... More and more the people in the highly industrialized countries which started the process of colonial conquest are becoming colonized. ... Through the control of the highly sophisticated mass media this system has the power to influence the minds of the victims in



such a way that they accept the process that leads to their deprivation as progress ( Kistner 1997 :12).

It is the view of this study that partnership is not getting more difficult. It was always difficult, complex and never “easy” as can be seen in the following survey of voices coming from the AALC over the past three decades.

### **Views on Mission and Partnership from All Africa Lutheran Conferences/Consultations (1955-1984)**

The following collection of views covers a time span of over three decades and serves as another window into the development of perspectives, definitions and vocabulary related to relationships and partnership in Africa and Southern Africa in particular. These voices, conversations and negotiations should not be forgotten but remembered, challenged and respected as we continue to work at meeting in Jesus’ name

#### **Marangu 1955 - “Quo vadis Africa?”**

The first All-African Lutheran Conference took place at Marangu in the then Tanganyika from November 12-22, 1955. Of the 168 participants 116 were Africans. Twenty two delegates came from the Union of South Africa of whom 16 were African and 6 were expatriates (AALC 1956 187-188).

The African delegates were given an opportunity to speak their minds more freely and fully, “in camera.” A statement was later issued entitled, “What are the most burning issues in the African Church today?” The first three points of the statement are pleas for advanced educational facilities. The fourth point calls for more Africans in responsible positions in the young churches and the final point states, “It would greatly help the propagation of the Christian faith in Africa if missionaries in their relations with Africans showed a better example of fighting all kinds of discrimination” (:73).

Thomas Marealle II, Paramount Chief of the Wa-Chagga, in his welcoming address made as his final point the statement that, “... although there are thousands of African Christians in Africa today, the time is not yet ripe to hand over the local church to us, because, if that means financing everything ourselves, we are just not ready for it. We need a great deal of help from our friends in the United Kingdom and in the United States. ...’ 17).

Bishop Hanns Lilje in his paper said, "...We feel it our duty to rethink the whole task of the Christian church in this world .... we can no longer conceive of the task of Christian missions in this continent in the same way as our forefathers did..." (:27). "...The church in Africa, if she remembers her great and rich heritage, may be led into new dimensions and by doing so, strengthen our faith, too: the faith of those who live under the completely different tasks of the older churches" (:31).

Prof. Bengt Sundkler delivered a paper on *The Church and its Environment*. In the discussion afterwards Sundkler spoke about the "straight-jacket" Europe had put over the churches and responded to a comment by Rev. L. Gcaba from South Africa on the need for one (standard) hymnbook and liturgy in the different languages for South Africa if not for Africa saying, "As a foreigner I should not speak to this question ... But my friends this is your chance. Write your Zulu hymns now and don't be satisfied with all the translations you already have. Express the joys which you have felt in Zulu."

Bishop E. Sundgren replied to this discussion saying that he was sorry to report that the manuscript of the Zulu Hymn book had just been handed to the printer the previous night (:122).<sup>7</sup>

Several papers were delivered under the heading "Quo Vadis Africa" and several discussions took place on the topic, "Has Africa lost Christ?" Rev. A.J. Abrahamse from South Africa replied to the latter question, "If someone says that Africa has lost Christ, I would answer, 'Not by a long mile.'" Rev. Rapoo praised the faithful and patient work done by the "ancient missionaries ... among our African tribes." But he went on to ask why the foundation was becoming shaky and if there was not, "something wrong in the administration of the Word of God by the present missionaries, or do we fail to understand each other? Or is it lack of cooperation? It is up to us to find out where the fault lies and how we can rectify it" (:134). (See page 106 below for Rapoo's views in 1971.)

### **Antsirabe 1960 - "Let the African find it himself"**

By 1960 so much had changed in Africa that in many respects the Marangu report seemed quite outdated as pointed out in the introduction to the Antsirabe report (AALC 1960:2). Of the nearly 200 participants at the Second All-Africa Lutheran Conference in Antsirabe, Madagascar, two-thirds were Africans. Of the 24 delegates from South Africa, six were expatriates.

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<sup>7</sup> More than four decades later the Lutherans in South Africa are still working on a common hymnbook which contains virtually no indigenous material.

One of the preparatory papers was prepared by the Rev. Alexander Tshongwe from South Africa entitled, *"The Task of the Church of Christ in Africa Today."* He spoke openly in a way few would have done in the preceding period saying, "If the African is honest with himself, he will openly admit that he is in a dilemma. He seems not to know as yet what he is looking for and to make matters worse, our European brothers are constantly suggesting and deciding what will work best for us. Also the African is not without blame ..." (:31). "I am an African and I still don't understand myself." He was adamant that it was not the European brother who would bring the solution, saying, "... let the African find it himself!" (:31).

With regard to the relationship of the local church and the missionaries, Tshongwe wrote, "On the surface the relationship seems healthy, but in reality it is not ... In the past the elder brother (the missionary) was directly the leader, but now he is indirectly still the leader. He has become an adviser, avoiding the word supervision.

Tshongwe made several bold proposals towards building a better relationship and so echoed out loud what many others felt:

- a) Let the missionary and his family be part of the congregation and let him be entirely under the synod as a member...
- b) Especially these missions should be abolished to which the missionaries cling tooth and nail. ... most of the ideas that are put to us come from those mission[ary] conferences and they are a separation from our church. ... [Referring to a conversation regarding Afrikaners who had settled in South Africa and the British who cannot make themselves at home in Africa, Tshongwe concluded], "Let the missionary make himself at home, too!" (:35).
- c) It is necessary that the mission boards abroad should change their attitude. For everything that is done by the missionary has been directed by letter from the mission board abroad of which I never read nor see a copy ...
- d) Politically the missionary has become a coward to save his skin. ... Once a missionary asked openly this question: 'Which is better for the Africans - for the missionary to have fellowship with them and be chased out of the country, or is it better to remain and preach the gospel?' [Tshongwe replied], "I take my hat off to a missionary who has been chased out of the country rather than sacrifice his conscience on the altar of un-Christian practice.
- e) It has been observed that the missionaries do not want to mix or mingle freely with the African Christians and this is easily noticed at the celebration of the Holy Communion... (:35)
- f) Again and again it has been noticed that the missionaries have gathered round themselves faithful pastors whom they think they can get along with. ...(:36)

Tshongwe concluded,

Let us try and build a healthy relationship between the missionaries and congregation, especially the African pastor. I disapprove of this idea that the missionary is working to work himself out of a job, that he is a scaffold. Nor do I consider him as a partner. I think this is all crazy and makes the church to the African a foreign institution. ... The African pastor and the missionary in the congregation, black or white, they should stand as Peter and John stood before Jesus. I cannot overemphasize the point that the approach to the African with the gospel is very important ... (:37).

The Antsirabe conference report and discussion on *Mission-Church Relationships* was very optimistic and upbeat. From South Africa it was reported that the relationship between mission and church was good (119). It was recommended that the next conference give primary attention to a more effective partnership of mission and church in reaching out to the unevangelized (:122).

It is interesting to note that Rev. Paulus Mhlungu, in his *Country Report from South Africa*, referred to the oldest Lutheran church built in Cape Town in 1792 and the Moravian Mission work which was begun in 1737, followed by German, Scandinavian and American Lutherans (:134). It is significant that although still racially divided from the African churches then (and now) the settler church is seen by Mhlungu as part of the Lutheran heritage.

At Antsirabe it was judged unnecessary to hold a special session for Africans as “everyone spoke frankly in general sessions.” A resolution was adopted, “The Church and Discrimination” which called for the removal of discrimination on the basis of race, culture, nation or tribe; (witnessing) that all attitudes and practices of racial discrimination are sin and evil ... (and respect for) ... the freedom and individuality of all nations, peoples and churches (:61).

The idea of a *Confessio Africana* discussed at Marangu was not taken further. Pastor Paul Pakendorf, Chairman of the CCLF at the time, made the following controversial statement, saying,

The fact of the matter is that man in Africa is at a stage when he is assimilating the thought-forms and the theology of the West, but he has not yet shown signs of creative thinking in response to the Christian message. The concept of a *Confessio Africana* is not African in origin. It can only have come from the incurably romantic thinking of white men ... There will be confessions coming from Africa, but there will be many of them and they will not be the same ... in God's good time ... (:69 - emphasis mine).

### **Addis Ababa 1965 - “Ongoing ambiguities and dependence”**

The third AALC was held at a time of great optimism and expectation as African countries and churches gained “independence.” The conference theme, “*A living Church in a Changing Society*,” was developed through a series of bible studies focusing on the nature and role of the church. viz.

*The Church Gathered, Organized, Proclaiming, Confessing, Serving, Worshipping, Suffering and Hoping* (:11). Of the 216 participants, 22 were from South Africa. Of the latter eight were expatriates (52ff).

The key-note address by Bishop Josiah Kibira highlighted the ongoing ambiguities in the church.

He asked:

...if our key words are really “freedom and unity”... what hinders us from freely and independently analyzing ... and evaluating the role of the church in this situation?... both ecclesiological and theological freedom are lacking in the African churches ... we can hardly think independently. We depend mostly on advisors from Europe and America. Our theological boards are very adequate as long as they reflect American, Swedish or German Lutheran theologies rather than African theologies ... (:19). Our theological thinking is ‘linked up’ with our financial needs; and we ... cannot form our own opinions (:20).

Regarding the renewal and outreach of the church, Kibira said,

Africa is still a battle ground of the world like Abraham ... we move into an unknown country ... in faith ... (:27).

Regarding the topic of “Independence and Partnership” one report stated that,

The independence of a church is a gift given to it by God as it grows into a fuller realization of its calling and a more mature sense of responsibility to its mission. The term ‘independence,’ however, must be understood within the interdependence of all churches in the one Church of Christ and dependence of all members of the Body of Christ on Him who is the Head of the Body. Partnership is an understanding between the churches (young and old) to pray and work together in the unfinished task of bringing the Gospel to the world (:55).

The conference said very little about political issues and focused mainly on the theology of the church, church discipline and social ethics. It was recommended that, “through its leadership and clergy each church should deliberately seek answers to the problems of justice in the nation ... [and] openly and fearlessly criticize all violations of justice, suppression of human rights, corruption ... and that excessive nationalism which idolizes the nation or its leader” (:144-145).

### **Gaberone 1977 - “The brutal violence”**

A gap of twelve years occurred before the next *All Africa Consultation* held in Gaberone, Botswana in 1977, in preparation for the *Sixth LWF Assembly* in Dar-es-Salaam. Regional consultations had been held in Arusha (1973), Rustenburg (1973) and Tananarive (1975).

This consultation took place during the time of intense Southern African struggles which followed the Soweto uprising in 1976. In the opening sermon, Dr. Lukas de Vries of Namibia spoke fearlessly of the brutal violence of apartheid and “the guns ... roaring on our borders” and related this to the LWF theme, *‘In Christ - A New Community’* (:3).

Two major sub-themes dealt with by the conference were “Together in Mission” and “Self-Reliance.

“Self-reliance and the interdependence of churches’ was the theme of a bible study by Rev. Tesgara Hirpo. He wrote, “...koinonia includes spiritual and material goods, they cannot be

separated in this *koinonia*, they are just two sides of the same coin" (AALC 1977:20). "Equality does not mean that everybody has the same, but that under the guidance of God everybody has what he needs" (: 21).

Dean Philip Robinson from South Africa [later Bishop of the ELCB], spoke wisely of the new community in Christ which, " does not abolish distinctions, but rather, enables us to rise above them." (:26).

A background paper entitled "*A New Beginning in Partnership*" states, [In Jesus Christ] "We have been liberated from bondage to the structures of the 'old age' with its divisions of rich and poor, North and South, giver and receiver, dominator and dominated" (:60). The paper lamented that,

We made the gospel dependent on economic and political power and influence. ...We created a system of ecumenical relationships on a Western organizational pattern as a support system for partnership in mission, and expected AALA (*sic*) churches to adapt to this system ... The point is not to make a precise accounting of the sins of the fathers, or of their successors, but to demonstrate the role which alienation has played and in some way continues to play in our partnership relationships (:62).

A model for fellowship, mutual recognition and cooperation between culturally diverse but spiritually equally-endowed churches is found in the New Testament ... linked not by ties of organization but rather common faith and calling ... The mark of this relationship was frank and open sharing in mutual respect and affection, not withstanding occasional sharp differences and struggles over doctrine or policy (:63).

The concept of *Missio Dei* was widely supported: "... The goal of mission is never the Church itself but always the renewal of the whole created world. Therefore mission cannot be actualized in inter-church aid or ecumenical sharing alone ." (:65). Regarding unity and mission the report observed that the use of the Confessions as a basis for unity in South Africa had failed. "Other influences" played a greater role than doctrinal consensus (:69).

Regarding structures of partnership the report noted how "certain keywords appear frequently such as: trust, respect, equality, friendship etc." but that "wrong attitudes toward money are a major hindrance to genuine partnership." A response from South Africa was recorded: "No real change is possible as long as giving churches believe the money is 'theirs' and want to know what happens to it" (:72). The problem of inevitable inequality in bilateral relations led a number of churches to lobby for multilateral structures.

A number of resolutions were drawn up including "Ground Rules for Mutual Assistance" since, "The administration of mutual assistance has become increasingly complex due to the number of partners involved, the existence of multiple channels..." (:85).

The following recommendations and findings were presented in the "Edited Report."

With regard to “Interdependence”:

“It was noted that by and large Lutheran churches in Africa are still very dependent in many ways on North Atlantic churches ... [including] finances and personnel as well as dependence on structures of church life and even patterns of thinking which are alien and sometimes in opposition to many good African traditions ...(:218).

A question was raised as to whether there could be true interdependence between dependent African churches and their counterparts in the West. It was suggested that it might be more relevant, “ ...to strive towards self-reliance first.”

Eight recommendations were put forward including the following one:

African churches should be careful about any assistance given with conditions set by donor agencies ... especially ... assistance that tends to create dependence or which destroys genuine partnership and make dignity and self-respect impossible (:219).

Regarding *The Church in Mission* it was recommended to the Lutheran Churches in Africa, “That they not allow themselves to be understood merely as objects for mission ... that they themselves have the task of evangelizing and assisting in the liberation of the people of Africa (:220).

Regarding *The Identity of the African Church* it was agreed that, “The Lutheran churches in Africa have no special identity of their own. The expression of their life through worship and proclamation is basically westernized. Through the church, people are converted not only to Christ but also to western cultures, customs and thinking. The church in Africa is in the humiliating position of ‘always depending on help from others’” (:228).

Regarding *Self-Reliance* it was noted that, “...self-reliance presupposes ‘self-identity.’ African churches should first of all try to discover who they are, where they are and what they want to be to the future generations instead of waiting for others to tell them who they are...” (:230).

How churches should “first discover who they are” was not defined at the conference and is still an ongoing concern as this study demonstrates. (See pages 166 and 172ff below.)

### **Monrovia 1980 - “ A cover-up for continued paternalism”**

In April of 1980 an *All Africa Lutheran Consultation on Christian Theology and Strategy for Mission* was held in Monrovia, Liberia. Despite the frightening experience of a coup d’etat which took place two days after the start of the conference the meeting went ahead in the face of a revolution and ended on the 18th of April, the day Zimbabwe achieved independence (AALC 1980:1).

While previous consultations in Gaborone in 1977 and again in 1978 discussed a wide range of theological issues this conference set out to define a strategy for mission in the African and global

contexts (:27). Papers were delivered that focused on the multi-religious context as well as the socio-economic and political environment.

Rev. Risto Lehtonen specifically addressed the topic of “Models for Mission Partnership.

He agreed that the whole conception of sending and receiving churches was basically wrong saying, “All churches are partners in the world mission and in their own location” (:154).

His definition of partnership was based first and foremost on being one body in Christ in witness and service. The key word for Lehtonen was, “sharing.” He stressed that most models of partnership had not been designed to facilitate “two-way sharing” (:154).

As working principles he proposed that, “... the initiative, the setting of priorities and leadership should come as much as possible from the mission area.” Also, “... there needs to be diversity of patterns of partnership. Moreover each pattern of partnership should reflect the universality of the church ... a true universality which is not dominated by any culture, any continent or any church, least of all by those churches which have the most money” (:156).

While this is a worthy ideal the question for this study is still to what extent sharing will take place, in light of past and present inequalities?

Prof. John Mbiti delivered a provocative paper at the conference entitled, *Mission Outreach in African Theology*. He asked the question, “Why has African Theology said so little on Mission?” and summarized some of the extant literature in Africa (:173-177). He argued that,

There is only one model of mission known in the church in Africa and that is the mission which has come from overseas. African Christians cannot afford to copy or follow that model, since they have neither the money, power, personnel, political backing, nor even the guilt, that has gone with this model of mission. Yet this model has dominated the scene so powerfully that the church in Africa has not had the freedom to think out, develop, evolve and practice other models of mission.

He went on to say that,

[The] biblical basis of mission is what African theology needs to discover ... We enter into the business of mission because it is justified by the Bible, not because of seeing foreign missions at work in our continent (:180). ... We need ... to explore the meaning and purpose of conversion in the African setting ... Foreign missions in Africa have often left out the Kingdom of God. But the Gospel is all about the Kingdom of God (:181). ... The mission of the early church derived its power, direction, authority from the Holy Spirit - not from mission boards, offerings or societies (:182).

Mbiti pointed out that, “The relationship between the foreign missions which have initially ‘created’ the church in Africa during the last two hundred years and the mission of this church must be sorted out [and that] the relationship between foreign missions and the indigenous church in Africa has to be worked out” (:189). In this paper he recalled that the idea of



“partnership” had been aired at length, especially since Whitby (1947), but pointed out that in practice, “this partnership has been largely a cover-up for continued paternalism ...” (:190).

Mbiti admitted that,

The hands of the church in Africa are tied by the inherited structures, imported theological education, a mentality of dependence on Europe and America, expensive institutions and rigid ecclesiasticalism (:190). ... It is a relationship of imbalance ... (:190). The baby is out of the womb ... but still receives its nourishment through the umbilical cord (:192).

His conclusion expressed, “... an open-ended concern that the church in Africa has an incomplete picture or understanding of mission and has done no serious thinking about the mission of the church in Africa.” (:196).

Mbiti suggested that the church in Africa had to urgently develop a model that took the role and participation of the laity, of the whole people of God, seriously in the mission of the church (:183 & 197).

Mbiti sent out a number of challenges to the conference delegates when he said: “ Africa has to study these patterns [of mission] with all their strengths and weaknesses .. [even the African pattern] will have its own failures and will have to be open to change ” 183). According to Mbiti in this model, “It is the lay people that should be the missionaries. Ordained pastors are “too busy keeping the institutional life of the church going. (:183) ... Mission is by people, to people, for people .” (:184). He spoke of the theory and practice of mission saying,

>The theory of mission is not complete without considering the cost ... This is not in terms of money [but] in terms of persecution, suffering and even death ... (:183).

With regard to mission and other religions in Africa: The question of revelation arises ... It is being recognized more and more that the God who is traditionally acknowledged and worshipped in African religion is the same God who is revealed in the Bible ... The answers provided by foreign missionaries to this relationship are not at all adequate ... (:186).

> Method and Practice of Mission: ... missionaries have functioned through highly organized structures ... [and] is still “untouchable”, a hero who sacrifices his “supposed-to-be comfortable home and goes to supposed-to-be rough lands. ... We must educate people away from that model of mission (:187). Mission is open to all just as it is mission to all (:189).

Mbiti made the challenging statement that,

.... Mission cannot become fully spontaneous in the church in Africa until the church is made more free from the northern power centres. ... If the 40,000 foreign missionaries in Africa were to be matched by 40,000 African missionaries in Europe and America, there would be a terrible outcry and resistance. ...

It is important to see how racial and refugee demographics have shifted and changed in the last decades in Africa, Europe and North America, bringing new and difficult challenges into Christian

congregations. “But the church in Africa tolerates these ever increasing numbers of foreign missionaries,” observed Mbiti.

Chapter two of this study gives numerous examples showing that the relationship *between* expatriate church workers and local, indigenous churches remains ambiguous. But as Mbiti clearly demonstrates here, there is also ambiguity *within*.

Mbiti concluded,

I do not want to pass judgment on servants of the Lord, and if these comments are wrong, I ask for God’s mercy and forgiveness (:191). Africa cannot afford to carry out mission in a pompous way ... I appeal for a simpler life-style among our church leaders in Africa, being very conscious that I am one of them ... (:194).

### **Harare 1983 - “Solidarity and division”**

In December 1983 a *Pre-Assembly. All Africa Lutheran Consultation* was held in Harare, Zimbabwe prior to the 7th LWF Assembly, which was held the next year in Budapest

The conference theme was, *In Christ: Prophetic Witness to Justice and Hope in Africa Today*.

The conference expressed its conviction that faith in Jesus Christ meant solidarity with the poor, oppressed and the victims of injustice, racism, sexism and other forms of discrimination (AALC 1983:2).

The consultation discussed ways and means of strengthening the interdependence of African Lutheran Churches in their common witness.

At this consultation the recommendation was made that in the absence of any significant and meaningful process towards church unity on the part of “white” member churches in South Africa, “that as an interim measure the ‘white’ member churches be suspended from the LWF membership until such time as they reject apartheid publicly and unequivocally and move towards unity with other member churches in the area” (:10).

Recommendations also included matters such as economic justice, a more equitable sharing of resources, sexism in church and society, polygamy, the superpower rivalry and the rapid expansion of other faiths and ideologies.

The six conferences discussed above span a period of almost thirty years, starting just before the end of direct colonial rule in Africa and continuing into the heat of the battle against the apartheid regime in the 1980s. In Southern Africa the struggle against racism and oppression

understandably dominated the theological and partnership agendas for decades. The kinds of questions posed by Mbiti in the 1980s still have to be comprehensively addressed by Lutherans in Southern Africa. Although the vocabulary is changing, the crucial questions of identity, independence, dependency and interdependence remain.

### No easy “solution” to the ambiguity of Partnership

This chapter began by asking if partnership was possible in a world of difference and inequality.

Dr. Kunchala Rajaratnam, an executive secretary of the LWF National Committee in India, and a member of the LWF Council, has written and edited several articles about partnership including: *Whither Partnership? New Synonyms of Development* (1993), and *Sharing Life: An Alternative Paradigm of Development Partnership* (1994). Lutheran World Information 23/94 provided a translated summary of an article by Rajaratnam which originally appeared in the publication *die weltmission*.

According to Rajaratnam,

‘[P]artnership’ is nothing but an illusion; nothing has changed the unbalanced pattern between the rich and the poor nations after the ‘end’ of colonialism ... How is it possible to bring about the living out of equal relations in mutual respect in the face of a system of worldwide unjust economic and political conditions?... The essential thing is sharing ... not only of material but also of spiritual and religious resources ... it has to be structured in a mutual effort ... Those who genuinely want partnership, can learn it.

Rajaratnam listed five elements essential for partnership:

- Commitment* Both partners should be committed to common faith, ideology, methodology and goals
- Equality* Both partners should at least, in principle, regard each other as equal
- Mutuality* Both partners are not only committed to each other. They are also committed to serve their own communities as well as the community of the other partner.
- Openness* Conflict situations should be discussed and solutions should be found openly and in dialogue.
- Honesty* Both partners should always put their cards on the table and not pursue secret aims of their own. (:8).

While few would want to oppose such principles for partnership, it is the view of this study, however, that they can actually contribute further to the “illusion of partnership” which Dr. Rajaratnam is trying to expose, because the principles are generic and non-contextual. This study argues that it is an illusion to expect that partners can or will act consistently according to a set of prescribed guidelines. As Rajaratnam himself says, “Language can reveal things as they are

however, words can also disguise and cover up things, and **then it is important to be on one's guard**" (my emphasis).

Regarding the issue of "Honesty" (Point 5 above), this study argues that the most honest approach is not to merely make appeals for both partners to be honest and "always put their cards on the table" but to honestly admit that neither side will or can put all their cards on the table.

In the concluding recommendations to their book, *Partnership and Power*, Helander and Niwagila (1996:140-141) state that,

...It is necessary to pay attention to our values and attitudes and embark on a personal and collective journey of self searching and reconstruction ... Actions and behaviour can be understood and interpreted only within the cultural context and therefore, learning another culture takes time and great patience ... one should not make hasty conclusions on the basis of first impressions. ... Also it is important to remember that sometimes not every individual can be taken as a representative for the whole community."

The authors do touch on several important issues related to partnership such as the cultural context, but also do not go far enough in the view of this study. Our learning of other cultures, including our own, is never complete and our conclusions, whether hasty or slow, can never be final or complete. I would argue that older "experienced" missionaries and students of culture make as many "mistakes" as younger ones although they may make different mistakes. I have observed that often children with less experience and training make easier connections than the older and more experienced parents when meeting new or different people.

The long conversation regarding partnership is not over yet and in certain respects is only really starting as new voices are heard and new vocabularies added to the conversation.

In a similar fashion to Rajaratnam, Helander and Niwagila in the conclusion to their study, make it clear they do not provide a blueprint but rather recommend "guidelines" for such an endeavour (1996:140-145).

Their concluding recommendations are as follows:

1. Recognize and affirm cultural differences.
2. Know the theological basis of the partnership.
3. Know your own organizational structures.
4. Be aware of the motives for partnership.
5. Be aware that partners are both givers and receivers - Sharing who we are, before sharing what we have.
6. Partners should examine their perceptions and self perceptions - Reciprocal appreciation is related to the level of identity.

7. Partners should work towards a balanced power structure and have an understanding of the meaning and use of power.
8. Clarity of communication and the free flow of information is important.
9. Psychological healing is essential.

However in the view of this study the result is again a long list of “shoulds” and “musts,” outlining what partners should know and be aware of. For example, guideline number four states that, “Each partner should also be aware of one’s motives for the partnership.” The authors state that, “There are no ‘pure’ motives, instead motives are either recognized or they remain unrecognized” (:142). The 5th recommendation states that, “It is ... a necessity to share the **who** we are first **before** sharing the **what** we have. To experience a balanced partnership, the partners must become aware of their own and each other’s need and how they can satisfy them” (:142 - emphasis in original.) Regarding communication and information the authors state, “Open communication means freedom of expressing differing opinions. One should be courageous enough to say no where it is necessary and yes when it is possible ... Misunderstandings may occur but they should not be allowed to undermine the established partnership relationships” (:144).

While I agree that the authors have made a number of important observations and recommendations the impression, (perhaps not intended by the authors), is given that by following certain guidelines, misunderstandings, stereotypes and conflict will be avoided or decreased. (In Chapter Two this tendency to prescribe will be discussed again as well as the shifts away from this traditional approach. (See page 194ff.)

Deconstructive criticism as explained by Moore (1992:93) assumes the “instability of language” and is “wary of the cure that might turn out to be a poison.” To use a technological image: “Even before it hits the shelf, the virus has already colonized the newest anti-virus programme.” The virus and anti-virus cannot be easily distinguished or separated. Every “new” agreement carries something of the past with it. At the same time one should not underestimate the creativity and newness in each encounter. Is partnership possible? Have we really met or do we still have to meet and how? The story of the two companions on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35) and the division of the goats and the sheep (Matt. 25:31-46) are reminders of how difficult it is for people to recognize and distinguish the other in God and God in the other.

In the final chapter I will argue that the concept of mismeeting emphasizes that each “new” solution, understanding or encounter holds both old and new paradoxes and ambiguities within it. Short and long term missionaries, experienced and inexperienced workers, local and foreign

partners are all compelled to make ambiguous and compromised choices. Some decisions or actions may be judged differently by different partners in the relationship to be more fruitful and some not. However these will always be tentative and not final evaluations. The negotiation and renegotiation of identity and relationships is an ongoing process.

There is no way to avoid the complexity and conflict of relationships. There is no “safety” in distance, noninvolvement or in neutrality. Our actions are always characterized by compromise ambiguity and sin.

For example, Zephaniah Kameeta (in Enquist 1990:134), in an unpublished address to the Metropolitan Washington Synod on May 6, 1988 bluntly said, “Without blinking an eye, Christians speak of the rich and poor churches. This is a[n] heretical description of the church which distorts the Gospel and prevents true sharing ... With this false understanding the church allows herself to be conformed to the standards of this world...” Kameeta also questioned whether it was morally justifiable for Third World churches to accept assistance from Western Churches that profit from an unjust economic order (:137). For Kameeta sharing means interdependence and mutuality but he observed that in Namibia, “we see a one-sided entry into the life of others. [as] an act of aggression” (:138).

As Enquist (:134-136) explains, “The first step in God’s Mission to make many rich is for believers to go out with empty hands to meet their neighbours.” As Kameeta says (in Enquist:135), “[W]hen we go empty handed to one another, we can embrace ... when we are loaded down with luggage it is difficult even to shake hands.” Kameeta also speaks of the close connection between the concepts “shalom” and “meeting”. “To meet someone is to make peace with him (:135). Sharing is not just sending help or sharing one’s belongings but participation in the struggle for justice...” (:136).

Kameeta is correct in emphasizing the dimension of struggle and justice in any “meeting” but even here the problem is that we are never empty handed! Those who struggle also carry “baggage”. What Rajaratnam and Kameeta (and others) are saying raises the question for this study, of how one can establish when language or conversation is “revealing and not disguising” or vice versa? When must one “be on one’s guard” as Rajaratnam advises and when not? (See page 53 above.) This study supports the argument that language always reveals and disguises. This is what makes communication and partnership so complex. It is always “ambiguous,” always a “mismatching.”

But that is “normal!” It is not something to be avoided or covered up. There are different kinds of connections and differences but these cannot be solidified or systematized into a programme or general set of guidelines.

Bonhoeffer wrote in *Life Together* (1976:30), “Christian community is like the Christian’s sanctification. It is a gift of God which we cannot claim. Only God knows the true state of our fellowship, of our sanctification. What may appear weak and trifling to us may be great and glorious to God ... Christian brotherhood is not an ideal which we must realize, it is rather a reality created by God in Christ in which we may participate.”

In this chapter I have focused on the concept, perceptions and problems of partnership in mission as expressed in a number of missiological and historical sources. While the contexts, people and issues have not remained static what has been the same and what has not changed is the ambiguity of the connections and differences within and between partners. All share in the compromised and ambiguous nature of life, identity and relationships. This study stresses that Africa, Europe and America are not monoliths but full of diversity and contradictions. While the nature of differences and connections can and will change, they will not disappear nor will efforts to establish and maintain partnerships.

Is partnership possible? Clearly there have been and are many efforts to define and establish partnership relationships and overcome perceived obstacles. It is tempting to make new and improved lists of what “should” or “should not” be done or perceived in order to have more successful partnerships. While progress and new learning is not denied, “the messiness is here to stay,” to use a phrase from Bauman’s *Postmodern Ethics* (1993:245).

We all stand in several places at the same time as Volf (1996:207) points out. There is no safe or neutral ground. I have argued that it is difficult to link hands or embrace when we all carry so much “baggage.” Each time a “log” is removed from the eye (cf. Matt. 7:1-5), a “new log” becomes apparent which was not visible before with its own deep and intricate root system! No generation of mission partners has been or will be exempt from the complexity of relationships.

As Frederick Gaiser (1998:111-112) has so rightly put it, “ while division in the church is offensive and finally intolerable, difference is not only not offensive, it is desirable and essential

and inevitable, [but] we will not always be able to distinguish between difference and division.” What Gaiser says about the church is also very applicable to partnership relationships.

Chapter two of this study focuses on numerous and various efforts to define, negotiate and manage a relationship between “unequal” partners over the years in the South African context, and specifically between the ELCSA and the ELCA and their predecessors as they have laboured to establish and maintain their partnership. Chapter three of this study looks at how Lutherans are trying to move beyond “partnership” towards “communion.” Chapter four develops the concept of mismmeeting as an important element in the understanding of partnership relations.



## CHAPTER TWO

### BRIDGES AND GAPS : LUTHERANS AND PARTNERSHIP IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

#### **Introduction**

This chapter examines how Lutherans, and in particular American Lutherans, arrived, and “cooperated” in South Africa before 1975 (Part A) and then focuses on several issues which dominated “partnership” relations from 1975 until the early 1990s (Part B).

Historically Lutheran work in Southern Africa has typically been divided into three phases:

1. The **pioneer** period (1829-1889),
2. The period of Lutheran **cooperation** (1889-1957) and
3. the period of **consolidation** and **church establishment** (1957 -1965)  
(cf. Florin 1965:94, Hellberg 1979:30-31, Buthelezi 1987:1-4).

The early 1960’s saw the transition from mission-run synods to regional churches. FELCSA was established in 1966 with the aim of further consolidating and unifying the various Lutheran churches. However, only four regional churches came together to form ELCSA in 1975. Unity talks with the two “German-speaking” churches (ELCSA-NT and ELCSA Cape Church) have continued sporadically for over twenty years with little progress. This latest period has been a time of struggle for integrity, identity and survival. In an interview (October 1997) Bishop Buthelezi maintained that for ELCSA, “consolidation” is still not complete.

This chapter takes the position that partnership in mission is not a new concept although the terminology may change. No matter how limited or one-sided that relationship has been, Lutherans have been involved in different kinds of partnership relationships in Southern Africa for over 300 years and yet in many ways “still have to meet” as partners in mission.

After the establishment of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (ELCSA) as an “independent” body in 1975, it can be seen that old and new patterns of relationship existed side by side. This chronological overview seeks to “excavate” around some of the themes, issues and language that characterized relationships even though they were not always labeled or defined as partnerships at the time. New arrivals on the “partnership scene” should be aware of this long and complex history of mission relationships and take note that even as we meet for the first time, we have already met and yet have not met, and still have to meet. (See chapter four of this study - page 247 ff.)

## LUTHERAN “COOPERATION” BEFORE 1975 (PART A)

### Lutherans in South Africa before 1829

Before mission work began among the indigenous people, German Lutheran immigrants were already part of the early European settlements at the Cape. From 1665 Lutherans of “good standing” were permitted to partake of the Lord’s Supper in the Dutch Reformed Church (Hofmeyr 1994:25).

Georg Schmidt of the Moravian Mission started the first official mission work in 1737 among the indigenous people at Baviaanskloof (later renamed Genadendal, in 1737) but left the Cape in 1744 after opposition from the Dutch authorities (Balie 1988:19). The work was restarted in 1792.

The Genadendal system of “closed [self-supporting] settlements” became the model for other mission societies in South Africa and enjoyed protection by the government (Hofmeyr 1994:23). As Gunther Pakendorf (1997:262) explains, “Mission stations had a central place, with their temporal and spatial organization, in the reshaping of the African landscape: regular hours, controlled working time, straight walls, right angled roads ... houses built in the European style.” Pakendorf rightly identifies the mission station “... as the site of a peculiar paradox ... on the one hand a yearning for a lost harmony and on the other hand an onslaught on the culture, religion and political structures of the autochthonous population” (: 263).

In 1742 and 1745 petitions were sent by Lutheran settlers in the Cape to the Classis of Amsterdam for permission to start a Lutheran congregation. In 1778 the Council of Seventeen granted their request and the first Lutheran minister, Andrew Kolver, arrived at the Cape in 1780 (Hofmeyr 1994:25). Members of the Dutch Reformed Church were concerned that the Lutheran congregation would attract their young people and instituted a regulation stating that if parents belonged to different churches, the boys were to be baptized in the father’s church and the girls in the mother’s church. In 1805 there were about 400-500 Lutheran members. Services were held in German and once a month in Dutch (:241).

Today, the Strand Street Lutheran Church, which was established in 1774 in downtown Cape Town, is a national monument, but it is also a reminder of the colonial past and the history of racial isolation and division still in effect between Lutherans in South Africa today (Credo 1959:22).

After twenty years of unity talks the 58th Diocesan Council of the ELCSA - Cape Orange Diocese meeting in Worcester near Cape Town (28-31 October 1997), tersely stated in one sentence and without explanation: "Diocesan Council recommends to CC [ELCSA Church Council] that the unity talks with the Cape Church and ELCSA Natal-Transvaal Church be terminated" (ELCSA COD DC Minutes 58/7.8:6).

It is important to look at what lies behind and between the lines of this statement at this point in Lutheran history. This is in sharp contrast to the view expressed by Scriba and Lislrud (in Elphick & Davenport 1997:194) that, "the dismantling of apartheid ... in 1994 eased the conflicts between the white and black churches."

### **A complex history**

The history of Lutheran "cooperation" in South Africa prior to the merger in 1975 and the formation of ELCSA has been the focus of a number of studies. See for example:

Herman Schlyter *The History of the Cooperating Lutheran Missions in Natal 1912-1951* (1953); Pernie C. Peterson *Mission in South Africa: Studies in the beginning and development of the indigenous Lutheran Church in the Union of South Africa* (1957); Theodor Homdrom *The Problem of Lutheran Unity in South Africa*, MTh thesis LTS (1959); Hans Florin *Lutherans in South Africa* (1965); Elfriede Strassberger *Ecumenism in South Africa 1936-1960*, (DTh Stellenbosch. 1971); Helge Fosseus *Mission blir Kyrka: Luthersk kyrkobilidning i södra Afrika 1957-1961*; Wilfred and Eleanor Bockelman *An Exercise in Compassion* (1972); Carl-J. Hellberg *A Voice of the Voiceless: The Involvement of the Lutheran World Federation in Southern Africa 1947-1977*; and most recently the history of the Lutheran Missions and Churches in South Africa has been highlighted by George Scriba and Gunnar Lislrud in *Christianity in South Africa* (1997) edited by Richard Elphick and Rodney Davenport (:173-194).

The chronologies of the "Lutheran" presence in South Africa usually includes the Moravian and Rhenish Missionary Societies. While it is a fact that Lutherans have been in South Africa for over 300 years, Lutherans have ended up in a marginal position and are still divided. In the late 19th century Lutherans had more than a third of the mission stations in Southern Africa and had provided almost half of the missionaries in Natal and the Transvaal (Scriba & Lislrud in Elphick & Davenport 1997:173).

It is interesting to note that generally Lutherans are also portrayed in other South African church histories as having made a strong start in the early years but becoming less and less of a factor in the wider picture. 1980 figures put Lutherans at 3,6% of the total population (Kritzinger 1988:20). (See also du Plessis 1911, de Gruchy 1979, Hofmeyr and Pillay, 1991,1994.)

The “Rheinische Missionsgesellschaft” (Rhenish Mission Society) was formed on the 24th of June 1829 by a Cabinet Decree issued by King Friedrich Wilhelm III. The Rhenish Missionary Society began work in 1829 in the Cape Colony on a farm renamed Wuppertal (du Plessis 1965:202). This station was handed over to the Moravians in 1966. All other stations were handed over to the Dutch Reformed Church in the 1930s and 1940s due to financial constraints (Scriba & Lislrud in Elphick & Davenport 1997:175).

The Berlin Missionary Society (BMS) was formed in 1824 as the “Gesellschaft zur Beförderung der Evangelischen Missionen unter den Heiden” by several prominent university professors and members of the upper classes in Berlin (Lehmann 1974:9). The BMS started work at Bethany south of Bloemfontein in the Free State in 1834 and moved into the North Eastern Transvaal in 1860. Berlin missionaries were spread over a wider area than the other Lutheran societies in all of the original four provinces. The BMS was the largest of the Lutheran mission societies in Southern Africa with 73 stations and 1069 outstations in 1955 (Lislrud & Scriba in Elphick & Davenport 1997: 176)

The Norwegian Missionary Society (NMS) was founded in 1842 by Haugian, Gruntvigian and Moravian representatives with strong links to the state church of Norway (Simenson 1986:14). Hans Schreuder arrived in South Africa in 1844 and was appointed bishop in 1866. He broke away from the NMS in 1873 and formed the Schreuder Mission which was taken over by the Norwegian Lutheran Church in America (NLCA) in 1927 (Lislrud & Scriba in Elphick & Davenport 1997:178).

Simenson (1986:14) gives valuable insights into the background and world-view of the early Norwegian missionaries. Simenson is correct in saying that it is easy in retrospect to point out the ambivalence, inconsistencies and contradictions in policy and strategy of that time. Simenson is particularly interested in the direct and indirect effects of the missions on social and cultural change in Zululand up to the turn of the 19th century and concludes that, “The effect of missionary practice in South Africa was thus primarily determined by local conditions and not by missionary strategy (:263).

After 150 years the NMS is withdrawing from direct involvement in South Africa (See chapter two of this study, page196.

The Hermannsburg Mission Society (HMS) was established in 1849 by Ludwig Harms to counter the rationalism of the day and to preserve pure Lutheran confessional teachings (Lislerud & Scriba in Elphick & Davenport 1997:176). The Norwegian Missionary Society (NMS) extended a call for help to the Hermannsburg Mission (HM) in 1854. The HM entered the Western Transvaal in 1857.

Before the famous Berlin conference of 1885 which led to the colonial partitioning of Africa, the HMS and BMS agreed to their own partition dividing the then Transvaal along a line drawn due north from Pretoria, with the BMS in the east and the HMS in the west. By 1955 the HMS had 23 mission stations in Natal and 21 in the Transvaal (:176).

The Church of Sweden Mission (CSM) was formed in 1874. The first Swedish missionaries came to South Africa (Natal) in 1876 at the invitation of Hans Schreuder of the NMS. Notably the CSM was the first Lutheran mission to begin urban work in Johannesburg among Zulu speakers in 1902 (178).

The Free Church of Hanover was formed in Germany in 1865 after separating from the State Church of Hanover. In 1893 two Hermannsburg missionaries left the Hermannsburg mission and together with four German speaking pastors formed the Free Evangelical Lutheran Synod in South Africa as well as the Hanoverian Free Church Mission which did mission work on its behalf in the same areas as the HMS. The Hanoverian Free Church Mission received financial aid from Germany and America (Missouri Synod). Because of their strict views regarding the Lutheran Confessions they did not join in the Lutheran mergers in the 1960s - 1990s (:177).

The Norwegian Lutheran Church in America (NLCA) only entered the South African scene in 1927 through Norwegian connections. The Finnish Missionary Society began work in the then German South West Africa in 1868 (Florin 1965:93).

As Florin (1965) and Strassberger (1974) have pointed out, the history of the Lutheran church in South Africa is one of the most complex of all. Unlike the churches of English and Dutch origin, for Lutherans “there were barriers of language and of approach which made cooperation and efforts at union much more laborious” (Strassberger 1974:63).

Pillay and Hofmeyr (1991:255) observed that for Lutherans in the 19th century the struggle between “mission consciousness and culture-oriented church identity” stunted further expansion. They also noted that “Lutherans were also pro- and anti-apartheid government [and that]

consolidation has not proceeded very far at all” (:266). In Hofmeyr (1994:132) there is strangely no mention of Lutheran work under the subheading *Expansion of Christianity in Natal in the Second half of the 19th century*. There is however a section about the Berlin Mission in the Transvaal in the 1860’s and 1870s. In Hofmeyr’s view:

The history of the Berlin mission clearly exposes the missionaries to the charge that they were agents of forces seeking subjugation and dispossession of indigenous peoples... (:138). ...The Berlin missionaries do not seem to have appreciated the tensions facing [the Bapedi leader] Sekhukhune nor did they reveal any sensitivity to the ambiguity of their own position (:139). ... In 1850 there were 11 missionary bodies in South Africa. By 1904 there were thirty of which about 20 were in Natal. 175 000 acres had been set aside for these mission societies (:180). ... In Natal the Missions Reserve Act (Act 44) of September 1903 introduced new controls. It enabled the Natal Native Trust to take over the administration of the mission reserves and a tax of 3 Pounds was levied on every inhabitant. By giving the missions half of the tax the Natal Government made the missions co-beneficiaries and co-responsible for their policy of control (:181).

Hodne refers to the same act and notes that the missions were given exclusive right to labour in their own reserves (Hodne 1996:111).

The point to be emphasized here is that it is not only the Berlin missionaries who were in a compromising position but all of the missionaries were and are in an ambiguous position without exception. Martti Eirola (1992:286), in his study of Namibian history and the role of the Finnish Missionary Society concluded, “For the most part the Finnish missionaries in any case supported both sides in the process by communicating information from one to the other.”

This study argues, especially with recent partnership relations in mind, that encounters between people in the past were not more or less complex than encounters today.

### **Different yet the same**

Over the years the five cooperating Lutheran missions working in South Africa have been characterized as follows: Hermannsburg stressed correct Lutheran doctrine. Berlin stressed education and lay leadership, while the Swedes are remembered for their church architecture and high church liturgy. The Norwegians were characterized by a strong individual piety and concern for evangelism and the Americans were known for strong stewardship, education and outstanding managerial and administrative skills (cf. Florin 1965:114-115, Scriba & Lislerud in Elphick & Davenport 1997:178, Hodne 1997 1). While these are definitely generalizations and caricatures they are perceptions which continue to influence relationships today.

The Berlin and Hermannsburg missionaries were greatly influenced by Bruno Gutmann and

Gustav Warneck (Florin 1965:113). But the HM was not keen to cooperate with the BM since it was a church of the Prussian Union (Lutheran and Reformed) or with the CSM because of its “liberal” theology ( Schlyter 1953:86).

The Scandinavian and American missionaries followed the Anglo-American concept of the “three self’s” and aimed at, “winning individuals rather than entire tribes” (Florin 1965:114, Strassberger 1974:63). The Lutheran church was predominantly rural, isolated from other churches and from one another (Florin 1965:81) and dominated by missionaries for too long according to Florin (:115). A Berlin Mission statement observed that, “...it is depressing that since about 1890 there has been a lack of a definite missionary strategy” (Florin 1965:116). Karzek (1994:105) illustrates in the case of the Berlin missionaries, how the single-minded concern for mission to “crude and uneducated [rural] peoples” resulted in the neglect of any significant engagement with the people and problems of the city beyond that of providing a “haven” for migrants while they were away from the rural mission stations (:115). Karzek sees this history as an ongoing handicap for ELCSA today (:2). Interviewed in January 1998 J. L. Knutson recalls that most of the American missionaries came out of rural areas in America themselves. Representatives (indigenous pastors) from the Schreuder/Mankankanana Synod went to visit their members, who had migrated to, or worked in, the urban areas in Durban served by the NMS and Johannesburg under the CSM, to keep in touch and to remind them of their Mankankanana Synod roots back home.

While differences were clearly and often painfully evident especially to the mission societies themselves there is also the perception from “below” that the missionaries or expatriate coworkers were/are all the same in terms of their power, privilege and paternalism, whether they be from Germany, Norway, Sweden or the United States. These often opposite images, paradigms and experiences need to be better understood in theory and in practice. Numerous agreements were hammered out over the years but as long as power remained in the hands of the missions, “There was no mutuality, it was a paternalistic relationship instead of mutual partnership,” as Dr. Wilson Niwagila put it in *Partnership and Power* (1996:81). He also asserted that it is,

hypocrisy to talk about partnership as equality and mutuality when it does not exist in reality (85).

### **The General Lutheran Conference**

In 1889 at a meeting at Umpumulo, in Natal, representatives from the five missions formed the **Free Evangelical Lutheran Church Conference for South East Africa**, later called the

**General Lutheran Conference (GLC).** Bishop Nils Astrup helped organize this “forum” where missionaries could discuss current questions and problems, publish a joint newspaper, discuss the establishment of higher schools and develop common literary work (Homdrom 1962:9). The charter members clearly stated that this was not a coalition but a way to further the interests of the Lutheran church (sic) in Natal and Zululand, “particularly among the natives” (Homdrom in Credo 1962:11 - my emphasis). It met fairly regularly except during the two world wars which had profound effects on efforts toward union (:10). One of the aims included in the *Statutes of 1889* was “the creation of an Evangelical Lutheran Church with the development towards a South African evangelical ecumenical movement” (Hodne 1997:17). The GLC was finally dissolved in 1964 after the establishment of the regional churches (Schlyter 1953:8).

### **The Cooperating Lutheran Missions (CLM)**

While the various Lutheran missions usually worked in separate areas in South Africa all five were present in Natal. This combination did not happen anywhere else in the country.

On January 4, 1912 the first executive committee meeting of the **Cooperating Lutheran Missions (CLM)** was held in Natal (Hodne 1977:36). The Education Department in Natal declared that it was impossible for the government to aid numerous and competing training institutions. As Schlyter (1953:13) explained, “This forced the Lutherans to cooperate.” The CLM began with the Norwegian, Swedish and Berlin missions. The Schreuder Mission (ALM) joined in 1928 and the Hermannsburg Mission (HM) in 1938. The latter made it quite clear that “with cooperation we do not understand organic unity where independence is given up” (Schomerus in Hodne 1997:136). The Schreuder Mission felt closer to the “orthodox” Lutheran theology of the Hermannsburg Mission. The Hannoverian Free Church Mission joined in 1952 as an observer but left again in 1962.

There were several areas of work where, according to Schlyter (1953:8), “... cooperation was seen to be practical without intruding upon the different points of faith.” This included work on a common catechism, hymn book, liturgy, constitution and cooperation in the training of teachers, evangelists and pastors

However, none of these projects was without controversy and tension. How does one interpret the terminology, “...without intruding upon the different points of faith?” For example, during the Second World War, the controversy over allowing students enrolled at the teacher’s training



school and of the Reformed background to receive “Lutheran Holy Communion” at the Umpumulo Parish church was a matter of irritation that complicated the work of the CLM for several years according to Schlyter (:62). President J. A. Aasgaard of the NLCA wrote a letter, dated Nov. 25, 1942, advising separate services for the time being. This decision was based on the “Galesburg Rule,” originally dating from 1872 which stated that, “Lutheran pulpits are for Lutheran ministers only. Lutheran altars are for Lutheran communicants only” (Nelson 1980:311).

Hodne (1997:139) points out that the CLM did not have a constitution before 1940 but relied instead on a “Scheme of Cooperation.” A draft constitution was prepared in 1934 and adopted in 1940 with the stated aim,

to establish a self-supporting, self-propagating and self-administrating Lutheran Church among the Zulus and kindred tribes, preserving their characteristic traits as far as possible (Schlyter 1953:59).

While this was seen as a progressive statement at the time it suffered from major flaws. As Bosch (1991:451) and others have argued regarding the three-self’s approach, the lack of the fourth self, that of self-theologizing, was a major flaw which undermined the first three.

What was meant by “preserving their characteristic traits as far as possible”? This study argues that while this was intended to show cultural sensitivity it was too static a view of culture.

The wording of the aim of the CLM reflects an attempt to combine two streams of thought. Siegfried Knak, Berlin Mission director (1921-1949), followed Warneck’s concept of mission as education and supported Kahler’s distinction between mission and propaganda, the latter being the mere duplication of the structures of the sending church. “A church must not only be self-reliant, self-ruling and self-propagating but also a reflection of the national character of its members” (Lehmann in Karzek 1994:114).

Pakendorf (1997:263) points to this very thing when he writes, “...This transformation is in itself contradictory, and nowhere more so than in the case of German missions since their attempt at conversion of Africans to Christianity and clearly also to the Protestant work ethic is accompanied by the stated desire *not* to change their traditional culture.

However, in the end, especially in the multiethnic cities, it meant preserving the traditions and traits of the various missions rather than a genuine respect for and understanding of the differences and complexities of rural and urban culture and structures. For many, the clear agenda

of evangelism, education and medical work was to supplant indigenous with western knowledge and culture. Here one thinks of Burgess' reference to the medical dispensary as a "tremendous wedge in piercing the darkness of heathen practices" (1934:210). Director Martin Wilde of the BMS wrote in a book after his visit to South Africa just before the First World War, "It is the mission's task to educate Black people to a Christian personality. " (Wilde in Pakendorf 1997:271).

While the theological education given was western, self-theologizing of a kind, was taking place and new connections were being made (cf. Bosch 1991:452). For Lutherans in Southern Africa, the results of joint training by the CLM cannot be overemphasized. As Lislrud put it, "All the present bishops of ELCSA were trained at LTC ... Without their theological training ... I doubt very much that ELCSA [would] have been established" (Lislrud Correspondence 1998). The LTC brought together students from different parts of Southern Africa and also through the Missiological Institute facilitated contact with other churches, people and organizations such as the Christian Institute led by Beyers Naude and the Interdenominational Committee for Industrial Mission (ICWIM) represented by Willie Cilliers.

### **Two views of the CLM**

In 1949 an **Advisory Synod** was proposed which would include two "African" and two missionary delegates from each cooperating mission. The synod was to meet every year (Schlyter 1953:75). The first meeting took place on the 8th of September 1949 (without Hermannsburg and Hanoverian Free Church delegates) and worked closely with the CLM Executive during its seven years of existence (Homdrom 1962:13)

The "impressive" work of the Advisory Synod included a thorough revision of the Draft Constitution. The "object" or aim of the 1912 constitution was expanded to include not only Zulus, Swazis and Xhosas but all Lutheran Africans in Southern Africa. As Scriba & Lislrud (in Elphick & Davenport 1997:183) point out, this was to reflect the emerging view which countered the apartheid government's ideology, that the church was to be geographically not culturally based.

The Advisory Synod also provided advice on vestments, an altar book, hymn book, church members' contributions, a common salary scale for indigenous church workers and the church paper "Isithunywa" (Homdrom 1962:16). Homdrom wrote, "The CLM now had the satisfaction of being in close contact with the African people on all vital issues. And participation in the

Advisory Synod proved to be a very happy experience to all” (:16). Rev. M. J. Mpanza wrote in the same edition of *CREDO*, marking the 50th anniversary of the CLM:

As to the origin of the CLM, I remember ... teaching at Umpumulo Training College ... There I saw our Lutheran fathers who were the founders of the CLM ... (:18). We trust that our American and European missionaries will not leave us ... we are very grateful and indebted to the various mission boards of our mother churches abroad for their wonderful contributions to the peoples of Africa (:34).

In contrast to the positive views expressed above, Florin, writing in 1965, included the observation by Joëlson that “[the] CLM has never been very much liked by the Africans, probably because it has been a missionary organization excluding the Africans. As it was, the new church needed subsidies from the very start and the missions on the field wanted to coordinate the subsidies given to the church by maintaining the rule that all requests for money should have to be submitted to the missions through CLM and to the Home Boards through JCSA. From the viewpoint of the church it seemed to be the missions’ wish to remain rulers of the church and it was felt as lack of confidence [in the indigenous leadership]” (Joëlson in Florin 1965:122).

Lislerud agreed that the missionaries had too much influence: “Maybe we were too eager to occupy seats in the different committees, synods, assemblies etc.” He referred to a “Dialogue Meeting” in Pietermaritzburg (November 19 - 20, 1970) [See chapter two of this study, page 98] where Dr. M. Buthelezi expressed his strong opinion on the “problem of a missionary dominated church” (Lislerud Correspondence 1998).

From 1962 to 1983 the CLM continued to function in order to supervise the work among Indians and take care of certain properties [in “white” areas] for the church. The CLM was dissolved in 1986 after 75 years of existence.

## **NLCA/ELC/ALC involvement in South Africa 1927 - 1960**

This section contains excerpts from annual reports of the mission bodies of the ALC and its precursors from 1927-1960, especially with reference to South Africa. It is important to listen to the language and themes expressed which give an indication of the thinking about mission and Africa as well as the self-perceptions of the day. This section reflects the language of official reports and the observations of the officials involved. These reports do not necessarily convey the

range of attitudes and perceptions of pastors and people in congregations across the Midwest or in South Africa itself. That would be a separate study in itself.

### **Family Connections**

In a study on partnership an important question to ask in this case is how did the American Lutherans become involved in a relationship with South Africa in the first place? What were the objectives and perceptions of this involvement and how did these change over time?

The story of the arrival of Hans Paludin Schreuder in South Africa in 1844 is well documented as well as the break with the Norwegian Missionary Society and the establishment of the Church of Norway Mission (CNM) in 1873, known in South Africa as “The Schreuder Mission - Mankankanana Synod” (Burgess 1934:110f : Hesterman 1967:13).

When additional support was needed, “Help from America” came about through a family connection. There was great interest in the “Zulu” mission in the home of Prof. Peter Laurentius Larsen the first president of Luther College, Decorah, Iowa. Larson was married to the sister of Nils Astrup who arrived in South Africa in 1883 after Schreuder’s death in 1882 (Burgess 1934:188). Nils Astrup was followed by his brother Hans Astrup. His son Johannes returned to South Africa in 1896 after studying at Luther College and Luther Seminary, St. Paul. By 1926 three missionaries, Johannes Astrup, Heinrich Otte and J. F. Ylvisaker were being fully supported by American Lutherans in the Midwest.

Ten years after the formation of the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America in 1917, a third arena of overseas mission work was added to that being undertaken in China and Madagascar. The Schreuder Mission which was controlled by a board in Norway and partly supported by the former Norwegian Synod was taken over by the NLCA at its 1926 Annual Convention. The new title would be “The American Lutheran Mission in South Africa (Schreuder Mission).” After 1927 the Farups, Gronlis, and Nelsons came directly from the United States to Natal. <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> J.A. Nelson, a farmer and great uncle on my mother’s side, did agricultural extension work for the ALM in Natal. He died in Sioux Falls, SD at the age of 93 in April 1998.

## Mission Rhetoric

It is important to focus on the rhetoric of each period in order to better understand the concerns and perceptions of the various partners at that time as well as the present time. The intention is not to judge any person or period but to gain a better appreciation for the way assumptions and perceptions operated then and now.

The 1927 report of the Board of Foreign Missions to the NLCA reported in Norwegian and stilted English that, "This mission field has now six workers and the congregation of Christian natives has during the last decade grown from 5000 to 7220." The names of the mission stations, missionaries and six "native" ministers were listed in the statistics for that year (NLC Report 1927 :93-94 ).

The 1928 report expressed the importance of the legal transfer of the Schreuder Mission to the NLC in 1927 and issued a call for additional workers including a pastor, teacher, agriculturist and "a couple of nurses." The Mission Secretary, Rev. Helge Hoverstad, concluded his report in glowing terms

The work in South Africa and in Madagascar has brought a rich harvest. In these fields there are open doors everywhere. These doors are God's gift to our Church and it becomes our duty to enter and do more work, resulting in more fruit and more blessings for the daughter church in the field and for the mother church at home. Let us not weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not (NLC Report 1928:248 - my emphasis).

It is important for the purposes of this study to identify and reflect on the images created by terms such as "penetration," "fields" and "open doors."<sup>2</sup> (See Word List: Appendix A, page 292 )

In his report of 1928 Field Secretary Rev. J. R. Birkeland gave a short history of the work that was started in Natal by Hans P. Schreuder in 1844. He also reported on his two-month visit to the field and a four-day conference held with missionaries and all the "native" pastors (jointly and separately) to discuss problems and the advancement of the work.

With what this study considers considerable insight for that time Birkeland observed that

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<sup>2</sup> The Ecumenical Coalition on Third World Tourism (cf. O'Grady 1990:3) is an organization which monitors the activities and effects of global tourism as well as the way in which language and images are used to promote tourism. This study argues that while partnership programs attempt to avoid the accusation of practicing ecclesiastical tourism the ability to travel remains largely the prerogative of wealthy churches and individuals.

There is considerable unrest among the natives in Africa and not least in South Africa. Here perhaps more than in any other continent are found the materials for an interracial conflict between the white and nonwhite worlds. The postwar worldwide movement for "self determination" found an echo here. A race consciousness is awakening and a nationalist movement attempts to link together all the black races throughout the continent. That the natives have many just grievances no disinterested person can deny. The native worker has in too many cases been underpaid and the white man's exploitation has caused distrust, dissatisfaction and antipathy in the black man's heart and mind.

A summary of the causes that are uniting natives in a common expression of their grievances may be found in a paper read before the Natal Missionary Conference by Mr. Jabavu, a South African native professor of Bantu Languages at the South African Native College, Fort Hare. [He lists several points including economics, droughts, disproportionate agricultural assistance, discriminatory legislation, bad housing, insecurity of land tenure.] An industrial system that allocates employment on the basis not of capacity but of colour is not only economically unsound but is morally indefensible. [He decries the fact that seventy years after the first baptism by Schreuder there are only eight native pastors!] (His exclamation mark.) In conference with all the native pastors and the missionaries it was unanimously agreed to cooperate with the three other mission societies in their theological seminary work at Oscarsberg (NLC Report 1928:253).

By quoting Jabavu, Birkeland demonstrated a remarkable willingness to listen to an African voice but when he writes about the educational and medical work he returns to and reflects the mind set of the time which assumed, what we would now call, a very one-sided learning process. The idea of the "two-way street" in mission was still several decades away.

Birkeland proudly asserted that, "The history of native education in South Africa is the history of South African Missions, for it is due entirely to the efforts of missionaries that natives receive any education at all" (:252). Pederson (1957:33) quotes the Tomlinson Report of 1955 which found that "in 1951, of 5870 Bantu (*sic*) schools in the Union of South Africa, 84.5 % were under church control."

Birkeland then made an impassioned plea for a "medical man" on "our field":

After a careful study of the map of missionary occupation in Natal, it will be readily seen that the field of expansion is limited... we do not need to travel very far from our stations before we may witness some of the most sickening and devilish forms of heathenism ever seen on this dark continent. There are thousands and thousands of heathens all about our stations who have not yet been touched and of whom many only have seen the worst in the 'white man's civilization.' (his quotes.) ...Thus the goal set by the late Bishop Astrup would be realized: "The aim of the Zulu Mission - the heart of Africa." Our black brothers and sisters do not forget us here at home on both sides of the Atlantic ... Two words are predominant in their [prayers]: Norway - America. Thanks and praise to God for the people who are bringing them the Gospel (:255).

Birkeland mentions the "native" pastors by name in the report and adds,

“The lady missionaries, single and married, on our field are also not to be forgotten” (NLCA 1928:252). [The latter are named in the 1930 statistics (:403) as “white Pastor’s wives” - PJK.]

Andrew Burgess visited South Africa with the objective of writing a book for the Board of Foreign Missions which was published in 1934 with the title, *Unkulunkulu in Zululand* [God in Zululand]. The book begins with the slogan: “To our torch-bearers in Dark South Africa” (:5). The goal of the missionaries was made clear in the introduction “to win the heart of Africa” and to address the needs of the “groping, unshepherded masses that still await His message” (:12). Burgess wrote in detail about Nils Astrup’s vision of converted Zulus bringing the Gospel to their dispersed “kinsmen” in Central and East Africa. In 1889 Astrup traveled with Evangelist Sem Msomi as far as the Limpopo River, reading the Book of Acts as they journeyed (Burgess :180 and interview with J. L. Knutson 1998).

The first chapters of Burgess’ book include the following titles, “*Glimpses of Paganism, Zulu kings and their Realm, Life in the Zulu Kraal, Facing a Closed Door and The Penetration of Zululand.*” Burgess writes about the early missionaries including, Samson, [Schreuder’s Zulu evangelist who learned to speak Norwegian (:171)], Simon Luthuli who accompanied Schreuder to Madagascar (:153) and Samuel Ninela, the first “native pastor in our Zulu mission” (:184). Burgess concluded with the challenges and problems being faced namely, “uplifting Zulu womanhood, medical work and cooperative work in educating teachers and pastors.” Burgess (:207) used a quotation from J. du Plessis’ classic book, *A History of Christian Missions in South Africa* first published in 1911 : “In Africa the Bible and plow must go together.”

Burgess also referred to the “breakdown of the tribal spirit, the temptations of the city and race unrest.” He strongly believed that “regeneration not by social reforms but the Gospel sets free,” and was concerned about the slow progress towards the goal of self support (:244). The Three Self’s concept was also mentioned by Burgess in this context.

Dr. Burgess, assisted by several seminary students, started work on a revision of his book in 1952 but this did not materialize (Interview J. L. Knutson 1998).

Pernie Pederson produced an illustrated booklet, *Mission in South Africa*, as part of a series on the various mission fields of the ELC in America published in 1957. The language and graphic material of this book consciously reflects a gradual shift from paternalism to “...a growing sense of partnership ... in the one great task of bringing the message of Christ to all people” (Pederson 1957:44).

In the early 1960s June Kjome was asked by the Board of World Missions' Director Rolf Syrdal to write a book based on her experiences in mission work in South Africa. The title, *Back of Beyond: Bush Nurse in South Africa* (1963), reflects a more nuanced account by someone who had lived and worked in the country for a number of years. In the final chapter, Kjome wrote, "Dark Africa has been the name applied to the African continent for too long. At one time that term was appropriate. However, it does not describe the Africa I know" (:220).<sup>3</sup>

The NLC report of 1930 referred to the "orderly and settled political conditions in South Africa." This was relative to the turbulent conditions in China at the time. The report made the ironic observation that "indeed the race feeling runs high and is a very burning question all over South Africa, but we cannot say that it interferes seriously with the work in our field. The government is friendly and offers some aid to missions" (NLCA 1930:379).

The 1930 President's Message by Rev. J.A. Aasgaard repeated a common theme,

The cry of old, "Come over to Macedonia and help us," is still calling and coming from the unsaved millions on our foreign mission fields ... Nationalism, communism, self determination of nationalists and the ever increasing bringing of the White Man's burden of sin and temptation in its modern form are making difficult for many a missionary the work of his calling (:11).

In 1930 NLCA Mission policy was spelled out in the following order with regard to *I Church organization, II The Ministry, III Schools and Institutional Work, IV The Use of Foreign Funds*. Steps were outlined to implement the Mission's policy of establishing a self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating Church. [Clearly, at this stage, this policy (:380) was directed mainly at China not South Africa - PJK.]

In 1931 there were six white pastors, eight "Native" (*sic*) pastors, 45 native evangelists and 34 native catechists. With the increase in candidates attending the seminary the report had "reason to believe that the outlook for the mission is brighter than ever" (NLCA 1931:370).

Field representative Helge Hoverstad reported to the NLCA General Convention of 1932 that while each mission field had its own problem: "one is common to all, self-help." He went on to

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<sup>3</sup>The fact that June Kjome remained abreast of developments in South Africa and was a tireless anti-apartheid campaigner into the 1990's could easily be material for another book, "Beyond Back of Beyond." Kjome acknowledged that such a book is never finished and that she is still "editing" her original book in her mind (Kjome interview July 1998).



explain that in recent years there had been a great change in the minds of missionaries, boards of missions and foreign mission leaders.

As never before it is now seen and admitted that self-help is something that should have been emphasized and brought along from the very beginning ... It is really also more in harmony with the biblical and apostolic method ... The rating of the native's ability for self-help should never be judged from the European or American standard of living, but from that of the natives' own country. Our missionaries see and understand this. They are trying their best to emphasize self-help but it is very difficult where the mission for years and years has carried most or all of the burden. It goes forward though slowly... .

He hastened to add, "What has been said in this paragraph is in no way to reflect upon our pioneer missionaries" (NLCA 1932:272).

Looking at these annual reports this study agrees with Hutchison's statement that often, "the dilemmas were not emphasized in reports but were well understood by many missionaries and mission executives (1987:12). Stephen Neill was also quoted (in Beyerhaus and Lefever 1964:185) as saying that the missions were guilty of creating the myth of the "younger churches," and of "speaking two languages and showing two faces, one to the home front and a different one on the foreign field."

The 1934 NLCA report proudly stated that "an increase in contributions from congregations [in South Africa] from 222 Pounds to 323 Pounds shows that the native church is on the right way toward self-support" (NLCA 1934:85). Severe testing by drought and malaria caused thousands to perish but "these tragedies were used of God to further his cause" (:84).

J. E. Gronli, the new Mission Secretary who served as a missionary in South Africa from 1928-1938, reported in 1938 that there was "a great deal of agitation" on account of the "new Native Bills" being introduced in Parliament saying, "It is hoped that justice and forbearance may prevail and that the various races in South Africa may devote their strength to the building up of the country on the basis of Christian love" (:114). "We face an insidious propaganda carried on by anti-Christian forces especially through the native press and through the free distribution of literature" (NLCA 1936:116). He noted that the limited voters roll was changed so that, "4 white men would represent the natives." Gronli concluded rather naively: "Time will tell how this system will work" (NLCA 1938: 117).

## Old and New Themes after World War II

The 1940, '41 and '42 reports briefly covered the effects of the war on the work on the mission fields stating that, "There is close cooperation with the missions from Germany the so-called Orphaned Missions" (NLCA 1942:105).

The handing over of Rhenish congregations (The Rhenish church did not belong to the CLM) to the DRC in the Cape is still lamented by some church leaders in the Cape Orange Diocese as a loss for the Lutheran movement in Southern Africa.

1942 marked the 25th anniversary of the union of the Hauge, Norwegian and United Church as the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELC). The report recalled that in 1917 the US declared war on Germany and 25 years later an even greater war was underway.

Looking back, Aasgaard openly admitted that there had been "mistakes and errors and things which might have been done differently," and asked for "a spirit of forgiveness for sins of commission and omission" (NLCA 1942 He went on to say

Our Country is not seeking more living room. **God has given us the resources and the land** that we need and more besides. There is the earnest wish that there may be under God living room for all the nations and races of the world that have the right to exist and the right to live (:12 - my emphasis).

For many German and Scandinavian immigrants in the late 19th and early 20th century America was seen as a gift from God. The later preoccupation with the battles against the enemies "without"; such as heathenism, communism and fascism in the 1940s, '50s and '60s was a clear indication of the arrogance and naiveté of the Christian West. As P. Williams (1990:205) astutely observes, "Few saw the problem lying within." As seen in chapter one of this study (:20f) German and Scandinavian Lutherans in America did not and generally still do not see themselves as settlers who benefited from the conquest and colonial exploitation of America, Asia and Africa.

In 1946 Dr. Aasgaard reiterated the common theme of the "Macedonian call" with special references to teaching, training and medical work (:8). Interestingly Bosch examines the way in which "the man from Macedonia became *the* archetype" in the nineteenth century of helpless and deprived heathen people in need of the benefits of western charity and mission (1991:289-290 - his italics).

The 1947 report stated that,

the field in South Africa has enjoyed peace and the blessings of a friendly government. Evangelistic and educational work have continued without interruption.

Medical work had not yet been authorized by the government but one doctor was in preparation (NLC 1947:151). (See *Excursus on Medical Work* below, page 176.) It was also reported that the newly established LWF was assisting the European societies and this it was hoped would increase the sense of Lutheran unity among the missions and create a stronger cooperative spirit among the various missions for future enterprises.

Second World War brought a new global consciousness and, as the report stated, “ [a] growing sense of responsibility and interest in foreign mission. Humanly speaking, the next decade will be decisive for foreign missions, even if it is an advance through storms of political and national conflicts of this day” (ELC Report 1948:9).

Specifically with regard to South Africa the report stated that,

This field was not greatly affected by World War II ... Peace has been maintained ... there has been an intensified yearning for western learning on the part of the nationals ... No opposition or interference has been noticed in our spiritual program ... government assistance has been received for our medical work (:146).

J. L. Knutson points out that “justice” was not a common word in the vocabulary at the time. The link between justification and justice had not been made (Interview, January 1998). This connection was clearly made almost forty years later at the Lutheran *Consultation on Justification and Justice* held in Mexico, December 1985 (ALC Report 1986:61).

According to Stephen Neill, in his book *Creative Tensions* (1959:54-55), “Whitby [1947] was the first opportunity for the renewal of the worldwide fellowship of the Churches after the end of the second world war. Old landmarks had been removed, old traditions broken ... All churches, older and younger alike, were challenged to rethink their position.

It is very important for this study to note that old and new paradigms can be seen to exist side by side simultaneously. For example, the revised *Rules of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* proposed to the Church Convention for adoption in 1948, reveal old and new themes (ELC Report 1948:150-153) . In the Preamble the “Divine Commission” given in Matthew 28:18-20 is quoted.

The Rules state that:

Obedient to the Savior's command the Church carries on mission work at home and abroad (:150).

Concerning "*The Foreign Field The Work of Missions*," the rules state that,

The Word of God shall be preached and the Sacraments administered in accordance with the canonical books of the Sacred Scriptures and the confessions of the ELC. The ecclesiastical functions are to be carried out as nearly as feasible in accordance with the accepted ritual of our Church.

Only when the missionary is convinced that the Word has borne fruit in genuine conversion shall the catechumen be baptized...

The missionaries shall endeavor to develop self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating church bodies upon each mission field through the early establishment of congregations ... and the training of a native ministry (:151 - my emphasis).

The 1949 presidential message by Dr. Aasgaard was more introspective and humble, declaring

There are disturbances and troubles over the entire world ... For all practical purposes the war is not over... We are reaping only what we have deserved because of our sins and transgressions, individually as well as nationally ... We have lived in sheltered and protected positions ... To him who has been given much, much shall be required ( ELC Report 1949:8-9).

Aasgaard also spoke enthusiastically in his report about the possibility of union with the ALC and UELC (:9).

### Progress "according to plan" in the 1950s

The 1950 report by Dr. Rolf Syrdal, who replaced Gronli in 1947, referred briefly to some limitations in government aid from the Malan government and growing apprehension and stated

the situation on our field in South Africa also has been conducive to good missionary activity (ELC Report 1950:146). 1950 marked a high point in the largest number of foreign staff. The policy of apartheid (*sic*) of the Malan government was causing some apprehension with regards to possible government interference in educational and medical work.

For the first time the need for evangelistic work by the ALM in the industrial areas of South Africa "where men of our area find employment" is mentioned by Syrdal in his report (:169). This was a major shift away from the traditional focus on rural Africa, creating heated debate between the older missionaries [some of whom had grown up in Zululand] and the young post-war recruits. Although urban work in Durban was perceived by the NMS as its prerogative, Syrdal argued strongly that the ALM should also go into Durban and that it did not have to ask the NMS for permission ( J. L. Knutson, Interview July 1998).

However, the colonial and imperialist assumptions regarding for example, the dignity of labour, and the ideological and structural captivity of the church in the middle-class host society, resulted in what James Cochrane (1987:133) describes in his book, *Servants of Power*, as "service to, rather than solidarity with workers."

The 1952 ELC President's Message dealt at some length with the subject of evangelism following a conference in Minneapolis in January 1952 with the theme "*Share Christ Today*."

The word, 'Go ye and make disciples,' is the charge of every follower of Christ. It is given not only to the regular ministers and ordained servants of the Lord, every Christian has received the commission to witness and to teach others...

We are engaged in a tremendous struggle not only in America but in the world, that Christ may be lifted up ... We are facing a disturbed and despairing society (ELC Report 1952:11).

Although only involved in Natal and part of Madagascar, under the sweeping generic heading "Africa," the following brief and confident report was given:

**The work in Africa has progressed without interruption according to plan.** The racial tension mentioned by many writers as existing in South Africa has seemingly had no direct effect upon our mission activity. Our missionaries continue to enjoy the full confidence of the people among whom they work ... One significant development ... was the decision to adopt a program which calls for a definite annual increase in self-support toward a self-supporting church (:180-181 - my emphasis).

At this stage self-support was only discussed with regard to the salaries of African pastors and evangelists, not the church's institutions.

In 1953 it was reported by Syrdal with a note of apprehension that,

the racial riotings (sic) that have taken place in Durban close to our mission field have been between the Indian population and the natives. So far our mission field has been spared the tensions manifest in the larger cities and the missionary is welcome among the Zulu people for whom we have our responsibility. How long this favorable situation will last we have no means of knowing. It seems urgent that an indigenous church be established as soon as possible because it is inconceivable that our mission field will escape the hatreds and tensions brewing in that section of the world if they continue to spread. Efforts are being continued by the missionaries to lay the foundation for one Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (ELC Report 1953:177 - my emphasis, see page 166 of this study).

It was in 1953 that the *Council of Churches on a Lutheran Foundation* (CCLF) was formed as a non-legislative body to coordinate "Lutheran interests" in Southern Africa (Florin 1965:94). This body was dissolved at its twelfth and final meeting on the 24th of February 1966 which was also

the constituting meeting of the Federation of Evangelical Lutheran Churches in Southern Africa (FELCSA).

The 1954 BFM report attempted to identify the cause of the racial unrest and its effects and openly admitted to the detachment of the missionaries. In October 1954 Dr. Syrdal told James and Arlene Knutson, as they prepared to depart for South Africa for a seven-year term, that in his opinion, because of the explosiveness of the situation, they would probably not even complete a full term there. In addition, their instructions, as for many others at that time, were to “work themselves out of a job” ( J. L. Knutson, Interview 1998a).

Syrdal reported that,

The Union of South Africa continues to be marked by a seething spirit of unrest. Most of the struggle caused by the Malan government with its policy of Apartheid is still largely confined to the political circles, but the results have caused suffering of physical, moral and spiritual nature, to untold numbers of natives, colored and Asiatics. Our mission field has been largely untouched ... because our work is in rural areas, largely on native reserves. We rejoice in the possibility of continued peace for our activities but feel definitely that we must, as a mission, get into the center of the stream of difficulty and suffering by ministering to the people in urban, mining and industrial areas” (ELC Report 1954:161).

The enactment of the new Bantu Education Law ... is one step in the nationalization of education and is also a tightening of control by the government upon the natives ... Our missionaries are of the opinion that the effects of this law will not be felt upon our field for a considerable period of time ... Happy for present opportunities the mission is also taking steps to assure continued contact with the youth when the law goes into effect (:162).

Syrdal also reported on the implementation of the “new Bantu educational law” starting in 1955

...our mission has ... worked on the change of policy that must take place when all our schools are lost to us and become a part of the political machine controlled by the nationalist party under the radical leader Strijdom. ...

According to Homdrom (1962:9) the missions seriously considered retaining one or more schools, however, because of the tremendous financial burden involved, they agreed to retain control only of the Seminary, the high school in Eshowe and two hostels. In 1961 the high school was also taken over by the Native Affairs Department (Hodne 1997:177). Thus the CLM was “squeezed out” of the education field after almost half a century of involvement (Homdrom 1962:9).

In response to the Werner Eiselen report, which laid the foundations for Bantu Education, a “*Memorandum of the Cooperating Lutheran Missions in Connection with the Report of the Commission on Native Education*” was drawn up by the CLM. This document questioned the

principles underlying “bantu education” and especially the move towards what they saw as a “secular education system” (Hodne 1997:190). The fact that Eiselen was the son of a Lutheran missionary is still a matter of great embarrassment and anger on the part of some Lutherans who were personally subjected to “Bantu Education” (Interview H.J. van Wyk, 1997).

Villa-Vicencio (1988:102) describes what he calls the abdication of the churches to the apartheid government’s introduction of Bantu Education. There was no unified opposition on the part of the churches. The churches offered “protest without resistance.”

ALM plans to begin mission work in Durban and on the Gold Fields meant in Syrdal’s words that,

This will be our first effort as a mission to actively face the changing sociological and nationalistic problems at their source (ELC Report 1955:161).

As apartheid legislation started to take effect the missions were being drawn into the fray, albeit very tentatively. There is still very valid criticism of the lack of resistance of Christians to the implementation of apartheid policies. Two cornerstones of mission work, education and the medical institutions were handed over with hardly any resistance. (See excursus on medical work in this chapter page 176 ff.)

Mission Secretary Syrdal admitted that the new emphasis on ministry to the “native locations, dormitories and factories” was a “belated step” which though difficult was already showing itself to be rewarding (ELC 1956:226).

With the election in June 1954 of Dr. Frederick Shiotz as President of the ELC, who had previously served in the LWF, a new international emphasis became evident. In his address entitled: *From Isolationism to Inter-synodical and International Cooperation*, he described the effects of the First and Second World Wars and the significance of the formation of the Lutheran World Convention in 1923 and the Lutheran World Federation which superseded it in July 1947. Under the provocative heading, “From a ministry to immigrants to a Mission without restrictions,” Schiotz described how the general use of the Norwegian language restricted the church’s concern to Nordic immigrants. Looking to the future he stated that,

Now, a fully indigenized [American Lutheran] church reaches out to all people ... regardless of race, economic standing, religious background or other circumstances in order that they may be brought under the influence of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and won for him and his Kingdom ... (ELC Report 1957:9).

As seen in chapter one of this study (page 42) 1955 was the year in which the first All Africa Lutheran Conference was held in Marangu, Tanzania where the topic of a “Confessio Africana” was keenly discussed. However a subcommittee on theology, meeting in Natal in 1959 June 2-5, resolved that “...the question of a so-called Confessio Africana is premature at the present stage.” The committee was of the opinion that this should be referred to the planned United Lutheran Church (Florin 1965:128).

The ELC report of 1958 (:209) described increasing restrictions by the government but a greater degree of self-respect and responsibility as indigenous people in colonial countries expressed their feelings of nationalism. Not mentioned in the report was that a Preparatory Assembly was held in Durban in 1957 and the Constituent Assembly in Christianenburg in 1958 to pave the way for the establishment of the Regional Churches (Florin 1965:98). Also in 1958 indigenous and expatriate pastors serving in the Mankankanana Synod met at Hlabisa and agreed that the Synod should see to the placement of expatriate missionaries and not the mission organizations as in the past. It was agreed that expatriates should no longer serve as district missionaries but as advisors (Interview J. L. Knutson, July 1998).

The BFM resolved to send “...fraternal greetings to the Younger Churches that have been established in every land where we have mission work with expressions of appreciation for their firm witness of the faith in these important and critical times and promises abiding interest and continued support” (ELC Report 1958: 213).

Dr. Schiotz in his Annual President’s Report of 1959 critically analyzed the American scene as well as the world scene and spoke of the effects of urbanization and industrialization and the challenges these posed to a largely rural and isolated church. In his view, the emphasis on the individual’s own experience and personal salvation indicated a lack of the horizontal dimension to the Christian witness. Schiotz pointed out that Lutheranism in the United States was becoming a middle-class church. Schiotz referred to Dr. Hendrik Kraemer’s “recent” book, *Religion and the Christian Faith* (1947), and stressed the need to grapple with the relation of the Christian faith to the non-Christian religions and “... to witness to th(e) gospel in fear and trembling but also with boldness of the spirit” (ELC Report 1959:12).

The 1950’s saw the tightening of apartheid policies in South Africa and the unraveling of colonial rule around the world. The three-self’s formula was still the desired goal but the pressure from



indigenous leaders on the overseas mission bodies was increasing for them to put words into action.

## **ESTABLISHMENT OF THE REGIONAL CHURCHES : 1960 - 1975**

The period 1960 - 1975 is extremely important in that, with the establishment of regional churches, it served as a bridge between the existence of “mission fields” and the establishment of a single national church in Southern Africa in 1975. However, this study is highlighting the fact that bridges and gaps exist side by side and that the process of establishment and consolidation is an ongoing one.

Concerning the general picture abroad, the 1960 ALC Mission Report observed,

...continuing unrest and strife in the world bringing extra burdens and anxiety to missionaries. On the other hand we recognize that political change, tension, and unrest give missions a special opportunity for witness and service. ... Questions are raised concerning old tenets of faith and old foundations of politics ... the growing spirit of independence among the people of Africa and Asia has created a climate conducive to the development of indigenous churches. ... In South Africa tightening restrictions continue. ... Negotiations towards a Lutheran United Church are thrilling to watch (ALC Report 1960:223).

While there were obviously ‘thrilling’ moments it would be more accurate to say it was also painful and frustrating to watch African leaders attempting to pick up and carry all the baggage the “Cooperating missions” expected them to carry (Homdrom 1959:34). This study proposes that much of the frustration among the ELCSA partners in the 1980s and 1990s stems from this period and the differing expectations both sides had of each other.

At present, while the ELCSA overseas partners restructure and reposition themselves around the world and in relation to ELCSA, ELCSA is still staggering under the load the partners handed over. Twenty years later neither side was very happy with the other, as could be observed at the EP meeting held in October 1997 in Kempton Park, Johannesburg.

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF), since its inception in Lund in 1947, was resolved, “to encourage the formation as soon as practicable, of united Lutheran churches in various mission fields” (Hellberg 1979:36). The Commission on World Mission (CWM) had the responsibility to promote the development of younger churches in Africa and Asia and to this end invited all the directors of the European mission societies to Oxford in 1949 (:37)

A draft proposal for a “Lutheran Council of Southern Africa” was presented to the CWM in 1952. The CWM of 1953 agreed to the establishment of the **Council of Churches on Lutheran Foundation (CCLF)** and took cognizance of the existence of European [white] Lutheran Churches in Southern Africa (:44). The CCLF was formed as a non-legislative body for the coordination of Lutheran work in Southern Africa. According to Homdrom (1962:13) the CCLF was instrumental in confronting the European [white South African German-speaking] synods with the problems and possibilities of union. While the work, structure and resources of this council were limited, it did bring Lutheran and Moravian church leaders of various regions together on a regular basis which otherwise might not have happened.

A preparatory assembly was organized by the CLM in Durban in 1957. At this assembly the decision was taken to call a “Constituent Assembly” to be held in October 1958. On that date 68 delegates met at Christianenburg, New Germany, Natal, to agree to the formation of regional churches. Two Africans and two missionaries from each synod and mission were invited to attend. (See list of future ELCSA churches in bold print below.)

An open letter from the theological students, addressed to “our dear Fathers,” was sent to the assembly expressing their concerns about divisions among Lutherans in South Africa. The letter, from the student body, which was made up of at least six different ethnic groups, warned the conference that,

A house divided against itself cannot stand ... Do we not now enjoy this [Lutheran] brotherhood here at the institution you have built for us? (Credo 1959, Vol. 5(1) :30 - my emphasis.)

Afterwards, the chairperson, Andreas Loken (1962:17), enthusiastically declared, “...It was a great experience, coming from different background[s] to work so harmoniously on such difficult questions ... and we are looking forward to the day when we fellow Lutherans really are one.

The Union Committee, which was formed at the Constituent Assembly, assisted by its three subcommittees on structure, theology and finance, worked from April 1959 to June 1960 to prepare for the first assembly of the South Eastern Region in July 1960 (:17). It was during this time that intense debate took place around the issue of the office of the Bishop. In the 1990’s the issue of the term of office of the bishop is still a matter of serious debate in ELCSA. (See chapter three of this study, page 210.)

The ALC's *United Testimony* of 1960, featured prominently in the discussions as this document was also the result of a recent merger of Lutheran churches. The fact that it was written in English also made it readily accessible to all parties. While the final constitution was ostensibly a joint effort this was not an indigenous theological document. As Lislrud commented, "The result was the formation of ELCSA-SER and (later) ELCSA - indigenous and autonomous churches - but where missionaries had too much influence" (Lislrud 1998:4).

A chronology of regional churches follows with future members of ELCSA highlighted in bold letters (adapted from Scriba in Bammann 1995:132)

### **Chronology of Regional Churches:**

- 1957 Rhenish Mission Church in SWA
- 1959 **ELCSA Tswana Region**  
ELC in Southern Rhodesia
- 1960 German ELC in SWA  
**ELCSA South Eastern Region**  
Moravian Church (Western Cape)  
ELC Ovambokavango Church
- 1961 **ELCSA Transvaal Region**  
ELCSA (Transvaal Church)  
ELCSA (Cape Church)
- 1963 ELCSA (Hermannsburg)  
**ELCSA (Cape-Orange Region)**
- 1966 Moravian Church (Eastern Cape)
- 1967 The Lutheran Churches in Southern Africa (Free Church Mission)
- 1972 The Free Evangelical Lutheran Synod in Southern Africa
- 1975 ELCSA (Four regional churches merge as dioceses and create a fifth diocese on the Witwatersrand (**Central**), later, **Botswana Diocese** (1981) and **Eastern Diocese** (1988) were added.
- 1981 ELCSA (Natal-Transvaal) merger of ELCSA (Transvaal) and ELCSA (Hermannsburg)

### **Chronology of Coordinating bodies**

- 1889 General Lutheran Conference
- 1912 Cooperating Lutheran Missions (CLM)
- 1953 Council of Churches on Lutheran Foundation (CCLF)
- 1964 VELKSA (DELK in SWA, ELCSA Cape, Transvaal and Hermannsburg)
- 1966 Federation of Evangelical Lutheran Churches in Southern Africa (FELCSA)
- 1991 Lutheran Communion of Churches in Southern Africa (LUCSA) (successor to FELCSA)

## Regional or Tribal Churches?

It was decided to form “regional” churches since little progress toward a united Evangelical Lutheran church was being made due to “theological and racial problems.” Schlyter, writing in 1951, (the Advisory Synod only started in 1949 - PJK.) pointed out that,

...the unification work has hitherto been done by whites. The Africans have had nothing to say which they should have had. The Zulus have not been invited to co-operate to realize the Co-operation in the same extent as the members of the young churches in India, China, Tanganika, and Madagascar (Schlyter 1953:84, see also Scherer 1969:150).

Bishop Fosseus in a *Pastoral Letter to pastors, evangelists and all other workers of the Swedish Lutheran Zulu Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in South Africa* (1959:35) argued at that time that a multiracial church in South Africa was only an ideal.

Our Lutheran Churches prepare a new solution to this problems (*sic*), suggesting a federation of regional churches, region taken mainly as language region. Each regional church should use one language only. Thus we would have one church for the Zulus, one for the Suthus, one for the Afrikaans, one for English and so on. These churches unite in a federation, each being autonomous. This makes language a uniting factor and provides a way out of the perplexing circles of racial categories. At least that is what we hope.

Florin made the important observation that, “Although the text of the resolution mentions only “Regional churches” the official interpretation meant “regional churches according to ethnic groups” (1965:93).

Taking a similar view, former FELCSA General Secretary Karlheinz Schmale (in Hellberg 1979:46) wrote that, “the establishment of regional churches ... [was] most unfortunate ... [in that it] cemented ethnic and racial groupings.”

Scriba (in Bammann 1995:142) referred to the book, *Contending Ideologies in South Africa*, edited by Leatt, Kneiffel and Nurnberger (1986:286), and agreed that, “the ongoing division in the Lutheran family is not theological but socio-political and ideological, based on different group interests.”

This study argues that, in South Africa as well as in the United States and specifically in the Lutheran churches, we have barely started to speak to each other openly of our history as white settlers and indigenous peoples. More than theology or ecclesiology, racism and its effects still divide Lutherans in South Africa. Until a healing of these divisions is achieved, the *status confessionis* issue will not be finally resolved.

The formation of the “white” United Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (UELCSA) in 1965 and “nonwhite” Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (ELCSA) in 1975 had roots in these earlier divisions. The proposal in the 1990s for a non-geographical diocese representing the Natal/Transvaal and Cape churches as a transitional structure was immediately seen by ELCSA as a way of perpetuating white privilege and autonomy ( Scriba & Lislrud in Elphick & Davenport 1997:194).

With the formation of the CCLF in 1953 the subject of a federation of Lutheran Churches in Southern Africa was tabled but not fully discussed until 1962. Hellberg wrote, “ If Lutherans, like Anglicans and Roman Catholics, had decided to disregard government policy and tribal outlook [there would have been] fewer problems in the future” (Hellberg 1979:49).

While this may be true in theory, the fragmented nature of Lutheranism in South Africa, its domination by expatriate missionaries, and the marginal status of its black leaders made it almost impossible to speak on a national or international level with one voice and be heard.

Hope and Young, editors of the book, *The South African Churches in a Revolutionary Situation* (1981:141) note that it was only in 1963 that the ELCSA - SER, “the church in which American Lutheran missionaries were working,” issued its first public statement on race relations.

In its July 1963 *Statement on the Attitude of the Church towards the Race Problem*, the SER Assembly agreed that the race problem should be approached from a theological and **not** from a political point of view. The statement declared,

Our efforts should be to go to the Biblical message and divorce ourselves from preconceived opinions and attitudes ... Any form of segregation and all forms of discrimination based on race, colour or ethnic origin are contrary to the will of God and the Gospel. One of the functions of the Church is the call, “to watch her own house...” (ELCSA - SER Assembly Minutes. 1963. Appendix :1-2).

The strong centralized structure of ELCSA, overseeing the mainly ethnically divided dioceses, has been the way in which universal and local identity is maintained. Decentralization is seen in ELCSA as a slippery slope back into further ethnic and class separation and inequality. The idea that theology and political ideology could be neatly separated and that a neutral hermeneutic existed for interpreting Scripture was commonly espoused until the theological and political challenges of the 1970s and 1980s.

According to Hellberg (1979:46), “In 1955 tribal unity was still more important than national unity ... in the whole of Africa. The missions had from the beginning worked in tribal languages, paying attention to tribal customs and history.” (See reference to CLM Constitution above, page 65.) Was there any other route? Elphick (1997:11 & 14) rightly points out that the capacity of the Gospel to be “translated” into various languages has been in tension with the universalism of the Christian proclamation (cf. Galatians 3:28). As Elphick keenly observed, “While the translation of Christianity did not cause segregationism, for a long time it accommodated it comfortably” (:14).

Heinrich Voges of the HM wrote that in light of the incarnational and contextual nature of Christianity it was not a mistake (“kein fehler”) when regional churches were formed according to language and culture.

However Maluleke (1995:12) in a debate on this same issue of unity and identity points out, from his perspective, that “the encouraging of ethnic unity was a definite strategy in the work of the SMSA [Swiss Mission in South Africa] amongst the Vatsonga people.” He argues that, “... right from the beginning, the missionary strategies were such that they led towards a situation of warped relations between church and state, church and mission, as well as church and society. Maluleke goes on to say, “ We must not let the good *intentions* of the mission station paradigm to blind us to its destructive *effects*” (:16 - his italics).

The question must be asked: Was there another route from mission to church especially when there were five missions all concerned for the survival of their own particular mission field and missionaries? While the four regional churches did agree to form one national body in 1975 it meant a loss of regional autonomy and power. The SER went from being a church with direct links to world bodies such as the WCC to being one of five dioceses. The struggle for identity and integrity apart from each other and together is not over yet for many Lutherans in South Africa. One example is the ongoing tension over the location of the Seminary at Marang near Rustenburg (formerly ELCSA-Tswana Region, HM) as opposed to Umpumulo in Kwazulu/Natal (formerly ELCSA-SER, CLM/NMS). Partnerships in the present and future cannot avoid these issues from the past and need to take into consideration the role of the missions and regional churches in supporting, consciously or unconsciously, “tribal” and regional identities.

## **Suspicion, rivalry and cooperation**

With the establishment of regional churches and the ending of the colonial era many missionaries were deeply concerned about their roles and future after “independence”.

Syrdal replied to a number of questions in a letter from Superintendent Hjalmar Astrup, who then circulated copies to ALM personnel in South Africa. Syrdal outlined his understanding of the “dual position of being a fraternal member of the native church and a missionary sent by a foreign country.” In trying to explain the relationship between the mission and the local church, Syrdal used what he himself referred to as “the lame illustration” of a father and son who go into a business partnership with each other (Astrup 1960).

Syrdal, in his DWM report of August 15, 1960 also touched on the issue of what he called the “Mission Relationship with the Church” explaining that, “The church now has the right to place missionaries This will not seriously affect the missionaries except that it will take them away from management of the mission stations.” He went on to say that, “I believe our missionaries have done a fine job in working out good relationships with the church and that they are highly respected by the church” (:3). Syrdal also discussed the issue of salaries for pastors, noting that, “the Swedish Mission had taken up an offering to establish an endowment to raise the salaries of the pastors ... [but Syrdal felt that] this was about the poorest method of stimulating stewardship among the people. A compromise for a short period may be necessary.

Astrup, in his Superintendent’s Report for 1961 to the ALM Missionary Conference, wrote about the “new” church and the fears being expressed in the field of Church - Mission relationships saying,

There must be clear cut lines on what is mission and what is church extension work. Some of the church leaders seem very suspicious of the missions and therefore have pushed very hard that all Church requests go directly to the Joint Committee on South Africa. We are responsible to our Board and our Board has a right to expect our findings on all requests (ALM 1961:2).

Syrdal wrote a letter to Homdrom dated June 29, 1961 on the subject of cooperation saying,

I would like very much if you could send some information that might help us in cementing or restoring good relationships with the Hermannsburg Mission so that they may be kept in close union both with the other missions and with the church. I recognize that some of the individuals of that mission are hard to deal with but I hope that arrangements can be made

so that they will catch the vision of being part of a national church rather than a mission from smaller groups. I wish this both for our own and for their welfare.

Syrdal also wrote a letter to H. Astrup dated August 14, 1961 in which he referred to what he called the “nationalistic tendencies of the Swedes” who were “putting pressure” on the other mission societies to raise the salaries of the African pastors in the new church. Syrdal complained that the other societies were quiet on the issue and waited for him to do the talking to the CSM and Bishop Fosseus.

Syrdal wrote again to Astrup, on September 5, 1962, following a JCSA meeting in Neuendetteslau, regarding the starting up of Lutheran work among Indians in South Africa and the difficulties of raising funds for the regional church’s budget saying, “It is so easy for the European missions to leave us ‘holding the bag’ when it comes to finances and I do not like to encourage that attitude.”

The salary issue rose to prominence after the establishment of the regional churches in the early 1960’s and was at the top of the agenda in the 1970’s as the regional churches prepared to merge into ELCSA. Some of the African pastors working with the CSM for example were not at all keen on a merger with other missions as it meant a lowering in their salaries and benefits. Rev. L. Dlamini remarked in a meeting that they (the indigenous CSM-paid pastors) were “too used to the ‘ibhotela’ [“butter” in Zulu] of the Swedish mission” (Interview J.L. Knutson, 1998a). As will be seen later in this chapter the tension between dependence and independence continues to be a central problem on the partnership agenda. (See page 135 below.)

### **The Joint Committee on South Africa (JCSA)**

Following the establishment of the four regional churches the **Joint Committee on South Africa (JCSA)** was formed in 1961 to enable the home boards to coordinate their work better from overseas. The proposal for a “joint committee” to meet in conjunction with CWM was made by the ALM to the LMC on November 2, 1960.

JCSA eventually became the **ELCSA Standing Committee (SC)** in September 1974 and the **ELCSA Partners (EPs)** in 1975. This structure continues to operate at the present time at three levels, viz. EP Working Group, EP Consultations, and EP Bishops’ Consultations.



The **Lutheran Mission Council (LMC)** was changed in May 1961 to the **Liaison Committee (LC)** of the CLM. At first the LC was a subcommittee on the CLM executive committee with the role of providing a forum for contact, consultation and joint action between the ELC-SER (The Church) and CLM representatives (The Missions). The “new” Liaison Committee (LC) began in October 1962 composed of mission superintendents and local deans (Loken 1962:34 & Florin 1965:109).

An official LWF delegation visited South Africa in May 1-18, 1962 in response to a request to assist in strengthening ministry to the English and Afrikaans (white) communities (Hellberg 1979:49)

The First General Convention of the ALC was held in Milwaukee in October 1962 with the theme “*Christ Today*.” The annual report of the Board of World Missions (BWM) and Executive Director Syrdal was very positive that,

Our horizons have been broadened ... our church is aware that changes have taken place in mission policies. Policies ... have for the past decades been constantly under self-examination to meet new situations. Today when we speak of ‘mission fields’ (his quotation marks) we do so with the knowledge that there is a church on each of the fields ... there are great areas still to be reached - people still to be won - in our unfinished task of evangelizing the world (ALC Report 1962:201). We are thankful that in the more rapid changes of the past years, full harmony and unity of spirit have been retained between mission and emerging and developing churches. Political changes have not affected our work adversely in any area, but in some instances have made conditions more favorable (:202).

However the “full harmony” referred to in the report was not borne out at local level.

In South Africa the ALM superintendent’s report by H. Astrup to the Missionary Conference of 1962 expressed shock that, “the Hermannsburg Mission did not agree to abide by the agreement with regard to Par.15b:1,” stating that,

We must bear in mind that the movement in the Church is entirely away from the partnership basis which has been our understanding of this relationship. ... Any effort on the part of a mission to change this accepted relationship would cause us to lose the only working arrangement that up until now we have felt to be the best (Astrup 1962:1).

The agreement in question was that the South African Church would be responsible for the travel and office expenses of missionaries on Church work. The HM was opposed to this.

Dr. Fricke wrote to H. Astrup, on February 13, 1963, asking for “help in delineating the lines of relationship for us, for we are eager to avoid any kind of complications or crossing of lines because of our lack of understanding of past operations.”

Homdrom wrote to Fricke on March 15, 1964, saying, “Our conference is also confused regarding our ever-changing relationship with the church.” In this letter Homdrom included a “radical proposal” for changes to the structures but argued that “something drastic must be done if the relationship between missionaries and the church is to remain good.”

The proposals included in the letter were that:

- JCSA should replace the CLM.
- The LC should cease to exist.
- The bishop of the SER or a representative should be at all JCSA meetings.
- JCSA should have an executive secretary.
- The LWF should send a nonvoting representative to JCSA meetings.
- Missionary conferences must limit their sphere of business.

The 1964 ALC BWM report by Lowell Hesterman, who replaced Fricke, described 1962-63 as a period of transition” noting that:

The [CLM has] ... given over the seminary buildings at Umpumulo to the church. ... The relationship between missionary and African has been amazingly good when one considers not only the racial tensions that exist in South Africa but also the many problems which remain and must be solved during these final years of transition from mission to church (ALC Report 1964:252,253).

The report ends with the following admission

Christian missions have been unsuccessful in their resistance to the South African government’s decision to evict black tenants from mission farms (:253).

Not mentioned in the 1963 ALC Report is that in July 1963 the SER Church Assembly adopted the statement: *On the attitude of the Church towards the Race Problem.* ( See page 86 below.)

The 1966 ALC BWM report by Hesterman was more detailed and frank about the divisions and growing tensions in the church and in the country:

In racially torn South Africa the ELCA - SER elected a Swedish missionary Rev. Helge Fosseus as bishop in 1965. ‘We are not prejudiced,’ an African delegate answered. Yet the apartheid policies of the S.A. government adversely affect the lives of African Lutherans and force our missionaries to work in an atmosphere of tension. ... A significant contribution to understanding the Lutheran witness in South Africa has resulted from a two-year survey conducted by Dr. Hans Florin. The Lutheran witness has been fragmented by church and mission structures, by European and African churches, by tribal developments ... Consequently, the Lutheran witness to South Africa’s socio and racial

problem, which has been ineffectual or neutral in the past, may now become a voice that cannot be ignored. On Feb. 24, 1966, 11 Lutheran churches constituted the [FELCSA]. FELCSA represents a major step in coordinating Lutheran work, especially as the population movement to industrial areas takes place (ALC Report 1966:299).

### **FELCSA is constituted**

The twelfth and final meeting of the Council of Churches on Lutheran Foundation (CCLF) and the constituting meeting of the Federation of the Evangelical Lutheran Churches in Southern Africa (FELCSA) was held from the 24th to the 25th of February 1966 at the Swedish Church in Hancock Street in Johannesburg.

The following churches and organizations were represented

ELC (Tswana Region), ELC (Transvaal Region), ELC (Cape-Orange Region), ELC (South Eastern Region), ELC (Ovambokavango Church), ELC in South West Africa, ELC (Rhodesia), ELC (Cape Church), ELC (Transvaal Church), Moravian Church (Eastern Cape), Moravian Church (Western), American Lutheran Mission (ALM), Berlin Mission, Church of Sweden Mission, Finnish Mission, Hermannsburg Mission, Norwegian Mission Society, Rhenish Mission, Lutheran Production Studios, Lutheran Theological College, Christian Academy and the Department of Mission of the LWF (FELCSA Minutes 1966:1).

There were observers from Hermannsburg and the Hannoverian Free Church and several visitors, giving a total of 51 participants all together. Hellberg (1979:84) noted that 13 churches were represented by "24 whites, six Africans and one coloured."

The process of drawing up the constitution, starting in 1962, was outlined at the meeting by Bishop Fosseus (FELCSA 1966:2). The nature and purpose of the Federation was to:

Represent the Evangelical Lutheran Churches in Southern Africa,  
To manifest the spiritual unity of Evangelical Lutheran Churches in witness and cooperative action,  
To nurture unity in faith and fellowship among all Lutherans..., to promote Lutheran participation in the ecumenical encounter, ...to promote cooperation with other Christians,  
... To sponsor and support institutions and programmes of common interest to all Lutherans such as Theological training, Urban and Rural Mission and Evangelism, Religious Literature and Broadcasting, Academy and Diaconal work ... (cf. FELCSA Constitution Article III, Sections 1 & 2).

Principles for guiding cooperation in the Rand-Pretoria area were also discussed in considerable detail at the constituting meeting (:7).

Hellberg (1979:85) noted that UELCSA did not join as a group but as individual churches. As a result there was an overrepresentation of white churches with 5 votes for 35 000 members to 10 votes for 800 000 black members.

Another controversial issue was the status of the mission agencies in the Federation. Eventually it was decided that they be allowed to join as members but with no vote (:85).

The coordination of LWF activities in Southern Africa was also discussed. Hellberg, who was at the meeting, suggested that FELCSA have a full-time secretary who would also serve as liaison between FELCSA and the LWF. Hellberg explained that the “division of labour” between the involvement of the DWM and DWS in Southern African along “ethnic” lines was an “unhappy difference” and admitted that the LWF did unintentionally support racial division with an uncoordinated approach. From 1957 to 1965 the DWM gave approximately R332,700 in assistance to “non-white” congregations and the DWS about R282,000 to the minority “white” congregations (:34).

### **The Agreement on Church - Mission Relationship**

In July 1965 the regional Church Assembly of the ELCSA-SER finally accepted a simplified version of the **Agreement on Church-Mission Relationship** (SER CC 18). The agreement was made between the ELCSA-SER, “the Church,” and the overseas missions working with the Church, “the Missions” (ELC-SER Agreement Document 1965: Paragraph 1, A & B).

The basic principles were given as follows:

#### **2. Basic Principles:**

- A. The Missions shall recognize the church as a self-governing body with full authority over its work and functions and restricted only by the Word of God as explained in the Evangelical Lutheran Confessions of Faith.
- B. The Church shall receive the missionaries of the Missions as co-workers to do missionary work in South Africa, proclaim the Word of God and to assist in building up a living, evangelizing Lutheran Church.
- C. The Church shall recognize its duty to evangelize the people in Southern Africa as its first task. The Missions have also accepted the same obligation. Therefore the Church and the Missions shall in mutual understanding and agreement carry out Christ’s Great Commission. [My emphasis - PJK.]

#### **3. Organization for Co-operation**

##### **The Joint Council for Cooperation (JCSA)**

A. The Mission Boards in Europe and America shall form a Council to deal with matters of common interest with regard to the Church ...

B. Lutheran Advisory Council (LAC)

In accordance with the above principles the Church and the Missions shall agree to form an advisory body to consider matters of policy between the Church and the Missions, work requiring joint Church-Mission action, housing of missionaries and other matters of mutual interest.

#### **4. The Work:**

A. The Missions shall assist the Church by sending missionaries to work in the Church wherever needed, as in institutions, on Committees and commissions in congregational work etc.

B. Institutions where Church and Missions co-operate and projects sponsored by individual Missions shall in each case be related to the Church on a basis determined by the Church and the Missions as circumstances and possibilities permit.

C. Welfare and Medical services of the Missions shall work in close contact with the Church. These services are expected to assist the Church in the spiritual witness to the People.

#### **5. The Workers:**

A. All missionaries in active service in the church, including all those in institutions and services associated with the church, shall have the duties and privileges as church workers.

B. The Church calls missionaries to work in the Church.

C. The Mission and the Church shall enter into an agreement with regard to the service of missionaries stating the nature of the work, the time of service etc. Special terms of service may be drawn up for missionaries as necessary.

E. ...Transfers and reorganizations of their duties should be effected only after agreement between the Mission concerned and the Church.

F. A missionary working in the Church shall abide by the rules and regulations of the Church.

G. Salary, allowances, travel expenses, lodging etc. of the missionary shall be paid according to the regulations of the mission concerned.

H. The missionary shall have the right to go on furlough overseas in accordance with the rules laid down by the respective Mission. [My emphasis. Is this not rather a "privilege"? - PJK]

#### **6. Workers conventions:**

The Bishop of the Church may call workers' conventions where all workers come together for worship, edification, study and planning for the progress of the work. The findings of such conventions shall be submitted to the Church Council.

#### **7. Property**

A. All immovable property registered in the name of the merged synods shall be transferred to the Church.

B. All churches, houses for African Workers, School buildings, plots and sites at present owned by the Missions shall be transferred to the Church on mutual agreement between the Church and the Respective Mission in areas where this is possible.

D. If the law permits and it is to the advantage of the Church, property received by the Church on a contract basis shall be transferred to trustees on behalf of the Church, such trustees to be accepted by the Church, LAC and JCSA.

## **8. Budget Commitments:**

A. The church shall have the **privilege** to apply to the Missions for financial aid for the work. An annual budget shall be presented by the Church Council to the members of JCSA.... [My emphasis. Note that this is not a “right” - PJK.]

## **9. Amendments to this agreement**

Amendments and changes to this agreement may be proposed by the Church and the Missions and will be valid when accepted by the Church in the Assembly and the Missions in the JCSA (ELCSA SER Assembly 1965).

While this agreement on Church-Mission Relationship, approved by JCSA in Oxford (12 April 1966), was a genuine attempt to express the principle of self-governance and respect for the authority of the local church, in reality the relationship was much the same as before. No one spoke yet of a church-to-church agreement. “Mutual understanding and agreement” (Paragraph 2.c above). was in reality more a statement of intent than a reflection of reality. The problem of the growing gap between salaries and other “rights” and “privileges” of expatriates and local church workers could not be papered over by such agreements.

1968 saw the introduction in the US of a revised salary structure for ALC pastors which also drastically increased the basic salary for married missionaries from \$3000 to \$5000 per year, closely approximating the salary of a pastor of the ALC (ALC BWM Report 1968:420). The 1968 Report also reported that more attention was given to explaining the Missionary Sponsorship program to local congregations in the US (:421). In 1968 the ALM withdrew from the CLM and voted to discontinue LAC.

In Natal, the 13 Lutheran mission hospitals were placed under the Lutheran Medical Foundation (LMF) which was a major step for the ELCSA-SER (:437). But this was a relatively short-lived arrangement as all the hospitals were handed over to the government in 1980

Also at this time the ALC agreed to dissolve their Missionary Conference so that all missionaries could be “fully integrated” into the church (:437). These once powerful meetings, which had for many years decided on the placement of expatriate as well as local church workers, became known as “fellowship days.

These annual fellowship gatherings of the expatriate staff of the respective mission societies were and are still regarded with some suspicion by the local church. (See page 164 below.)

Dr. M. Buthelezi, who had completed his doctorate in theology the previous year in the USA, addressed a combined missionary fellowship gathering in Durban, June 28-29, 1969, on the topic *The Service of a Missionary and the Responsibility of our Church.*

Buthelezi openly challenged the missionaries, saying that they still wielded more power than the elected deans and bishops in the church. "You are the only ones who are enjoying the wholeness of life in our church ... As a group you have professional and educational privileges which our pastors have not had." Buthelezi asked the question if the regional churches had been successful in giving missionaries meaningful work and answered his own question with a clear "no." In his view missionaries had become bureaucrats and alienated from everyday life in the congregation. Buthelezi concluded, "Missionaries have served the African at the price of his dignity ... fellowship and human relations have been neglected" (Buthelezi 1969)

The establishment of the CLM, JCSA, LC and LAC and numerous revisions of cooperation agreements were all efforts to liaise, define and coordinate the work of the various role players in Natal and in the other regional churches. All of these were limited and intermediate structures which were dissolved, redefined or superseded over a period of more than 85 years.

#### **Non-agreement on the salary issue**

Ever since the formation of the regional churches in South Africa in the early 1960s as self-governing bodies and the acceptance of the obligation, "to carry out the Great Commission in mutual understanding and agreement," (Page 94 above) and in the light of the growing spirit of resistance and national pride across Africa, the issues of injustice, exploitation and inequality in the church grew in intensity.

In 1969 the salary issue burst out into the public arena as a direct challenge to the lack of justice and the lack of mutual understanding and agreement in the church. The issue was hotly debated in the church and even in public newspapers. The Sunday Tribune of March 9, 1969 carried an article in which "an African Lutheran minister" (Dr. Manas Buthelezi) slammed the "unbelievably low" salaries paid by the church to African clergyman. Buthelezi challenged the popular explanation that the pay discrepancy was because African congregations had not learnt to support their pastors. Superintendent Diehl of the CSM had pointedly asked why the "better-off" [African] members did not contribute more to their church (Interview J. L. Knutson 1998a). Buthelezi argued that "all the money which is donated by 'mission friends' is for the support of the total Church work here. It is not given to missionaries as members of a separate organization." In the article Dr. Buthelezi drew up a comparative salary scale for clergymen of 6

different denominations but pointed out that he could not find out the salary scale for Lutheran White missionaries (The Sunday Tribune 1969, March 9).

An exchange of letters between Bishop Helge Fosseus and Rev. Lowell Hesterman of the ALC illustrates the sensitivity of two of the partners and their different perceptions on this issue.

Hesterman replied on April 30, 1969 to Fosseus' letter of March 10, 1969 with the enclosure of Buthelezi's article, expressing a "great deal of anguish" (Hesterman 1969a). Later, in a letter to Bishop Helge Fosseus dated November 12, 1969 Rev. Lowell Hesterman stated: "I am in full support of the attempts to raise the salaries of the pastors in the ELCSA-SER ... [but] I am apprehensive about soliciting missionaries ... to subsidize pastor's salaries."

Hesterman expressed his fear that if the hopes and expectations of the pastors were raised and not met the resulting situation would be far worse. Hesterman voiced his concern that "some missionaries might liken this to undue pressure (even calling it blackmail). This approach seems to attack the symptoms rather than the problems facing the church such as: a Church overly staffed and overly institutionalized, with a poor stewardship performance." Hesterman asked, "How can an African pastor or dean feel 'equal' when he knows he is directly subsidized by that [missionary] pastor or dean?" He then suggested that it might be well to see how other African churches were doing that no longer used a centralized treasury but made the local congregations and/or parishes responsible for the salaries of their pastors (Hesterman 1969b).<sup>4</sup>

Hesterman was responding to a circular letter sent by Fosseus to all missionaries, dated 5th September 1969, requesting them to commit themselves to a percentage deduction in favour of raising local pastors' and evangelists' salaries. Fosseus gave three options for the making of deductions while the fourth provided the option of declining to participate stating: "Unfortunately I will be unable to contribute towards this scheme" (Fosseus 1969b).

Fosseus replied to Hesterman on November 26, 1969 with "surprise" and "hurt" saying:

...I do not understand why you use such strong language. What has inspired you to write that letter? Proposals of this kind are not new things here .. (Hermannsburg missionaries have done similar collections for several years. ... All is being kept strictly secret and no one will know who gives and who does not give.) I ask you not to judge us for this. We

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<sup>4</sup>From 1 January 1998 the South East Cape Circuit of the ELCSA Cape Orange Diocese was to be allowed to decentralize financially for a trial period, however, this partial decentralization at circuit level was postponed by the Circuit in February of the same year as partial decentralization did not give the parishes the authority and control they were seeking ( COD DC 59:/11.5.1).



have a task at a time of much tension in a country of much controversy and are happy for what the church can do even under these circumstances (Fosseus 1969c).

Hesterman meekly replied on December 3, 1969 to Fosseus, saying, "I did not and do not now intend this to become an issue. First of all, it does not warrant that much time and my purpose was not to be critical but to share my concerns which at this distance may not accurately reflect the actual situation. ." Hesterman requested that this discussion be set aside until his visit in February 1970 when it could be discussed in person. He reaffirmed, "our full support for you and your leadership" (Hesterman 1969c).

There were some missionaries who did make contributions to the salaries of their coworkers. As J.L. Knutson observed, "It didn't solve the problem but it made some of us feel less guilty" (Interview January 1998).

From November 19-20, 1970, a two day "dialogue" meeting was held in Pietermaritzburg to discuss the theme: "*Are there marks of unity between African and Missionary Church workers?*" A five member subcommittee met in October to prepare the programme and nominate 20 missionaries and 20 African church workers to attend the meeting after complaints were heard in the Ministerial Council regarding circulars and articles in *Isithunywa* that missionaries were no longer needed in the church.

H. C. Fedderke and A. Tshwongwe presented papers on the first question: "*Is there unity between black and white in working conditions?*"

In his paper, Fedderke said, "There is at the moment no clear and mutual understanding of the nature of the church and its mission. Real partnership asks for true belief and true obedience on both sides. " (:6).

In Tshongwe's view, "... the shortcomings of the missionaries far overshadowed their successes." He complained about the "secrecy" and lack of openness on the part of the missions and asked ominously, "Are they Agents?" (:2).

Hans Blum replied to the second question, "*Is there oneness in economic welfare?*," by pointing out that there was no "equality of supply" even between white church workers because, "they all worked for different employers." He did not see a way to "overbridge" the gap. Hlophe, like Tshongwe, attacked the secrecy around missionary salaries, asking, "Can there be cooperation

when there is mistrust?" He voiced his controversial conviction that, "the best and greatest service missionaries can do is to depart in peace ... we are tired of being discriminated against" (:4).

A. Löken replied to the third question, "*Is there unity regarding church structures?*", and spoke of the "dialectical situation" of "unity and deep cracks" in the church. He drew attention to, "the true unity we have [as a gift] in Christ," and said it was time "to demythologize the powerful missionary as a phenomenon of the past." He admitted that, "our church inherited an overdose of missionaries" but went on to argue naively that missionaries were not interested or involved in the power struggles of the church (:3).

Buthelezi, in his paper, expressed the view that, "The African in our Church shall lead only when his views shall be heard not that white missionary ideas are invalid but it is only missionary ideas here since Bishop Schreuder. Whose word and vision is to be listened to? The missionary has had his chance ... [and] should temporarily refrain [from speaking]" Buthelezi concluded, "To speak of unity is to mock the truth" (:2).

This exercise at dialogue was seen by those in the leadership of the SER and the missions as a way of letting off steam. ALM Superintendent Rindahl, in a letter to Hesterman (4 December 1970) wrote, "This meeting was called for by what we may call the 'missionary go home,' (or 'missionary keep quiet') group in the church and does not necessarily represent the majority opinion ... however, they have the right to speak ... there may be more who share their views but do not speak up..." He did however conclude that the dialogue was "worthwhile." In the letter Rindahl specifically described the problems in relationship between missionaries and African workers to Hesterman as being, as he put it, "tensions" rather than a "crisis."

The BWM report of 1970 on South Africa was a relatively lengthy one. Some of the history of the origins of the church in 1844 leading up to the establishment of the ELCSA-SER in 1960 and the ongoing cooperation of the five missions through JCSA was outlined in the report. With regard to the budget of the SER it was reported that approximately \$125 000 came from church members and \$225 000 from the supporting missions. The church (SER) had 140 national pastors at the time (:856). The report reiterated the view that, "Church life in S.A. must always be considered in the context of the government's official policy of separate development commonly known as the apartheid policy. The report referred specifically to job reservation,

dislocation due to rezoning, removals, and other adverse conditions in the townships. The report noted that the ELCSA-SER had officially voiced its protest against the government apartheid policy by approving the June 1968 SACC document, *Message to the People of South Africa* (:857).

The 1970 report then made the surprising statement that, “the church is now fully autonomous and is in no way controlled by any mission organizations.”

What was new, especially to the missionaries serving at that time, was that now it was the *local church* -- not the missionary conference -- that placed them. In the view of this study this statement about “full autonomy and control” cannot “slip by” without being questioned

While it is true that to a great extent ELCSA supports itself financially, it is still dependent on outside financing in a number of ways. The central office and seminary were still dependent on the annual EP Block Grant in 1997, almost thirty years after the 1970 statement on “full autonomy” was made. Several times during ELCSA’s history the overseas partners have been called upon to literally bail ELCSA out of financial crises. (See page 137 below.) Also, throughout this period, the presence of expatriate coworkers has been a continuing form of subsidy. The more recent phenomenon of direct partnerships has also meant that the income from new overseas partners for local projects is not known in spite of directives to declare all such transactions to the church authorities. The minutes of the COD DC 58 of November 1997 stated that, “Missionaries [should] be placed in areas where the parishes are unable to support an indigenous pastor financially (ELCSA COD 1997, Par 58/18.4.2).

The complex web of continuing direct and indirect financial dependence and overseas control continues. J.J. Kritzing (1988:68) in his survey of mission in the South African context comes to the same conclusion that “the older ‘mainline’ churches are struggling with an expensive and cumbersome structure and are to a large extent barely managing to keep afloat.” Partnership in mission remains a highly ambiguous relationship. It is the view of this study that there never will be equality and yet at the same time that does not mean there should not be any relationship at all. The question this study is concerned with is specifically, “what kind of relationship is possible between different and unequal partners and with what consequences for those involved?”

Rev. Fricke (BWM Executive Director from January 1963 to June 1, 1970) reported as follows on the changing dynamics in South Africa:

In fact, the American Lutheran Mission ceased to exist as an organization on January 1, 1969. ALC missionaries now serve within the framework of the church or ...within the structure of the LMF. The medical work is heavily subsidized by the government. ... There are approximately 750 000 Lutherans in Southern Africa, ... in 12 different Lutheran Churches. Three have entered merger negotiations which if successfully completed will form a tri-lingual church of nearly 300 000 members. ... The RVOG closed operations in late 1968 (ALC Report 1970:857).

Fricke also reported that,

The ALC missionary staff ... has been reduced from 22 who served in 1966 to only 13 ... More medical missionaries are urgently needed ... additional ordained missionaries will likely be restricted to strategic areas of church life where specially qualified men (*sic*) can make a distinctive contribution. ... A continued missionary presence is urgently needed to enable the African church to experience the catholicity of the church in the face of the grievous apartheid policies (1970:858).

Here a new word, "presence," finds its way into the report. The task is no longer expressed in purely managerial terms. The ALC now saw its task, not to "manage" people or events, but "to be present" in the situation, with the people. But this presence was an ambiguous and compromised presence.

In response to correspondence from the Bockelmans [which was subsequently included in their book on the ALC involvement in Southern Africa (1972:91)] J.L. Knutson stated,

To me today, the most difficult thing about being a missionary here is that by virtue of being white we are automatically included in the 'privileged' sector of the population. In addition to this, by virtue of being a clergyman of the ALC I get a salary way above my African brother pastor ... Some just bluntly say, 'It's apartheid in the church,' and then what do you say - especially when you are totally opposed to the whole idea of apartheid? ... How do we preach to the people in the [black, urban - PJK] locations? The answer probably is that we can't anymore .. in terms of the whole picture, where is our credibility?

While the *Agreement on Church - Mission Relationship* of 1965 stated the basic principles or desire for mutual understanding and agreement, the continuing inequality in salaries domination by the missions underlined the limited nature of the autonomy and authority of the regional churches and posed the critical question of the credibility of the missions missionaries.

## **Redefining and renegotiating the role of the missionary**

In his report to the JCSA meeting in 1971, the Coordinating Secretary, Rev. Peter Sandner of the BM, shared his interpretation and vision about the new JCSA constitution which was adopted fifteen months earlier by JCSA in St. Louis, Missouri as follows

This partnership reflects a new understanding of our partnership in the mission of the Church. This mission cannot any longer be fulfilled in isolation. In the past, when the world map of the Christian faith still showed large uncovered areas, the unilateral pioneer work of individual persons or groups may have had its justification. The great task of our time is coordination and cooperation. ... This means we cannot preserve our own identities in isolation from those who received the same call in the same area. ... This is also true for JCSA... (JCSA 1971:1).

Sandner also reported that since the St. Louis meeting, the ELCSA Cape Orange Region and Tswana Region had asked to be related to overseas partners through JCSA in the same way as the SER and the Transvaal Regions.

This eleventh annual JCSA Conference of September 21-23, 1971, meeting in Johannesburg, had 43 participants from the regional churches and the overseas missions. At this meeting a summary of the reactions of the Home Boards to the 1970 minutes was recorded in an appendix with regard to the critical question

“Will the Home Boards continue to subsidize the budget of the church if the church no longer requests missionary personnel?”

In matters arising from the 1970 JCSA meeting the minutes stated that, “...members agree in principle [that] personnel and financial support are not linked. Emphasis was however placed on the need for mutual partnership in carrying out the task of the church” (JCSA 1971: 5.3)

The reactions regarding the relationship between missionary personnel and financial subsidies were as follows (JCSA 1971 Appendix).

ALC : Two important aspects of relationships, for the ALC, are missionary participation in and financial assistance to the overseas churches. However, a valid relationship may exist in the absence of either missionary participation or financial assistance by the ALC (:3).

BM: It has never been a rule for the BM to link the extent of financial subsidy to the number of missionary personnel employed in a Regional Church ... We however emphasize that according to our understanding of partnership between churches this partnership cannot be limited to matters of finance only. It must include sharing of spiritual gifts on the basis of mutuality... (:4).

CSM: ... (agreed) ... but we fear that a church which has no personal relations with other churches will become spiritually isolated... (:4).

Hannover: ...is interested in a fellowship with South African Lutheran Churches which transcends financial support and financial transactions... (:5).

HM: ...No final answer yet ... The subsidies of the HM to the budget of the SER will be at the most nominal, as now, if the church no longer requests missionary personnel. (:6).

NMS: No reply

The CSM, in its submission, asked in a polite, rhetorical way, but bristling with underlying frustration,

The question posed seems to imply a negative reaction to the missionary as such and therefore needs further clarification. We are asking ourselves, why would a church no longer request missionary personnel?

- a) Does the church consider the task of mission with the churches complete?
- b) Does it wish to test its own capability to run its own affairs even if it is not economically ready to do so?
- c) Does it consider missionaries a hindrance to development?
- d) Is there any other reason? (:4).

The CSM then outlined its response:

Lack of personal contact and consequent lack of information about a particular church or project will make it difficult to stimulate people to give of their means for a project.

CSM is **inaugurating a scheme of friendship relations on parish level** with its sister churches. One reason for this is that the decreasing number of missionaries noticeable in many areas may result in a weakening of personal contact with the churches. The scheme is aimed at increasing the points of contact and includes suggestions for persons from Africa visiting Europe ... We consider it essential that our sister churches cooperate with us in this regard.

If the time comes when a church faces us with the situation implied in the question, it may be necessary for us to reconsider our official agreement with the church concerning the nature of our support to the church (:4-5 - my emphasis).

In its response the Berlin Mission also spoke of a “new programme of partnership,” involving the exchange of coworkers between congregations and church circuits in Africa and the city of Berlin which was proving to be very encouraging and fruitful both in the field of spiritual enrichment as well as soliciting new financial engagement (:4).

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hannover hoped that subsidies to JCSA-related churches would go through FELCSA to ensure just assignment of overseas subsidies irrespective of the number of missionary personnel serving in the individual churches.

The Church of Hannover indicated it was considering the possibility of inviting JCSA-related pastors to serve in Germany for a limited period 5).

Apparently, the Berlin parish of Marienwieder was the first to actually begin this kind of partnership in the early 1970's (Bauerochse 1996:168).

Hermannsburg followed the example of Berlin. The CSM did not implement its proposal of friendship relations but instead focused on supporting youth work in the Cape Orange Diocese in the 1980s and 1990s. The ALC did not consider this kind of partnership until the late 1980's when the issue was unavoidable because of the growing number of local initiatives. The result was the development of the Companion Synod Programme by the ELCA in 1990. (See page 183 below.)

This 1971 JCSA meeting is an important example of the long, slow process of partners challenging and listening to each other and especially to the voice(s) of the regional churches in the context of the struggle for political liberation and economic justice. The different language used is clear evidence of a variety of moods and questions and foreshadows the moratorium call made in Lusaka by John Gatu of the AACC in 1974 (Verkuyl 1978:254). The extensive use of and definition of the term "partnership," at that time by Sandner of the BM, who later directed the UEM initiative, was a significant shift in terminology (see page 197 ff. in this chapter).

At this JCSA meeting ten years after the establishment of the regional churches, and in conjunction with the consecration on 19 September 1971 of Bishop Mhlongu [the first African bishop in the ELCSA – SER], discussion papers were delivered by Dr. Manas Buthelezi and Bishop D.P. Rapoo (ELCSA-Tswana Region) on the topic: *The Place of the Missionary in the South African Churches*.

These two papers are extremely valuable in revealing the views of two prominent black South African Lutheran leaders at that time.

Buthelezi began by critically questioning the underlying reasons for the designated topic by asking,

Is the issue not simply that the missionary is subconsciously rejecting his 'new place' in a changed situation? ... the whole issue is a non-problem ... It is my contention that the failure of the missionary to appreciate the new situation of which he has been prime architect defeats the ultimate ends of the whole missionary enterprise, ... It is too much to expect the church to arrive at an understanding of her basic responsibility as an indigenous church and at the same time prescribe ... the place the missionary is to occupy ... Is it not sufficient to state simply that it is the needs of the church which will predetermine the 'place' of the missionary, rather than vice versa? (Buthelezi 1971:1).

Buthelezi then gave his view of the role of the missionary in the past, in the present and in the future.

Buthelezi referred to the pioneering spirit of the age and the relationship between missionary status and government authority. Quoting from the apartheid government's Tomlinson Report of 1955, Buthelezi analyzed the "father image" acquired by the early missionaries. This, wrote Buthelezi,

...had adverse psychological consequences to the African. He lost confidence in himself and his potentialities. ... [The missionary] encouraged the African to reject his culture in favour of that brought by the missionary (:2).

He quoted a statement by Pastor Alexander Tshongwe of the ELCSA-SER,

If the African is honest with himself, he will openly admit that he is in a dilemma. He seems not to know yet what he is looking for ... our European brothers are constantly suggesting and deciding what will work best for him (Buthelezi 1971:2.)

Buthelezi, writing about the missionary's power and authority, remarked that while the motivations for colonization and mission were different, there was an "accidental historical confluence ... [with] disastrous consequences." Buthelezi emphasized the fact that missions flourished from the time of the establishment of European authority. He recalled the incident when Martin Oftebro, son of a Norwegian pioneer missionary, went with the British colonial soldiers to capture King Cetshwayo after the defeat of the Zulus in 1898. Cetshwayo, who had shown considerable hospitality to the missionaries, is reported to have said to him, "Was your father a friend of mine for so long that you should do this to me?" (:4)

With regard to the place of the missionary Buthelezi trenchantly remarked,

If I had my way, I would so arrange things in this meeting so that instead of talking about the place of the missionary we rather talk about the place of the black Christian in the Lutheran Church in South Africa. ...

The question of the presence or the absence of foreign missionaries in our church was introduced into the discussion in our church by missionaries themselves as soon as the black Christians took the initiative in grappling with some of their problems. The black Christians did not initiate this controversy. The case in point was the problem of the salaries of black pastors. As soon as articles ... appeared in the church papers, missionaries ... [reacted] (:5). ... [ See page 96 above.]

Second, it is a question of indigenous theology... Can we be one church if we do not share the common medium of everyday life? i.e. preparedness to live under the same conditions of both spiritual and material conditions of life... [See page 44 above.]

...The problem is not so much the place of the missionary as the place of the church in the context of the situation in which it finds itself - a situation created by factors that have originated both inside and outside the church (:6).



Regarding future foreign personnel policy, Buthelezi analyzed how non-missiological factors had influenced missionary traffic and pointed out that:

Financial support ... the grants which JCSA makes ... are taken for granted since they have already been underwritten by the mere presence of the missionary in the church regardless of the actual work being done. Missionaries have been the only connecting link between the supporting mission and the supported church ... Missionaries have actually influenced the coming of certain gifts into the church. This has helped to perpetuate the myth [or the reality as this study argues - PJK] that the missionary is a convenient blank cheque....

The calling of a missionary has served as a way out of a financial budget difficulty. The missionary is cheap labour in as far as the [receiving] church does not have to pay ... In the long run the mission will unwittingly have invested in the person of the missionary instead of the church (:7).

Buthelezi continued by saying:

It is also known that in actual fact missionary service is not cheap labour, but is expensive labour. In some cases a salary plus allowances ... can support four to six indigenous workers (:7).

Buthelezi made the following bold proposals:

1. The European and American Churches should investigate the possibility of phasing out [the] 'professional foreign missionary' in favour of temporarily loaned personnel who will be called for specified periods....
2. The salaries [of missionaries] must be paid by the [local] church ... so that the church may have a clear picture of how much it costs to operate the whole church machinery.
3. ... a fund (undesignated aid) could be established so that the church will take responsibility to call and maintain loaned workers.
4. ... the church should be free to choose between help in the form of personnel and a pure grant...
5. ... the European and American missions should resign from the ELCSA-SER Mission Board ... to allow it to be an indigenous and responsible body (:8).

Almost thirty years later, while some things have changed, others remain the same. It is important that present-day partners/companions of ELCSA not forget the words and feelings of that time when black consciousness was still relatively new, especially to white ears in South Africa. Again, one sees in these remarks many of the sentiments expressed in the call for a moratorium at the AACC in Lusaka in 1974, three years later.

Bishop Rapoo's paper was very different from Buthelezi's but also revealing of the views and terminology of many in South African Lutheran church circles.

Rapoo chose as his title, "*The Position of the White Missionary in the African Congregation (not in the African Church)*", since as he put it, "In the eyes of our Lord Jesus Christ, there is no African church (Church for Blacks). These distinctions may exist in our homes but should not exist in the Church." Rapoo went on to give his reply to the question, "Are the White Pastors still needed?" with the following words:

I use the word *White Pastors*, not missionaries, because the word missionary has lost its meaning. ... In fact I do not agree with the way we interpret the word missionary. Any person sent by his Lord ... is [a] missionary. ... I hereby inform the White missionaries that the doors are still opened for them to enter the field of the Lord who has sent them. ... I also request you who come from Europe to talk to your people and urge them to be prepared to accept missionaries from Africa to preach the Gospel to them as it is our wish to work with you here in Africa. Let it not be a one way traffic, but a two way traffic (Rapoo 1971:1 - his italics).

Rapoo then asked the critical question:

Do you give us financial assistance because we still have White missionaries? ... The Gospel says: If you are blessed with two blankets and your fellow man has none, you should give him the second blanket ... As far as I am concerned we really need one another... (:2).

In conversational style Rapoo argued his case:

How are the White Pastors connected to the Black congregations? What is expected of them? ... I am not fighting I am talking. The Tswana proverb says, 'Ntwa-kgolo ke ya molomo' which means: 'It is wise to settle differences by talking rather than resorting to a real fight.'

I am for equal pay for all Church workers who are doing equal work whether they be here or in Europe ... Leave the excuse that money comes from overseas. You have to know that one day it may happen that the money may come from here in Africa. ... This point of inequality of pay for the same job ... is a real offend (sic) to us ... we will not remain silent while we are aware that you are not Angels but people ... We receive you with pleasure and give you some responsibilities in the Church and before long, you throw away that load before you reach the desired goal and that also hurts us. ... We have been trying to make White Pastors feel at home and despite that, some of them still leave us in the lurch and I believe it will still be the same in the future (:2). In view of these incidents you are advised (sic) to note that you are making us sad. ...The Lord has left us a new commandment of loving one another ... (:3).

Although completely different in style, both Buthelezi and Rapoo spoke boldly and with passion to missionaries who were so well known and familiar to them. These were very sensitive and painful questions which are still not resolved today. These two papers highlight the questions this study is concerned with -- how have we met and in what sense have we not yet met and still have to meet?

At the same 1971 JCSA meeting Rev. Olof Joëlson presented a paper entitled *Self-support and Subsidy of the South African Churches*.<sup>5</sup> He began with the question,

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<sup>5</sup> This paper was based on a global stewardship research project which was compiled in the LWF booklet by O. Joëlson, *Church and Economy* published in 1972.

What is the relationship between mission and church? What is the distinction? ... [Theologically speaking] the church has been there from the beginning, because Christ was there, in the preaching of the Word and in the holy sacraments. ... From a practical point of view ... we must say that there has been a gradual change from mission to church ... What has to be "handed over" to the church and what has to be "retained" by the mission? The mission was supported from overseas, but who has to support the church? (Joëlson 1971:1).

Regarding self-propagation, self-support and self-determination as principles for the church, he admitted that independence could easily lead to selfishness, self-indulgence and complacency. Joëlson agreed that,

It is quite obvious that there is still a need for help through subsidies and grants ... [for] ... many years to come. ... The present set-up, the present administration structures and the present way of carrying out decisions make it necessary (:2).

But then Joëlson went on to say that,

[Mission] ... may not only need new approaches and new structures in the younger churches but ... may also make substantial restructuring in the 'sending churches' necessary (:2).

He reflected on "what was good and what was bad" about subsidies:

Subsidies are destructive for both giver and receiver because they lead to the oppressive use of power. ... The giver ... becomes patronizing and fails to see that he, too is a receiver. The receiver ... loses sight of his own power, hides his resentment ... with deep bows and broad smiles, ... accepts terms like autonomy and partnership too uncritically..

Traditional subsidy arrangements have hurt the mission of God because they have promoted values and goals which run counter to good mission ... encouraging the copying or perpetuation of foreign or unrealistic institutions (:5).

The receiver becomes ready to accept the value system of the giver, neglecting ... what is good in his own value system ... The receiving church becomes increasingly self-centered and very 'survival conscious' ... (:6).

For Joëlson the answer to the financial question was through gaining a better understanding of stewardship:

...It is not a question of yours or mine giver and receiver we must be 'together in mission' (:6).

Joëlson concluded with a vision which has still to be realized

It is my dream to see an international sharing fund with the LWF ... The distribution should be in the hands of a committee representing all churches ... If the mission organizations were willing to join, it could become true church cooperation and togetherness in mission (:9).

These formal and organized discussions between the representatives of missions and the regional churches in 1970 and 1971 reflect the trends highlighted almost a decade earlier in Ralph Dodge's *The Unpopular Missionary*, James Scherer's *Missionary Go Home!* and Beyerhaus and Lefever's

*The Responsible Church and the Foreign Mission*, all published in 1964. John Gatu's call for a five year moratorium (temporary withdrawal) of all foreign missionaries from Africa was first made in 1971 in New York and reiterated at the AACC in Lusaka in 1974 (Kritzinger et al. 1994: 14-15).

In ELCSA and the ALC as a whole there have been few examples of and limited avenues for a critical dialogue to take place among ordinary members in a consistent way. *Credo* was a theological magazine sponsored by the CCLF upon the initiative of the ALM and the Mankankanana Synod with a limited readership and time span (September 1955 - ). *Isibani*, was a "in-house" magazine produced by staff at Hlabisa Hospital from October 1958 to about 1985. The *Isithunywa* was a publication which was started in 1905 and which served a vital role in the SER in the 1960s and 1970s. *The Missionary*, a magazine of the NLCA, and later the ELC and ALC was published from 1938 until May/June 1969. *ELCSA News* was a relatively tame and short-lived church newspaper produced from July 1979 to 1990

Since 1990 there has been no church newspaper in ELCSA. This is mainly because finances and expertise are limited but it may also be because open debate and criticism are not actively encouraged. For example while doing research for this study I often encountered personal interviews and views from ELCSA leaders in magazines published **outside** of ELCSA, in overseas partnership newsletters and magazines, such as the South African ecumenical monthly magazine *Challenge* and the Hermannsburg Mission's periodical *Mitteilen*. One example is a reference in the *Hermannsburger Missionsblatt* (No. 6, June 1971:77) to an article by S. von Fintel quoting at length a letter by Pastor B. Hlophe originally published in *Isithunwya* regarding the salary issue in the SER

The proposed agenda for the January 26 - 28, 1972 JCSA consultation in Hermannsburg again took up in a number of ways the issue of "mission-church relations" and set out several points for discussion including the following:

2. ...The general situation in SA
3. The **Relations** between JCSA members and churches in SA including 'the principle and consequences of multilateral relations.'
4. Calling of Personnel from SA for service in overseas churches...
6. **Friendship Relations.**
7. Representation of JCSA members in the Board of the South African Council of Churches...

8. **Equalization of Salaries** - 'Economic fellowship which expresses equality of all men' (sic.)
10. **Endowment Fund** (arising from the transfer of land/properties). (Emphasis mine.)

The CSM prepared a Memo for this meeting (Exhibit 3 of the Agenda) regarding its proposal concerning "Friendship relations."

The proposed CSM programme would include the exchange of information, visits and gifts. It was clearly stated that CSM should be involved as a facilitator and that the Afro-Asian congregations were **not** to contact Swedish congregations directly (:2 - my emphasis).

The motivation for this proposal given by the CSM was that, "the responsibility for mission rests with every church ... mission is the mission of God ... mission occurs on six continents ... therefore it is essential to cooperate.

It was hoped that the contacts with WCC, LWF and mission agencies could be supplemented with "friendship relations."

CSM undertook to act as intermediary. A trial period starting January , 1972 involving 25 congregations was planned (3).

The Bockelmans' book, published in 1972, also touched on the subject of the changing role and definition of missionaries.

One of the difficult things for an American Christian to do is to shift his thinking from sending missionaries to an emphasis on helping churches. We will, of course, continue to send missionaries, but they will have a different task. [This assumption was easily made before the moratorium call of 1974 - PJK.] Our whole orientation in the support of missions in the past has usually been such that we experienced our greatest satisfaction in the support of missionaries. That was only natural because the strongest relationships are personal relationships. But the present day calls for the development of a different kind of satisfaction ... We need to be as excited about working with other churches as we were sending missionaries to help establish the churches (1972:104-105).

This was written almost 20 years before the Companion Synod Programme of the ELCA was officially launched. Whether the thinking has shifted is the subject for further examination below.

### **Mission land as liability and responsibility**

The issue of land has always been intertwined with the coming of settlers and missionaries to South Africa as well as being a cornerstone of apartheid policy. The Glen Grey Act of 1894, the Land Acts of 1913 and 1936 were instituted with little protest from the churches (Cochrane 1987:103). In the words of S.P. Holomisa, [The settlers were] "uninvited guests" [who] "overstayed their welcome, invaded the land" and "subjugated the people" It was reported that

in 1997 white people still owned about 87% of the land (SACC 1997:1). In the words of Prof. Itumeleng Mosala, spoken at the SACC/NLC-sponsored *Conference on Church Land* (5 November 1997), “The churches’ hands are dirty ... to put it frankly” (SACC 1997:3).

While no precise data exists regarding the amount of church land in South Africa, in Kwa-Zulu/Natal, the Lutherans with 18945 hectares or 35.50 %, Roman Catholics (35.14 %), and Anglicans (10,32%) are the churches with the most land (Von Fintel 1995:11).

Land was donated or “sold” to the missions for religious, educational and agricultural purposes; to provide an income and provide a sanctuary for converts (:1). For many years the Berlin and Hermannsburg missions used the proceeds from commercial farming and logging to augment mission finances and to assist rural communities living on mission land which often ended up as a “black spot” in a white area. The Property Management Company (PMC) was created by the CLM since the independent regional churches could not legally own land in “white” areas. The Missions gradually replaced their PMC board members with representatives from ELCSA and finally handed over control to ELCSA on the 28th of September 1993 (ELCSA CC 74/16.2).

Now ELCSA has direct ownership of the land and through the PMC manages the farms and properties once belonging to the mission societies.

In the case of Bethany, south of Bloemfontein, the descendants of residents who were removed from the land by the apartheid government claim that the farm belongs to the indigenous community and not to the church. Following the promulgation of the Abolition of Racially Based Land Laws Act 1991 (Act 108 of 1991) and the establishment of a Land Allocation Commission, the new Department of Land Affairs, ELCSA, the Berlin Mission and representatives of the Bethany community have had protracted negotiations over the issue of land restitution and development (ELCSA CC 87/11.3, 9-12 Feb. 1998:10).

A special JCSA meeting held at Hermannsburg, in Germany, January 17-18, 1972 voted, “that the co-ordinating secretary investigate whether the establishment of an endowment fund for JCSA related churches would be a suitable means of promoting the implementation of the principle of self-support.”

The ALC’s BWM meeting of April 5-8, 1972 dealt with several JCSA matters including once again the relationship of JCSA members and South African Churches with regard to constitutional as well as financial questions. With plans to establish a united, independent Lutheran church in progress in South Africa, the above proposal for an endowment fund to be created from the sale

of mission land holdings for the financial support of the church was also discussed at the meeting. Each mission agency was asked to respond to this proposal.

The position of the Hermannsburg Mission was outlined in a letter dated September 2, 1971

Regarding the proposal of an investment fund the ELC of Hannover and the HM suggested that efforts to strengthen Lutheran unity and ecumenical cooperation in South Africa were the best investment for the Lutheran Churches in South Africa.

With regard to farms owned by HM, the view was that,

...since on the whole these farms were donated or bought for mission work in South Africa in general, their proceeds should not be utilized for any specific regional church in South Africa, but for the Lutheran Church as a whole ... The HM ... will work out steps ... for the development of valuable farmlands so as to render profits ... [which] should be given to FELCSA. As soon as Hannover has taken over the legal responsibility for paying the salaries of the missionaries the capital value of the farms should be at the disposal of FELCSA ... or one of its member churches (ALC BWM Agenda 1972:30-31).

The position of the Berlin Mission, as previously stated at the Rosettenville Consultation, was as follows:

It is certainly not a pleasant situation for our partner churches in Africa, that they have to request financial assistance from partner churches and mission societies overseas ... If the Missions would transfer their land properties in South Africa partly or completely to a foundation for the African Lutheran Churches, these could cover their needs to a considerable degree from the proceeds of such capital and thus they would not need to ask for assistance from overseas again and again at the present extent.

It is the view of this study that such thinking can only be seen as superficial and wishful thinking in light of the growing economic gap locally and globally.

The BWM voted that the DWM support the establishment of an endowment fund and that JCSA be informed that:

DWM is unable to make regular budgetary contributions ... and that DWM be requested to furnish a listing of ALM properties in SA ...[in order to] explore with the ELCSA-SER which of the properties could be used by the Church.(BWM 1972:27).

Due to its relatively late arrival in South Africa in 1927 the American Lutheran Mission did not acquire land to the same degree as the other older mission organizations except for some land inherited from the Schreuder Mission (Untunjambili, Luwamba and Raper Farms) as well as several properties in Durban and Eshowe. These were either transferred to the PMC with regard to the land or sold with regard to the properties (DWM Report on ALM Property :15 October 1973).

The land issue remains one of the greatest unresolved problems of the post-colonial/apartheid era. It is the view of this study that the present “White” frustration in South Africa about crime and violence cannot be compared to the violent dispossession of land, exploitation of resources and mass removals of black people in the past by the white minority. Von Fintel (1995:10) concluded his report to ELCSA saying, “The land issue is a very emotive issue and will have to be addressed as expediently as possible and with utmost delicacy ... responsibility and care ... involving community representatives in ... [the] deliberations.” Not only in South Africa but in North America relationships and identity in the past and present are still affected by the land issue. The same holds true for partnership relationships in the future. Issues of land restitution, economic justice and development must remain on the partnership agenda.

### **A breakthrough time for the ALC?**

The 1972 report of the Board of World Missions heralded what was deemed to be an important step for the ALC with the development of the document *Working Objectives for the Division of World Missions*. This document was finalized at a meeting of the Board and Division in St. Petersburg, Florida from the 5-12 February 1971 and accepted by the BWM on May 10 -12, 1971

Dr. Morris Sorenson, who served as DWM Executive Director from July 1, 1970 to May 1, 1981, called it, “a breakthrough for the division as it enters a new phase in mission in a changing context” (Sorenson 1996:217).

Of major importance for the DWM was the definition of the mission task as, “essentially evangelistic” and “basically a reaching of faith toward unbelief across frontiers, whether they be cultural, political, ethnic, socio-economic or geographic.”

At that time the United States was embroiled in the Vietnam War and facing growing criticism for what critics called its imperialistic and militaristic ventures (Magdoff in Owen & Sutcliffe 1972:164). Christian mission(s) were also being similarly accused of supporting and benefiting from Western Expansionism at the expense of indigenous peoples and cultures. Orlando Costas (1982:62) spoke of the “sad experience of mission work throughout the last three centuries” and put it bluntly when he said: “Mission work is so dependent on the world of free enterprise that it is practically impossible for it to exist without that support.”



In this charged atmosphere of criticism the Board of World Mission of the ALC wished to make it quite clear that it was committed to the reform of oppressive structures and that it worked with local churches as it engaged in Christian witness and service. (My emphasis.)

The objectives of the DWM were set out as follows:

### **I. Establish and Maintain Relationships with overseas churches.**

#### **Paragraph B:**

Relationships are maintained in full cognizance of the fact that each church is a legitimate expression of the body of Christ, with a responsible selfhood apart from any other Church. Thus these relationships do not [Would it not be more accurate to have said 'should not'? - PJK.] create or perpetuate a dependence of the Churches upon one another, nor do they provide for one Church doing for another what each should do for itself (ALC BWM 1971 Exhibit.1:1).

C. Relationships are defined in the governing documents of the Churches; and in "special agreements" between the Churches, which, reflecting their selfhood, take seriously the historical development, cultural setting, economic strength, and political environment of the Churches. [Twelve partner churches are listed including the ELCSA-SER - PJK.]

E. In places where relationships are maintained with other Churches the missionary obedience of the ALC is, for the most part, fulfilled in and with the Churches. However, in certain instances, and in particular places, on the basis of consultation, The ALC expresses its missionary obedience apart from the church in that place.

F. Two important aspects of relationships, for the ALC, are missionary participation in and financial assistance to the overseas Churches. However, a valid relationship may exist in the absence of either missionary participation or financial assistance by the ALC. This is a very complicated and difficult topic i.e. finances.

[Criteria are given on which the granting of financial assistance is based but not limited to (:2)].

ALC/DWM regards fiscal self-reliance as an immediate priority for all related overseas Churches and requests each related overseas Church to enter into negotiations with ALC/DWM to develop and implement a program of decreasing subsidization. ALC/DWM sees the order of priority for a Church assuming fiscal responsibility to be:

- a. Congregational life
- b. General church programs and administration.
- c. Institutions

### **II Engage in Christian Witness and Service with Overseas Churches**

1. Leadership training
2. Parish ministry
3. Team ministries
4. Resource ministries
5. Specialize ministries
6. Consultative ministries
7. Educational ministries
8. Healing ministries

## 9. Mass media ministries

**III Facilitate for the ALC and, when possible for the several overseas churches, an interchange of theological insights, Christian Lifestyles and perceptions of the missionary**

ALC/DWM provides for exchange visits.

**IV Recruit, call and maintain missionary personnel for overseas ministry**

D. ALC/DWM provides personnel for experimental, innovative and unusual ministries to the Churches...

**V. Minister to persons in their social, political and economic relationships**

A. ALC/DWM commits itself (to) ...reform of any structures which deprive, oppress or dehumanize persons .. (:3). to share material resources, made available to it, with those who are in need... (:6).

**VI Identify and develop new areas of ministry**

**VII Cooperate in its missionary obedience with other churches and agencies wherever and whenever possible**

**VIII Stir up and engage the ALC in more faithful obedience to its missionary obligation to Jesus Christ**

B. ALC/DWM , through a program of interpretation, seeks:

1. to engage together with the constituency of the ALC in defining the nature of contemporary missionary obedience...

3. to familiarize the ALC with the unique [What about common characteristics? - PJK.] characteristics of each overseas Church with which the ALC is related...

6. to address itself to particular problems and unfortunate attitudes toward mission which are manifest, from time to time, with the Church (:8).

Reflecting on these *Objectives* the ALC BWM report of 1972 made the following points under the heading *Missionary obedience and relationship with Churches*:

We can no longer identify easily “our work” or “our mission fields.” We see, rather, our responsibility in mission being expressed in an identification with God’s people - his church in those nations of Asia, Africa, and Latin America where we are privileged to serve. Thus we maintain relationships in mission with the churches noted in our *Working Objectives* (ALC Report 1972:186).

With regard to *Financial Assistance* it was explained that:

Fiscal self-reliance, however, must never become an end in itself, nor is it to be viewed as leading to the disengagement of the ALC in areas where fiscal self-reliance has been achieved. It is rather, a significant step to an increasingly effective **mutuality in mission**... (:187 - my emphasis)

The term -- “Overseas operations” -- used in the ALC’s biennial report of 1970 was replaced with a new heading in 1972 -- “World Areas” -- indicating a shift to a more global perspective (:191).

Under the general heading “Africa” the following remarks were made in the report

There are few atheists in Africa. The people of Africa are inherently religious, following their traditional religions, Islam or Christianity .... The growth of Christianity during this century has been phenomenal ...Leadership training is of high priority for the churches ... African churches are increasingly turning to the social needs of the people; ...urbanization,

unemployed youth, injustice ... We are privileged to have a significant involvement in the struggle for the soul of Africa (:191 - my emphasis).

The phrase “struggle for the soul of Africa” was unfortunate in the view of this study, reflecting terminology of an earlier era and serves as a reminder that we carry several paradigms with us at the same time, as Bosch has pointed out (1993:349). (See page 72 above.)

The report continued,

With regard to South Africa the most outstanding event in the life of the SER was the consecration of Rev. Paul Mhlungu on Sept. 19, 1971 as the first black bishop of the 95000 member church. Merger discussions continue. There has been a steady decline in the number of our missionaries serving in South Africa, as South Africans assume greater responsibility for ministry (:193).

In retrospect, to speak of a “breakthrough” for the ALC was probably too optimistic a term. It was a step forward in certain respects but not all. According to J.L. Knutson (Interview 1998a), the decline in missionaries was not only due to the success of local training and increasing indigenous leadership but also due to natural attrition and increasing financial constraints ( See Appendix C for chart regarding ALC missionary staffing trends in South Africa: 1927 - 1990).

The following section reflects the steps taken towards a more inclusive and global approach by the ALC in defining the mission of the church in the early 1970s.

### **The ALC : Defining a global and contextual missiology**

July 1973 saw the first meeting of the newly renamed and restructured *Board for World Mission and Inter-church Cooperation* of the ALC. The board increased from 8 to 19 members with a representative from each district and three members at large. These changes reflected in part the vision of Dr. Kent Knutson (ALC President: Jan. 1971-Feb. 1973) to involve the whole church in mission. (See Kent S. Knutson's *The Shape of the Question*, Augsburg, 1972:8)

The BWMIC adopted a statement on April, 4-6 1974 repeating its commitment to the ALC's constitution<sup>6</sup> and outlining its vision for mission which stressed that:

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<sup>6</sup>Paragraph 12.61 of the *Constitution and Bylaws* of the ALC (1960) states that the DWMIC, ...shall undertake programs and responsibility on behalf of all congregations to implement the mission of this church to carry out the Lord's command to bring (sic) the Gospel to all nations, to cooperate with churches outside the US carrying out their mission, and to assist in providing for the needs of people outside of the United States ... Mission is the church embracing the whole world ... ministering in word and deed ... it offers ... hope, ... dignity, ... healing, ... reconciliation. ... We therefore affirm that our distinctive mission is evangelistic (ALC Constitution 1960:99).

Mission is the privilege and responsibility of every congregation of the ALC.

...It is important to note that the above statement reflects a global understanding of mission. Mission is not a movement from West to East, from North to South, from developing nations, from advantaged to disadvantaged peoples ... We need the witness of one another. We need to discover mutuality in life and mission. We need to recognize our interdependence with all mankind (ALC Report 1974:100).

The 1974 DWMIC Director's report explained that,

For administrative purposes, we have chosen to divide the world into four geographic areas: Africa and Madagascar, East Asia, Latin America and South Asia...

DWMIC participation in mission and ministry in these areas is in, together with, a part of, in cooperation with and under the direction of churches, institutions and agencies in the areas. There is *no ALC work* in those areas. It is a *participation in* and an *enablement of* Lutheran ministry in the areas (Italics in original text).

The Working Objectives of the Division state:

“Relationships are maintained in full cognizance of the fact that each church is a legitimate expression of the body of Christ, with a responsible selfhood apart from any other church. thus, these relationships do not [in the view of this study this denial of dependence was far too optimistic a statement - PJK] create or perpetuate a dependence of the churches upon one another, nor do they provide for one church doing what each should do for itself (:106).

The following seven areas of overseas engagement were listed:

1. Evangelism, Congregational Development, and Church Administration
2. Institutionalized and Non-Institutionalized Forms of Leadership Training
3. Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Education
4. Health Care
5. Community Development, Service Projects and Sensitizing of Christian Communities to Social Concern
6. Written, Visual and Electronic Communications
7. Missionary Support Activities (:106-108)

With regard to Africa, the 1974 report pointed out that there was a growing realization that even though many African countries had gained political freedom, most continued in “economic bondage.” The report reflects the awareness that many of Africa’s natural resources are being exploited for the profit of Europe and North America. Therefore development continued to be an “African priority.” Julius Nyerere of Tanzania is referred to as providing a critique of the route being taken by highly developed Western nations although African Socialism or Ujamaa were not specifically mentioned in the report. The drought in the Sahel and the increasing focus of Black African governments on the white-dominated southern regions were also covered in the report. Increasing “guerrilla attacks” and widespread conflict were noted (:109).

The new BWMIC took note of the ALC’s Church Council action with regard to South Africa which resolved,

to continue to strengthen our fellow Christians by providing and where possible, increasing financial support and personnel to the black Lutheran churches of Southern Africa,... giving financial support to the CI and SACC, ... to ... remember our black sister churches in Southern Africa in prayer, ... recognizing problems of the same nature in our own country, we seek ways to challenge US corporations located in Africa to improve conditions for black employees ... to create in the members of the church a greater awareness of the issues involved and our participation in such sins of oppression... (My emphasis - see page 144 of this study regarding the divestment issue)

Two significant factors were also highlighted in the report:

There is a very definite growth in Black consciousness ... Blacks are discovering their own identity and strengths.

Secondly, the confrontation between government and church is intensifying [also the number of] bannings, the establishment of Bantustans or homelands and the temporary status of urban dwellers due to Pass legislation (:112).

The report noted that “serious merger discussions” were underway in South Africa between the “four Black Lutheran church bodies” (:113).

In his book, *Beyond Expectation*, Sorenson (1996:217) referred to several important documents developed by the ALC in the 1970’s including:

A Theological Statement, Toward Wholeness in Mission - A Statement on ALC Women in Overseas Ministry, Fiscal Self Reliance, Confessional and Ecumenical Relationships, and Personnel Exchange with Overseas Churches.

A new theological statement was prepared by a BWMIC task force in April, 1974 for presentation at the Seventh Annual Convention of the ALC (October 9-15, 1974).

This was the basis of a paper, *Toward an understanding of Task*, which Sorenson, as Director of DWMIC presented to missionaries on home leave on August 1, 1974. Using the constitution of the ALC and the 1971 document *Working Objectives* as a basis, Sorenson sought to articulate a “theology of mission” which informed the activity of the Division. Sorenson stated that,

In this day when there is an obvious movement from dependence to independence to interdependence it is essential that mission be understood in clear and rather precise terms (Sorenson 1974:3).

Sorenson (1996:269) expressed his understanding that “the church is distinguished by a **unity** given by the Spirit” (Ephesians 4:4-6) and “**diversity**” (1 Corinthians 12:4-6). He stated emphatically that, “unity is not, and can never become, uniformity.” (My emphasis.)

Sorenson emphasized three points regarding the nature of mission: <sup>7</sup>

A. In the first place, mission is rooted in the Gospel. Sorenson lamented that, “We have been unjustly accused of being concerned only with ‘souls’... We have been misunderstood ... [He calls for greater awareness and resolve to address the demands of] ... economic exploitation, racism, military dictatorships, injustice, oppression [and] ... starvation (Sorenson 1974:6).

These global problems are named in a generic way. The role of the US is not analyzed in depth nor are the perceptions of pietistic and dualistic thinking really addressed in the main document however these questions are raised in the appendix below. Sorenson continued:

B. In the Second place, Mission is Global. Mission is not a movement from west to east, from north to south, from developed to developing nations, or from advantaged to disadvantaged peoples [but is it not still the case in fact? - PJK.] ... Mission is every Christian and every congregation of Christians living out faith in the world. ... Thus the missionary response of the ALC is, for the most part, understood in relationship to churches, institutions, and agencies in Asia, Africa and Latin America ... (:8).

...Developing strategy and programs, within the context of relationships, often places the missionary in a rather ambiguous position ... (:9). ...How does DWMIC view the missionary and his relationship to national groupings of Christians? ... [Sorenson made the point that a missionary of the ALC is a person who has, to a significant degree, a dual accountability - PJK.] ... A missionary of the ALC is one who lives and ministers in an emerging(?) church and as part of a changing world ... (:11). ... There is the danger of limiting the missionary response of the ALC to the response of another church institution which might not be fully cognizant of the comprehensiveness of mission... [Was the ALC itself fully aware of the comprehensiveness of mission? This study argues that this kind of statement is too optimistic - PJK.]

...Finally, if mission is global, mission is not only to minister but it is to be ministered unto ... embracing and being embraced by all persons, of every race and color and language and political persuasion (:12).

...To express mutuality and interdependence in mission and ministry is extremely complex ...there is the subtle temptation ... that more affluent western churches might easily demonstrate something of a “neo-paternalism” in an eagerness to effect an exchange of personnel (:13).

C. In the third place mission is faith reaching out to all humankind in a proclaiming and doing of the Gospel, among peoples of every tribe, history, culture and nation...

[Sorenson declared:] I am proud to be part of the ALC. The ALC does have a distinguished record of moving easily, freely and responsibly ... where God has called to mission. For that tradition I am deeply grateful. However, it would seem that now the Lord is calling us to an increased sensitivity and daring response to new needs and opportunities (:13). ... Doors are open ... (:14)

The appendix to this paper, entitled, *Some Issues of Concern to DWMIC*, poses some very relevant and critical questions.

5. Mission on Six Continents -- What is it? ...What does it mean when we talk about “ministering and being ministered unto?” ... “embracing being embraced?...” What is our

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<sup>7</sup> A version of this paper *Toward an Understanding of Mission in a Global Context* is in (Sorenson 1996:269). This was also presented as an article in the *LTS Review*, Vol. XIII, No. 2., Fall 1974.

... responsibility to the constituency of the ALC when it become evident that American political and economic interests seem to be contributing to oppression and injustice internationally rather than serving as liberating factors in the lives of nations and peoples. ... Does the missionary continue to be “our most effective resource in overseas mission?” (1974:2)

As is evident in the appendix above the language was changing. New adverbs were being introduced into the vocabulary including words such as “complex,” “ambiguous,” “mutuality” and “interdependence.” The frequency of words such as “interdependence, mutuality, cooperation and enablement” make the intention absolutely clear. The only problem is that good intentions and new vocabulary do not always accurately reflect the realities and ambiguities of the situation. For example, the Bockelmans acknowledged in their book, *An Exercise in Compassion* (1972),

It’s often difficult, if not presumptuous, to say that somebody, ‘needs’ you. It’s more correct to say that we need each other. The greatest call to the Christians today may be to exercise compassion - to suffer with each other (:10).

The “issues of concern” mentioned in the appendix to the Sorenson paper rightly question if and how mission is possible for those coming from a compromised and privileged position. There was a growing realization that mission takes place on the boundaries and a sense that there are gaps and ambiguities that the language and experience struggle to grasp or control.

While this section has described bold efforts to redefine mission and relationships in mission the next section emphasizes the tedious but necessary day-to-day sorting out of “the nuts and bolts” of partnership with the ELCSA partners in the mid-1970s.

### **The General Standard Agreement**

At the ELCSA Standing Committee (SC) Consultation in Rustenburg (20 September 1974) a draft of the *General Standard Agreement* was presented.

The preamble was accepted, with an amendment, to read, “partners” instead of “churches” i.e. “partners cooperate in **equal partnership** ... and believe that they are entrusted by God with **joint responsibility** of bringing the Gospel... to all nations” (SC Minutes 1974 :Par.6.1).

On behalf of the ALC and other mission societies Rev. J.L. Knutson expressed “thanks to God for the hospitality and fellowship of the future churches in SA. In the midst of growing separateness they are making a positive witness to us all by uniting. The overseas partners look forward to growing **two-way cooperation** in the future ” (:Par.11.1 - my emphasis).

At the **8th JCSA Standing Committee** of October, 16-17, 1974, JCSA representatives expressed regret that ELCSA Bishop Rapoo had not been invited to the JCSA Executive Committee meeting in Uppsala. (JCSA SC 1974:Par.1.5 (a)). Before 1975, representatives of the various regional churches had been invited from time to time as observers to the JCSA meetings. With the formation of ELCSA the name of the JCSA SC was changed to ELCSA SC as ELCSA would become a full member of the committee (:2.1(a)).

A Special meeting of the JCSA SC met (November 15, 1974) to discuss a new draft of the *General Standard Agreement* to guide relations between each of the partners and the new church. The dissolution of the Joint Committee on Southern Africa (JCSA ) was finalized on January 1, 1975 whereupon the administrative functions were turned over to the Standing Committee of ELCSA (SC).

### **A bilateral agreement**

A bilateral *General Standard Agreement* document between the ELCSA and the ALC was signed by Bishops D.P. Rapoo and P.B. Mlungu for ELCSA and Bishop E. O. Gilbertson for the ALC on the 17th of December 1975 in Rustenburg. This was timed to coincide with the merger of the four regional churches. Each of the other overseas partner churches signed identical bilateral agreements with the newly formed ELCSA.

The preamble to the bilateral agreement stated that,

The following agreement is based on the fact that the churches in Southern Africa and the churches/missions overseas *through history belong together* and believe that they are entrusted by God with a joint responsibility of bringing the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all nations and are facing this task together (Matt. 28:18-20). Therefore the above mentioned partners cooperate in *equal partnership* of Christian brotherhood, according to terms ... set forth (my italics).

The agreement included the following articles

#### **Article I , Personnel**

1. The partners shall support each other with personnel. ...
5. Co-workers and their families sent out at the request of a partner shall become full members of the partner church and shall have the responsibilities, obligations, rights and privileges, including spiritual care of such members. If necessary, special arrangements shall be made in consultation with the Bishop.



## **Article II, Intermediate Structures**

Intermediate structures between expatriate personnel and their sending church/agency such as “missionary conference,” local representatives, etc. shall not be established independently from the partner church. Where, for certain legal and practical reasons, existing structures are still necessary for the time being, they shall be authorized and coordinated by the receiving partner.

## **Article III, Finances**

1. The partners shall support each other financially...
3. Requests for financial assistance ... shall be made through the head office of the respective partner. All funds shall be received by the central treasury of the respective partner.

## **Article IV, Property ...**

## **Article V, General ...**

2. Amendments and additions ... shall be agreed upon in joint consultation by both partners. ... The partners concerned shall inform all other partners who have entered into this type of general agreement.
3. Should one of the partners desire to terminate this agreement, notice shall be given two years in advance.

The prevailing perception of mission history and partnership at the time is reflected in the preamble of the agreement. History is interpreted in very neutral and almost romantic terms. The connections between imperialism, colonialism and mission are not mentioned. Even present-day partnership agreements rarely reflect these realities but rather declare the ideals and practicalities of the partnership as seen in the conclusion to chapter one of this study ( See page 53 above).

## **ELCSA - ALC/ELCA Relationships 1975 - 1990 (PART B)**

The formation of ELCSA meant that the ALC and the other European-based mission agencies now had to relate to the new church with its five dioceses and not only as in the case of the ALC, to the former ELCSA-SER and Johannesburg Circuit, the ALC’s traditional partner in South Africa.

In 1974 the Division for World Mission and Inter-Church Cooperation (DWMIC) developed and adopted a theological statement which affirmed that,

Mission is rooted in the gospel, the redemptive activity of God in Jesus Christ. Mission is understood as the church’s response to the gospel. This response embraces the whole world, and is the privilege and responsibility of every congregation of the ALC.

On the basis of this scriptural and theological foundation DWMIC formulated aims and objectives to guide its policy making and action in mission (ALC Report 1974:99)

The 1976 report on South Africa stated that,

The most significant development in Lutheran ministry in South Africa during this period was the formation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (ELCSA). An ALC missionary [Rev. T. Homdrom] was elected general treasurer of the church. Leadership training through the two seminaries, community development work [Rorkes Drift Arts and Craft Centre] and stewardship training are the areas of ALC personnel involvement at this time. The involvement in medical work is decreasing as the government plans to assume responsibility for the 13 Lutheran mission hospitals in Natal in 1980.

The political situation continues to grow more complex and critical with no apparent changes in the apartheid policy (ALC Report 1976:86).

In his November - December 1975 Annual Report to the BWMIC, Rev. J.L. Knutson, as the Secretary for Africa and Madagascar, reported on increasing "white fear" in South Africa following the independence of Mozambique. Increased detentions were seen to be aimed at crushing rising black consciousness espoused by SASO and the BPC (Knutson 1975:2). A bomb explosion at the ELCSA merger meeting in Rustenburg in December 1975 was seen as evidence of opposition to the church's stand for unity and its opposition to government policy (:7).

Earlier in that year the famous *Appeal to Lutheran Christians in Southern Africa concerning the unity and witness of Lutheran churches and their members in Southern Africa* was drawn up at the 5th FELCSA Conference in Swakopmund on 11-13 February 1975 (FELCSA minutes 1975:7. par.13.b).

The report tabled by the FELCSA Committee on Human Rights stated that,

those who practiced apartheid in worship as well as in daily life exclude themselves from the fellowship of Christian believers (Hellberg 1979:145).

A twelve-hour debate followed the report. After remarks by Praeses von Delft, the president of UELCSA, Bishop Rapoo reacted angrily, "I propose that we bury FELCSA, because there is no dialogue here" (:145). President Habelgaarn of the Moravian church intervened "to save the situation" and in the end all the members signed the statement (:146).

### **The Salary problem continues**

While the matter of salaries was discussed after the formation of the regional churches in the early and late 1960s (see page 96 above) the salary issue was again a major problem affecting

relationships after the establishment of ELCSA in 1975, bringing into serious question any talk of ELCSA being an “autonomous and equal partner.

Regarding “The Salary Problem” it was reported to the DWMIC by J.L. Knutson that,

.this topic created the most heated debate as usual.

A number of proposals were discussed including one that missionaries earning over a certain amount should give 20 - 40 % of their salary to a common salary fund. Some people felt this should include overseas mission office personnel as well (Knutson 1975:3).

J.L. Knutson commented that,

there is no easy answer, but this matter will continue to plague relationships and create a growing burden for the missionaries. This issue needs to be addressed by the overseas partners so that the missionaries are not left in an untenable position.

An alarming aspect of this debate is that some of the bishops and pastors are only concerned about their own personal salaries and not [about] their black coworkers’ [salaries]. The possibility that a large disparity between local pastors and parishioners could destroy the effectiveness of their ministry seems to be largely ignored. Developing financially appropriate ministries in each area and TEE are possible answers. (:4)

The ALC was encouraged in the report to continue its support of ELCSA and intensify pressure on the South African government.

FELCSA held an extraordinary conference (October 27-28, 1976) in Johannesburg, appealing for unity in the crisis situation and reaffirming the Swakopmund appeal, urging positive and practical implementation. Hellberg wrote (1979:164), “One gets an almost frightening impression of the tensions within FELCSA and the apparently irreconcilable different positions taken by white and the non-white (*sic.*) Lutheran churches.”

After the Uppsala meeting of the LWF Executive Committee, which issued an open letter to Prime Minister John Vorster, FELCSA President Von Delft wrote a letter in protest to the LWF, questioning its competence and authority over matters in a “foreign state.” General Secretary Carl Mau replied in a carefully worded letter, “You and your church are not in the position to really hear the loud cry of our black brothers and sisters for help and you do not want to see how your land is going on a path of self-destruction” (:165). In his reply to Mau, Von Delft declared, “...we speak a different language,” and strongly rejected the “presumptuous and loveless judgment” by the LWF that he and his church did not listen to their “black brothers and sisters” (:165-166).

In a letter to member churches and affiliated organizations dated February 6, 1976 the General Secretary of FELCSA, Rev. Karlheinz Schmale wrote,

Since (sic) a number of years now the FELCSA Human Rights Committee has tried to come to grips with the increasingly burning issue to establish a unified salary scheme which can be applied to all church workers within the Lutheran family.

Already in 1973 the report of the General Secretary had contained a call for, "salary structures to be investigated such that they conform with principles of justice" (FELCSA 1973, par. 4:5).

A FELCSA survey in 1974 showed that salaries varied from a minimum of R50 to R734 per month for local and expatriate church workers respectively.

A second FELCSA questionnaire was sent out in February 1976 which asked if the respondent supported a five-year plan unified-scheme during which time deductions from 10-20% would be made from missionaries' salaries and paid into a central salary fund and a freeze on missionary salary increases over a five year period.

J.L. Knutson replied to the FELCSA survey on behalf of DWMIC on February 24, 1976 saying,

...Together with you we abhor the apartheid system ... including this particular issue of unequal pay for equal work. We all know that in the final analysis the only real and lasting solution lies in a basic political change in South Africa. In the meantime any attempts to solve the problems will be piecemeal. But that doesn't mean that we shouldn't try to do what we can by way of expressing solidarity and giving a united witness (Knutson 1976a:1).

J.L. Knutson went on to say in the letter that while the Division agreed in principle with the equalization of salaries,

...We do not feel that we can make this commitment [re: deductions] on behalf of our missionaries ... we question whether this method of deducting from missionaries salaries and adding to African workers salaries really speaks to the issue. This would mean for example that when there are fewer missionaries left, the amount of money available from this source would be less ... We understand that the highest priority right now for the South African Lutheran Churches is equalization of salaries, at the same time we feel that the matter of fiscal self reliance must not be lost (:2).

In his report of October 1976 to the Board the DWMIC, Director Sorenson referred to "Overseas Church Persons to the South Dakota and Rocky Mountain Districts" (DWMIC 1976 :5). [Bishop Daniel Rapoo (Western Diocese) was part of this group. The report stated that,

The visits of these teams are being designed to assist members of local congregations to develop global consciousness, to deepen their Christian commitment and to respond more adequately to worldwide human need. It is important to note that those persons are being invited primarily for ministry and not for interpretation. [This was probably said to emphasize that these were Christian leaders in their own right and not exhibits of our missionary efforts - PJK .] This is ... for a meaningful expression of the interdependent

nature of the relationship which this Church maintains with groupings of Christians outside of the U.S. (:5).

The February 11, 1977 *Program Description for Southern Africa* again referred to the problem of the disparity in wealth between blacks and whites.

In South Africa the two worlds, haves and have-nots, developed and developing live side by side. The church and missionaries are in the middle ... [This is a very passive way of putting it. This study argues that the church and missionaries were/are on both sides - PJK] ... Church finances and fiscal self-reliance are continuing problems for ELCSA. The problem is intensified by rapid inflation and the concern for equalizing these salaries of Black church workers and white missionaries (Knutson 1977a:1).

At the LWF VIth Assembly in Dar-es-Salaam (June 13-25, 1977) meeting under the theme, **In Christ - One Community in the Spirit**, Dr. Buthelezi (in Hellberg 1979:171) gave a keynote address where he pointed out the need for an “entirely new confession which would answer religious, political and economic questions in the context of current ideologies, colonialism and exploitative economic systems.” Hellberg points out that this was a significant point of departure coming from the non-white (*sic*) Lutheran churches in Southern Africa because it went beyond an interpretation of the Two Kingdoms teaching (:172). In his book Hellberg wondered where this would lead these churches as well as the LWF as a whole (:172). (See the discussion on the LWF as a communion - page 227 below.)

Seven years later in 1984 the two white churches were expelled from the LWF but remained members of FELCSA and its successor LUCSA. The suspension was lifted and the ELCSA Transvaal/Natal was readmitted as a member to the LWF in 1992 (Lislerud & Scriba in Elphick and Davenport 1997:193). But in 1998, twenty years after the 1977 *status confessionis* confrontation, unity talks between ELCSA and the UELCSA member churches had stalled with little real enthusiasm from either side to continue.

In the late 1970s another episode in the history of partnership relationships between ELCSA and the ALC took place from September 1977 to June 1978 when Pastor Clifford Kawie of the Cape Orange Diocese served as an exchange pastor at Trinity Lutheran Church in Moorhead, MN, USA. There was considerable unhappiness arising from expectations of a salary by Pastor Kawie during this period. The ALC explained that it could not pay a salary since no work permit had been issued with the visa. Bishop A. Brunke, in a letter dated 7 October 1977, requested that the ALC reconsider its position and suggested a minimal salary of R150,00 a month (Brunke 1977). It was inconceivable to an ELCSA pastor, serving as an “equal” partner in a wealthy church and

country, that such a problem should present itself. It caused considerable embarrassment and discomfort on all sides.

The issue of gifts and support to visiting partners is often mentioned in partnership literature.

The ELCA - DGM *Companion Synod Missionary Exchange Manual* (1990) devotes several pages to "Guidelines for Receiving International Guests" (ELCA 1990:15-18). Paragraph 13 states:

Do not buy expensive gifts for your guest, nor agree to support specific projects that would benefit them or their families. This can be very divisive when they return to their home church. There are better ways to communicate your love and hospitality than through expensive material gifts (:18).

The fact is that there is no way to avoid conflict on this issue. As Dr. Molefe Tsele explained in a paper delivered to a Metro Chicago Companion Synod Committee meeting, "Partnership is a struggle ... and a way of the cross." Tsele concluded, "God uses us in spite of ourselves; in spite of our motives" (Tsele 1991:2). In focusing on the aspect of struggle Tsele is correct. There are no guidelines that will prevent conflict in these matters. There is no genuine relationship without struggle and is never a struggle between equals.

Reflecting on the salary issue in an interview in Jabavu, Bishop Buthelezi described it as a part of ELCSA's ongoing quest for identity (Buthelezi 1997)

For Buthelezi, the salary issue was a concrete issue, a clear symbol, a question of "who we are in relationship to each other." He emphasized that while there were and still are no clear cut solutions in the process of contesting this particular issue, other often unforeseen and indirect, issues were addressed. For Buthelezi the confrontation served a purpose even if no practical solution was found.

Buthelezi believes that progress has been made on the salary issue: "psychologically if not materially." He pointed out that ELCSA would not allow the contrast to paralyze it. Buthelezi agreed with the statement, "We have a problem but the problem does not have us." Buthelezi wondered if new visitors like old missionaries were paralyzed by contrast

According to Buthelezi, the breakthrough, the overcoming of the paralysis, could not be simply linked to a chronological event e.g. the formation of the regional churches in the 1960s or

ELCSA in 1975, but in the exercising of freedom and power, now at least we can decide to end or perpetuate [the relationship].”

In the conclusion to their chapter on Lutherans in South Africa, Scriba & Lislrud (in Elphick & Davenport 1997:194) agreed with reference to the lack of unity between white and black Lutherans, that one of the remaining questions still under discussion, as of 1996, was, “... how to equalize pastors’ salaries between the more wealthy white and poorer black congregations.

In his book, *Missions and Money*, Bonk (1991:74) also agrees that “perhaps no single missiological issue has been so hotly debated ... as the tensions arising out of the staggering financial inequities ... The problem bedevils virtually every mission agency.” He puts it bluntly, “Money gives power; power results in domination. True partnership between unequals if not impossible is extremely unlikely” (:73)

### **Conditions of Service (Or who is really in control?)**

At the EP Meeting in Hermannsburg, 26 January 1977, the “*Conditions of Service*” issue was discussed again. In light of the new proposed salary scale, the question was raised with regard to old and new missionaries. A request for a formal consultation with ELCSA was made (EP Minutes January 1977, Par. 5 :2).

In response to the EPs request for a formal consultation on “Conditions of Service,” the 8th ELCSA Church Council (21-24 March 1977) subsequently agreed to invite the EPs for a consultation in Swaziland, 3-4 May 1977 (ELCSA CC 1977, 8 Par.7.4.1).

ELCSA CC appointed a committee to study the whole question of partnership, namely, Dean C. Molefe, Dean L.E. Dlamini and Bishop Rapoo (: Par. 9.13).

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hannover requested the establishment of a *spiritual* relationship between the two churches on a partnership basis (:Par.9.22 - my italics).

The **EP Consultation in Mbabane** ( May 3 - 4 , 1977) was a serious attempt by the partners to grapple with all of the burning issues but ended inconclusively. The meeting discussed the designing of *Conditions of Service* with the purpose, “to eliminate any form of discrimination with ELCSA,” and asked the question, “Who is the employer of a new missionary?”

The reply was ambiguously put as follows:

- 9.2.1 The missionary is under basic employment by the sending partner
- 9.2.2 On request, a missionary is seconded to ELCSA for temporary employment.
- 9.2.3 He/she owes first loyalty [my emphasis] to ELCSA and has similar rights and obligations as any worker in the church.
- 9.2.4. ...Written agreements will have to be signed by: ELCSA and EP, Missionary and EP, and Missionary and ELCSA.

It was all too cumbersome and ambiguous. One of the ELCSA delegates expressed his utter frustration by “closing his file” and indicating that there was no point in continuing the discussion. After this impasse was reached an offer to meet again in Berlin, in May 1978 was made at the meeting by the BM (Knutson 1998a).

On June 15, 1977 the General Secretary of ELCSA, J.G. Khutsoane, sent a letter to all the EPs as a follow-up to the Swaziland consultation regarding the ELCSA Conditions of Service which stated that, “there shall be equal pay for equal work.” He also was instructed by CC to inform and remind the EPs about the policy regarding missionary conferences especially in light of the tension and polarization existing in South Africa, “... to avoid even any impression which could add to such tension.

The European and American EPs met in Uppsala, September 1-2, 1977. Regarding the proposed “Conditions of Service,” a long and painful discussion took place resulting in the following carefully worded memorandum:

...We expressed our concern about the future development of the relationship between ourselves and ELCSA. We have a long-standing relationship with ELCSA which through the years has developed into a partnership which we treasure and want to develop even further. The discussion at Mbabane, however, illustrated that there are problems in our mutual relationships which have to be grappled with anew in mutual consultation.

We appreciate that ELCSA in its task of fulfilling its Christian witness in the complex South African situation has the full right at its own discretion to make decisions which contribute towards this goal. We wish to support the church in these decisions and are prepared to have discussions with it regarding them and any adjustments that may need to be made in our system of relationships.... (Appendix to EP Minutes of 1-2 September 1977)

In a letter to Rev. Wilhelm Steffens in Hermannsburg, dated November 23 1977, J.L. Knutson referred to the “complex situation” in South Africa and differences between the policies and structures of the EPs making a coordinated approach difficult to achieve. He referred to the stalemate reached at Mbabane in May 1977, the possibility of a “black and white confrontation and the need for further investigations and consultation before [the next] meeting with ELCSA .”



ALC missionaries were obviously concerned about the whole situation. In a letter to Rev. T. Homdrom, dated December 14, 1977, J.L Knutson referred to the implications of *Conditions of Service* for ALC workers in ELCSA and explained,

We discussed this matter at some length in the [DWMIC] Board meeting and I had an opportunity to sketch in some of the background and to relate some of the history of these discussions. It was also noted that **this is the first time in our overseas involvement that the overseas church has set the conditions of service**, but there was realization that the situation in South Africa is different and therefore we need to be flexible at this point. In the discussion it was pointed out that we do not start from the premise that at all costs and by all means we must maintain ALC missionaries in South Africa. ... To sum it all up, we certainly hope that we will be able to work things out so that our people can remain in South Africa, but we do not want to force the church's hand in the matter. In saying all of this I am aware that there is a considerable difference of opinion among the leaders in ELCSA and that this also has a bearing on the eventual outcome of discussions on this matter.... (Knutson 1977c - my emphasis.).

The ALC DWMIC 1978 report on South Africa commented on general trends with regards to missionary personnel world wide. In contrast to the decade of the 1960's when nearly all ordained missionaries came directly from the seminaries more than half now came with parish experience. This was due to the need for filling positions requiring special skills or experience. One half of the positions were filled by ordained pastors. The total number of ALC missionaries worldwide decreased by 41 (ALC Report 1978:89).

The 1978 report also revealed that the **United Mission Appeal (UMA)** brought in nearly \$16,500,000 for DWMIC projects in more than 16 countries. The Fulani ministry in West Africa was the largest project (:91). For about ten years the DWMIC had money for numerous projects including grants to the SACC, CI and other organizations and scholarship funds. According to Sorenson the final total received for UMA projects was about \$37 million (Sorenson 1996:242).

The 1978 report mentioned the banning of 8 organizations as well as newspapers and numerous activists by the apartheid government. It was reported that

Black consciousness leader Steve Biko died of severe wounds inflicted in prison (:99). South Africa seems to be on a collision course.

ELCSA suffers continued harassment and strives for a meaningful identity as a unified church.

For the first time since 1930 there are no DWMIC nurses serving in South Africa. One medical doctor remains as director of an ELCSA hospital (:100).

In the *Evaluation of DWMIC Participation in Mission in SA* during 1978, the observation was made that, "... the church [ELCSA] has a large superstructure of institutions and programs in relation to the resources available." No explanation is given as to why this was the case but it was

reported that, "There are renewed efforts in stewardship teaching." One ALC missionary served as stewardship advisor in the Western Diocese (Knutson 1978:12).

### **A new vision for the ALC in the 1980s ?**

From July 26 - August 4, 1978 an **Inter-Church Consultation** was held at St. Olaf College, Northfield, MN with 33 church leaders from Asia, Africa, Melanesia, Latin and North America. The summary report, "*Stepping Boldly and Firmly ... Into the '80s*" contained the following statements, among others: (See also Sorenson 1996:217-218).

#### **I The Mission Task**

There is but one mission to which the church is called. That mission is rooted in the Gospel and grows out of it ... There was a strong appeal for a renewed commitment to the church's evangelistic task. [This] should be made within partnership ... When mission is focused on the whole person and is directed to all persons, there need not be conflict between the various aspects of mission (:2). [The reference here is to the conflict between evangelism and social involvement - PJK].

#### **II Resources for Mission**

...Mission is the task of all Christians      The contribution of women to the church's mission was recognized...

#### **III Self-reliance**

...is to be understood to be the church in any one place assuming the basic responsibility for its own ministry ... Self-reliance does not imply isolation or abandonment of any partner, nor is it to be understood to focus only on monetary gifts ... self-reliance must be understood within the context of the unfinished task ... not simply directed to fiscal and administrative ends. The challenge for the next period is to discover creative ways to share financial resources without compromising fellowship in the Gospel and partnership in mission (:3). [By contrast this study argues that the church in its relationships is always compromised! - PJK]

#### **IV Relationships**

The consultation affirmed the interdependence of churches in life and mission. ... Each church needs every other church to unleash its potential and to meet the needs of people ... In the development of a strategy for mission, there can be a healthy tension between the national and global responsibilities of each church ... Relationships are to be characterized by growing mutual trust ... Interdependence is contingent on mutual commitment to mission. The magnitude of the task requires the sharing of financial and human resources for the sake of mission (:4).

The stated purpose of this inter-church conference, namely, -- "to listen to church leaders from other parts of the world" -- was significant. However the statements do not in my opinion adequately deal with the past history and ongoing realities of conflict, compromise and

dependence. However these issues were addressed by the EPs in a joint statement regarding the conditions of service drawn up in Berlin in May, 1978. (See page 133 below.)

Reflecting on the inter-church conference Sorensen recalls that, "Considerable attention was given to the question of an appropriate decision-making process in partnership. This proved to be a very difficult issue and one which was not 'resolved.' It was apparent that this area would require particular attention during the next period" (Sorenson 1996:219).

### **Together as unequal partners?**

An EP meeting was held in Berlin, February 7-8, 1978 to prepare for the larger EP Consultation in Berlin, 29-31, May 1978 with the proposed theme : "*Together as Partners*" (Par. 6). In light of the inequalities already highlighted in this study one could ask if the theme should not have been rather "Together as unequal partners"?

Lectures were delivered by Dr. M. Buthelezi and Dr. Theo Sundermeier addressing the topic - *Theological and Practical aspects of Partnership*

In an appendix comments were submitted by the EPs for consideration by ELCSA regarding "Conditions of Service," including the following points:

...It is an essential element of partnership that we recognize the prerogative of a church to determine conditions of service for its workers based on available resources ...

It is also an element of partnership that we recognize that churches exist in societies which are deeply rooted in different cultures, traditions and economies.

Consequently the EPs accept the competence of ELCSA to determine conditions of service for its workers. EPs request ELCSA to give continued attention to the question how it is possible ultimately to achieve complete equality of conditions. We recognize this as a great problem and are prepared to work with ELCSA in order to reduce the differences. (My emphasis.)

We wish to give further consideration to the offer of ELCSA to determine and pay the salary of the missionaries according to its own scales, but request the Church Council to recognize the right of the sending body to supplement the conditions offered by ELCSA by means of remunerations (*sic*) determined according to necessary requirements, different situations etc.

These remunerations include social benefits, educational aid, reorientation and resettlement expenses in the home country...

We request ... that a transition period be allowed ... and consideration to special cases e.g life-time missionaries (EP 1978a, Appendix 1).

An EP subcommittee also met during the Berlin meeting in order to consider together ways of “strengthening our partnership in the gospel.” Of special consideration were the *Conditions of Service* for persons serving in ELCSA.

The subcommittee made the following statement:

1) As we look at the past and at the present we confess that, although our various churches have made statements against apartheid and discrimination, there have been inequalities and inadequacies in our mutual relationship. We are deeply troubled by this and pledge ourselves to work toward the elimination of such inequalities and inadequacies.

We are aware that this will take time, but we commit ourselves to this task confident that we are involved in a dynamic process of growing together.

2) We commit ourselves to the principle that all persons serving in ELCSA should serve under ELCSA Conditions of Service and be paid according to ELCSA regulations...

6) It is our understanding that those who are serving at present in ELCSA will continue under the old Conditions of Service until their present term of service has expired. Persons recalled by ELCSA for a new term of service will return under the new Conditions of Service.

7) It is our aim to implement the new Conditions of Service by June 1979 (EP 1978b, Appendix 2).

The 1978 report by J.L. Knutson to the BWMIC stated that “At the consultation in Berlin in May, 1978, between ELCSA and EPs, agreement was reached on the aim of equal salaries for Black and White church personnel ... The most encouraging aspect of these discussions was the spirit of oneness and cooperation that emerged” (Knutson 1978 :13 - my emphasis ).<sup>8</sup>

Representatives of the ALC, NMS, and the Evangelical Church of Kurhessen-Waldeck were unable to attend the next EP Meeting, in Hermannsburg, 13-14 September 1978. The salary question and financial situation of ELCSA were discussed again. Points of agreement were noted as well as points requiring further negotiation ( EP 1978c, Par.5).

A short ELCSA/EP Working Committee meeting took place in Johannesburg, September 22, 1978 in order to prepare for the October 1978 meeting to finalize a Common Salary Scale. It was decided that the EPs would be requested to grant a salary injection of R1 200 00 to augment the ELC Capital Trust (EP 1978c Par. 4.1). Proposals were also made for ways to bring the topnotch ELCSA salary to R400 per month in 5 year’s time (EP 1978d, Par. 4.1.2).

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<sup>8</sup>Ds. Willie Cilliers of the NGKA always said that the Lutheran “mother” and “daughter” churches were on different continents whereas the DRC and its “daughter” churches were in one country which made facing the same dilemmas even more intense. In an article by Christina Landman in *Challenge* (No.42/July 1997) entitled, *The Bottom line is money*, Landman wrote, “the stumbling block to [DRC] unification is simply this: the apartheid between the haves and the hungry. The URC has accepted the DRC’s confession of guilt for apartheid ... the URC feels that the DRC should confess with deeds, with their purses, and not only with words” (:7).

Nowadays it may sound like too-little-too-late but each small step was a major achievement.

The ELCSA-EP Working Group Meeting (31 October - 2 November 1978), in Rosettenville, Johannesburg, was a very important meeting marking the culmination of years of negotiations around the question of a common salary scale. Bishop Mhlungu was elected chairman for the meeting. He expressed appreciation for the progress made since the consultations in Mbabane (1977) and Berlin (EP 1978e :8). The meeting discussed at great length the minutes of the subcommittee dealing with the *Common Salary Scale*.

It was finally agreed that for the time-being an appropriate salary should be determined which would provide the missionary with a fair income. A formula was worked out including a blocked supplement, a released supplement (R500), and the ELCSA salary (R170) (:Par. 10.3.2).

Numerous questions regarding local and overseas taxes and the financial situation in the church and dioceses were raised by the overseas partners (:6,7).

Clearly the agreement reached was more of a psychological solution than a practical one. The idealism of the 1960s and early 1970s had passed. The 1976 Soweto Uprising by the youth had introduced a more militant spirit into race relations. The possibility of real change through negotiations alone was being questioned. In the end the issue of equal salaries was overtaken by other events and crises. While ELCSA had put pressure on the EPs to reach an agreement, the will and ability to implement and monitor this complicated formula once it was reached was limited especially by those who were not part of that particular process at the time. This is often the weakness of any negotiated settlement, that the arrival of new people and new facts can quickly overturn everything previously agreed upon.

It became clear that ELCSA was facing severe financial difficulties and in order to receive assistance from the EPs, did not wish to alienate their partners/donors any further at that stage.

The EPs for their part were also finding it difficult to bargain and negotiate with ELCSA as an "equal" partner when ELCSA was increasingly not able to manage its own financial affairs.

Skepticism and frustration were rising on all sides.

At this time a new factor was also emerging, that of direct partnerships with circuits overseas.

The possibilities of assistance and cooperation with these "new" partners began to look more promising than the complicated and unsatisfactory agreements with the traditional EPs.

At the EP Meeting in Uppsala, June 6-7, 1979 proposals for the September 1980 consultation were made regarding the "Partnership" issue: viz.

- a) The need for a theological motivation
- b) New areas for mutual assistance
- c) More intensive consultation and coordination (EP 1979a)

A year after confessing to the inequalities and inadequacies of their mutual relationship in Berlin (May, 1978) the EPs took a hard line in Uppsala by declaring that since no budget for 1979 or 1980 had been received from ELCSA there would be no increases in EP grants for 1980 (EP 1979a).

At the EP Working Group Meeting (10-12 September 1979) in Rosettenville, attended by the three bishops, Rapoo, Hart and Buthelezi, it was decided that only four persons would represent all the overseas partners to make for a more balanced meeting.

The local working group had met on 22 August 1979 to attend to certain matters arising from the previous year's minutes, in particular the tax implications of the new salary proposals. viz.

All the missionaries were to receive the smaller salaries while in South Africa and have separate accounts overseas as long as:

- 5.2. Overseas funds were not to be made available to any SA citizen.
- 5.2 A three year contract was maintained.
- 2.2.3 South African citizenship would not be taken up.
- 5.4 Through correspondence with the government it was clearly stated that the total salary was taxable whether or not it came to SA (EP 1979b).

Point 6.2 of the minutes stated that R760 000 was needed to cover ELCSA's accumulated deficits (EP 1979b).

The 1980 *Evaluation of DWMIC Participation in Mission in Southern Africa* referred to these matters as follows:

...no basic changes in [government] policy ... The financial crisis in ELCSA also continued... The block grants of the five overseas partners were kept at the same level. ... It is significant that the ELCSA continues to request expatriates for certain positions and it is hoped that DWMIC will be able to keep three or four pastors in this activity for at least the next few years (Knutson 1980 :12 - my emphasis).

[Reference is made to the] serious discussions as to the role and function of FELCSA, now that most of the Lutheran churches have merged, ... But it still serves as a valuable link with churches in Namibia and Zimbabwe (:13).

At the EP Meeting, in Hannover (February 12, 1980) the report of the *Evaluation Group* regarding the financial crisis in ELCSA was received. A cash "injection" of R760 000 was

needed. This was reported in a letter from ELM Director Welge to Ted Homdrom as ELCSA General Treasurer (Welge 1981). Some of the points discussed at the meeting were:

2.2. EPs committed themselves to ongoing dialogue with ELCSA on all matters of church life including stewardship, administration, finances and theological training.

2.3 [A] follow-up study and report on implementation by ELCSA was requested before the next EP meeting.

13.1 Two boards accepted the "Conditions of Service" but the CSM had problems with Swedish unions to which its employees belonged.

14. The meeting expressed deep concern and compassion regarding tensions in Botswana (EP 1980a).

At the EP Meeting, in Stavanger, Norway on May 28, 1980 the *Conditions of Service Agreement* was discussed and the amount of R500 was accepted in principle as the monthly salary for all expatriate missionaries in South Africa (EP 1980b :Par.14). By comparison ELCSA pastors were receiving a basic salary of R175 per month at the time.

### **Cooperative stewardship or a "poor compromise"?**

The salary and finance issues led to the selection of the theme: *Cooperative Stewardship* for the EP Consultation in Tlhabane, Rustenburg , 9-11 September 1980.

Bible studies on the topic *Stewardship of Talents, Time and Treasures in Cooperative Stewardship* were presented. Bishop Dlamini presented a study based on Matthew 25:14-30 and Luke 19:12-28.

Dlamini emphasized the point that while the talents are not given equally to all,

...the talents are free gifts from God and are given in trust. The Giver still retains a claim upon them. The recipients are only stewards and trustees who will have to give an account of how they [were] used ... The master does not expect the feeble to do the work of the strong nor the poor to do the work of the wealthy. 'Everyone according to his ability (Dlamini 1980:2).

He ended with an appeal,

Let us utilize all our talents, and efforts for the reduction and overcoming of all our ELCSA problems whether financial or organizational (:3).

The consultation agenda included the new topic of *Circuit to Circuit Partnership Relations*. Questions were raised about these Partnership relations between circuits in ELCSA and circuits overseas and the financial consequences for the budget of ELCSA (EP 1980c, Par. 12).

The minutes noted the report on the follow-up by the Evaluation Group and the finding that ELCSA had a deficit of R749 884 (Par.6).

It was against the backdrop of political and financial crises that Dr. M Buthelezi presented a paper at the consultation (September 10, 1980) entitled, *“The Stewardship of the Church of Christ in Current South Africa.”*

Buthelezi began by describing the context and history of the meeting:

The Church of Christ does not exist in a vacuum. It exists in a world that is social, economic and political .... We are assembled here as representatives of the Church of Christ which is scattered all over the world. We happen to have met on South African soil. It is natural that we should take stock of how as a church, both local and ecumenical, we have used the gifts and resources God has given us as we serve him in the South African context. ... (Buthelezi 1980:1).

Buthelezi referred to the current situation in South Africa with regard to the establishment of independent states within South Africa (homeland policy carrying the seeds of dividing the church and racial groups), tensions in schools, the “tricameral” proposal, population removals, security legislation and the “Pay Gap” (:2).

Buthelezi then went on to speak of the stewardship of spiritual resources and money

This [latter] problem has been discussed more than any other ... a few observations... There is still a lot of money lying in the pews ... we need the teaching of stewardship. The money coming from overseas is not evenly distributed. Para-church organizations attract more overseas money than the Church proper .... In Diakonia House we are facing a strange problem where staff resign from ELCSA because of a lower salary and join another agency supported by the same donor’s background as ELCSA ... I have faced this question: ‘Why is ELCSA paying such low salaries and yet Lutherans in Germany and Scandinavia are so generous?’ ... It is difficult to convince people as to why the subsidization of salaries by overseas donors is not justified in the case of ELCSA while it [is] in the case of para-church organizations which employ people from the same community (:4).

Buthelezi expressed the need for new patterns of ecumenical stewardship and identified four phases in the prehistory and history of Stewardship in ELCSA:-

1. Mission-Field Stewardship
2. JCSA Stewardship Era
3. EPs Stewardship
4. Ecumenical Stewardship (:4).

Buthelezi explained that,

In the first era it was easy to motivate people in Europe and America to give financially since the mission field was merely an extension of the home board office. Stewardship on the mission field was a low priority.

In the second era there was a need for coordinating the work of the different foreign mission agencies. This tended to depersonalize the face of the agencies ... emphasis was placed on “selling” church budget items rather than the church itself (4)..



After the formation of ELCSA the EPs took the place of JCSA but served virtually the same purpose. The ELCSA-EP Consultation structure was an attempt to bring humanity to an otherwise impersonal structure. I do not need to belabour the obvious point that this is an inadequate attempt. **The distances between the ELCSA's constituents and the EPs' constituents are greater than ever before** (:5 - my emphasis).

This has created a **crisis of partnership** (my emphasis). As a way out of sporadic partnership, groups arose mainly in Germany with the aim of direct and unmediated relationship with South African counterparts.

The question that can be raised is whether the promotion of partnership in Europe will not in the longer run lead to the demise of mission agencies as we have known them and whether it will not make the administration of ELCSA too complicated. With so many points of foreign contacts, starting from the congregation to the diocese, will ELCSA be able to keep track of what is going on at each given moment? (:5).

Buthelezi concluded,

1. If we are to recover the spiritual and human touch that has to be there in any ecumenical relationship, some form of partnership needs to be continued and encouraged between ELCSA and churches in Europe and USA.

2. The existing form of partnership needs to be revised and streamlined ... **The material aspect of the fruits of partnership does not have the same significance for a European or American Church as it does for ELCSA** (my emphasis). For this reason there is a need for a thorough and objective study of the ways in which partnership can be implemented so as to strengthen the integrity and ministry of both ELCSA and churches in Europe and America. ... **The existing regulations and guidelines of partnership are not adequate...** (:6 - my emphasis).

Buthelezi, in this paper, boldly addressed the unfinished business of past agreements and relationships and the growing complexity of new forms of partnership. He was quite right that the existing regulations were and are not adequate, and that ELCSA would not be able to monitor these partnerships.

This study is doubtful if any one can or should try to control these relationships. The "goal posts" do not remain in one place very long. No matter what structures are in place the complexity will not go away. The "half-life" of any agreement continues to shorten.

After a visit to South Africa by T. Bergman and Rolf Bergland of the CSM, several points were made in a wide ranging report to the CSM Board on 12 November 1980 regarding the **Conditions of Service agreement**

The proposal does not meet up with the original intention of the Church Council as declared in 1976 and in actual effect does not constitute much of a change for the missionaries. 'A poor compromise' was a common comment. Nevertheless ... [the writers contend that it is]... an important step towards a truly comprehensive church budget (Bergman 1980: 9).

The uncoordinated channeling of funds ... came under heavy criticism ... Is the overseas church aware that its financial policies have this effect [of causing] ... irritation and personnel problems? (:11).

Bishop Ambrose Moyo in a paper presented to the *LWF Pre-Assembly* in Johannesburg on March 15, 1997, twenty years later, spoke of the ongoing dependency syndrome, saying that, “African churches are hostages to their overseas partners ...” (Moyo 1997:9), and that, “money seems to determine our relationships.” He wrote of the “pathetic” and “dehumanizing position of an African Church leader today,” who is “reduced to the level of a beggar,” who has to “crawl,” and “lick the boots of a representative of a sister Church in Europe, who is the age of my son to persuade him to make a grant...” (:8). He went on to call for new economic structures and improved relationships with “our sister churches in the north and across ethnic and tribal lines ...”(:9).

### **Acknowledging ambiguities and challenges in mission**

The DWMIC program proposal for “*Participation in Mission in Southern Africa*” for 1981 again addressed the salary issue pointing out that,

Church finances and fiscal self-reliance are continuing problems for ELCSA ... In order to increase the salaries of black church workers to a level more comparable with the salaries of other black workers, a one-time additional grant was provided by the overseas partners. Presently, 50-70% of parish salaries are provided through local income (Knutson 1981:13).

The ALC BWMIC 1980 Report commented on the adoption of a statement by the *BWMIC “On Missionary Vocation.”* The statement spoke both of the broad and specific call to mission and the ambiguity that comes with it:

God calls and sends people to fulfill his purposes ... All Christians are to share the Gospel by what they say and what they do. In this sense, all Christians are called to be missionaries (ALC Report 1980:97).

[The ALC] ... sets apart persons who respond to God’s call to serve in nations and cultures other than their own. Such persons are designated missionaries by the ALC (:126)

Missionaries are sent to identify with Christian churches, institutions and agencies overseas for joint participation in mission. Missionaries are sent to proclaim the Gospel, and to serve human need in areas where there is no particular church with which to identify. ... Through this exchange, Christian communities around the world share God’s gifts with one another (:127 - my emphasis).

All Christians are ultimately accountable to God. Within this accountability to God, ALC missionaries are also accountable to both DWMIC and the church, institution or agency within which they work. The ambiguity in which this places the missionary cannot be completely resolved ... it is reduced by the DWMIC policy that missionaries should strive to become deeply involved in the community of Christians with which they work (:128 - my emphasis).

It is very true that the ambiguity cannot be completely resolved nor should it be. The view of this study is that deeper involvement **does not** necessarily reduce the ambiguity! It will probably accentuate it even more ! But then that reflects the complexities of the situation more accurately.

The 1980 ALC report continued:

Changing conditions at home and abroad affect the placing of missionaries. An increasing level of education and training in “third world” (quotation marks in original) countries has made it possible for churches to locally staff certain positions that were once filled by missionaries; but a number of new positions, requiring higher levels of training and expertise have been developed in certain areas.

Paradoxically, even with increasing development around the world, the gap between the rich and poor widens, placing greater demands on new missionaries.

Ordained ALC women missionaries are not readily accepted in most churches with which the ALC is related. Discussions continue (:98).

Again with regard to South Africa it was reported that ELCSA was undergoing a financial crisis and therefore modification of programs had been necessitated (:110).

1981 saw the end of an era in DWMIC involvement in South Africa with regard to medical work. (See excursus on medical work in this chapter on page 176 ff)

Effective in 1982, for the first time in over 50 years, there will be no DWMIC supported medical personnel in ELCSA ... ELCSA leadership urges that overseas agencies encourage doctors to serve in the former Lutheran hospitals. DWMIC should continue such efforts since there are critical staffing problems ... (Knutson 1982 :13 - my emphasis).

In the 1982 ALC DWMIC Report, the new Director, Mark Thomsen (who started in 1981) outlined the priorities for the Division in the 1980s as follows:

One of the top priorities of DWMIC in the 1980's will be the ... promotion of a global evangelical mission of the church with ALC congregations and institutions... (ALC Report 1982 :85).

Thomsen observed that while congregations of the ALC contribute \$300 million to the total budgets of their local ALC congregations, only 3% was used for the global mission of the ALC. Also the number of salaried missionaries decreased from 223 in 1974 to 166 in 1982. In Thomsen's view, “[this] reflected the growth and autonomy of national churches; however the primary reason was budgetary” (:85)

The “Global Challenge,” according to the new director, included

- (1.) Evangelism and the challenge of “unreached” people around the globe.
- (2.) Political Oppression. The ALC is challenged to identify with their partner churches who carry out their own mission under social, economic and political oppression ... These churches have much to teach us in terms of integrity in the face of opposition ...

Partnership with churches under fire is not only a challenge but a privilege shared in the body of Christ.

**(3.) Inter-Faith dialogue:** Another challenge arises within the context of global pluralism. Crossing geographical boundaries in the jet age is relatively simple. Crossing faith boundaries is still one of the most difficult challenges facing the church, even when those boundaries are found in our own communities ... Then there is China ... is there any way that after decades of Western exploitation and imperialism Christians from the west can identify with the mission of Christ and his church in that Socialist-Marxist colossus of the future? (:87).

**(4.) Poverty :** The ALC is represented in this developing country (viz. Cameroon) in a holistic ministry. A holistic vision of mission affirms that the God who compassionately loves people deeply enough to love them beyond their failures and sins in forgiveness, also loves them wholly enough to be concerned for both their eternal destiny and their earthly well-being.

**(5.) Health Care.** Health care, which is a powerful demonstration of love and concern, has made giant strides forward. ... Training programs ... have made it possible for trained nationals to assume most responsibilities in health programs. However, for a number of years the missionary doctor, nurse or technologist may be the difference between hope and hopelessness for many people whose only source of medical care is that which the church provides. There is today a growing awareness that health care must be approached from new directions. [See the discussion on medical survey by Ernest J. Holman, 1967 in the excursus in this study page 178 ff - PJK]. Community and preventive health programs have significantly changed the nature of health care in many developing countries. Furthermore, if our concern is genuine, we must realize that the ultimate answer to disease is not through the provisions of limited health care programs. Because disease and poverty are inseparably linked, unjust economic systems that bind most of the southern hemisphere in poverty must be corrected... (:90).

**(6.) Contextualization.** One of the great challenges of any cross-cultural missionary effort is the struggle to re-articulate the gospel in thoughts and forms which will enable the reality of Jesus Christ to become incarnate in new contexts and situations. One still is uncomfortable with Western cultural forms of the gospel which are found in non-western contexts around the globe.

**(7.) Interdependency.** [The report quotes Ralph Winter's book, *The 25 Unbelievable Years*, which noted that] in 1945 99% of the non-Western world lived under colonial rule and that 25 years later 99% were citizens of independent states. In the realm of global mission, this means that we have moved - and in some areas are still moving - from a 'Western mission era,' through the struggle for national church autonomy, to an era in which global churches find themselves mutually dependent upon one another .... We must realize that we have as much to receive from the global ecumenical community as we have to offer (:90-91). [For example from] the African church - concerning the authentic meaning of Christian fellowship; ... Latin American, Asian, Chinese churches - social justice, contemplation, commitment. ... From around the globe come questions as to whether we, as a Christian church in America, have not identified the gospel with an American, but non-biblical, value system ... revolving around individualism, free-market economics and national security. Global mission in the 1980's will mean receiving ... as well as sharing our witness to Jesus Christ.

Another of the top priorities of the DWMIC continues to be the establishment of autonomous, national churches which are first, self-propagating; second self-governing; and third, self-supporting ... Global mission possibilities are countless. The primary limiting factor is ourselves (:91).

It is interesting to note the differing influences and emphases of the mission directors during this period, in particular Morris Sorenson, who started in 1970 and Mark Thomsen, who started in

1981. While the unique personalities, gifts and experiences of the two directors are evident in the different approaches taken, their statements also reflect the wider context and language of each decade. At the risk of making a generalization it can be said that while Sorenson was very focused on the evangelistic task. (See page 131 above regarding the document, *Stepping Boldly and Firmly into the 80s.*) Thomsen (1993:42) gave special emphasis to the concepts of vulnerability, the way of the cross and the challenge of engaging in a holistic and dialogical approach to mission.

Defining partnership in mission is an ongoing and ambiguous process as illustrated with the thorny issue of devising a common salary scale, especially with the example of the “R500 salary compromise.” Often, when agreement is finally reached after years of negotiations, other events have overtaken or expanded the original issue. For the sake of progress and everyone’s pride an agreement is formalized on paper but with the point finally having been made, little effort is made to adhere to or monitor that particular decision because of new or other pressing needs or issues. The split in Botswana was and is one of those complications.

#### **The Botswana issue : Further complications among the Partners**

In September of 1979 a number of Lutheran members and congregations in Botswana belonging to the ELCSA - Western Diocese formed the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Botswana.

Bishop Rapoo gave a report on the split in Botswana to the 17th ELCSA CC 19-22 February 1979 ( Par 16:10). The 18th ELCSA CC (29-31 May 1979) was subsequently informed of the Botswana High Court judgment handed down on 28 March 1979 in ELCSA’s favour, ruling that the ELCB should vacate all properties which belonged to ELCSA.

At the EP Meeting, in Hamburg (6 December 1980), the Botswana issue was discussed and the need for continuing dialogue concerning mission outreach and Lutheran work in Botswana (EP 1980d Par.8.0). Also at this meeting J.L. Knutson reported that the Tenth ALC Convention had resolved to divest funds from companies doing business in South Africa (2.0 - see page 144 below).

ELCSA was very unhappy that some of the EPs and other overseas mission bodies, in this case the FELM and the VEM, were involved in the Botswana issue which ELCSA regarded, from its perspective, as an internal problem.

Eventually the *Standing Committee* of the ELM issued a five page statement defending its position entitled: *The Position of the ELM in the Botswana Conflict*, on October 14th, 1981

The ELM made the following points:

The position of the ELM is based on the fact that **God has willed through history to connect the ELCSA and the ELM with each other**, and on the conviction that God has entrusted both of them with the joint responsibility to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all nations and to face this task together {See Preamble of the Agreement (1959) and (1975) and ELM Constitution, Paragraph (1)}. By handing over church government and church responsibility in general [to ELCSA], ... ELM, however, did not release themselves from the joint responsibility to proclaim the Gospel within the Tswana Region and the ELCSA(1).

Respecting the autonomy of the ELCSA and being convinced that this conflict was an internal affair of the Church, the ELM has tried to **take a neutral position ... (:2)** [The ELM] is convinced that for the foreseeable future there will be at least two Lutheran Churches to be reckoned with (:2) ... and takes it as a fact that ELCSA, at present, is not in a position to carry out this responsibility of mission work within the ELCB. (:3) ... it is recommended that the ELM supports evangelistic and missionary work of the Lutheran congregations in Botswana. The ELM is **convinced** that giving help and support to the ELCB could contribute towards reconciliation (:4 - my emphasis).

No further explanation was given nor was the opposite possibility admitted to, that this policy could further alienate and divide. For ELCSA this was not neutrality but arrogant interference from abroad. Both sides had a different view of mission history and prerogatives. The statement above demonstrates the assumptions of the ELM. By 1997 the two Lutheran churches in Botswana were even further apart in the opinion of some due to the continued interference by certain EPs and other mission societies e.g. FELM and VEM. Some leaders in ELCSA still see the Botswana issue as an internal affair (EP Meeting 1997). By contrast it is recognized in ELCSA that ELCSA does not and cannot interfere in internal matters in the partner churches locally and overseas in Europe and the United States.

Former ELCSA Dean Philip Robinson was consecrated as Bishop of the ELCB on the 13th of September 1981 with several overseas partners participating in the ceremony.

The 27th ELCSA CC (27-30 Oct. 1981) took the following stand on the Botswana affair, expressing deep regret at the recognition of the ELCB as a church by the ELM. The CC stated that,

any financial support [for Botswana] should come through ELCSA and that the sending of ELM personnel to the ELCB will strain the relationship between ELCSA and the ELM (ELCSA 1981, Par 31.1a,b,c).

At the same meeting the CC mandated the Partnership Committee of ELCSA to discuss problems that had occurred in the past in preparation for the next EP consultation.

The ELCSA established the Botswana Diocese in 1982 (Lislerud & Scriba in Elphick & Davenport 1997:186). It was reported to the 28th CC (2-4 Feb. 1982) held in the Friedenskirche in Hillbrow that Bishop-elect Rev. C. Ulrich was involved in “sensitive negotiations” regarding the Botswana issue (ELCSA 1982, Par.10.1.1). Even with the best of intentions Rev. Ulrich of the ALC, who was seen as an outsider, and later Bishop Michael Nthuping, from ELCSA, were unable to facilitate a mutually acceptable solution. Twenty years later, in 1998, there still was no common agreement on the Botswana issue.

The ELCA decided not to establish a Companion Synod relationship, when the programme started in the early 1990s, with either the ELCB or the ELCSA -Botswana Diocese until clarity was reached. However, it is the view of this study that in the complex mix of partnership relations in Southern Africa there is no objective place to stand and claim neutrality.

There is no doubt that a complex set of factors gave rise to the Botswana issue including individual personalities, personal and national pride, communication problems, power struggles and colonial history.

An additional thesis I would like to put forward with regard to the difficulty in resolving the Botswana issue has to do with the long-held vision of “one united Lutheran church in Southern Africa” (cf. the GLC of 1889, page 64 below). ELCSA sees itself as the product and the heir of a long process of cooperation and unity. That mission partners are involved in the region, in other relationships, with churches that have refused to join ELCSA or have broken away is seen as arrogance and disrespect which undermines the autonomy and authority of ELCSA which all the agreements since the 1960s and 1970s sought to establish.

Because of and in spite of this crisis in Botswana a new and different vision of the Lutheran churches in Southern Africa as a communion is slowly evolving in the 1990s. (See page 165 below.)

### **The Divestment issue: The ALC’s response to Apartheid**

A comprehensive overview of the ALC/ELCA and ELCSA’s reactions and involvement in the apartheid issue cannot be done in this study. The inclusion here of some of the statements made and actions taken is to highlight the importance of the apartheid struggle for defining the relationships and conversations between the “partners.”

Several months after the June 16 Soweto Student Uprising in 1976, the BWMIC resolved on October 27-29, 1976, "...to continue within the ALC and in cooperation with fellow Lutherans to express solidarity with and lend support to the Lutheran Churches in Southern Africa and particularly in Namibia" (BWMIC 1976, Par. 1(a) : 22). The Board also urged the Committee on Social Responsibility of the Board of Trustees to, "continue reviewing ALC investments in firms operating in Southern Africa..." (par.5).

After the death of Steve Biko and the banning of 17 organizations in September 1977, Theo Kotze of the Christian Institute (and others) fled the country and spoke at many gatherings in the United States including the BWMIC on October 31, 1979 (ALC BWMIC 1980:786). Exiles such as Kotze made a definite impact on Lutherans in Minnesota at that time (Interview J.L. Knutson 1998a). This bears out what Walshe (1983:42) wrote concerning the CI, that it came to a profound understanding of Christian mission, formed in the South African crucible but relevant to Christians everywhere.

On October 31-November 3, 1979 the BWMIC asked for ALC divestment, "...as symbolic of our Christian concern for our brothers and sisters in South Africa" and requested the Church Council of the ALC to ask congregations and their members to encourage Western companies to withdraw from South Africa (BWMIC 1979:124). The SACC had already issued the call for civil disobedience in 1979. During that year the ALC had financially assisted the SACC's *Dependent's Conference* and *The Asingeni Fund* with UMA funds (ALC 1980 Report: 110).

The 1979 BWMIC decision followed that taken the previous year by the ALC's Southeastern Minnesota District Convention on March 11, 1978 to adopt a resolution directed to the 1978 General Convention. The resolution referred to the over 50 US banks and \$3 billion in loans supporting the white minority government and economy, the increase in American corporate investment from \$490 million in 1966 to \$1.57 billion in 1975, and the calls by,

...numerous black leaders and organizations in South Africa for the withdrawal of all foreign investment and the decision that the SE Minnesota District withdraw all funds from banks making loans to the South African government and divestment of all holdings in banks and corporations making loans or investing in the SA government or its public and private corporations (Exec. Committee of the Church Council, ALC, April 1978 Exhibit #1 :1).

The response of the Board of Trustees, in March 1978 to the ALC Church Council decision on divestment, was to question the resolution by saying,



Apart from the generality of the wording, some phrases are deceptively unclear... (and) untrue. ... we are not aware of any Minnesota bank which makes loans to the South African government (Exhibit #1:3 - my emphasis) .... a survey ... shows that the ALC holds stock in 17 corporations ... listed ... as having business in South Africa. (:7). ... The Board of Trustees expresses ... its conviction that to place all of these corporations in a single category that deserves punitive action is indefensible ... The Board conveys its convictions in several points pointing out its legal and moral responsibilities as trustees, ... that divestiture is often ineffective and may be counterproductive since it eliminates the possibility of corporate influence, ... That the Board of Trustees would not knowingly become a party, along with others, to a boycott of banks and corporations by virtue of their involvement in South Africa (Exhibit #1,:8).

The Board of Trustees at its March 1978 meeting, suggested an alternate resolution which was,

calculated to contribute to an easing of the inhuman controls placed upon the non-white majority ... in southern Africa, renew the commitment to the members of the pension plan ... consistent with the legal requirements and with the 'Prudent Man Rules' that places the interests of donors and owners ... and ultimate beneficiaries above all other considerations ... sharing the concern of the church for the plight of non-whites in southern Africa, the Board ... seeks to ... improve significantly the plight of such persons within the limits of its constitutionally-conveyed responsibility ... Institute a program of corporate monitoring and response (:10). Sharpen if possible a policy statement that bears upon the point. It is recognized that past efforts in this direction have not been fruitful but it may be necessary to continue the struggle. ... No ... standard has been found among all the data examined except in ... rare cases ... as to require divestiture or non-participation in any corporation which has interests in South Africa (:11 - my emphasis).

The Tenth General Convention of the ALC (October 1-7, 1980) adopted the following resolutions (ALC 1980)

That the ALC again express its unequivocal rejection of apartheid and all other forms of racial discrimination in our society ... and declare apartheid to be a matter of 'status confessionis'... No negative votes were observed. (Excerpts from the 1980 Convention minutes, Exhibit B:2)

That the ALC declare its judgment that at this moment in history in South Africa, divestiture is the most legitimate strategy in opposing apartheid and the most effective consequence of a declaration of "status confessionis" (ALC 1980.4.56);

That the ALC acknowledge with gratitude the difficult and diligent work of the Board of Trustees and its investment committee, and request them to totally divest from all corporations doing business in South Africa, and that this disinvestment take place in a prudent manner that is consistent with legal requirements and does not place undue risk upon the ALC investment portfolio. A hand tally was taken with the result being: Yes - 447 (57.5%) ; No - 331 (42.5%) (:3).

Debate continued whereupon a resolution (ALC 1980 4.58) was adopted including the following statements:

Whereas, the ALC ... has publicly ... opposed apartheid during the past decade ... whereas the particular issue of divestiture is a difficult and complicated one, not only for us but for the black Lutheran churches whose opinion is divided on the question ... resolved to again express its ... rejection of apartheid ... declare its judgment that divestiture in one of a

number of legitimate strategies ... but not a necessary consequence of a declaration of “status confessionis”... but “.. the most effective consequence...” and that the ALC ... call ... for :

1. An end to future bank loans to the Republic...
2. An end to any sales to the SA police and military...
3. A moratorium on any significant expansion efforts by US corporations in South Africa. ... That the ALC support the call for withdrawal of investment ... if in the judgment of the Board of Trustees that investment on balance strengthens the apartheid system ... That the ALC urge the government of the US to implement economic sanctions against the RSA (ALC 1985:18-19).

On May 14-15, 1981 the Board of Trustees agreed in effect to pursue a “dual strategy” of “prudent divestment” and the “applying of pressure” on companies operating in South Africa for the adoption of specific practices as requested by the Tenth ALC General Convention (ALC 1986b).

On June 25, 1981 the ALC Church Council agreed to develop a strategy,

... which will more effectively support the non-White population in southern Africa in their struggle for justice and representation and which will lead to the reconciliation of all people in southern Africa” (ALC 1980 4.58 and ALC CC 81.6.127).

The ALC Office of Church in Society, headed by Charles Lutz, was very involved in advocacy around the apartheid issue to and on behalf of the ALC. A booklet was produced summarizing the actions taken by the ALC from 1980 to 1985 (ALC 1986b). One of the documents included was : “*Apartheid in Southern Africa - Is it any of our business?*” This essay, commended by the ALC Church Council June 25, 1981, as background information (ALC 1981), included the following points: :

1. Apartheid and Biblical Faith (:481).
2. “Status Confessionis” This term was applied to the situation of Lutheran churches in Southern Africa at the Sixth Assembly of the LWF in Tanzania in June 1977. The 1980 General Convention of the ALC expressed its unequivocal rejection of apartheid and all other forms of racial discrimination in our own society as well as in other nations, and (to) declare apartheid to be a matter of ‘status confessionis’ (:481).  
... The ALC affirmed that there could be no argument over whether apartheid was acceptable or reformable ... There could be no compromise. Apartheid had to be opposed by whatever means at hand. The ALC action conceded that there were many legitimate strategies for opposing apartheid. One of them ... [ is the strategy of disinvestment].
3. [The essay referred to the long history of involvement by the ALC and its European predecessors with southern Africa for nearly 140 years and continued]: Our concern for justice and freedom among all the population has been a part of our total activity in mission with people in southern Africa from the beginning (: 482).
4. Why Southern Africa?  
...there are *no other nations* (italics in original) in which those conditions are supported by a system of law, in which an interpretation of the biblical faith is used to justify that system  
...there are *no other nations* with oppressing systems in which the United States has such influence and presence through government relationships and economic relationships (\$3.5

billion in trade annually, \$2 billion in investment) and from which US citizens and consumers draw such benefits.

And there are *no other nations* with oppressing systems in which there are Lutheran churches of such numerical strength and in which the ALC has such close and long-standing ties with vital Christian communities, which have repeatedly called on their partner churches around the world for support and actions...

Our fellowship in the faith with suffering Christians calls us to do so, because our unity in Christ transcends national and ethnic boundaries” (:483).

In June 1985 the ALC Church Council added further recommendations to the 1981 statement with the document, **Goals for Combating Apartheid** (1982 *ALC Reports and Actions*, Exhibit A:478).

The statement expressed the ALC’s commitment to combat the evils of the apartheid system in South Africa and Namibia, by standing in solidarity with fellow believers and all people who suffer oppression in those lands, and:

1. To continue and seek to increase our support of all phases of the work being done by the churches ... with prayer, personnel, and finances according to the needs and requests identified by our fellow believers...
2. To develop a system for maintaining dialogue with US Lutherans who ... work in South Africa...
3. To identify and develop resources for ALC congregational life ... pertinent to the need for justice and reconciliation
4. To repent of our complicity in the perpetuation of racism in US society ... to link the struggle(s) ... to combat racism in all its forms everywhere.
5. To advocate with our own government that a variety of pressures ... be brought to bear upon the government of South Africa including: UN sanctions, appointment of a black ambassador and more black diplomats in SA reciprocal visa restrictions, denial of tax credits to US firms in Namibia, humanitarian and educational assistance to liberation movements such as SWAPO and the ANC.

Also to support the Board of Trustees policy of disinvestment, sharing information, the sports and entertainment boycotts, and discourage support for banks making loans to the SA government, that ALC members refrain from buying Krugerrands, and visiting SA through conventional tourism (:478).

It is also important to recognize the work of Edward C. May as director of the *Office on World Community of Lutheran World Ministries*, the USA National Committee of the LWF, and many members of Lutheran congregations who supported the Namibia Concerns Committee, which later became the Southern Africa Network (SAN) (ALC 1986a).

It is important for this study to acknowledge that over the past two decades no other area of mission involvement has received so much time and attention in the ALC from local to assembly level as that of South Africa. The apartheid issue has focused and reshaped the language and perceptions of many Lutherans in the US towards Africa, South Africa and racism in general. Obviously many were indifferent and a few vehemently dissented with the actions taken by the

church. For example the Revs. Basich and 28 individual plaintiffs instituted a law suit against the Board of Pensions and the ELCA - Board of Pensions (ELCA Board of Pensions 1994).

ELCSA members and leaders were not always united either, making it difficult for partners to respond. One example is when Bishop Dlamini, as an invited guest from South Africa, spoke out against sanctions and divestment at the ALC's Tenth Convention, creating considerable consternation on the part of those who had lobbied so hard for the motion on divestment. Bishop Dlamini received a standing ovation after his address. A delegate from the Northern Minnesota District moved to have the assembly reconsider its action in light of Dlamini's grave concern about the possible negative effects of divestment on ordinary people. However the next day the delegate withdrew the motion. The convention responded with spontaneous applause (ALC Report Summary 1960:1016).

Lutz explains that Lutherans in the US have felt a special call to the agenda of freedom and justice in South Africa because of the convergence of two factors, namely, appeals for solidarity from Lutherans and others in South Africa and the recognition that the US government and businesses could play a negative or positive role in changing South Africa. Lutz agrees that while the results from divestment, as far as inducing withdrawal of companies from South Africa, was negligible, they were significant in raising consciousness and as a symbol of solidarity. He concluded his report,

Yet, minor as our role may be, it is an important one, both symbolically and economically. Institutions within the United States, including its churches, must be seen as unambiguously taking sides in the southern Africa struggle for freedom and justice (ALC 1986b, Exhibit B/OCS:1-4).

The impossibility of taking an "unambiguous stand" is a point that this study wishes to emphasize. Stands must be taken but ambiguity cannot be avoided, especially when those taking a stand are still part of the privileged and powerful.

The next section follows the continuing efforts in the late 1980s to define and set priorities for mission partnerships in ELCSA.

### **Who defines and sets priorities for partnership?**

At the ELCSA - EP Consultation in Skelleftea, Sweden, 28-30 May, 1984 seven EP churches/organizations were present with 12 representatives including four bishops from ELCSA.

The following topics were discussed

- > The Role of **Expatriate**<sup>9</sup> Workers in ELCSA (Par. 4 - my emphasis)
- > The Role of EP's in uniting Lutherans in South Africa.
- > How can EP's become more aware of and involved in local/parish issues in ELCSA **without encroaching on ELCSA priorities?** (My emphasis.)
- > Channels of communication
- > The Comprehensive Budget ...<sup>10</sup>
- > Channeling of funds...<sup>11</sup> (ELCSA EP 1984).

*Partnership Guidelines and Agreement* as well as *ELCSA-Special Agreement - Worker* documents were included as appendices to the document

In order to regulate the involvement of expatriate workers, the 38th ELCSA CC (21-23 August 1984) accepted that the term of service for expatriate workers should be for three years and renewable (ELCSA CC 1984, Par. 0013).

An example of when local control over expatriate workers was exercised was when CC 39 (15-18 October 1984) stated that the ELCSA Conditions of Service applies to expatriate workers regarding retirement and further service to the church. "CC does not accept the ALC's interpretation in the recall of Rev. T. Homdrom. CC 39 understands the recall of Homdrom as expressed in CC 33 as ending in July 1985" (ELCSA CC 1984, Par.0319). ( Homdroms had served in South Africa since 1951.)

It was stated that at its June meeting the Church Council of the ALC adopted two resolutions that could have significant consequences for the future income of DWMIC and for the stewardship program of the new church. The board discussed the fact that "increasingly people want to have a **personal involvement** in the mission of the church." The success of the missionary sponsorship program was seen to indicate this (:4 - my emphasis).

Also at that time the ALC's *The Women to Women Project* resulted in what was called the "marvelously successful" visit to the ALC by 20 women from around the globe. The national

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<sup>9</sup>This is a new word in the vocabulary at the time clearly emphasizing the **difference** between the indigenous church and workers from other countries.

<sup>10</sup>Problems often arose when a missionary was replaced by an indigenous Pastor. Including the salaries of missionaries in the Comprehensive Budget was intended to show more accurately the total salary budget of ELCSA including local and expatriate workers.

<sup>11</sup>Some funds are often sent to SA through channels other than through ELCSA head office. Reports of these other overseas funds from the EPs were requested by ELCSA but with no real response.

convention of the ALCW was described as “the best ever.” It was reported that the guests made a powerful impact upon many people ... and raised the awareness of the ALC to the global dimension of the body of Christ (BWMIC 1984:3)

While councils have met regularly over the years at all levels in ELCSA, and numerous conferences and workshops have taken place ELCSA’s priorities have not been clearly spelled out for its members. The struggle against apartheid and the struggle for survival were the obvious priorities during this whole period. The struggle, the crisis, set the agenda for the day, the week, the year

There was little time to reflect systematically on a wide range of other issues

By contrast the 1984 ALC Report by the DWMIC Director, Dr. Mark Thomsen, carefully looked back and forward. The report begins with the biblical quotation: “God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself ... entrusting to us the message of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:19). Thomsen then goes on to speak of sin, brokenness, alienation and conflict in the world,

Our lives are enmeshed in a world ... with the poor, the refugees, threatened by nuclear weapons ... We know that we are both willing and unwilling participants in that world ... As a church in the USA we also continue to be the materially affluent among the world’s poor and the politically powerful among the world’s weak ... Christ calls us to serve him in the least of his sisters and brothers or be judged as irresponsible in Christ’s presence (Matthew 25:31-46).

Detailed *Mission Principles and Priorities* developed by the DWMIC were adopted at the 12th General ALC Convention in Moorhead, October 17-23, 1984. These principles were developed to help the ALC evaluate and prioritize future programs (ALC Report 1984 - Exhibit A :82-89).

In the introduction to the *Principles*, a biblical and theological basis for mission was provided. According to the document, biblical faith asserts that God is always in mission, which is grounded in God’s passion and compassion for people and life (Exodus 3:7-8). The mission principles of the ALC were given as follows

### **Mission Principles**

**1. Within a world of religious pluralism, we are committed to a clear and bold witness to the lordship of Jesus Christ as God’s ultimate word for all humanity and the whole universe.**

... Is witness to the lordship of Christ not another form of Western imperialism? Doesn’t witness always involve cultural and religious arrogance?

Our response to charges such as this must take the form of a deep and humbling confession. The history of Christian expansion has at times been marked by crusading armies, forced baptisms, 19th-20th century imperialism, cultural pride and prejudices and racial arrogance. ... Witness to the universal lordship of Jesus Christ denies cultural superiority, racial pride or any other form of triumphalism. It leads the body of Christ to share in the suffering servanthood of the crucified Christ. ...

As Christians we have no message to proclaim concerning the superiority of our own religious and moral lives nor the values of Western Christendom; however, we have been captured by the vision of what we believe is God's definitive presence, revelation and action in Jesus Christ. We witness to the kingdom of God hidden in the suffering and crucified servant, Jesus Christ! ... We are confronted by an ultimate question for our own lives ... To those rejecting God's grace, Christ pleads that they repent and passionately warns that they walk into their own darkness and God's judgment. People who do not encounter Christ within history can be placed in the hands of a gracious God whose compassion encompasses all humanity and the universe. Their acceptance or rejection of God's grace in Christ is hidden in the mystery of God (:83).

**2. We are committed to a "holistic" mission that shares the gospel in proclamation and deed with the whole person within the total community.**

...God hears the cries of all the people ... Mission is responsible participation in God's missioning purpose to transform the whole of life and creation.... A poverty-ridden church may authentically proclaim, "I have not silver and gold, but I give you what I have" (Acts 3:6). However it is the height of hypocrisy for an affluent church in the midst of poverty to proclaim, "I have no silver or gold, but I would like to tell you about Jesus." The affluent in the midst of poverty are called by Jesus Christ in no uncertain terms to identify with and serve the poor or be endangered by Christ's judgment ... in a world of 900 million malnourished people, 15 million refugees and where thousands of people live under oppressive left- and right-wing totalitarian governments, we are committed to identification with the oppressed and poor..." (:84 - my emphasis).

Examples are given in the report of how this is being done in Japan and in the Central African Republic but clearly this is easier said than done. This study asks the question if it really is possible for the affluent to "identify" with the poor and if so what does that mean?

**3. We are committed to the building up of churches that are autonomous, independent and interdependent.**

...Full autonomy can only be achieved when global churches are fiscally self-reliant ... This focus on autonomy must be balanced by an equal emphasis on interdependence (:84). ... Christ blesses the global church with a variety of gifts ... of faith, hope, and zeal ... American and European churches, despite their seeming financial strength, may depend for their very future existence upon the faith, hope and wisdom of the global churches that they financially support. DWMIC is committed to receiving the gifts of Christ which are offered through the global Christian community. ... (:84-85).

While independence and interdependence are essential this study argues that "balance" is impossible since there are too many ambiguities and inequalities

**4. We are committed to the "contextualization" of the Christian faith and life. For DWMIC this begins with a commitment to develop highly qualified cross-cultural mission personnel.**

...We are committed to training our missionaries to be effective in translating the faith, life and mission of the church in a variety of cultural contexts. We are also convinced that this task of contextualization is primarily the responsibility of the new Christian community which lives and thinks the gospel within its own culture (:85).

Self-theologizing is the missing fourth leg which was always lacking in the three-self's formula of Venn and Anderson. This study supports this emphasis but realizes the difficulties of doing this in a world still dominated by western symbols and languages.

**5. We are committed to ecumenical and confessional participation in mission within the body of Christ.**

The church is the one body of Christ (Ephesians 4:4-6). Unity and mission are interdependent (:85). ...

**II Major Program Priorities**

- 1. Evangelism and the development of new Christian communities**
- 2. Development of Christian leadership**
- 3. The development of holistic mission in the areas of deepest poverty and most oppressive injustice (:86).**
- 4. Interpreting Christian mission to The ALC with a strong emphasis upon the internationalization of mission (:87).**
- 5. DWMIC is committed to placing greater emphasis on developing the gifts and talents of women.** DWMIC is committed to the development of human gifts, talents and resources, for it is people who ultimately are the life and mission of the church. Within the twentieth-century awareness of the unity of humanity, DWMIC will focus upon developing the gifts and talents of the whole people of God. Particular attention will be given to the development of the gifts of women.

...This emphasis is necessary within the church which, like the rest of society, has neglected and overlooked the potential of women (:88).

This study agrees wholeheartedly with this confession and asserts that in many ways men and women still have to meet.

**III Program Methods for implementing program priorities**

**IV. Resources for Implementing Program Priorities**

- i) Personnel**
- ii) Finance for special projects**
- iii) Financial grants for buildings and equipment**

**Glossary**

Holistic/holism : A view of life, people and mission that emphasizes the whole of people's lives - the interrelationship of the individual and the community, the spiritual and physical dimensions. Holistic mission seeks to integrate verbal proclamation with physical service.

Contextualization: Making something relevant to people's own culture or historical situation. "Contextualizing" the gospel means communicating it to each particular group of people through words, concepts, and actions that speak especially to them (:89).



In this document the principles and priorities for a more holistic and contextual understanding and practice of mission are carefully explained. There is an obvious awareness of the need to define and redefine old and new terminology as evidenced in the inclusion of a glossary. This study recognizes in this ALC document the growing influence of other voices and contexts for the priorities and the mission vocabulary of the ALC.

### **The LWF evaluates and the ALC responds**

The invitation by the ALC to the LWF for an international team to evaluate the DWMIC was a noteworthy step. In December 1984 a Commission on Church Cooperation (CCC) Evaluation Team (ET) from the LWF conducted a two-week evaluation of DWMIC's program (ALC 1986 Report :80). The ET report included the following comments:

(1) Consideration should be given to how overseas partners and other church and mission agencies could participate effectively in the discussion of ALC/DWMIC theological and policy statements...

(7) Review of mission policies in areas where the ALC/DWMIC works with its "traditional" partners should be carried out in consultation, not only with the historic partner church, but also with other churches and mission agencies working in the same area or region (:96). ....

(11) In the new Lutheran church special attention should be given to world mission and mission in the USA together. ...

(17) In mission interpretation more emphasis might be given to strengthening the sense of partnership in mission by a wider exposure to the leaders of the overseas churches to American church constituencies through publicity and also visits. ...

(19) In the future, especially in the new Lutheran church, the distance from local congregations to the world mission enterprise through the specialized agencies of the church is in danger of growing. Without careful attention to this, much of the spontaneous commitment to international mission in local congregations might develop its own uncoordinated channels.

(20) The participation of overseas churches in the shaping of mission theology ... is a crucial concern for the new Lutheran church (:97) How inclusive should the mission teams be which are responsible for the strategy in the area in question? What are the desirable North/South, East/West, men/women, young/old, components in the project or program? [South/South is a term which only comes into use in the 1990s, see page 193 below - PJK]

(21.k.) To what extent does the strategy aim at a multiplying effect, e.g. through local Christians, through other partners from nearby or from overseas?

(21.l) To what extent has consultation with churches of the area, with their mission partners and the world organization such as LWF, WCC, WACC been carried out before final decision? (:98).

The BWMIC response (ALC Report 1986:81) to the LWF report contains the following remarks:

A basic critique of DWMIC policy runs through the entire evaluation document; namely that the DWMIC has very little flexibility in its mission planning since so many resources

are committed to placing ALC missionaries within the life and work of traditional partner churches. The Evaluation Team (ET) also suggested that greater flexibility take the form of enabling Third World churches and Christians to participate more fully in the global mission of the church ....

The BWMIC recognizes this critique as valid ... and suggests that this critique be seen within the following context:

“1. The DWMIC has inherited, through its history, work in approximately 15 countries with 15 partner churches. In the middle 1960’s the ALC had over 600 missionaries working with these partner churches; within the last 25 years the number of missionaries has been reduced to approximately 320. The reduction of missionaries in most areas has been possible because partner churches have developed the capacity to carry on their own programs. It is true however, that the DWMIC continues to receive more requests for mission personnel from partner churches than it is able to fill.

2. The cost of missionary personnel has escalated to the degree that the cost of the 320 missionaries presently serving with the DWMIC (185 salaried positions) is double the cost of the 260 salaried units serving in 1972 (approximately 450 missionaries).

3. It has been easier to make a case within the ALC for an increase in budget when it could be shown that the increase meant a larger number of missionary personnel placed around the world ... this has influenced its policy in maintaining a high percentage of its resources in missionary personnel.

4.... the BWMIC is convinced that it is important to place ALC members as missionaries in order that they might represent the ALC around the globe and serve as catalysts for Christian renewal within the American context as they move back and forth across geographical boundaries.

The BWMIC is also aware of the growing number of highly committed and skilled people in Third World churches and will increasingly make available financial resources in order to facilitate international mission programs making use of their talents. ... The BWMIC will undertake to make the international exchange program a priority for the future.

[Regarding] “Global strategy” the ET indicates that the DWMIC needs to develop more fully an overall global strategy for work upon all continents. It is indicated that the DWMIC analysis and planning has focused upon the traditional areas in which the DWMIC works with traditional partner churches. ... The DWMIC is now in the process of developing a more comprehensive view of the world mission of the church and thanks the ET for encouraging a more flexible approach (:82).

The Mission Principles and Priorities (MPP) Statement is one of the initial steps ... resulting in the following program additions/changes. (1.) Expansion into northern Madagascar, (2.) A 300% increase in scholarships (3.) A major focus on witness among Muslims and Buddhists (:83).

The LWF ET report included the controversial statement “Mission theology is evidently at a cross road in the ALC today” (:96).

This study attempts to highlight the view that mission is **always** at a cross road. The importance of regular evaluations at various levels by both insiders and outsiders to the process is extremely important in any relationship. Different criteria, resources and different differences will however always make this a complicated and difficult task.

### **The ELCSA Partnership Sub-Committee meets to define Partnership**

On the 14th of March 1985 a meeting of the *ELCSA Sub-committee on Partnership* was held at Polokwane, Pietersburg comprising of Deans C.M. Molefe and E.N.S. Mutshekwane. While the

meeting was made up of only two people these minutes give a unique insight into the thinking in ELCSA with regard to partnership at the time.

Biblical and historical reasons for the existence of partnership relationships were outlined. Great Commission in Matthew 28:16-20 and image of the body of Christ in 1 Corinthians 12:1ff were identified as foundational themes for partnership. The following historical perspective was included:

From America, Sweden, Norway, Germany and other places, men and women were challenged to answer the call. As a result of this, many mission stations were established ... From this mission work, congregations were started and grew into churches. ...The situation of Mother to daughter relationship developed into a new understanding of Church to Church relationship (:1). We are called upon to common obedience to Christ's Commission. In partnership the churches learn to relate to each other in the spirit of Christ ... **Partnership is fellowship in the name of Jesus (:2 - my emphasis)** .

Under the heading, *Levels of Partnership*, the following points were made:

...member churches should respect the dignity, integrity and selfhood of a sister church. Partnership is accepted on Church, Circuit and Parish levels [No mention of Dioceses? - PJK.] Partnership shall always be between equal units of the respective churches...

According to the subcommittee, possible partnership activities include:

The exchange of information by correspondence (with a copy to the administrative structures), visits (with written reports sent to the administrative office), sharing personnel (when the one partner can afford it), establishing prayer fellowship, sharing life experiences, joys and sorrows, sharing concrete gifts, parcels, cards, cassette tapes, and special projects. Normal church protocol shall be followed in processing such requisitions. Partnership must be personified but never degenerate into a private affair (:2).

The Deans explored the topic of the "Possibilities of local Partnerships coming together."

The writers were concerned about the financial burden partnerships at congregational or circuit level might have on ELCSA.

We therefore do not recommend the coming together of partnerships on the local scene because it will be a very expensive exercise and will destroy the personification (sic) of partnership. ... Attempts to congregate partnerships will only help destroy the uniqueness of relationships or partners. **Spiritual growth will be destroyed by attempts to generalize and equalize growths in Partnership. People of God will never be identical even when they are biologically from the same parents.** The guided self-hood of the wedded partners must be respected ( my emphasis).

Regarding Partnership Committees, the minutes stressed the need for such committees and that they must meet each other on "equal terms, or [on an] equal level for a common purpose.

Deans also agreed that "Therefore the position of the Africa Secretaries and their communication with ELCSA must be reexamined. i.e. 'Who is the counterpart of an Africa Secretary of the EPs

to ELCSA? Who plans his visit for example? Is it the Presiding Bishop...?" The Deans concluded: "In short, the future of the ELCSA Partnership Committee without a counterpart [overseas] is irrelevant" (:3).

The subcommittee drew up a questionnaire on partnership which was to be used to make up a register of ELCSA Partnerships and discussed the possibility of a meeting of ELCSA partnership committees from different dioceses to share experiences. Unfortunately neither of these initiatives were carried through to completion.

In this subcommittee meeting we see members of ELCSA seriously trying to grapple with the growing number of partnerships and resisting the idea of ELCSA being viewed as the lesser or younger partner or spouse. The study takes special note of the resistance of this subcommittee to generalize or to standardize partnership relationship into "identical molds."

As the documents above indicate, the task of theologically and historically defining or redefining partnership in mission was being addressed by the ALC and ELCSA in 1984. However, events during 1985 pushed official and personal relationships to breaking point.

### **Partnership in trouble**

The 1985 *Report and Evaluation of ALC Participation of Mission in Southern Africa* by J. L. Knutson reflected the growing intensity of the struggle in the mid - 1980's stating: "Events are overtaking us; the country is in flames; South Africa is now in civil war." Several issues were highlighted including:

1. The role and numbers of expatriate personnel. (The 1986 EP consultation focused on this topic).
2. **The whole concept of partnership in mission. For a number of church circuits in South Africa, partnership has been narrowed down to direct relationship with a parish or circuit in Europe.** <sup>12</sup> (My emphasis.)
6. Seeking ways in which DWMIC can support ELCSA in its stand against apartheid and its call for change in the South African situation (Knutson 1986:17).

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<sup>12</sup>This was the first time this "new" kind of partnership in South Africa was officially mentioned in an official report of the DWMIC.

## The Germiston Statement

In November 1985 some 25 Lutheran pastors and laity (including several expatriate church workers) met as “The Lutheran Confessing Fellowship,” and issued what was called, “**The Germiston Statement**” (ALC Report 1986 Exhibit #1, Appendix #3:3) The conference expressed the following concerns and commitments:

1. To *INFORM* Lutherans about measures taken by the church to promote reconciliation and resist apartheid.
2. To *INVOLVE* Lutheran Christians in the struggle against apartheid in the church and in our society
3. To *PROMOTE UNITY* among Lutheran Christians...
4. To *SUPPORT* each other ... and victims of apartheid.

B. Our perception is that there has been a lack of ministry to those members and church workers of ELCSA who have been detained and their families...

C. ...the Joint Project for Lutheran Theological Education at Pietermaritzburg

D.... the presence of apartheid collaborators ... in the official structures of ELCSA...

E. ...concern about overseas workers who arrive ... and begin work without orientation ... and ... [without] an understanding of their role in the broader struggle.

Aware of the *Confessing Fellowship* initiative, the ALC voted on March 19-22, 1986 in favour of a motion expressing its, “affirmation of ALC missionaries serving with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa as members of ELCSA ... in opposition to apartheid in the way their conscience or situation may lead them” (ALC DWMIC 1986 :26).

However, the matter of the *Confessing Fellowship* and *Germiston Statement* was seen in a very serious light by the ELCSA Church Council. Letters were written to every participant of the Confessing Fellowship and each of the “Seniors” or local supervisors of the ELCSA mission partners.<sup>13</sup> While the “apologies” of the other participants were accepted by their respective bishops a confrontation developed between Rev. Thomas Soeldner of the ALC and the Bishop of the Central Diocese, Dr. Manas Buthelezi. The Soeldners’ contract with ELCSA was not renewed. In light of this and other problems a very tense ELCSA-EP Consultation was held from 20 - 22nd August 1986, at La Verna near Vanderbijlpark, Johannesburg.

A paper written by Dr. A. Lema of the LWF entitled, “*Mission is Partnership not Charity*”. (LWF Information 23-1986:17-20) was read at the consultation. The paper made the following points with regard to the topic *The Concept of Partnership in Mission*:

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<sup>13</sup> See ELCSA Church Council minutes 45 and T. Soeldner letter to the ELCSA Church Council dated 28 March 1986 contained in ALC Report 1986 Appendix 4.

...In order to overcome the relationship of the past (mother-daughter) the need was emphasized that in an ongoing educational process the awareness should be established in the South African church that she plays a fully valid role as partner in the overseas churches. Differences between the partners are not differences in quality as the church receives her qualification by being established through Christ's saving grace and his Word.....

Partnership between churches ... is a relationship which has to grow in depth, mutual respect and trust. Therefore openness and ongoing evaluation of the attitudes and activities in partnership are necessary... (:3).

This paper was written for and used originally in the Tanzanian situation. The vocabulary sounds bland in comparison to the intensity of language in documents and statements coming out of South Africa at that time.

In contrast to this theological paper which sought to move away from "charity," Rev. Mervyn Assur, as General Secretary of ELCSA in his report to the same 1986 EP Consultation, focused mainly on the hard realities of the financial situation of ELCSA. He pointed out that the Block Grant from the partners had remained the same over the past few years but due to inflation and devaluation of the [South African currency] the Church Council had resolved, "That the problems of forwarding Block Grants be discussed with the EPs so that a regular cash flow be ensured" 2).

### **The Kairos Document**

The position of ELCSA and the partners towards the *Kairos Document* (KD) and other ecumenical statements was also discussed at the La Verna Consultation (:Par.2)

ELCSA's provisional response is contained in the minutes of ELCSA CC 42. The KD was regarded by ELCSA as "incomplete," and the results of further work on the document were 'awaited'.

The EPs responded as follows:

ALC: Many congregations are studying the KD but the ALC/DWMIC has not discussed it nor issued a statement.

ELM, NMS, and BMW had similar reactions. The meeting expressed the view that the whole exercise should not aim at taking sides for or against the document as such, but the challenge contained in it should be accepted ... The role of the EPs should not be so much to issue statements but to contribute to the process in the South African churches....

These responses to the KD were all very tentative. On the one hand it showed a concern on the part of the EPs to listen and not to be prescriptive or overtly judgmental of ELCSA but in the

view of this study the partners did not sufficiently realize at that time that the KD also put the spotlight on themselves and on the church globally. This was made much clearer in the subsequent document, *Road to Damascus: Kairos and Conversion* (1989), in which the signatories confessed in the preamble: “We are all in continuous need of self-criticism and conversion.”

In early 1998 Bishop Lislrud expressed his difficulties, still, in understanding ELCSA’s attitude to these documents at various levels. As a former LTS lecturer he wondered if the theological training was partly at fault (Lislrud 1998:3,6). He also referred to the effect of ELCSA’s ongoing dependence on finances and missionaries especially from conservative German mission sources (:4).

In 1994 Musawenkosi Biyela completed a doctoral dissertation entitled, *Beyond the Kairos Document: A Christology for a Post-Apartheid South Africa*. Biyela proposes a theology which goes beyond prophetic theology and which includes all three offices of Christ as crucified Prophet, crucified Priest and crucified King. Biyela’s “wall-demolishing theology” seeks to bring all cultures under the cross, and proposes a praxis or way of life where, as in the Trinity, no one dominates the others (Biyela 1994:180). Biyela does not discuss the response of ELCSA to the Kairos Document at the time of its publication. The fact that he does grapple with the document as a Lutheran theologian in the 1990’s is a positive sign and of benefit for all the partners in the ongoing conversation.

### **Wrestling with the theory and praxis of partnership and identity**

At the 1986 EP Consultation at La Verna the ELM presented its updated document: “*Strategy of sending personnel in the context of sharing resources*,” (Appendix 3) as its response to the agenda item, *The Role of Expatriate Workers/Missionaries today* (:5).

It was in the light of this document that the matter of the “Germiston Statement” was discussed at length at the consultation. ELCSA expressed its concern that

...the meeting took place without the knowledge of the church leaders ... Rules and guidelines should be clear especially to new workers. Special emphasis in this context should be placed on regular consultation between the worker and his superiors and on loyalty towards the church. (:5).

As a participant in the consultation J. L. Knutson recalls that the “Germiston Statement” was more of a controversial issue than the Kairos Document (Knutson 1998a).

This EP consultation came at a very tense time in South Africa. ELCSA's leaders did not all agree politically but were still confident of ELCSA's status as a role player in the ecumenical and international scene. However, because of the tension between ELCSA and the EPs, there was not to be a full EP consultation for three years until September 1989 in Swaziland.

The EPs were also informed about the grave concern in the church (ELCSA) about the divestment campaign which was partly supported by partner churches overseas (EP 1986:7, Par.16.4).

Another concern expressed by ELCSA was the large sums of money transferred to ecumenical agencies in South Africa (:7).

The representatives of ELCSA (ELCSA delegates : Bishops: Serote, Nthuping, Hart, Dlamini, Rapoo, Buthelezi, Deans: Farisani, Mascher, Ramokoka, Shiele, Rev. Dipheko and Messrs. Madonsela, Kgomongwe and Mrs. Mabiletsa) expressed the following views:

...on the whole people overseas feel that with their actions they listen to voices from South Africa. But it must be noted that such voices need to be discerned. The standpoint, e.g. of the former SACC-General Secretary Bishop D. Tutu is not the only valid expression of black opinion. The feeling was expressed that sanctions would rather have a negative and destructive effect on black people. ... It was recommended that ELCSA and the EPs "should continue to wrestle with [these] problems..." (:10 Par. 20).

It was announced at this meeting that the ELCSA General Assembly of December 1984 had voted to withdraw from FELCSA. <sup>14</sup> Also the dissolution of the CLM was finalized as from 1 July 1986 after 74 years of existence 11

After the consultation at La Verna, J.L. Knutson, as the ALC Africa Secretary, wrote to the ELCSA General Secretary M. Assur on September 14, 1986 about the decision by ELCSA not to renew the Soeldners' contract saying,

...this decision of the Church Council causes us great distress and sorrow. In the long partnership that the ALC has had with ELCSA and its predecessor bodies this is the first time that a co-worker ... has not been recalled. We recognize that ELCSA has the right not to recall a co-worker. But in the spirit and context of the long and fruitful partnership ...we respectfully request a review of this decision (Knutson 1986 - my emphasis).

In the *Report and Evaluation of DWMIC's Participation in Mission in Southern Africa during 1986* J.L. Knutson wrote of an atmosphere of civil war and the calls for the release of Nelson Mandela and other political leaders and negotiations "without preconditions." He reported that:

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<sup>14</sup> ELCSA gave official notice to FELCSA of its intention to withdraw on February 6, 1985 (FELCSA Minutes 11 March 1985).



The situation in SA has become much more oppressive and frightening during 1986 ...The Burchfields were deported in January 1986 and the Church Council of ELCSA, acting on a resolution from the Central Diocese [under] Bishop Manas Buthelezi, voted not to invite Pastor Tom Soeldner and his wife Joyce to return ... at the end of 1986. Pastor Dan Selbo was refused a visa. Thus three out of four pastors were not able to serve in ELCSA as planned (Knutson 1986:18).

Regarding "Missionary support" J.L. Knutson highlighted several issues:

1. The whole concept of partnership in mission. How can the partners of ELCSA find appropriate ways of relating to ELCSA today in this very complex and confusing time when ELCSA is so very vulnerable and seems to be very sensitive, when there is basic opposition to apartheid, but a great diversity when it comes to how and when to speak and act? [It is the view of this study that this was and still is a question - PJK.]
2. The role of expatriates. What are the expectations of ELCSA concerning expatriates? How do they wish them to serve and how are they to be involved? ...
7. To continue to seek ways in which DWMIC can support ELCSA in the stand against apartheid and calls for change in the South African situation (:21).

The October 20-22, 1986 minutes of the ELCSA Partners meeting in Johannesburg, a month after the La Verna consultation, addressed the topic, *The Role of Expatriate Workers/Missionaries today*. Reference was made to the letters received by the respective EP's on the "Lutheran Confessing Fellowship" and the "Germiston Statement."

The position of ELCSA was again stated that the Confessing Fellowship meeting took place without the knowledge of the ELCSA church leaders.<sup>15</sup> In the charged and polarized atmosphere in South Africa in 1986 the ELCSA Church Council wanted to know which Lutherans were involved in the Confessing Fellowship and with what mandate? It was reported that all workers involved in this action (both local and expatriate) had been reprimanded because of their disregard for church leadership and structures. The church leadership was also very annoyed about the financing of the meeting and about the fact that people abroad were involved by being informed by other than official channels, that is to say, the ELCSA leadership was bypassed.

In light of this conflict, the EP meeting looked again at the role of expatriate workers suggesting that,

as a part of crisis management, rules and guidelines be worked out to fit the special situation in South Africa, and that these be clearly made known to new expatriate

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<sup>15</sup>Bishop Buthelezi saw documentation from this group while attending a conference in the USA where people were already excitedly speaking of a "Lutheran Kairos Document" (Interview with J.L. Knutson Feb. 1998).

coworkers. Special emphasis in this context should be placed on regular consultation between the worker and his superiors and on loyalty towards the church; furthermore that funds donated to the worker for his work be strictly administered according to approved procedures (EP Minutes Aug. 1986:5, Par.13.4 - my emphasis).

Soon after the La Verna consultation the first *Conference of International Black Lutherans (CIBL)* was held in Harare at the University of Harare from September 4-12, 1986 with the theme: “*The Lutheran Heritage and the Black Experience in Africa and North America.*”

Albert Pero and Ambrose Moyo collected and edited the essays in a book entitled, *Theology and the Black Experience: The Lutheran Heritage Interpreted by African and African-American Theologians* (1988).

The preface to the book contends that there can be no people without a culture and that the destruction of a people’s culture is a destruction of the people themselves.

As Africans and African-Americans we have suffered greatly from the missionary and the white American efforts to destroy our cultural identity, but despite all that, we have maintained distinct African and African-American cultural perspectives which have contributed to forms of Christian spirituality and practice.... (Pero & Moyo 1988:9).

Moyo emphasized the point that in the past Lutheran missions did not take African traditional cultures and religions seriously by requiring rejection of African culture for genuine conversion. He referred to the mission stations which served to “isolate new converts from their own people and culture, e.g. Umpumulo in Natal.” Moyo stated his belief that,

This same negative attitude toward African cultures has continued in the post-missionary era and is being perpetuated by the church structures which the missionaries set up before they left. The structures of our church leadership, the order of our worship services, music, medical institutions and our constitutions have hardly changed since the missionaries left us. Any attempt to tamper with those structures is seen as sacrilege... (:81).

The ELCSA Church Council (CC 46), meeting from 13-16 October 1986, reaffirmed its decision not to recall Rev. Tom Soeldner (ELCSA 1986, Par 11023). The Council referred to the ELCSA - EP consultation of 20-22 August 1986 which focused on the role of expatriate workers and stressed the importance of “loyalty to the [ELCSA] church” (CC 46 :Par. 11048.5). Appendix 6 contains the results of a “*Manpower Study Report.*” The following statistics regarding expatriate co-workers in ELCSA were included: ALC - 3, CSM - 17, BMW - 16, ELM - 32, NMS - 5; for a total of 73 expatriates including farm managers.

A *Kairos Covenant Convocation* was held in Chicago in November 1986 and a statement, “*An initial response of US Christians in Solidarity with the Oppressed in South Africa*,” was drafted and signed by about 80 signatories including several American and South African Lutherans. Following the conference a book, *The Kairos Covenant: Standing with South African Christians*, edited by Willis H. Logan, was published in 1988 by Friendship Press, New York.

At the “ELCSA - Related Partners Working Group” in Geneva (February 8-9, 1987) the general situation in SA was discussed again, including the release of Dean T.S. Farisani from detention. Thanks were expressed to Rev. R. Shultz and BMW for their assistance in this matter. It was noted that Rev. M. Tsele and others were still in detention (EP 1987 :1, Par.2.2).

Regarding the role of expatriate workers all EPs were requested to submit their latest policy documents regarding the sending of personnel. ELCSA was also asked to elaborate on the role of expatriate workers, “so that a mutual strategy for the years to come can be worked out. 3. Par.5.7.2)

At this meeting the final version of the document, *Special Agreement - Worker* was presented and approved for implementation as from January 1, 1987 (:2, Par.5.1). This agreement set out policy regarding employment, housing, salary scale, length of service and orientation. “The receiving partner shall have the opportunity to advise the sending partner on any special preparations [with regard to orientation] of the co-worker before entering service...” (Appendix A, Par.6(f) :2).

The document also included guidelines for job descriptions, transfers, membership of the church, disciplinary action, annual leave, annual reports and intermediate structures, ordination, termination of service and the constitution. ELCSA requested that it be clearly stated which missionary support structures were in existence and what the co-workers’ relationship towards these structures was (Par.13:3). The document was to be signed by a representative of ELCSA, the sending body, the co-worker and two witnesses.

### **The ALC: Looking back and looking forward in 1987**

The Report of the Director to the BWMIC (March 19-21, 1987) noted that this particular meeting was a unique event in the life of the DWMIC as it was the last meeting of the board before the planned 1988 ELCA merger. The director, Mark Thomsen looked back over 27 years with thanks, and “forward with hope, in spite of anxieties, questions and uncertainty. His

“Review of a Joint Journey” highlighted progress made with regard to the 12 goals set by the director six years earlier (BWMIC 1987 Appendix :5). Viz:

1. Articulation of a theology of mission, expressed in a document of ‘Mission Principles and Priorities’ (:5)
2. Development of strong autonomous churches in the third and fourth world with an increased emphasis upon the development of theological and spiritual leadership through theological education programs.
3. Further development of evangelical mission programs in cooperation with the global and ecumenical church to reach the so-called “hidden peoples” of the world with the gospel of the crucified and risen Christ (:6).
4. Consciousness-raising with the ALC concerning the tremendous technological and material resource gap existing between the USA and the third and fourth worlds, and the development of more adequate programs of assistance and advocacy which will make sharing of human, technological and material resources tangibly possible.
5. Development of a vision in which the internationalization of mission becomes apparent. We must see the USA as a mission field, and we, as a church in the West, must become aware of our need to listen to the Christian insights and witness of the global ecumenical church. [Exchange programs and consultations are listed.]
6. Development of a strong policy regarding global justice including the goal of organizing an all-Lutheran and ecumenical coalition of churches which will focus upon the liberation of Namibia and South Africa and will not cease intense and possibly expensive advocacy at even the highest levels until those tasks have been realized (:7).
7. The immediate development of a mission personnel policy which is aware of the changing role of women within church and society and the need to use the gifts and talents of ordained women within the global situation.
8. The further development of educational programs for the professional cross-cultural missionary personnel.
9. The further development of missiological strategy for every particular situation in which the DWMIC is involved. The study must be done in dialogue with the Third World churches and DWMIC missionary personnel in those areas ... especially in the local situation (:8).
10. A total rethinking of pastoral care and personal support for the global cross-cultural staff...
11. The development of a strong program of education by DWMIC in order to permeate the ALC with a sense of urgency in regard to the global mission of the church.
12. The further development of the missionary recruitment program... (:9).

In the view of this study, six years is a very short period of time, but clearly many of these goals were set in motion. Ten years after this review many of these goals are being developed and implemented. (See page 194 below regarding the accompaniment model.)

### **ELCSA in search of a framework for old and new relationships**

The ELCSA Church Council (52) met in March 1988 in Johannesburg. At this meeting the possibility of new relationships with Lutheran churches in Bavaria, the Netherlands, the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) and the Church of Norway Council of Foreign Relations was discussed. It was suggested that ELCSA should not develop contractual agreements from

the outset but establish a process of relationships and that traditional relationships with the EPs should not be jeopardized or affected by them (ELCSA CC 1988 Par.2003.6).

The Church Council (CC 52) also met with Gunnar Staalsett and Ishmael Noko of the LWF to discuss the way forward for ELCSA in Southern Africa. The LWF leaders spoke of the many different “pictures” of the church described in the New Testament, the most intimate being that of the “Body of Christ.” It was emphasized that no problem had taken so much of the LWF’s time as the issue of the suspension of “certain churches” from the LWF.

The LWF leaders explained to the ELCSA Church Council members the way in which the self-understanding of the LWF had developed over forty years. In its programme of restructuring, regions (rather than national churches) had become more prominent in the making of policy and programmes (CC 52 Par. 1968.1,3).

It is clear, in the view of this study, that the LWF leaders were trying to introduce a different paradigm to the ELCSA leadership; one of a family or body of churches in a regional context. For ELCSA it was not easy to accept the idea of being an equal partner with churches that had previously refused to merge with it, such as the Moravians and the “white, German speaking Lutherans,” or those who had, in ELCSA’s opinion, broken away, like the ELCB. The ELCSA Regional Churches had given up a certain amount of identity, tradition and autonomy in the 1975 merger. Accepting the autonomy and legitimacy of these other smaller Lutheran bodies was interpreted as bending over backwards to wayward family members and an undermining or unraveling of the integrity, vision and status of ELCSA.

In the discussion that followed the input by the LWF, the important point was made of “the need to initiate a healing process on the local level.” It was stated that, “Unity (with the Natal/Transvaal and Cape Churches) will make the suspension irrelevant” (Par.1968.6.5). The use of the phrase “initiate a healing process” ten years before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (1997-1998) is significant. One of the problems that this study highlights is that “unity” talks have proceeded for twenty years without a specific “healing process” taking place among Lutherans. Despite some localized efforts at “living out unity” the rift between the churches has grown deeper if anything. The ELCSA Cape Orange Diocesan Council (28 - 31 October 1997) proposed that unity talks be terminated (COD 58/7.8). This decision was endorsed by the ELCSA Church Council at its meeting of 9 - 12 February 1998 (CC 87/6.2.2).

That no Lutheran body made a submission to the TRC hearing on the role of the churches in October 1997 still begs many questions.

At its March 1988 meeting the ELCSA CC reiterated that, “if a person from a[n] overseas partner church is appointed in the area of a local partner it should be the local partner that calls and seconds.” This was apparently said with specific reference to the request by Rev. Tom Soeldner to work for the Methodist Church of Southern Africa based in Johannesburg after ELCSA decided not to recall the Soeldners (ELCSA CC 1988.3). In the following paragraph the CC requested that the issue of the “relevance of partnership” be taken up at the following EP Working Group meeting.

CC 54 (1-4 August 1988) referred to a meeting of the ELCSA Partnership Committee comprising four bishops, two deans and a pastor (Rev. Agulhas). A subcommittee was appointed to review ELCSA-EP relationships (Appendix 5. Par. 6). It was also noted that “South to South” relationships did not exist but should be strongly recommended. Appendix 11 dealt with the meeting of the Joint Mission Board for Mozambique (21-22 March 1988).

Once again the ELCSA Church Council (CC 55 - 3-5 October 1988) stressed the need for guidelines on the role of expatriate workers in ELCSA and referred the matter to the planned ELCSA-EP Consultation to be held in October 1989 in Swaziland.

From 24-25 October 1988, CC 56 met to discuss finances and receive an update following the bombing of Khotso House (Par. 2286) and requested the Episcopal Council of ELCSA to discuss the matter of the “orientation” of overseas workers. Here the concern was that some expatriate missionaries were too conservative and accepting of the homeland policy, contrary to the official ELCSA position taken by the General Assembly.

A subcommittee was appointed by CC 57 (20-23 February 1989) to draw up guidelines for expatriate workers in preparation for the Chicago EP meeting (Par. 2300).

The bomb blast at Khotso house in August 1988 and the decision by ELCSA to move to new offices in Kempton Park together with ELCSA-NT (EP 1989a :1, Par.2.b) were discussed at the EP meeting in Chicago (15-17 March 1989) as well as the statement made by UELCSA in 1987 that “apartheid is a sin” ( , Par. 2.e).

At this Chicago EP meeting it was agreed that the role of expatriates needed to be discussed again at the EP Consultation to be held in Mbabane in September 1989 (:4, Par.8). The theme for the consultation, the first in three years, was: *Relationship and Integrity of Partner Churches in Cooperation*. During this consultation on Partnership, Bishop Buthelezi took many by surprise when he declared that the term “partnership” was no longer acceptable, and suggested the concept of “communion” be used instead (Interview J.L. Knutson 1998b).

For the first time six bishops from Europe and the USA agreed to attend an EP Consultation. This was significant in that for a number of years several leaders in ELCSA had questioned the fact that ELCSA bishops were expected to relate to mission secretaries and not the bishops of the respective overseas partners (Interview J.L. Knutson July 1998).

The 1989 Mbabane EP Consultation issued a joint statement declaring that:

- >The unity of the Lutheran family needs to be broadened and strengthened. Ecumenical cooperation should be optimized regionally and internationally.
- >The teaching ministry should be strengthened...
- >Theological training, self-supporting ministry need emphasis. .. (:2).

The Consultation further noted the following:

- >There is no possibility for adequate political activity because of the denial of political expression by the SA regime... [and called] for the release of all political prisoners and ending of state of emergency (:3).
- > The homeland governments were not legitimate (:4).
- >regarding “Sanctions and Disinvestments in SA”: ELCSA Church Council was requested to finalize its stand and the EPs and LWF to expedite economic betterment and empowerment by accelerating funding for viable economic church projects in the period of change.
- >the meeting rejected the recent racist elections and called for negotiations, and free and fair elections (:5).

With the unbanning of the liberation movements, and the release of Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners in February 1990, a new situation suddenly presented itself. ELCSA reacted both with new confidence and new uncertainty.

CC 61 (19-21 March 1990) discussed the minutes of the Unity Committee and challenged the German-speaking Lutherans with the offer that, “ELCSA can offer German speaking pastors from its own ranks to ELCSA/NT and the Cape Church” (ELCSA CC 1990, Par. 2466.2).

Meeting only one month after the release of Nelson Mandela and other leaders, the ELCSA Church Council was warned of possible changes in donor patterns by means of a short paper entitled, *A Possibility of Wrong Perception* (sic) (ELCSA CC 61, 1990, Appendix B:18 - Authorship not indicated):

ELCSA has a deliberate ... mission, aiming at, through all Christian means, self reliance. She is therefore not enslaved by any form of begging mentality ... [however] present and international changes present several problems.

1. The church will no longer be regarded as the only voice or funding agent in the apartheid struggle...
3. South Africa will be regarded as just another African country and, as the most developed, will get the smallest share...
4. Disinvestment will now show negative effects since companies will be slow in reinvesting causing [an] unstable economic situation.

In the mid-1980s ELCSA had taken what it believed were clear stands as the main Lutheran body in Southern Africa, exercising its authority by stopping the Confessing Fellowship, withdrawing from FELCSA, taking the ELCB to court, and yet, its power and autonomy was in decline as events overtook everyone in the region. The EPs came and went at will in the region. To make matters worse ELCSA was still very dependent on the EPs for financial support of the head office and seminaries.

FELCSA did not collapse as ELCSA expected after ELCSA's withdrawal but continued to attract new members and enjoy the attention of the LWF. It was frustrating and even humiliating for ELCSA.

The Executive Committee of FELCSA meeting with Dr. Ishmael Noko of the LWF in Windhoek (29-31 March), accepted a resolution for the establishment of a new umbrella body (LUCSA) for the Lutheran family on the African sub-continent.<sup>16</sup> The following reasons were given by the LWF leaders for establishing a new structure in Southern Africa:

1.1 The FELCSA Constitution [of 1966] was adopted before Zimbabwe, Namibia and other nations were independent and when the mission societies had only recently given independence to their mission churches and some of the present churches had not been founded.

1.2 The situation in comparison to 1965 has changed drastically, even though the apartheid system in South Africa has as yet not been overcome. [Nelson Mandela was released on February 11, 1990 - PJK.]

In addition FELCSA has experienced internal tensions which require a meaningful constitutional and structural change.

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<sup>16</sup> In the view of this study the talk of a Lutheran "family" in Southern Africa was too optimistic in light of the existing divisions.



1.3 The global situation between East and West ... is changing...

1.5 Except for Namibia, all Lutherans are facing a minority situation on the African sub-continent, where there are more than 5000 different christian (sic) denominations, sects and other religions. In this situation the Lutherans have to stand together to provide spiritual support and to share resources.

1.6 The church structures inherited from overseas churches have to be reviewed... (:2).

1.7 Self-determination and self-reliance will have to be lived out properly. The North-South gap between the so-called "First World" and "Third World" must be bridged.

1.8 We will strive to overcome simply being imitations of our overseas sister churches and to contribute to overcome problems of the "First World" (:3).

## 2. Basic Principles:

2.1 **The concept of partnership is not sufficient any longer.** It had its merits stressing the equality of people and church organizations. But there is also a serious suspicion today that the concept of partnership is developing into a new way of paternalism. Therefore, the new constitution shall be based on the Christian concept of communion, "koinonia", celebrating the Holy Communion with Christ and sharing their gifts and shortcomings... (My emphasis.)

After a 5 year absence from FELCSA, ELCSA reluctantly rejoined the other Lutherans and the Moravian in constituting the new LUCSA.

### Changing perspectives on Partnership from "ELCSA"

Bishop Buthelezi presented a paper to the ELCSA Church Council dated October 28, 1987 entitled, *Models of Relationship between ELCSA and Overseas Lutheran Churches in the past and present*. Buthelezi began by saying that,

Since the first Christian convert in South Africa and elsewhere, there has been a search for a model of relationship between the churches which sent missionaries and those which emerged resulting from mission activity. Each adopted model reflected beliefs and theological emphases of the time. That does not imply that it was either wrong or right, since there were very often prevailing social and political circumstances which brought it about (Buthelezi 1987:1).

Buthelezi gave a brief analysis of several models viz.

The *Agricultural Model*, which uses the image of the sower and the field (:1)

The *Military Model* with the image of a holy war against evil forces and the conquest of pagan peoples and uncivilized territories (:2).

The *paternalistic model* which referred to mother and daughter or younger churches (:3).

In Buthelezi's view,

Certain problems have developed as a result of the fact that the concept of partnership is related to externally located objectives. In spite of all attempts to explain and emphasize spiritual aspects of partnership, money and material benefits have remained the only obvious practical translation of the partnership relations. ELCSA has lost a great deal in integrity (:5).

A diagram (:5) illustrates the fact that “Africa Secretaries” from the overseas missions relate to ELCSA bishops on behalf of overseas churches and bishops. Regarding the Partnership Model Buthelezi critically pointed out that:

This is the current model of relation between ELCSA and the Lutheran Churches in Europe and America. It developed with the emergence of ELCSA in 1975. The basic idea is that as a partner ELCSA is equal to its Lutheran counterparts in Europe and America ... The concept of partnership has been borrowed from the commercial world. For this reason it is theologically barren and sterile. **It is one of the most ill-conceived models of relationship (:4).** (My emphasis.)

Buthelezi explained that the Partnership model was flawed as it was based on “enlightened self-interest” and stated that:

...What is paramount is a common external objective or joint venture. ... Partnership does not describe or define a theological organic unity that exists ... It rather describes a structural formation ... The concept of partnership has nothing in it that generates mutual respect... (:4).

Buthelezi then referred to the need to evolve a different relationship model “that will bring [the] LWF into the central picture,” and commented, “It is interesting to note that prior to the formation of ELCSA and when JCSA was the co-ordinating body of the overseas churches, the LWF was involved in the meetings of JCSA with the Regional Churches...” (:5)

The following year in May 1988, B. Sulimma also presented a paper on partnership, in this instance, to the Hermannsburg co-workers’ conference in Natal, entitled “*Partnership, Ubudlelwane, Partnerschaft.*”

In this paper reference is made to the origin and common use of the term “partnership,” by partners, “who do business together.” Sulimma discusses the Zulu verb, “ukudlelana” which means literally, “To eat together.”

He went on to point out that while these terms are rarely used in the Bible the topic and its aims are commonly discussed.

For Sulimma the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2) is considered as the beginning of a new community with universal dimensions: the one, holy, catholic church. which is also described as a family with one “Father in heaven,” and as “the body of Christ.” In his view the New Testament Epistles can be considered as evidence of a dialogue between congregations and fellow-Christians. There were “visits” and “exchanges of spiritual experiences” as well as the sharing of financial burdens and gifts, all of which are evidence of a shared mission task (:8).

Sulimma, in the second part of his paper, outlined the structure and guidelines for partnership between the Shiyane Circuit of the South Eastern Diocese and the Verden Circuit near Hannover, Germany (:12).

In the view of this study much of this outline by Sulimma focuses on what “should” take place especially with regard to partnership projects involving financial assistance, overlooking the ambiguity and tensions that exist and that will persist.

Eight years after the *Models of Relationship* paper (discussed above) Bishop Buthelezi delivered a paper entitled, *The Vision of Mission in Southern Africa* to the ELCSA-EP Consultation held at Tlhabane, Rustenburg in October 1995. The stated purpose of the consultation was “to review together where we are in our respective understanding of the mission task of the church.”

Buthelezi bluntly posed the question,

Do we still mean the same thing when we talk about mission against the background of our respective European, American and South African contexts. Have we not outgrown our basic assumption that we mean the same thing when we talk about ‘the mission imperative’ or ‘the mission task of the church’? Where is that mission imperative located and what is that task of the church?

Buthelezi acknowledged that many things had happened since the first missionary landed in South Africa. Buthelezi wryly commented that, “The composition and style of this meeting, for instance, is a[n] historical example of that transformation.”

Buthelezi observed that the understanding of mission as “*a common task*” was not new and could be traced back to the early church (Romans 1:11-13), and also how the understanding of this concept had deepened over the years particularly since the IMC conference in Whitby (1947) which coined the phrase “Partners in Obedience” (:1).

Buthelezi repeated the critical question, “Are we still talking about the same thing when we use the word *mission* in our respective contexts as members of the Lutheran Communion? What is the vision of our future together? Or are we nearing the parting of ways?” (:2).

In an interview (October 1997) Buthelezi made the comment that this consultation did not discuss the various understandings of mission but ended up talking about the problems of ELCSA which was not, according to Buthelezi, the original purpose of the consultation.

Buthelezi shows an acute awareness of the relation between language and context in his 1995 paper when he says:

It is appropriate that I should explain that my paper has ELCSA as its context of reflection.... We may use similar sounding words but we come out of different and changing contexts ... words, meanings, understandings are constantly changing, sometimes drastically, sometimes in a slower evolutionary way (:2).

Buthelezi was quite correct to pose the question of context. As Volf (1996:207) puts it, "Nobody stands nowhere." But what is the "ELCSA or Lutheran context of reflection?" Is there a common or recognizable African or South African context? This study is posing the question: "Can we be partners even though we do **not** always have a common ideology, theology, methodology or goals?" Volf (:207) is also correct when he says, "Most of us stand in more than one place." The cards are never all on the table and never have been. There are many different agendas - conscious and subconscious. We need to be more aware of the multiple dimensions, connections and differences within us and between us. These are the questions with which this study is concerned.

Buthelezi went on to describe the ELCSA context in the following way

There are historical and ecumenical challenges. ELCSA is passing through a phase in her history when the generation of Christians which was raised in a mission station culture is fast disappearing. The systematic dismantling of the mission station as a centre of evangelization and culture began in earnest in 1948 with the coming to power of the Nationalist Party and the implementation of apartheid legislation. Church schools and hospitals were taken over and in some cases the mission station disappeared as a social entity (:3).

Buthelezi sees evidence of the disappearance of what he calls "church culture," saying,

...you may be spiritually mature, yet lack a church culture. You may love and trust the Lord but may not be fully informed about how the church operates in contrast to political, social and economic institutions (:4).

This says Buthelezi,

...calls for a new vision of mission that embraces not only Christian enlightenment but also church and spiritual formation. ... I am not suggesting that we should resurrect the mission station set-up and do what is now impossible, that is, taking people out of their social setting, as the early missionaries did. My point is that things have changed. Former structures of support and social Christian formation are no longer there. ... There is a sense in which ELCSA is not yet out of the pioneering stages of her history ... We are not yet fully out of the colonial era ... The mentality of taking over from the colonizer or in our case the missionary is still with us. Yet there are many sectors in the life of our church,

where there is **nothing to take over-** no fruits to eat [but] a lot of virgin soil to till and plant in (:5).

Buthelezi went on to make the point that,

Understandably, a lot of energy is still absorbed in consolidating what we have inherited from the missionary era, to a point where we have forgotten that the missionary only did part of the pioneering: there is still more pioneering to be done. ... We still have to redefine and identify missionary targets in a changed cultural and political environment. ..It calls for a new vision of mission (:6).

Buthelezi also noticed that,

We are victims of the **paralysis of contrast** (his emphasis) ... by the “have” and “have not” contrast. It has the effect of blinding us to the challenges of developing a pioneering spirit in our own terrain that sees there can be something where there is nothing. Being in a church that does not have a strong financial base can be both a challenge and a cause for paralysis, particularly when the green pastures lie across the fence not far away (:6).

Buthelezi addressed what he called the ecumenical challenge of Zionists and other religions.

The church built in the days of Bengt Sundkler has blown down. The remnant of the congregation worships in a school. It may symbolize a faith that has failed to face ecumenical challenges.<sup>17</sup> With the new constitution guaranteeing religious freedom the playing field has been leveled for religious communities in South Africa. This may be a healthy development (:7).

I note that Buthelezi is cautious at this point.

Buthelezi pertinently asked the ELCSA partners if Lutherans in South Africa have a special contribution to make? “What is the vision of our mission?” (:8).<sup>18</sup>

In his reply Buthelezi gave some pointers “*Towards a vision for Mission.*” These include:

“**Rediscovering the Bible.**” Buthelezi asked, “Is the Lutheran Church still the church of the Word? Pentecostals and Charismatic groups have usurped our historical mantle .” (:8).

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<sup>17</sup> I would add to this the image that while the star of Umpumulo wanes that of the conservative, right-wing church centre at KwaSizabantu rises nearby.

<sup>18</sup> The report of the Missiological Institute at LTC Mapumulo in September 1972 which focused on a “*Relevant Theology for Africa*” stated, “We do not seem to have been able to reach clarity on what a ‘Relevant Theology for Africa’ ought to be...” (Becken 1973:191)

**“Rediscovering Justification by Faith.”** Buthelezi referred to the increasing use of choruses and the unpopularity of traditional Lutheran hymns. “Part of the reason is the unclarity (sic.) of our preaching about salvation according to our heritage” (:9).

**“Rediscovery of the place of the Holy Spirit in the Church.”** Here Buthelezi criticized Lutherans for underestimating the work and presence of the Holy Spirit in their own church compared to teaching and practice of the Zionists (:11).

**“Rediscovery of the Liturgy as the Ultimate Goal for Mission.”** Buthelezi referred to the Lutheran Confessional statement that the church exists where the Gospel is preached and the Sacraments administered. “The Mission of the Church is to glorify and praise the Name of the Triune God... Every service is a mission event. There is an organic relationship between taking the liturgy seriously and taking mission seriously” (:13).

In all this I sense a struggle by Buthelezi, and ELCSA as a whole, to restore what is perceived as a disintegrating centre. But here one thinks again of Bediako who says there are no absolute centres or peripheries (1995:167). This study emphasizes that we all stand on several shifting centres and borders at the same time.

One of those who has tried to challenge the thinking and praxis of the Lutheran churches in South Africa with new paradigms is Klaus Nürnberger who (in Kritzinger & Saayman 1990: 206) argued that,

There is an impasse centering on the definition of soteriology as salvation or liberation. What kind of God is glorified and praised? What kind of salvation, reconciliation and liberation is confessed, preached and witnessed to?

Nürnberger argues that, “God is not ‘above’ in the Platonic sense of the word,” ... [but] “encountered within experienced reality our relation to God is horizontal, not vertical” (:218).

Nürnberger further makes the point that,

In contrast, it is precisely relationships between people which are vertical - simply because most of the time there are some who are on top of the others. .. It is God who horizontalizes vertical relationships! (:218).

Both Buthelezi and Nürnberger pose challenging questions to South African and overseas Lutheran partners alike. What do mission partners from overseas come to see? Some former missionaries and offspring are afraid to come back and see “everything going to ruin.” Other

visitors do not waste time visiting unimportant places and people but visit the famous and infamous. What are they looking for? What do they see and *not* see? The same could be asked of ELCSA leaders, pastors and members of congregations when they travel locally or overseas. An extensive survey would be most revealing. For example, H. Paul Santmire's *South African Testament: From Personal Encounter to Theological Challenge* (1987) describes his personal impressions and observations not only of South Africa but of ELCSA leaders and church workers. However some of the people mentioned in the book did not appreciate that while they welcomed this and other guests into their homes and lives they were being observed, photographed and analyzed all the time by someone who was soon out of their sight and out of reach.

This study agrees that for a clearer vision of partnership there needs to be a clearer understanding of self and context. Bediako (1995:162) points out that the theologies of the South locate themselves consciously as for example with the book by Allan Boesak, "Black and Reformed."

Western theology was always presented as "*the theology*" when it too was "geographically localized and culturally limited." Buthelezi has tried to do the same in his 1995 *Vision* paper, by locating and relocating the Lutheran Church in the South African context. Buthelezi made important observations of the changed/changing context of the Lutheran churches in South Africa but in the view of this study ends up mostly looking back and not risking enough the exploration of new horizons (see page 172 above). Surely for ELCSA this requires not only international partnerships but intense dialogue with grass roots Lutherans and "relatives" and "partners" in the Pentecostal/charismatic African-instituted churches (AICs) in Southern Africa.

Relationships, both old and new, were and are more complex than ever as ELCSA and the EPs entered the 1990s.

### **EXCURSUS : Lutheran Medical Work : Buried ruins or scattered seeds?**

While the history and impact of Lutheran mission-sponsored medical work is a subject on its own, a short excursus has been included in this study on Lutheran partnership in South Africa. What do "Lutheran partners" today think or say about medical work and the healing ministry or the lack of it? Are new partners walking unknowingly over buried ruins or seeing the various fruits of scattered seeds and grafted stems?

It is important to ask why such an important part of Christian witness and Lutheran cooperation in South Africa came to an apparent end? What was achieved? Was it a glorious chapter which should not have been closed or was it an inevitable dead-end street? If not, why the absence of

Lutheran medical work now? What should partners be learning from the successes and failures of that work?

In the books by Burgess, Kjome and Bockelman the importance of medical work is repeated in numerous ways. The story of Schreuder helping the ill Zulu King Mpande in 1849 is well known. The first expatriate Lutheran mission nurse in South Africa was Elida Fykse who started a dispensary at Ekombe in 1880 (Gelfand 1984:27). Many missionaries gave “back verandah” first aid. First aid became medical work which became hospital work.

In 1962 Rev. Carl Otte (in Kjome 1962:5-6) proudly wrote in the forward to *Back of Beyond : Bush Nurse in South Africa*, “It seems only yesterday that the Zulus looked at our hospitals with great suspicion ... Today our hospitals are full.”

Eventually medical personnel become managers and administrators. Dr. Erling Hestenes (1960:8) wrote in the *Isibani* of July-September 1967, about the process of establishing closer cooperation between the five missions which started in 1959 and culminated in the launch of the Lutheran Medical Foundation (LMF) on October 17, 1967 for the 13 Lutheran hospitals in Natal.

Gelfand writes, “The Lutheran Church contributed significantly ... It was probably the biggest group in this field” (Gelfand 1984:27). Gelfand includes maps showing the distribution of mission hospitals of various denominations in South Africa in the 1950s and 1960’s showing 45 hospitals in Natal, 32 in the Cape [mainly in the Eastern Cape], 37 in the Transvaal and 3 in the Orange Free State (:345 ff.). He divides the development of medical work into three periods. viz. 1900-1935 : Mission support; 1940-1970 : State support; and after 1973 : State control

From its inception in 1967 the LMF was seen as a temporary parent body because of political factors which “prohibited the church following the normal approach.” The ultimate aim in Natal was for the mission hospitals to come directly under the wing of the ELCSA-SER at the earliest point in time (Holman 1967:214). There was no mention of a hand over to the government at that stage. Perhaps it was understood but too painful a subject to declare openly. What was “clear” to the missions in the 1960’s was that the newly formed indigenous churches could not at that time or in the foreseeable future assume full management or financial responsibility for the church related medical programs



In a letter from W.O. Rindahl to Hesterman dated January 19, 1971, Rindahl reported on a visit to the Bantu Affairs and State Health Department by representatives of the LMF, “to try and get a better picture of future prospects for our medical work. ... They [the Health Department] stated emphatically, ‘We cannot get along without the missions.’ ... We had asked if and when they might want to buy us out and take over fully ... Guesses of up to 50 years were made.”

Rindahl concluded somewhat tentatively that, “From this interview it would seem the future of our mission hospitals is not quite so dark ...”

The LMF was placed under the ELCSA-SER in 1975 when ELCSA was established. The last nurse sponsored by the ALC left in 1978 and the last doctor in 1981 (Knutson 1977d:15).

The DWMIC officially withdrew from the LMF on November 23, 1974. On September 11, 1979 the LMF was dissolved and all assets of the foundation were transferred to ELCSA to be used for medical work according to the Statement of Basic Principles. In 1980 all Lutheran hospitals were handed over to the South African government (Knutson 1978:12).

In the words of J.L. Knutson, “1981 saw the end of an era in DWMIC involvement in South Africa. Effective in 1982, for the first time in over 50 years there were no DWMIC supported medical personnel in ELCSA ” (Knutson 1982:13).

Did the missions and the church give up too much too soon? What is the perception now concerning medical work twenty or thirty years later? Interviewed in October 1997 Bishop Buthelezi lamented the declining standards of health care at Ceza Hospital (his birthplace) and now a government hospital. What were and are the alternatives for involvement by the church in the healing ministries?

### **The Holman Report 1967**

Under the auspices of the LWF Dr. Ernest J. Holman was invited to do a study of Lutheran medical work in the ELC in SA (SER). His report was published in August 1967. He recounted the history of how the early missionaries became involved in medical work, the arrival of the first trained nurses, the establishment of clinics, hospitals, nurses’ training schools and the arrival of doctors in the postwar period. Over time he observed a “growing gap between the church and the hospital” (Holman 1967:100). After World War II new advances in medicine and medical

equipment required greater skills and increased expenditures (Gelfand 1984:23) making it increasingly difficult for the mission hospitals to continue.

In his report Holman made the point that the priority should not be more hospitals but increased knowledge of what constitutes the basis of sickness and health... (1967:107). Holman wrote, "We are experiencing some significant changes both among our overseas supporters and locally - which are forcing us to reevaluate and rethink our approach to and the content of church-sponsored medicine" (:83).

Holman identified "ignorance" as a major problem. He pointed out in his conclusion that, "The difficulties of securing overseas medical and other staff for our medical program are further complicated by the existence of 'apartheid' in South Africa (his quotation marks). But Holman did not take the implications of the apartheid context far enough. One of the strengths of the medical work, according to Holman's report, was as he put it, "no apartheid in our Lutheran Church." He noted that, "There is a strong and healthy attitude of mutual acceptance and cooperation among the African and European groups within the church. The government allows full freedom of action and movement within and throughout church -sponsored programs." But Holman also commented that, "A weakness was passivity [by the church] in relations to the government (:89).

In the conclusion to his report Holman called for:

Recognition and full realization that our Lutheran medical program is only a part - and a relatively small part - of the total health services in Natal Province." [Gelfand (1984:197) estimated that at one time Lutheran hospitals made up one quarter of hospital beds in Natal.]

Recognition of the fact that as missionaries and locally-employed Europeans, their primary aim is not only to provide a technical service, but to constantly train and place more responsibility upon and with African personnel, thereby in effect, working themselves out of a job as quickly as possible.

Holman's study concluded that there was "nothing basically wrong with our Lutheran hospitals, clinics and medical program generally." But then Holman pointed out that it was "... apparent that we simply lack efficient numbers of well-trained, qualified people and misuse those we have" (:Par. 17).

He then contradicted this when he wrote that "this study concludes that too much emphasis in the past has been placed on 'curative' work, whereas our church-related medical programs are ideally

suited to launch out on the less dramatic, but urgently needed 'preventative' programs of community health and health education for the African population" (Par. 21).

Holman accepted that within the context of "The Healing Ministry... [the] ultimate objective was to create truly Christian hospitals..." But Holman also stated that, "...our Ministry of Healing concept up to the present time has been largely ineffective and undefined" (Par 25.a.b.).

The study also concluded that: "The Lutheran medical program ... cannot become meaningful and effective in terms of meeting the medical needs of the African people of Natal unless (his emphasis) we align ourselves in greater cooperative efforts with the other Christian bodies engaged in health services" (Par. 26).

In the end Holman said something to please and anger everyone and the progressive vision of primary health care was lost. It did not seem possible to start over again and focus solely on community health and primary health care.

### **Medical Adversaries or Partners?**

Deep in the green hills of rural KwaZulu-Natal Dr. Roz Coleman goes about her normal day's work at Hlabisa hospital .... She knows that the hospital is not her patients' first or last call ... an estimated 80% of South Africans still consult traditional healers ... Statistics indicate that there is one traditional healer for every 300 people and only one medical doctor for every 40 000 in South Africa (Sheriffs 1996:62f).

It was widely recognized by Sundkler (1948:228) and others that healing plays a central role in the so-called African Indigenous/Instituted Churches (AICs). For a long time it has been acknowledged that many African church members belong to a "mainline" church but also attend an independent or night church (kereke ya bosiu) in the case of sickness.

Called a traditional healer or herbalist at best, a witch doctor or "toordokter" at worst, the isangoma or inyanga was seen as ignorant, dangerous or even evil, definitely **not as a partner in healing.**

According to Gelfand (1984:22) "lurid accounts of the African witch doctor" were received in Europe and America for many decades. In Mostert's (1992:956) words, "The missionaries and the diviners were fixed enemies." In the 1950's some Lutheran mission doctors would even cut off patients' bracelets or amulets before proceeding with their treatment (Interview J.L. Knutson July 1998). According to Gelfand (1984:22) attitudes only started to change in the 1960's.

Michael C. Kirwen, in his book *The Missionary and the Diviner* (1988:xxiii), also observes that for him, and others like him, theological training in the west was very ethnocentric and only started to address the questions of inculturation and indigenization in the late 1960s and 1970s

A month after the appearance of Holman's report a theological consultation on the "Healing Ministry of the Church" was held at Umpumulo from 19-27 September 1967. Papers were delivered by among others: Rev. A-I. Berglund - "African Concepts of Health, Sickness and Healing; Rev. A. Tshongwe - "Charismatic Healing in Ethiopian Churches"; and Rev. V. Msomi - "Healing in African Independent Churches." Dr. W. Bodenstein delivered what was then and still is now a most intriguing paper entitled: "Contemporary Approaches to Healing in African Medicine." He concluded with nine theses, three of which are as follows:

- > African medicine is closer to concepts of Christian healing than orthodox western medicine in that it accepts the 'wholeness' of the individual...
- > The illusion [must be challenged] that orthodox western medicine is synonymous with Christian healing...
- > If the Church in Africa continues to run away from the confrontation and dialogue with African medicine ... then all attempts to implement and cultivate the Christian ministry of healing will not get off the ground (Bodenstein 1967:64)

Theo Sundermeier (1996:178), in an excursus in his book *Den Fremden verstehen*, also stresses the urgent need for developing an "intercultural hermeneutic of healing.

In South Africa some major insurance companies now offer insurance coverage for medical costs incurred by visits to accredited "traditional healers."

### **The ongoing challenge of health ministry for partner churches**

In a *Policy Statement Concerning Health Ministry* adopted in October 1992 the ELCA-DGM acknowledged the struggle churches have faced in defining the biblical and theological basis for the ministry of health and healing. In 1987 and 1990 consultations were held to discuss future directions, goals, priorities and guidelines for the church's health ministry in the global context of poverty, continuing population growth, urbanization, a growing water crisis and AIDs.

The document fully supports the shift in focus from Western, institution-based, curative health care to primary health care and advocacy around the root causes of ill health.

The DGM has also recognized the Global Health Ministries Foundation (GHM) established in 1987 with significant support and impetus from former mission medical personnel as a resource to the DGM (88:10:46).

A GHM brochure, entitled *Helping the Hands that Heal*, states that, “The founders, many of them former missionaries, were moved by pleas from their overseas colleagues, ‘We never have enough supplies, equipment, personnel or money to do our jobs. ... Out of your abundance, can you help us?’” A March 1998 list of projects for funding is entitled: “Pick the spot where you will make a difference through Global Health Ministries!” (Underlining in original.)

As can be seen above, Global Health Ministries uses the “Macedonian Call” language in its literature which in the view of this study is a reversion to an older one-way paradigm of mission. In 1972 Wilfred Bockelman in his book *Exercise in Compassion* (10) pointed out the presumption of saying: “They need us.”

How can partner churches respond to the Gospel and the health needs of other people (including themselves) in a holistic way and learn from the mistakes and successes of the past?

Healing was and still is central to the proclamation of the Kingdom of God (Jansen 1968:45).

There is no question that for many years both expatriate and local doctors and nurses at mission hospitals and clinics, worked with great dedication often in difficult circumstances. Where and how does that legacy fit into the mission priorities and mission partnerships in the years to come in South Africa? What should the focus be? The incidence of tuberculosis, malaria, malnutrition and AIDS is on the increase. What is the response of the churches? In South Africa several hundred Cuban doctors have been deployed by the government in rural hospitals (some of them former mission hospitals) to fill a serious shortage of medical personnel.

In May 1998 Hlabisa hospital celebrated the 50th anniversary of the arrival of Dr. Hestenes as the hospital’s first doctor in 1948.<sup>19</sup> During that month traditional healers and medical personnel met at the hospital to discuss research on AIDS being done in the area.

With regard to medical work and mission this study sees an ongoing mixture of old and new patterns, perceptions and activities. The risk of reverting to a one-way approach to health care is great but there are encouraging signs of cooperation and growth with links to the past and relevance for the future which must not be lost from the partnership agenda.

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<sup>19</sup> The Hlabisa Mission Hospital was first started as a “dispensary” in 1928 by the Schreuder Mission nurse Petrine Solvik (Burgess 1934:210).

## Mixed blessings : Partnership continues post - 1990

### Changing Perspectives on Partnership from the ELCA : The Companion Synod Programme

David Dennison (1998:2), director of the ELCA Companion Synods Program, wrote with great enthusiasm in the DGM newsletter, *Global Contact*, that with the creation of the Companion Synod Program in 1990, “A new era of mission dawned in the ELCA.”

While the Berlin and Hermannsburg Missions began with a few circuit to circuit partnerships in the 1970s it was only in the late 1980s and early 1990s (after the formation of the ELCA in 1988) that a Companion Synod programme was inaugurated in the ELCA. This was introduced, as part of the ELCA’s “MISSION ‘90” emphasis, whereby congregations were to enter into partnership relationships with a ministry at home and somewhere around the world.

The ELCA Companion Synod Programme Office started in January 1990 (Dennison interview 1997). The *Companion Synods Missionary Exchange Manual* (1990:6) acknowledges that the ELCA is not only a missionary sending church but a missionary receiving church and explains that the purpose of the program is to enable the people of the ELCA to experience the gifts and witness of others, not merely as a direct exchange but rather, “as an exchange for all the years that we have sent missionaries to our partners.”

While many congregations already had various connections with missionaries, congregations and projects in different parts of the world the Companion Synod Programme was designed to link each of the 65 synods of the new church with churches and dioceses around the world in an organized way. (See Companion Synod list - Appendix C, page 294.)

In connection with the Companion Synod Programme launched in 1990, the ELCA developed several information booklets: *Embracing God’s World: Global Mission Education in the Congregation* (1994), *A Relationship Handbook: For Missionaries and Their Sponsors* (1994), *Having an Excellent Adventure: A Handbook for Responsible Travel* (1992), as well as the handbook mentioned above, *Companion Synods Missionary Exchange Manual* (1990).

The “Exchange” manual contains information about the purpose of the Companionship programme, biblical bases, guidelines and criteria. The appendix has a section entitled,

## *Reflections on Appropriate Global Mission Language.*

Throughout this study the power, limitations and ambiguity of language is stressed. The handbook correctly states that, “Words expose our deepest beliefs and attitudes. Words also tend to create the reality they describe. We seek to communicate and create respect for people of other cultures and nations. That means examining our language, and listening to what our words reveal

We seek to mold our words in the image of the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ which reconciles and brings life to those who hear” (ELCA 1990:42).

Words expose but also “cover” as we have seen in chapter one of this study. (See page 17ff above.) That is why the next move becomes problematic when, in the words of the handbook, “we [should] try to avoid words that are paternalistic or condescending toward another church or culture.” In the view of this study a title such as, “*The Quick Guide to Appropriate Global Language,*” only covers the ambiguity of the language we use. Instead of deconstructing language, instead of confronting the pain, manipulation and power dynamics of relationships, past, present and future, a “quick guide” to avoid confrontation and conflict is given.

Is it true that “the work of missions” has changed so radically in approach and attitude that our language needs to “*catch up*” (:43). What does “*catch up*” mean? The guide advises the reader to be “*careful*” in using terms such as “partner churches,” and not to make it “*sound*” like overseas churches are “junior partners.” The guide also explains that “we do not refer to them as ‘*our*’ churches, even if they are of the offspring of ELCA mission work.” The guide also argues that we, “... Do not speak of ‘our mission in Tanzania,’ for example. It is the Tanzanians’ mission or Christ’s mission It *betrays* paternalistic attitudes” (:43 - my emphasis)

In a section entitled *Cultural Sensitivities*, “differences” are described in the handbook as follows

Emphasize our commonalities as human beings and as Christians. There is a tendency for us to become preoccupied with cultural differences. We tend to focus on the exotic or what is unusual to us. Sometimes we are too curious about differences. Differences are not right or wrong, better or worse. They are simply that: differences. And that’s O.K. (:9).

In the view of this study there is no escape from the ambiguity of language. There is no “quick” solution. There is no guarantee that changing vocabulary will ensure that the other will no longer be violated or “covered” over.

De Kock (1993:252) concludes his book, *Civilizing the Barbarians*, with the warning that, “**These [phrases]** (still often used by politicians who for example condemn ‘barbarous acts’ in a ‘civilized society’) **have become no less slippery than they were 100 years ago.**” (My emphasis.)

In the words of McLaren & Giroux (1994:34), what is needed is not the elimination of the discourse of power, conflict and struggle but a “proliferation of competing discourses that not only challenge the old vocabulary but expand the sites from which notions of whiteness and blackness among others are made visible and rewritten.” Simon (in McLaren & Giroux 1994:138) asks, “What are the narratives and sites of popular memory, the symbolic representations that have mediated, made visible and accessible the establishment and negotiation of relationships? Memory is a contested terrain and begs the question, By whom, for whom and with what consequences?”

The DGM document, *Companion Synods Program* (ELCA 1990b:1), emphasizes that, “Companion Synod relationships should be established through the DGM in order to prevent duplication of efforts and overburdening overseas churches with contacts from the USA.” Guidelines are given with regard to establishing and sustaining a relationship. e.g. “Before the two organizations enter into a companion synod relationship, they should each define their expectations and plans for the future of the relationship. ... Persons, activities and resources need to be carefully identified as well.”

The way in which the 65 synods were linked to churches and dioceses around the world was more arbitrary for some than others. In October 1990 it was reported that, fifty-nine of the 65 synods were involved in the Companion Synod Programme and that, “13 have confirmed their suggested match and 16 have requested and are waiting for a match to be confirmed” (ELCA 1990a:3). The overseas partners did not have much of a choice except to refuse or accept the decision. Just as American Lutherans became involved in South Africa through personal contacts more than 100 years ago, often similar connections came into play when Synods gave their first three choices to the selection committee. (See page 69 above.)

The following section is not an exhaustive study of each ELCA Companion Synod in South Africa but gives some indication of the old and new dynamics in partnership in the early stages of the programme.



## **Montana Synod - Cape Orange Diocese**

In the case of the Montana Synod, Rev. John Gronli (son of the missionary J.E. Gronli who served in South Africa from 1928 to 1938) encouraged a South African connection. Montana Synod is now the companion to the Cape Orange Diocese and the Lutheran Church in Bolivia. Following a contact visit in April/May 1993 Rev. John Gronli made several recommendations in his report. He pointed out the potential difficulty posed by the established pattern of partnership between the COD and various German Circuits and the Church of Sweden. It was mentioned to Gronli that some of these partners might consider finding another partner if the COD develops a partnership with an American Lutheran Church. Gronli stated his belief that it was not feasible or desirable for the Montana Synod to replace the European partners and therefore there was a need to develop a new concept of "companionship" as opposed to "partnership". Gronli suggested various steps including a visit by Bishop Fortuin to Montana, pairing of congregations, exchanges of personnel and the possibilities of a South to South connection with Bolivia (Gronli 1993:5).

## **Southwestern Minnesota Synod - South-Eastern Diocese**

The Southwestern Minnesota Synod was linked to the South-Eastern Diocese (SED) in April 1990. Bishop Charles and Shirley Anderson visited the SED in 1991 and Bishop and Mrs. Simon P. Zulu visited Minnesota in 1993. Bishop Stan Olson visited in 1995. In 1997 a student from the SED was studying at Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, MN.

The information pamphlet issued by the Southwestern Minnesota Synod refers to the NMS involvement from 1844 and the arrival of several American Lutheran missionaries in the 1870s as well as the long history of medical assistance in the region ( SW MN Synod Pamphlet 11/92).

In a memo to the Synod Program Staff and dated April 3, 1991 Bishop Anderson acknowledged receipt of a "very welcome" letter from Bishop Zulu but expressed his worry "that correspondence will be as difficult as in the past. The delay of nearly one year since our first letter seems unusually long. Or am I just impatient?..."

In his letter of 21 February 1991 Bishop Zulu made a sincere apology to Bishop Anderson for the delay in responding. "Please do not get disappointed at our delayed action in this regard. I can assure you that our Diocese is eager to establish this contact."

Bishop Stanley N. Olson wrote a detailed report of his visit to the SED and South African in September and October 1995. He prefaced his report with a note to the reader that after two weeks he had not become an expert and offered his comments with the full awareness that his knowledge was still “extraordinarily limited and provincial.” He asked that any mistakes and misleading impressions be corrected (Olson Report 1995:1).

### **East Central Wisconsin Synod - Western Diocese**

Bishop E.R. Tisane wrote a letter to Rev. J.L. Knutson of DGM dated 1989-12-14 in which he said, “The (Western Diocese Executive) Committee also appreciates the fact that the ... East Central Wisconsin Synod has been chosen as partners of the ELCSA WD. We have long been waiting for this opportunity... to relate to Lutherans in the US like we are for years relating to those in West Germany (HM) as our partners and founder Church.”

A two-page information sheet (undated) was compiled by the Synod office which outlined the purpose of the Companion Synod Programme between Eastern Central Wisconsin and the Western Diocese, “together we can strengthen one another ... [and] deepen our commitment as individuals and as faith communities to our Lord and Savior.”

On January 27, 1991 Rev. Dan Olson as Area Secretary wrote to Bishop Tisane relating that [Bishop Robert Herder and the people of the East Central Wisconsin Synod], “...have been disappointed that nothing has come from your side and are wondering if you wish to pursue this companionship or if they should seek a partner in a diocese in another overseas church.”

David Dennison of the Companion Synod Office wrote a memo on October 29, 1991, to all ELCA Bishops in Companionships with Dioceses in ELCSA who were troubled by the slowness [of the] companion relationships asking for patience and prayer support in the troubled times facing Southern Africa.

He encouraged person-to-person visits, “since relationships in an African context must be established face-to-face.”

Rev. Barry S. Hoerz, a member of the Companion Synod Task Force wrote a letter to David Dennison of DGM dated 24 January 1995. “This is just to inform you that as of last Saturday ... our Companion Synod Task Force ...voted to disband.”

The reasons were as follows: “1. The Task Force has not accomplishing (sic) anything tangible or visible. Bishop Tisane will not let anything happen that does not go directly through him, and has hampered direct person-to-person or congregation-to-congregation interaction. ... This impasse

does not have an end in the foreseeable future We're tired. New faces aren't appearing and attempts to recruit new members have come back empty.

### **Northeastern Ohio Synod - Northern Diocese**

The Northeastern Ohio Synod went about setting up guidelines for Synod/Diocese, Conference/Circuit and Congregation/Parish relationships. These encouraged the exchange of correspondence, information, visits and exchanges after approval by the Bishop's office (NE Ohio Synod 1995). It was also stated that direct financial and/or extensive material exchanges were not acceptable except through existing ELCA DGM structures.

In an information flyer sponsored by the Synod Global Mission and Companion Synod Committees to celebrate the end of apartheid (no date), the following views were expressed:

Hopes that both churches will be renewed by the faith witness of one another, that both will be givers and receivers of encouragement, witness and prayer support, challenged in their mission callings and better informed about life and mission of the church outside their own countries.

What kind of a partnership is this? It is a relationship program and mutuality is a key theme.

We learn about [each other], It is NOT a fund raising program for South Africa.

R. Guist wrote in the Lutheran (1993:24a), following a visit to the Northern Diocese [ND] that, "We discovered that the ND has had a long-standing partnership at all levels - parish, circuit, and diocese - with the Berlin Mission (BMW) of Germany. That is a monetary partnership, and the BMW helps with many much needed projects ... (The Companion Synod program here is not monetary but built on a mutual learning and sharing)." In a conversation with a ND parish pastor Guist related how pleased the pastor was that, "...this was not to be a monetary relationship. He held one hand higher than the other and said that they did not want it to be 'Big Brother Brother,' He put his hands side by side and said, 'It is best to be on the same level.'" concluded, "I am so glad he felt that way."

### **Caribbean Synod - Eastern Diocese**

The Caribbean Synod Council accepted the Eastern Diocese as its companion synod on January 10, 1990. Bishop Richard Schiele of the Eastern Diocese heard of the decision indirectly through a copy of a letter sent to all the ELCSA Dioceses by Rev. Dan Olson of DGM dated October 22, 1990. Rev. Olson subsequently sent an apology to Bishop Schiele dated June 25, 1991. Bishop

Schiele wrote an introductory letter to Bishop Rafael Malpica-Padilla, dated 15 June 1991, giving some of the history of the Eastern Diocese, how the work was begun by a young Swazi, Mtfwalo Johannes Mdziniso in the 1920s. Schiele spoke of the ties with the Berlin Mission and Church of Sweden Mission and his enthusiasm for this “new venture” with the ELCA Caribbean Companion Synod programme.

The first visitor from the Eastern Diocese to the Caribbean Synod was Rev. Caroline Mhlongo in March 1994 who was part of a South African Women’s Tour group visiting the US at the time. The Rev. Martha L. McCracken wrote in her report,

Throughout the tour we were made more mindful of the many similarities our churches had, more than the differences. In respect to worship, the people in both areas love to sing and are beginning to incorporate more indigenous music ... while still keeping some of the hymns from the German and Scandinavian traditions ... One difference that caused some discussion was the withholding of pastors’ salaries by the Diocese if congregations do not pay their share of the budget.

Mrs. Leonore Schiele visited in May 1996 and also wrote a detailed report including her observations of church practices in the Caribbean Synod congregations.

### **Metropolitan Chicago Synod - Central Diocese**

This particular relationship started after discussions between Bishop Sherman Hicks and Bishop Buthelezi in 1989. The first “team planning session” by the Metro Synod was held in Park Ridge on April 17, 1990. Bishop Buthelezi replied in a letter dated 20 February 1991 to confirm that the envisaged relationship had been formally approved by the Diocese. Bishop Buthelezi wrote a letter (November 29, 1991) to Rev. Barbara Gazzolo of the Companion Synod Working Group giving an overview of the history and structure of ELCSA and the South African context. viz.

Lutheranism in South Africa has a predominantly black membership (90-95%), and has German, Swedish, Norwegian and American heritages. There is cultural diversity within the Diocese (about 7 languages are spoken in the congregations), congregational life and spiritual life have been affected by socio-political developments [Apartheid, the struggle against apartheid, violence, crime] (Buthelezi 1991b:1-2).

Buthelezi requested that for these reasons the companions should, “Please bear with us if it seems to take long from our side to get the structured process of our relationship in full swing.” Prof. D.B.Z. Ntuli was appointed by the Diocesan Council to communicate with the Companion Synod

in future. The bishop affirmed that they were in agreement with the guidelines proposed by the Metro Synod.

In a letter to Dan Olson of DGM, Rev. Gazzolo wrote on October 1, 1991, "Our Companion Synod Working Group has been frustrated in its attempts to further a relationship with the Central Diocese..."

In a letter to Bishop Hicks, dated May 7, 1992 and prior to a meeting in Berlin with Bishop Buthelezi, Rev. Gazzolo presented the following "concerns to be clarified with Bishop Buthelezi,"

What are the expectations, needs, goals and contributions that the Central Diocese brings to the relationship? Do our letters go through Prof. Ntali (sic)? We have heard nothing from him. What if our questions and letters to him go unanswered?"

More explicit guidelines include: Seek to be all we can be to one another **APART** from any financial or material commitment [emphasis in original]. Only the exchange of very small personal gifts will be appropriate at congregational level. Do we need to set that limit? Any financial requests or transactions be approved and handled through both diocese and synod.

Regarding approach and style: Respect for the context, situation and practical limitations of each other, respect for the other as interpreter of their own experience, commitment to a long-term relationship even though the program and/or its leadership will change over the years, approaches which create openness to new experiences, new information and in some cases conflicting values.

In a letter to Professor Ntuli dated March 4, 1993, Rev. Gazzolo wrote enthusiastically of the impending Bethel Lutheran Church choir tour to South Africa and also mentioned Bishop Buthelezi's reservations about relationships between congregations, which in the case of the Central Diocese, "are not organized and supervised in the same way" [as in the US]. Gazzolo concluded, "So on these two possibilities ... relationship between Deans and relationship between congregations, it seems we have hit an impasse. But life is fluid and things change, and for this reason I will look forward to visiting with you and Bishop Buthelezi in June."

A number of the ELCA companion synods have been extremely active during the past few years in Southern Africa. Others have yet to begin. This is said in the light of 150 years of contact with Southern Africa by American Lutherans. The letters included in this short section give some indication of the various expectations, perceptions, differences and connections experienced by people who have met, are meeting and still have not yet met.

### **Rethinking mission theology and priorities for the ELCA**

With the formation of the ELCA in 1988, and the coming together of three Lutheran bodies in the United States, the newly established DGM Board defined and adopted four mission goals and five

priorities for the Division in March 1989. These statements give an indication of how the ELCSA defined mission in the last decade of the 20th century.

Just a few years prior to this the WCC produced in 1983 the document known as the Ecumenical Affirmation (EC). The similarities between the ELCA statement and the EC are striking and are presented here for comparison.

The seven EC affirmations are grounded in the understanding of the WCC as a fellowship of churches with the common confession of the “Lord Jesus Christ as God and Savior” and the understanding that they are “on a pilgrimage towards unity” under the missionary vision of John 17:21 (Stromberg 1983:4).

The conviction is also expressed that, “[member] churches ... have learned to recognize each other as participants in the one worldwide missionary movement” (:18).

The seven affirmations deal with

1. Conversion
2. The Gospel to all realms of life
3. The church and its unity in God’s Mission
4. Mission in Christ’s way
5. Good News to the poor
6. Mission in and to six continents
7. Witness among people of living faiths

In a paper prepared for the *1998 Congress on the World Mission of the Church*, Scherer added a paragraph for consideration entitled “*Authentic witness within each context*” as an addition to the seven convictions of the original WCC *Ecumenical Affirmation* saying that,

“...each local community must be free to develop its witness to Christ within its own cultural context, without having alien forms imposed on it. Yet the final product must be identifiable or recognizable as a true expression of the universal faith in Christ and the Triune God as witnessed in scripture and creeds. This approach welcomes a diversity or plurality of cultural expressions while at the same time setting limits on diversity” (Scherer 1998:9).

The need for authentic contextualization cannot be stressed enough and yet to speak of the possibility of freedom “without the imposition of alien forms” in an unequal world, (where everyone is being colonized), is unrealistic in the view of this study.

The four goals adopted by the DGM Board in 1989 are as follows: (Selected excerpts from the full statement are included following each of the four goals.

**1. To share the good news of Jesus Christ with those who acknowledge no faith, people of other faiths and adherents of various ideologies.**

DGM is committed, within a world of religious pluralism and ideological diversity, to ...a clear and bold witness to the lordship of Jesus Christ as God's unsurpassable and normative revelation for all humanity and the whole universe.

**2. To take part in God's life-giving purpose for all people, especially by being in solidarity with and advocating for people who are oppressed, poor and suffering.**

Goal 2 calls DGM continually to evaluate its motives and methods in the light of what God intends for ... those in need. To find ways to be in mission that is shaped by the cross will be difficult for a church in the US ... as... we carry with us liabilities ... and responsibilities.

**3. To seek more effective ways of relating to and cooperating with churches around the world that express the unity of the body of Christ and further the mission of the church.**

...Partnership and the structures for cooperation are still largely characterized by the donor-recipient patterns of thought and behavior. How can this be challenged and overcome? Resources are now being seen as more than money and missionaries ... How can we all acknowledge the rich variety of gifts we have and how can these gifts be shared ... in new ways?

**4. To develop our gifts as a church, acknowledge our limitation and embrace the gifts of others in engaging in global mission.**

We are a US-based mission agency. We are identified with a nation that throughout the world is seen as powerful and dominant ... That imposes certain limitations on how and where we do mission ... It also provides opportunity to confront and rise above those constraints ... How the ELCA responds to its vocation to mission now will decide the shape and direction of the life of this church in the century to come.

This study commends the approach being used by the DGM of stating its goals together with an open and honest acknowledgment of the ELCA's liabilities, limitations and responsibilities in relation to each goal. This approach is taken even further with the GM21 document. (See page 194 below.)

The DGM Board adopted five priorities in March 1990 presented in a document entitled: *Mission in the 1990's : The Role of Missionaries in the Global Mission of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* (ELCA 1995b:19).

The list of priorities was as follows:

**1. Evangelism :** ...DGM will send missionaries who know, speak and live out the gospel... DGM will support the evangelistic efforts and witness of churches with which we cooperate in mission.

**2. South - South Relationships:** ...DGM has chosen as a priority the development, facilitating and nurturing of exchanges, relationships, cooperation and mutual involvement in mission among the churches of the South – Africa, Asia and Latin America.

**3. Mission to the ELCA:** ... DGM [will] encourage and enable churches outside the USA in mission to this church and society. We need to experience the gifts and witness of churches in Africa, Latin America, Asia, Eastern Europe and the Middle East.

**4. Leadership :** ... DGM resources [will be allocated] to the discovery, formation and undergirding of persons who are or can be leaders. The emphasis will be upon contextual, formal and informal ways to enable persons to learn, grow, be equipped and empowered to give leadership...

**5. Poverty and Oppression:** ... DGM will put resources where they are most needed; ... will give special emphasis to advocacy on behalf of those without voice, influence or power; ...will support efforts that accompany and empower poor and oppressed people (ELCA 1995b: 19).

In 1996 the priorities were rearranged as follows

1. Evangelism
2. Leadership
3. Poverty and Oppression
4. South - South Relationships
5. Mission to the ELCA

The theological basis for mission was developed through broad consultation over a period of three years as follows:

**A. Missio Dei :** ...Mission is a movement from God to the world; the church is an instrument for that mission. [The quotation is from Bosch 1991 - PJK]

**B. The Gospel is inherently universal:** ...The church begins to be missionary not through its universal proclamation of the gospel but through the universality of the gospel it proclaims” (quote from W. Frazier in IBMR, Oct. 1987, 146-157) ... The term “global mission” reflects the reality that churches all over the globe are called to be centers of mission.

**C. Mutual Witness and Discipleship** express the nature of the church: ...Mission is carried out in partnership and mutuality with others of the community of faith in a given location ... The disparities in material wealth among the peoples of the world present a difficult challenge to partnership in many places but mutual, reciprocal relationships remain the goal.

**D. Mission is Shaped by the Cross:** ...interprets the theology of the cross in relation to cross-cultural mission ... proclaims the living Word of God in Jesus Christ, is incarnational and empowered by the resurrection, ... anticipate(s) the full revelation of God’s glory in the future...

**E. Mission is Wholistic:** ... serve(s) the needs of whole persons and communities.

**F. Mission is always contextual :** The gospel transcends ... judges and transforms cultures ... part of the richness of cross-cultural partnership in witness is mutual discernment ... (ELCA 1995b:4-6)

Carl Reko of ELCA - DGM spoke of the growing understanding in the DGM of the need, not so much to *plan* and form *structures* for a future which is unknown and unpredictable, but to *position oneself*, in order to make maximum use of all available resources and to be able to respond to a variety of changing needs and challenges (Reko Interview 1997).



## **Accompaniment : A new paradigm for the ELCA?**

In 1998 the Division for Global Mission of the ELCA prepared a draft long-range planning document (GM21) “appropriate for global mission in the twenty-first century,” entitled, *Accompaniment: A Vision of Evangelical Faithfulness in God’s Mission in the 21st Century*.

This document includes a missiological statement, perspectives on the global mission context, lessons from companion churches and a long term plan including twelve signposts or characteristics of “accompaniment.

The GM21 document examines the past and present global mission context, portraying in a column format some of the shifts and changes that have taken place in the past three or four decades. More than in the past, this document seeks to analyze the changing context of global mission and the mistakes and limitations of the missionary enterprise.

The document identifies three “assumptions” which permeate its programs. viz.:

1. Leadership development
2. Capacity Building
3. Gender Equity

Twelve “signposts” towards the “Destination” are given:

1. Proclamation of the Gospel
2. Servant Stance
3. Concern for Interfaith Witness and Dialogue
4. Transparency in Communication
5. Shared Decision making
6. Respect for ethnic diversity
7. Respect for Diversity of Gifts
8. Contextualization of the Church
9. Priority for South-South Programs
10. Wholistic approach to Mission
11. Concern for Righteousness, Justice and Peace
12. Ecumenical Approach to Mission

While this document honestly seeks to face the past and creatively move into the future, the reference to “accompaniment” as a “new paradigm” must be questioned. This study suggests that it would be more appropriate to use the term as a “*central theme*” of DGM’s understanding of mission rather than as a “*new paradigm*.” David Bosch spoke of “elements of an emerging ecumenical missionary paradigm” (1991: 368ff.). This study would rather emphasize *accompaniment* as one of those elements in an emerging paradigm.

The document acknowledges that the term ‘partnership’ has “often been found wanting and masked an unequal yoking of a supposedly powerful giver and a weaker receiver.” According to the document, former sending churches and emergent international churches are asking not only for a new term but that it be accompanied by equalization of power in the relationship. The document further explains that:

A primary reality of *accompaniment* is the equality of the companions. The basis for conversation is no longer between a giver and a receiver but between two equal churches each of which has gifts to give and receive (GM21 draft: 7). ... We walk side by side. Neither makes decisions or takes initiatives for mission in the other’s context without consultation and mutual cooperation with the other (:14). ... Accompaniment implies a companionship of equals and signals mutuality in our relationships (:15).

However, what is problematic for this study is the stress in the GM21 document on equality at the expense of difference. How does the offering of “a vision of an idealized future of churches in a totally equitable and effective walking together” (:36) speak to a sense of how God uses difference, discontinuity and conflict?

What also needs further clarification is the interaction between direction and destination. This study supports the identification and use of the terms “signposts” in the accompaniment document rather than “commandments” for example. However, the vocabulary and concepts of partnership still creep into the document. For example line eleven, on page seven, of the introduction states: “A primary reality of accompaniment is the equality of the companions. The basis for conversation is no longer between a giver and a receiver but between two equal churches...” This follows the earlier admission on line five that some critics note that, “the term ‘partnership’ masks an unequal yoking.

In the view of this study, the term “accompaniment” while being extremely valuable, is becoming overloaded with too much baggage if it must do all the work of a paradigm. As stated above this study proposes that instead of speaking of a new “paradigm” the document could more appropriately speak of accompaniment as a helpful “metaphor” or a “guiding image” within a larger emerging ecumenical paradigm for mission in the way of the cross.<sup>20</sup> Sensitivity to complexity and spontaneity, connection and difference needs to be maintained.

Chapter three of this study looks at the limitations of and necessity for models or frameworks while chapter four argues that mismeeting in Jesus’ name is an important dimension of

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<sup>20</sup> Philip Hefner (1998:245) used these terms, speaking of “The Church as Well of Possibility” as “a helpful metaphor” and “guiding image.”

communion. In the final chapter of this study the argument is made that in addition to *accompaniment*, it would be well to add *mismeeing* to the list of elements or themes within an emerging ecumenical paradigm of mission.

### **New bridges and gaps in Partnership**

After 150 years the **Norwegian Missionary Society (NMS)** is withdrawing from direct involvement in South Africa.

In a telefax dated October 9, 1997 the following message was conveyed from General Secretary Tor Jørgensen General Secretary of the NMS to Bishop Sibiya of the South Eastern Diocese of ELCSA:

At the General Assembly last year, the NMS decided, as you know, to propose for the ELCSA to enter into a new relationship with the NMS.

Our situation in Norway calls for radical measures in our policy .... We have started a process of redefining our involvements around the world, also concerning our relationship with your church. Our intention is to ask for a new type of agreement with the ELCSA where NMS as a missionary-sending body, ends its working relationship with your church and instead points to other types of relationships ... between the ELCSA and the Church of Norway.

As far as NMS is concerned we are considering the following reduction of involvement:

- >South Africa will not have a separate portfolio in our missionary department.
- >No general personnel responsibilities.
- >No long-term budget commitments (after 1999 there will be no block grant from NMS).

There will of course always be a special openness in NMS towards matters relating to ELCSA. We hope that :

- >Prayer commitments and visiting programs on special occasions can continue.
- >NMS-related people with special background and insight in South African matters can continue to be involved in the South Africa commitment already existing in the Church of Norway.

In addition we want to emphasize one special link ... between our School of Mission and Theology in Stavanger (MHS) and your theological institution(s).

...the future relationship between South Africa and Norway must become a clearer church-to-church based relationship with the Council of Ecumenical and International Relations the natural point of contact. Possible consequences:

- >Participation in CMCR and bishops meetings.
- >Diocesan-based relations.
- >Relations with other church-related organizations in Norway.
- >Support for applications for projects through the LWF.

Only time will tell what the impact will be of this shift in relations especially when compared with the ongoing presence of other missionaries from the HM and the increase in traffic from Companion Synods of the ELCA.

Following a different path from the other mission societies, the Vereinigte Evangelische Mission (VEM), (formed in 1971 through a merger of the Rhenish and Bethel missions) began to operate under the name **United Evangelical Mission (UEM)** from the 5th of June 1996.

This was hailed in the UEM newsletter of October 1996 as a “landmark in German mission history” and a “spectacular transformation,” in that a German mission became a new international and ecumenical missionary communion comprising 32 partners in three continents (Haeske 1996:1).

Rev. Dr. Ulrich Beyer (acting UEM Vice-Moderator) in his address, spoke of “look[ing] back full of thankfulness and shame” at the Rhenish mission history and its burden of guilt. He pointed out that in 1977 and in 1990 the VEM issued a statement declaring “before God and before our brothers and sisters:

We confess: Lord, we have sinned against you, because we denied that our black brothers and sisters were created in your image, because we claimed that your incarnation for reconciliation with the world just applied to people’s private lives...” (Ulrich 1996 :10).

Beyer brought to the attention of the UEM conference that at the conference worship service,

We confessed our guilt, that we, - the mission from the west - kept our leadership much too long in many place in what at the time were called missionary churches, and that we made our decisions alone. But at the same time, we can say thankfully, for Christ’s sake our guilt has been forgiven, and we have been granted a new beginning, which today has made possible a mission of equal partners.

... the era of western mission has ended, the time of world mission has come. What is needed now is not a moratorium for mission, but rather mature partnership and mutual co-operation (:11).

This was, according to the UEM, the first German missionary society to give *structural form* to the partnership between churches and Christians in North and South, “something often preached in the worldwide ecumenical community.” It was agreed that funds, power and responsibility for joint missionary tasks would be distributed equally in future. However the newsletter reports that, “Sadly the attempt to elect a woman to the first 24-strong governing board failed” (Haeske 1996:2).

A brochure from the 1996 UEM General Assembly contains diagrams of the development of mission through four stages or models viz.

1. Von hier nach dort (one-way),
2. Im Gegenverkehr (two-way),
3. In vielseitigen Beziehungen (multi-lateral),
4. In ökumenischer Gemeinschaft (ecumenical community).

The February 1997 UEM Magazine includes an article by Dr. Wilhelm and Jutta Richebacher, lecturers at LTS, Makumira, Tanzania. They admit that there are still open questions which “only time will answer.” The last paragraph is entitled, *Overcoming differences*, and refers to the issue of different wages, different economies, origins and lifestyles. In their words, “These are exciting questions which will not be easy to answer but for which a solution can be found with enough patience” (:5).

The point this study seeks to make is that all these models or stages of mission mentioned above still exist side by side. We do not completely discard old paradigms but add to the previous ones. It is incorrect to give the impression that a new structure completely negates or replaces old ones. What is not shown in the multilateral diagram are the gaps, spaces and loose ends. While forgiveness is offered through the grace of God, reconciliation and restitution are part of a very long process. There is real newness but also continuing inequality and injustice. We are not and may never be equal partners no matter what structure is instituted. The vision of the UEM is therefore to be commended but tempered with the view presented in this study that all meetings are mismeeting.

### **North-South, South-South dynamics**

Each of these mission societies and initiatives has a unique and different history. All keenly express the historical and theological need for and importance of mutual and equal partnership. Partnerships started in most cases through some kind of personal contact. But as the number of partnerships increased each mission society had to develop some kind of overall strategy and structure in cooperation with the local churches in Europe and Southern Africa. Partnership agreements and contracts were carefully drawn up and signed by each partner concerned.

The Berlin Mission (BMW) has twelve circuits, ten of which have partnerships overseas. Hermannsburg (HM) has a plan for approximately 34 partnerships with circuits in South Africa. When it came to choosing partners in South Africa, Martin Detlefs (1997) commented, “The HM took what Berlin left over.” As seen in chapter two of this study, the ELCA felt compelled to develop a Companion Synod Programme for its 65 Synods. At present there are six

companionship relationships with six ELCSA dioceses. Because of the existence of two separate Lutheran churches in Botswana the ELCA has delayed establishing a companion relations with one or both churches there.

Adding to the complexity is the desire of the ELCSA (Cape Church) and the ELCSA: N/T, in the face of ELCSA's decision to stop unity discussion and decreasing financial support from Germany, to forge direct ties with Lutheran churches in North America.

Obviously there is overlapping of partnerships and relationships at various levels. All of these partnerships/companionships are targeted at or impact on ELCSA. Some partnerships focus on church to church relations, others focus on the diocese, circuit and/or parish.

Martin Detlefs, formerly of the HM, in an interview in 1997 made the observation that ELCSA has been unable to coordinate or monitor these various partnership programmes and been unable to enforce its own regulations. The partnership idea puts a lot of responsibility on local people in local congregations to keep everything in perspective on both sides. Such networks are wonderful in theory, allowing for many options but are very difficult to manage. The question for Detlefs is what kind of network is evolving?

Detlefs (1995:3) states in his manual on partnership, *Nachlese-buch: Nach-Lesebuch*, that where partnerships are concerned, "Control is good but trust is better" (My translation). In his view the regulations regarding the channeling of funds are not adhered to but notes that there is a clear commitment to share information. There is as yet no "Partnership Office" in ELCSA to coordinate and monitor these numerous relationships. One proposal would be for all the partners in Southern Africa to jointly subsidize such an operation (as is the case in Tanzania) as part of their commitment to a long term relationship. Networks such as LUCSA and the ELCA's Southern Africa Network (SAN) need to be added to the equation together with other ecumenical and regional structures.

The traffic and facilities on the north-south axis continue to increase compared to the narrow paths going from east to west or south to south. All of the ELCSA partners have at one time or another supported short-term "missionaries" from the south to the north. In addition to this the ELCA has pledged itself to supporting what it calls "South to South" connections. There are a few examples of doctors and teachers from the South being sent to institutions in other countries in the South e.g. from Madagascar to Cameroon and Puerto Rico to Brazil (ELCA 1989:13)

Many more South-South spokes are needed in the North-South wheel. But interest in such programmes from churches in the South and in the North is still very low. The advantages and benefits of North-South relationships seem much more obvious to most people than those to be derived from South-South connections.

The ongoing complexity and ambiguity of all these different partnerships funneling into Southern Africa only emphasizes the importance of exploring the concept of mismeeting put forward in chapter four of this study.

### **The long conversation continues**

A decade after the first conference in Harare, 60 theologians met in Bulawayo from December 13-19, 1996 as the Conference of International Black Lutherans (CIBL) to address the theme, *"Poverty and Plenty: A Lutheran Perspective on Bridging the Gap between Rich and Poor."* A summary statement of the conference *"A Message from Bulawayo"* was distributed by the ELCA-DGM in 1997.

The introduction speaks of one of the purposes of the CIBL, "...to bridge the gap between Black Lutherans (Africans) in diaspora in the Americas, in the Caribbean and in Mother Africa" (ELCA 1997:3). What has become clear to the CIBL is that the gap is not only geographic but "...profoundly psycho-spiritual, physical and economic in regard to the continuing subjugation of Black peoples around the world" (:3). Appreciation was expressed by women participants in the significant gender change in the CIBL constituency since Harare I. However a number of concerns were raised including the challenge to the church "to critically examine manifestations of dependency (economic, psychological, spiritual, etc.) as they relate to the decolonization of the Black female mind" (:9).

What the preceding chapters have attempted to demonstrate is that, for white and black, male and female, born in Africa and elsewhere, every mind is "colonized" in one way or the other. If partnership is to proceed we need to be more aware of these histories of colonization within and between us in our relationships.

The intention of this historical survey is not to judge from a superior or a neutral position but to emphasize that there is complexity and ambiguity in each meeting, in each era and in every vocabulary model or paradigm. Our vision is no better or worse than previous generations. We all can point to "successes" and "failures." As partners we all stand somewhere and most often are

standing in more than one place at the same time. While the outcomes are ambiguous there is still a need to distinguish between what Sponheim calls “different differences” if we are to be serious, committed and honest about our conversations and meetings in Jesus’ name.

The following chapter focuses on the shifts from partnership to communion while the final chapter argues that to speak of “mismeeting in Jesus’ name” in the context of communion is to stress the ongoing connections and discontinuities of partnership in mission.



## CHAPTER THREE

### BEYOND PARTNERSHIP - TOWARDS COMMUNION

#### The Necessity and Limitations of Models

Chapters one and two of this study explored some of the ways in which American, European and African Christians and in particular Lutherans in Southern Africa have perceived and defined themselves and their missionary motivations and relationships. This chapter looks at several biblical and theological models of the Church and Mission as they relate to partnership. Of particular interest to this study is the growing movement by Lutherans to move from partnership rhetoric and structures towards “Communion.” This chapter will stress both the necessity for and the limitations of models or frameworks.

In a paper prepared for a Congress on the World Mission of the Church (St. Paul, MN, June 1998) Jim Scherer wrote, “Whatever the reasons, Western Christians will not be able to play a worthy part in the new missionary era unless they understand their own motivation, and have a valid biblical and theological basis for their contribution ... The new missionary era calls for a **profound rethinking of all essential missionary relationships**” (Scherer 1998:4 - my emphasis).

David Bosch (1991:23) examined what he called the “key concept” of “self-definition” throughout his book, *Transforming Mission*, by asking how early Christians, as well as subsequent generations understood themselves. Bosch went on to ask, “How do we, today’s Christians, understand ourselves? And what effect do these ‘self-understandings’ have on their and our interpretation of mission?” Bosch (:23) gave credit to Ben Meyer for showing that, “... it was because of a new self-definition that at least some of the first-century disciples felt urged to get involved in missionary outreach to the surrounding world.” Bosch accepted that, “...reality changes if one’s self-definition changes” (:24). In my view, Bosch is correct in saying that while the self-definitions of early and later Christians were not always adequate and often warped, we need to be challenged by them and include ourselves in the dialogue. This study emphasizes that our own self-definitions are never adequate or complete. I wish to underline Bosch’s view that, “What [the New Testament] authors did for their time, we have to do for ours. We too must listen to the past and speak to the present and the future” (:21).

Similarly, Wilbert R. Shenk, in his book, *Write the Vision: The Church Renewed* (1995), put forward the now well known thesis, that the integrity and future of the church is linked to its understanding of mission. Shenk adamantly calls for the church to “become more self-aware of the assumptions that have controlled mission studies and missionary action up to the present” (:91). Shenk argues that, “the church is indispensable for sustaining Christian faith. Yet the church must have a character that allows itself to embrace peoples of the most diverse backgrounds and must do so across time. When the church allows itself to be taken captive by a particular culture, ethnic group, or class, it forfeits its claim to be a faithful witness to the reign of God” (:8).

In a similar vein, Welker (1994:40ff) speaks of the “three-fold Babylonian captivity of theology and piety,” namely “old European metaphysics, dialogical personalism and social moralism.” He proposes what he calls a “realistic theology” which renounces the “hunger for control” and gives up “the illusion there is a single system of reference.”

Since the church is always a *corpus permixtum* and its members *simul justis et peccator*, it should also hold true that the church is also always compromised in its self-understanding and its witness. Shenk (1995:73) describes the increasing separation of church from mission through the ages into modern times in the “Christendom model” as well as the fragmentation and trivialization of mission by the separation of mission from evangelism and the focus on the individual in isolation from the prevailing culture.

As Avery Dulles rightly pointed out in his book, *Models of the Church* (1974, revised 1985), the present crisis of faith is in part a “*crisis of images*” as it is “rocked by paradigm shifts” (:25).

In the first edition of his book, Dulles described six models: The Church as *Mystery*, *Institution*, *Mystical Communion*, *Sacrament*, *Herald* and as *Servant*. He pointed out that in every age the church has adjusted its structures and offices to the social context and that the evaluation of models remains difficult since most criteria presuppose a choice of values which in turn presuppose a certain understanding of reality and the faith (:197).

Dulles remained skeptical about finding one “super model” and said, “We are condemned to work with models that are inadequate to the reality they point to” (:203). While Bosch also emphasized that our views are always interpretations, based on our self-understanding, and that our theologies are always partial and culturally biased, he concluded that this is “not something

we have to lament; it is an inherent feature of the Christian faith, since it concerns the Word made flesh” (1991:182).

Shenk also reminds us that there is no precise definition of the church in the New Testament, but a “plethora of images and metaphors” (1995:81). He reminds us that already in the first generation of Christians, tensions arose between *being* over against *function*, and *institution* versus *movement*. Shenk makes the important point that, “It is evident that the definition or starting point will determine the outcome” (:81). There is no privileged vantage point or neutral ground to evaluate models of the church. Shenk believes that, “some of the most acute analysis of what the church is and ought to be is coming from Asia, Africa and Latin America.” (:7).

In *The Good News of the Kingdom : Mission Theology for the Third Millennium* (1993), Charles van Engen supports Bosch, Senior, Stuhlmüller and Newbigin in saying, “We cannot talk of the Biblical foundations of mission before talking first of our hermeneutic principles” (:29). He concurs with Bosch’s call for interaction between the self-definitions of early Christian and present day self-definitions. Van Engen sees the Bible as a “tapestry of God’s Action in the World” where text and context are interwoven in such a way as to affirm “the whole and the diversity” allowing for a variety of approaches and challenges to those approaches (:32).

While the image of a tapestry well emphasizes the complex combinations of approaches this image must not be used to “cover over” what Brueggemann ( in Bosch 1991:24) has called the deep yet valid tensions which exist in a range of alternative moves or approaches in the Bible.

### **Biblical reflections related to identity and partnership in mission**

Senior and Stuhlmüller, in their overview of Jewish history in the Old Testament, bring out an “inherent ambiguity, [or] ... dialectic between centripetal and centrifugal forces, between a concern for self-identity and responsible interaction and solidarity with the entire human family” (1983:316). The two authors make the point that, “ Israel was not called to go to the nations; [but] the nations were permitted to come to Israel.”

Similarly Sundermeier points out that, at its origin, Israel had a “tribal religion” characterized by a “closed circle” outside of which was the “wilderness” (1996:108,116). Significantly and uniquely,

“the presence of the stranger reminded Israel of her own history    foreigners were even included in the family tree of David” (:119).

Volf (1996:148-156) contrasts the ideas of contract and covenant in the Old Testament. As he explains, “Unlike contract, covenant is not simply a relationship of mutual utility but of moral commitment ... Covenant partners are not simply moral agents who have certain duties to one another within the framework of a long-standing relationship ... the very identity of each is formed through relation to others; the alterity of the other enters into the very identity of each” (:154).

The “Great Turning-Point” as Blauw (1962:83) has pointed out was the announcement of the resurrection of Jesus and the call to mission emerging from it. In the New Testament Jesus radicalizes the command to love (Matt. 5:44). Sundermeier (1996:212) observes that, “Love cannot stay by itself but seeks out the other, the neighbour, the stranger, the enemy.” As Sundermeier rightly points out, Paul saw to it that the Christian religion did not remain a “stammesreligion” but became a world religion (:122). Senior and Stuhlmüller (1983:318) also stress that “Jesus was the catalyst that triggered the Christian impulse for mission” but add that the early church like their Jewish forebears faced the constant temptation to close ranks over against “outsiders” (:323). Blauw is correct when he says that, “It is exactly by going outside itself that the Church *is* itself and comes to itself” (1962:122 - italics in original).

Koenig (1985:10) focuses attention on the theme of hospitality in the New Testament saying, “...we might call hospitality the catalyst for creating and sustaining partnerships in the gospel. Within these partnerships all members, even God, as director, will play the role of stranger.” Koenig makes use of Parker Palmer’s phrase, the “company of strangers” (:31). Koenig sees in Luke’s writings, “the development of house churches in a network of concern as a flexible model that makes room for cooperative partnerships in mission between residents and itinerants, hosts and guests, ministers of the word and ministers of the table” (:109 & 119). Importantly he acknowledges in the final chapter of his book that it would be a romantic illusion to suppose that we could form such partnerships with all the strangers we meet, including those intimate strangers who make up our household and circles of friends (:125). Koenig supports Henry Nouwen’s idea of “free space,” cultivating an openness for new modes of welcoming and being welcomed (:126).

Sundermeier also makes the important observation that, “The only border that Christianity recognizes is that between belief and unbelief    and it is a line even believers must constantly

overcome within themselves” (1996:123). The most honest confession is recorded in Mark 9:24, “I believe; help my unbelief!” But as Sundermeier correctly points out, the church often reconstructs the walls of separation, creating an “ecclesiological ‘stammesreligion’” once again (:123).

According to Küng (1976:383), “...the New Testament, as a whole, precisely demonstrates the unity of the church, a unity in plurality and diversity ... distinct from uniformity or egalitarianism, ... selectivity and divisions.” He argues that, “The churches of the New Testament are conscious of being *one* church and they practice it, .” (382).

In contrast to this view, Bosch (1991:52), reflecting on the failure of the early church to develop its identity as charismatic movement and religious institution, made the point that, “...very few people can be both at the periphery and at the center at the same time. And even if they do manage that, they usually do so only for a very short while.” The Protestant Reformation was also a “movement” against the institution but in time itself went down the road of institutionalization (1979:27).

Shorter makes the very important point regarding the connections and differences between the incarnation and the “Pascal Mystery.” For Shorter (1988:82), “The incarnation possesses a logic of its own. Christ’s own enculturation was a unique and unrepeatable event. There is no world of essences ... Christ himself is transmitted from culture to culture, from history to history but always as stranger who proposes a radical revision.” The “Pascal Mystery” goes further than the analogy of incarnation, since as Shorter puts it, “... after the resurrection Christ belonged to every culture at once” (:83). Sanneh (1989:51) has argued persuasively for the principle of translatability as the “source of the success of Christianity across cultures” and essential to the nature of Christian mission

What becomes clear in the discussions above is that for the covenant community of the Old Testament and for the church of the New Testament there was a constant struggle and tension between the impulse to define its mission and identity by “going outside of itself” and the temptation to “close ranks.” Albert Nolan (1988:136) writes, “Jesus found faith outside the powerful system of holiness . This was a sign of hope.”

The following section looks at some aspects of the relationship between theology, ecclesiology and mission.

### **The ongoing importance of mission for theology and ecclesiology**

Bosch traced successive missionary paradigms from the first to the twentieth century in his book, *Transforming Mission* (1991), and made it clear that there is no single “theology of mission,” saying, “Ultimately mission remains undefinable ... the most we can hope for is to formulate some approximations of what mission is all about” (Bosch 1991:8). Bosch gave a thirteen point “interim definition” and in the last third of the book discussed “elements of an emerging ecumenical missionary paradigm.” viz.

The Church-With-Others, Missio Dei, Mediating Salvation, Quest for Justice, Evangelism, Contextualization, Liberation, Inculturation, Common Witness, Ministry by the Whole People of God, Witness to People of Other Living Faiths, Theology, Action in Hope (:368-510).

David Lochhead in his book, *The Dialogical Imperative* (1988), expressed his view that, “A theology of mission is nothing else than a theological understanding of the relationship between the Church and the world.” That relationship, according to Lochhead’s scheme, has taken on various forms based on the theology applied. These are described alternatively by him as a theology of isolation, of hostility, of competition, of partnership or of dialogue (:94). (See chapter four of this study for a more extensive discussion of Lochhead’s scheme - page 255ff.)

Scherer’s summary of Lutheran mission in his book, *Gospel, Church and Kingdom* (1987), describes the theocentric and eschatological framework of Luther’s thinking and its significance for mission. But theory and practice do not always correlate. Scherer points this out when he says that, “Some of the Lutheran restraints with regard to Lutheran mission activity are related to unresolved theological problems such as the nature of the church and the authority of its ministry” (1987:53). Scherer explains that “in the 17th century, in its battle with Catholicism, Lutheran Orthodoxy went to the extent of arguing that the Great Commission was no longer valid except within the territories of the evangelical princes, saying that the apostolate established by Christ was defunct” (:67).

Pietism, influenced by Philip Jakob Spener and August Hermann Franke at the University of Halle, reaffirmed the validity of the Great Commission and, by creating voluntary missionary societies, overcame the territorial restrictions of the established church (:71). Scherer explains that

Pietism brought a burning concern for the conversion of the individual and the society (volk) but promoted a type of spiritual elitism and contributed to the division between church and mission in many European churches which is only recently being overcome (:73).

Scherer has sought to bring attention to what he calls “Luther’s informal missionary triad,” consisting of the *Word*, which has the power to encircle the earth and engender faith anywhere, the *Church*, called, gathered and sent by the Spirit and, the baptized *believer*, who witnesses through his or her vocation. This study agrees with Scherer that this can be a valuable “benchmark” for the ongoing development of missionary theory and praxis (1987:65-66).

The definition of the church set forth in the Augsburg Confession (Article VII), states that the Church is, “the assembly of all believers among whom the Gospel is preached in its purity and the holy sacraments are administered according to the Gospel It is not necessary for the true unity of the Christian church that ceremonies, instituted by men, should be observed uniformly in all places” (Tappert 1959:32).

In his book, *Principles of Lutheran Theology* (1983), Carl Braaten, in a chapter entitled, *The Ecumenical Principle*, and under the subheading, *Defining the Church*, points out that,

Luther retained Augustine’s distinction between visible and invisible church. The visible church being a mixed body, the line between believers and unbelievers is invisible and cannot be drawn by us this side of the day of judgment. Consequently the true church is always an object of faith not subject to empirical verification (1983:43).

Braaten also points out that,

The emphasis on gospel and sacraments as the essence of the church has kept Lutherans free for a variety of church structures (:45). ... With regard to the ministry, two poles are evident ... ministry from below (the priesthood of believers) and ministry from above (the ordained ministry). ... Ministry from within (direct inner call), has not been recognized on its own in the mainline Lutheran tradition (:44).

More recently Braaten (1992:113) has said that, “God appears in history in the way he (sic) eternally is, ... as a communion of reciprocal relations. Indeed in God there is real otherness; he empties himself into one that is other, through whom he reveals and manifests himself.” (My emphasis). There is an ontological correspondence between the internal relations of [the Trinity] and the outward fulfillment of those relations ... Mutuality and relationship belong to the eternal dynamics of love. God is love” (:113). As Braaten puts it, “We need the truth of the Trinity to measure what we say throughout the whole of theology a model for our thinking of the unity of the church. Perhaps monotheistic monarchianism undergirds the patriarchal system of human relationships and church unity. The Trinity can be a starting point to rethinking church unity

115). The church does not move God around the world, God moves the church around the world through the ongoing activities of all three persons of the Trinity” (:116).

The Lutheran emphasis on continually distinguishing between Law and Gospel recognizes two kinds of discourse as explained by Gritsch and Jensen, “... that which poses the future conditionally and that which is unconditional. The Gospel tolerates no conditions and takes the conditions as the very occasions of its [unconditional] promise” (1976:44).

Philip Hefner (1998:282ff.), in an article entitled, *The Community of Possibility: Belonging without Conditions* (1998), has spoken of what he calls, the ambiguous impact of Article Seven of the Augsburg Confession and the Lutheran emphasis on justification by grace. He refers to the Donatist controversy and Augustines’s distinction between the church’s concern for love or unity and its concern for truth. In his words, “Lutheranism was conceived and came to terms under conditions that made truth the first priority ...” (:284). Speaking of the famous phrase in Article Seven, *satis est*, “it is sufficient,” Hefner points out that the church is here defined by its adherence to the truth. As a result, as Hefner puts it, “All the rest, all the diversity is adiaphoron, that is, it need not divide the church. The value of diversity is not mentioned, nor is the character of community discussed” (:284). Hefner argues that in the face of the dominant Roman church, Article Seven and the justification doctrine defended diversity, but when Lutherans faced groups other than the Roman church these articles did not serve diversity but were used against them to accuse them of heresy and withhold fellowship (:285). Hefner observes that, therefore, “It does not come easily for Lutherans to hear that their church is called to become a community of belonging without conditions” (:298). He goes on to argue for an understanding of the seventh article of the Augsburg Confession that supports the view that “the gospel in its purity breaks all of our correct understandings of the gospel and all of our attempts to make our understandings into criteria for community” (:289). As Hefner puts it, “We must recognize as correct, the truth that we are justified in spite of our doctrinal inadequacies and because of them” (:290).

Leonardo Boff (1985:91) puts forward the argument that, “Pure Christianity has never existed [but is] always mediated.” He points out that in opposition to Barth, who separates religion and faith, “Catholics see faith and religion *overlapping*.” For Boff, the process of syncretism never ends. There is always the possibility of rejection and distortion but the grace of God is never totally obstructed. For Boff “catholic” means “mediation.” The Gospel lives in history and cannot be separated from these forms (:71). Pathologies occur when historical mediations are



either accepted or rejected to the exclusion of the other (:75). For Boff the mystery of the Incarnation is expressed in sacramentality (:79). According to Boff, “Present Christian syncretism seems incapable of doing justice to other cultures, ... the future of Christianity depends on the ability to formulate new syncretisms. Just as God accepted humanity as he found it, so must Christianity” (:106).

Boff is also saying the model of the body by itself has limitations when he says, “The church has a Christological and also a *pneumatological* origin” (:145). Boff is calling for a corrective balancing of models which shifts power from the hierarchy by stressing that *charism* is the structuring element of the community. “The power to bind and loose lies with the whole community not just the hierarchy” (:142). (Matt. 18.18.)

With different Lutheran traditions imported into the Southern African context definitions of structure and leadership have not been easy. For example the debate over the office of the bishop (episcopacy) which took place with the formation of the SER and later of ELCSA is still not settled. At the time of the merger the Church of Sweden Mission was adamant that apostolic succession be incorporated into the new church. Many of the African delegates felt the office of a bishop-elected-for-life was closer to traditional African leadership roles than that of a president elected for a term. When the proposal of electing bishops for a term was discussed at the ELCSA Church Council in October 1993 the South Eastern Diocese threatened to secede if such a proposal was accepted, saying:

We of the SED distance ourselves from the proposed form of the Bishop’s office for the following reasons:

1. The historical form of the office of Bishop was a major issue in the formation of the first merger of the then S.E. Regional Church in 1960. It is therefore impossible to entertain another form of the office of Bishop without creating a crisis in the SED.
2. If ELCSA is going to insist on the change of policy on the issue which promotes disunity in our case, we the SED will have to reconsider our position in ELCSA.
3. ...The leadership of the church either by Bishops or Superintendents in the past has always followed the old historical tradition as far as the term of office is concerned. SED shall keep to it to the bitter end ( ELCSA CC 1993:24).<sup>1</sup>

Boff, as a Catholic theologian, argues that apostolic succession marginalized the charismatic forces in the early church and questions whether the institutionalized church can be converted? (1985:47).

In his book, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, Moltmann (1977:343) spoke of unity in freedom and diversity in unity as opposed to uniformity saying, “[It is] ... only in *his* Spirit that unity and diversity can be so intertwined that they do not destroy one another.” Moltmann then posed the question whether political enemies could “remain one under the gospel” and “for how long?” Moltmann’s reply was that, “Unity and division, conflict and reconciliation, confrontation and co-operation must all be tested against the cross of Christ” (:347 - italics in original).

With Bosch (1979:27) we agree that the church cannot choose between being an “institution” or a “movement” but must live in the creative and dynamic tension between the two.

### **The limitations of the three-selfs formula**

At the time of its introduction, the Three-Self formula of Venn and Anderson was a “progressive” response to the paternalistic approach to mission of many mission societies in the 19th century.

C. Peter Williams (1990:262), in his book, *The Ideal of the Self-Governing Church: A Study in Victorian Missionary Strategy*, points out that while the ideal of an indigenous church was accepted in principle by most Protestant and Roman Catholic missionaries during the Victorian era they were opposed to it in practice. The “goal posts” were, so to speak, constantly being moved. As seen in chapter one and two of this study (page 43 & 88), the question arose among many missionaries of what constituted a “responsible” church and when? The problem for many was that the Three-Self formula negated unity by emphasizing autonomy (Van Engen 1981:275). While changes came relatively quickly after the Second World War with the end of direct colonial rule and with the handing over of church and government structures it soon became apparent that the new relationship between church and mission, or church and church was as ambiguous as before. (See page 88 ff.)

The movement from “mission to church” is a central chapter in mission history but one which, in the view of this study, is not yet complete. The lack of the fourth-self, that of self-theologizing, was a major flaw in this formula, the lack of which still affects churches established by overseas mission agencies.

## **The limited horizon of church planting**

The IMC at Willingen in 1952 sought to redress the problem of the split between church and mission by establishing a new theological basis for the church and for mission. J.C. Hoekendijk sharply criticized church-centered mission at the IMC in Willingen. *Missio Dei* and the Kingdom of God were emphasized as the goal or horizon of mission but this was not immediately accepted or understood. However, Scherer (1987:97) points out that Hoekendijk's critique of church-centered thinking had a marked effect on Lutherans at the time.

Hoekendijk also strongly criticized the tendency to make mission "a road from the church to the church" (Van Engen 1981:315). This is still one of the biggest problems facing bilateral partnerships as the relationship becomes an end in itself with a resulting narrowing of the ecumenical horizon (Bauerchse 1996:439). This study sees this as a critical issue for the future of the 65 Companion Synods of the ELCA.

The merging of the IMC and WCC in 1961 was done in part to end the dangerous dichotomy between "sending" and "receiving" churches. The churches were called upon to undergo a very deep repentance and learn again that, "the church does not have a mission but the church is mission" (Scherer 1987:103). As seen in chapter two of this study the Lutheran churches in Southern Africa and especially ELCSA have been constantly preoccupied with consolidation. (See page 58 above.) It is the view of this study that the identity and survival of the Lutheran church is closely linked to the development of the church's vision of mission in the region.

## **Beyond Church Growth**

Van Engen (1981:275) sees Church Growth theory as being based on church planting as the goal of mission influenced by the Three-Self formula. While strong on "missions," it is related to a church-centric view. This study has noted the early beginnings of mission work by Lutherans in Southern Africa, the strong start and increasing marginalization of Lutherans in South Africa. (See page 60 above.) Van Engen sees the need to balance and correct both extremes represented by McGavran and Hoekendijk (Van Engen 1981:323). Van Engen proposes a "new word" in addition to the four traditional marks of the church, that of "*yearning* for numerical growth" (:487). While this study agrees that mission *intention* (faithfulness and hopefulness) rather than mission *results* (quantitatively measurable criteria and results/ productivity) is important, this

study would rather, with Bosch, call for “*Mission*” to be the new word or mark of the church. As Bosch (1991:63) correctly pointed out, “progress is also a false god.”

Although Van Engen is critical of some aspects of the church growth movement this study still finds his approach problematic. To speak of the “true church” gives the impression that there are different identifiable categories of church. McGavran, in his book, *Understanding Church Growth* (3rd ed. 1990), speaks of *true* or *committed* Christians (:269) and pseudo-Christians or Christo-pagans (:214). Luther and the reformers acknowledged one church and one community of saints: *simul iustus et peccator*. What is helpful for this study is Van Engen’s point that the CG movement has not understood the tension between “the now and the not yet” (1981:448). Bosch (1991:82) has pointed out that, already in the early church, the ongoing tension between church and discipleship was an issue as acknowledged by the writer of Matthew’s gospel.

The whole issue of church growth is a sensitive one for Lutherans in South Africa who see the phenomenal numerical growth of so-called “independent” and pentecostal churches in “their” areas and amongst “their” members throughout Africa. (See page 174 above.) At the same time Lutherans are critical of the theology and practices of the AICs. A matter for further study is the question of perceptions and dialogue or lack of it, between Lutherans and independent churches. Tobias Masuku poses a challenging question, asking, “Are AICs Christian Partners or Antagonists?” He suggests some lessons for what he calls the historical “mission churches” (1996:58-61). Could the concept of mutual affirmation and mutual admonition not be applied in this situation as well? (See page 237 below.)

### **The limitations of strategy planning**

Walbert Bühlmann in his book, *The Church of the Future* (1986), gave his outline of elements for a model of the church for the year 2001. While the first millennium was characterized by the Eastern Church and the second by the western Church, the third millennium in his view will be the “World Church.” For Bühlmann the WCC theme of Mexico 1963, “Mission in six continents,” heralded a shift in the centre of gravity for the church to “the south, to the poor and to the young” (: 1). Bühlmann stressed the need for a new synthetic, universal reading of history (rather than a monocultural one). He described prototypes resulting from new structures, new presence, new activities, new church unity. He asked the question, “What will hold a pluriform church together?” (:177). He spoke of the “exchange” of money, personnel, theology, experience and lifestyles that focus on peace and justice.

What needs to be examined (by further study) is the virtually unconscious replacing in the church of colonial European (German in the case of most Lutherans) idioms with neocolonial American and global-commercial influences. While copying and re-colonization takes place everywhere one should not underestimate the adaptation and creativity in the ongoing translation process (Sanneh 1989:1). Bediako (1995:167) is quite correct when he observes that there is not a simple shift of the center of Christianity from one part of the globe to another but a proliferation of centres and readings of history. Examples of cultural copying and adaptation can be found in the North and in the South but the concern of this study is that the traffic continues to be largely one-sided from the North to the South including for example the use of “American” accents and idioms in prayers, songs, symbols and religious vocabulary with the attendant devaluing of the genius of local initiatives. This study has observed that globalization is an ambiguous process (see page 39).

In the epilogue to Bühlmann’s book, Karl Rahner shared his perspectives on pastoral ministry in the future in the diaspora but rightly cautioned that, “Global planning has its limits because of sin” (:190).

Hefner (1998: 266) makes a similar point when he says that, “Planning and strategy ... are basically activities of extrapolation, that is, projecting the trends that are likely to emerge from the past and present.” He goes on to argue that, “Extrapolation is only as good as its data bases, it cannot take into account the extraordinary. ... It is irresponsible *not* to carry out the reflection that planning and strategy involve, but it is also irresponsible not to recognize that the church is called as a community of God’s possibilities, not God’s extrapolations” (italics in original).

David Lochhead in *The Dialogical Imperative: A Christian Reflection on Interfaith Encounter* (1988) refers to the influence of contextual theology and the sociology of knowledge on the subject of interfaith dialogue. He draws on Kierkegaard and Wittgenstein who were, as he puts it, “... philosophers of discontinuity.” Their influence is evident in Lochhead’s resistance to what he calls a theology of partnership, the idea that there are truths that are common to all religions” (7).

The view of this study is that planning and the development of new models of partnership should not be a way of overcoming difference and discontinuity but of remaining open to the future.

## Beyond Partnership

A consultation in Jerusalem of nine Lutheran churches focused on the theme *Churches in Partnership: A New Discipline of Sharing*. The conference concluded that what was needed was not a new model of partnership but a “new discipline of sharing.” The consultation agreed that there was no ready-made blueprint for partnership and that the biblical image of the body remained the most adequate model where, “we remain dependent on each other without allowing one part to dominate over the other (Northelbian Centre 1994:3).

But is this new discipline without domination possible? According to Scherer, (1964:161) in the light of the history of colonial imperialism, “The first prerequisite of the Christian mission is to listen patiently and learn the lessons of the past.”

But this study has shown in chapters one and two just how difficult the process has been and continues to be. (See page 12 above.) Kosuke Koyama (1982:54) correctly identified the problem saying that, “Christianity suffers from a ‘Teacher Complex’ ... We are becoming more and more blind because we say we can see.”

Bediako (1995:260) visits the modern question of whether the West can be converted from a missiological point of view and asks, “Was the ancient West given the opportunity to be converted?” He makes the point that most of the West’s primal religions were wiped out but that there are still “enduring elements.” He makes the intriguing statement that, “The primal imagination may turn out to be not so alien to Europe after all, even in a post-Enlightenment era” (:262). Bediako suggests that, “The resurgence of the occult and New Age religions shows how a primal imagination suppressed rather than purged or integrated rises to haunt the future” (:262). As we meet, Bediako challenges us in other words to ask how well we really know ourselves and how well aware we are of the many places in which we stand?

Bediako (1995:258) quotes Andrew Walls who says, “Christian theology is being taken into new areas of life where Western theology has no answers, because it has no questions. In a post-missionary context there is an ongoing search for Christian identity ... a struggle for an appropriate Christianity ... as with early Hellenistic Christians and modern Africans, religious pluralism is their experience.”

Newbigin (1989:227) suggested that, “the only answer, the only hermeneutic of the gospel, is a congregation of men and women who believe it and live by it. Jesus ... did not write a book but

formed a community. This community has at its heart the remembering and rehearsing of his words and deeds and the sacraments given by him

Shenk (1995:101) ends his book, *Write the Vision*, with a strong endorsement of the vision expressed by Karl Rahner of the future that, "... so-called Christian nations will have disappeared and Christians will be a minority ... the church of the future will be built from the ground up by base communities that [are] free to pursue their mission. ." It is, as Shenk puts it, "...a radical but hopeful vision"

This section has stressed the ongoing development and critique of various theological models and paradigms of the church and of mission and the need to be more aware of the assumptions behind each model or paradigm.

This study proposes to speak of mission also as mismeeting to emphasize that truth and mission is dialogical, relational and narratological. As Milbank puts it, "Christianity does not claim that the Good and True are self-evident to objective reason or dialectical argument ... we need the stories of Jesus for salvation" (1990:395).

### **Beyond Guilt?**

One of the most difficult and troubling aspects of a broken, unequal or distorted relationship is the matter of guilt. With regard to the history of western colonialism and mission this study is aware of the question of whether "new" partners should be held responsible or feel guilty for the mistakes of those who have gone before, especially if the effects are still felt today? One visitor to South Africa from the former DDR did not feel she should have to personally feel guilty and continually apologize to strangers for what happened to the Jews in Germany before she was born. The same question can be asked with regard to white South Africans who were born after the apartheid government was established. This question can be directed also to North American settlers and immigrants with regard to Native Americans and the African slave trade. The discussion on the "covering over" or invention of America and Africa in chapter one of this study is relevant here. (See pages 17 ff. & 25 ff. above.)

Newbigin (1994:184) touched on the aspect of guilt when he wrote, "It is good to repent of one's sins and perhaps even of the sins of one's grandparents, but unabsolved guilt by itself is not

creative. It only paralyzes. It is only as forgiven sinners that we can engage in mission and part of the way to do that is to accept correction and rebuke from those who have been injured. But it is unacceptable ... paternalism to think we are responsible for all the wrong in the world.”

Bosch (1991:446) also wrote of the vicious circle of frustration caused by guilt and the “pelagian arrogance” that, “we have the power of accomplishing every good thing by action, speech and thought,” and, “that we can and must cancel our guilt by restitution and by more action” Ten years earlier Bosch (1981:512-518) dealt with this topic in an article entitled, “The Melbourne Conference: Between Guilt and Hope.” Bosch (:516) observed then that, “. . . in their relentless criticism of themselves, their churches and their society there was little hope ... It was law without gospel, judgment without mercy, works without grace.” Bosch supported Raymond Fung’s creative tension that each person is both a sinner and sinned-against, in contrast to the general view expressed at the conference that there were two separate groups of people. At the same time Bosch accepted that the wealthy are, “at least partially responsible for the present [and future discrepancies] and therefore are challenged to respond not by the Law but by the Good News.” Halina Bortnowski (in Bosch 1981:518) writes, “There are wrongs that cannot be repaired by human means.” Bosch went on to add that, “We can say this only with tears in our eyes, but unless we can say it, we will be spiritually crushed and paralyzed by our sense of guilt” (:518).

There is also the danger, as Segundo puts it (in Bosch 1991: 446), “. . . to diminish the importance and decisive character of the next generation.”

The concept of mission as mismeeting in Jesus’ name as defined in chapter four of this study (see page 240ff) does not easily allow one to settle for simple or final conclusions about cause and effect, and challenges one not to overestimate or underestimate the role played by oneself or the other, by those who have gone before and those whose time is yet to come.

Rev. George S. Johnson in his book, *Beyond Guilt and Powerlessness* (1989), speaks of his and others’ experiences during visits to Namibia and South Africa in the 1980s. He speaks of how the “gift of guilt” can become a paralyzing curse. He includes stories of people who, “felt trapped ... but ... who for one reason or another, were able to move beyond these frustrations and continue in the struggle” (:8).



This study argues that we can never and should not expect to move completely “beyond” or away from guilt. While guilt should not rule us, we should not by distance or familiarity stop feeling guilty. It is part of the cross we are called to take up and carry. With Newbigin and Bosch this study agrees that we must not be arrogant enough to think we are responsible for all the wrong in the world, but this study emphasizes that when we agree to enter into a relationship with, in this instance, Lutheran Christians in South Africa, we are not coming with clean slates. Often partners from overseas are eager to explain that they are not coming as tourists. It is often said in the North and in the South that ecclesiastical tourism is unacceptable. But that is exactly what is taking place, among other things.

This study emphasizes that we did not begin the relationship or the long conversation nor can we in all honesty unilaterally change or end it.

As Schreier (1995:10) puts it, “We find ourselves between the times we are always it seems, impatient with ambiguity. Dwelling precisely in that ambiguity may be necessary to keep us from simply repeating the past.”

Volf (1996:139) puts it brilliantly, “The vision of the final redemption whose last act is “nonremembering” is meaningful as long as we do not forget, that as long as the Messiah has not come in glory, for the sake of the victims, we must keep alive the memory of their suffering ... for ultimately forgetting the suffering is better than remembering it

Schreier (1995:23) reminds us of how, in the United States of America during the Civil Rights struggle in the 1960's, well-meaning whites marched for “integration” instead of “Black Power,” not realizing that “integration” could only happen on the white's terms. They did not see the need to change the fundamental structures of society and fundamentally themselves.

The same can be said of a partnership which espouses the values of reconciliation and unity without squarely addressing issues of justice. As long as global inequality continues, partnership will at best foster what it defines as and calls unity, equality and integration rather than the struggle for liberation.

Wink (1992:10) describes, “The powers as good, fallen and in need of redemption.” These, Wink explains, include systems, institutions and structures, from subatomic particles to empires (:6). This study argues that partnership can be described in the same way, - as good, fallen and in need of transformation.

Wink states that, “An understanding of the Powers makes forgiveness of our enemies easier. If our oppressors know not what they do, if they are also victims of the delusional system, then the real target of our hate and anger can be the system ... ” (:273). The Apostle Paul speaks of “contending against the principalities [and] ... powers” (Ephesians 6:12).

This study stresses the view that both people and systems are fallen and cannot save themselves. Not just the enemy but we too are part of the delusional or fallen system.

Wink puts it well when he says that,

“The enemy is thus not merely a hurdle to be leaped on the way to God. The enemy can be the way to God (:273) ... We are dependent on our enemies for our very individuation. We may not be able to be whole people without them ... How humiliating ... we may not only have a role in transforming our enemies but our enemies can play a role in transforming us. .... Our enemies can tell us things about ourselves those close to us are able to overlook or ignore... (:253).

While Wink wants to stress his point by using the term “enemy” one would also add the term “other” to augment and broaden the point that these dynamics are there in relation to all partners and all others including those we term enemy

Wink claims that, “The ultimate religious question today is not, ‘How can I find a gracious God,’ but ‘How can we find God in our enemies. There is in fact no other way to God for our time but through the enemy, for loving the enemy has become the key to human survival and personal transformation” (:263).

Wink warns that it is dangerous to be engaged in a nonviolent struggle besides people who have not yet learned about their inner violence (:188). This study includes those who do not accept any responsibility for the past and feel no guilt, as well as those who operate on the basis of guilt.

But that is what is happening in partnership where we are face-to-face and side-by-side as blacks, whites, Africans, Americans, Europeans, men, women and all only partially aware of our inner violence, racism, sexism, gifts and caricatures. There is never enough preparation, orientation, follow-up, never enough time or resources and often what is offered as orientation is just someone else’s limited and biased perceptions and prejudices.

As soon as the log is removed from my eye I see another log that was hidden behind the first log and so the process of identifying logs continues. I therefore do not easily or quickly get around to seeing and removing the splinter in my neighbour’s eye (cf. Matthew 7: -5). Partnership is

complex and very ambiguous. But that is unavoidable. As Appiah (1992:72) observes: “It is too late to escape from each other.” Can we be more aware of that? Hopefully, sometimes ... that would be a rare gift of grace.

Wink does acknowledge this difficulty when he says, “We should be confessing our complicity with the Powers, the ways we benefit from the injustices ... and the racist and sexual stereotyping we thoughtlessly perpetuate in our encounters with others. Instead we tend to confess infractions of the rules the Powers themselves have established...” (1992:160).

Wink (:87) asks, “... if the Domination System is so intolerable why do people tolerate it? ... [They are] ... caught in a powerful delusion that they benefit from a system that is in fact harmful” (:93).

Wink puts it this way,

The doctrine of the Fall reminds us that we cannot be saved from the Powers by anything within the Power System but only by something that is transcendent ... The church is fallen along with the empire! (:72). ... The Fall does not mean that everything we do is evil, vain or hopeless but merely that it is all ambiguous, tainted with egocentricity, subject to deflection from its divine goal or capable of being co-opted toward other ends (:73). ... The doctrine of the Fall affirms the radicality of evil. It liberates us from the illusion that at least some institutions are ‘good’... and frees us from delusion about the perfectibility of ourselves and our institutions and from the diabolical belief that we are responsible for everything that happens (:70-71).

Wink makes a valid point that all our efforts are ambiguous but whether we can be liberated from our illusions may also be an illusion.

The question of guilt begs the question of forgiveness. In an article entitled, “Is forgiveness enough?: Reflections on an odd question,” Gerhard Forde (1996:307) makes the distinction very clear between, “... sins, mistakes that are obvious to us, and that which is hidden from us, our *sin*.” As Forde explains, “Sins we can see and do something about. *Sin* is the temptation to go it alone, a temptation we are powerless to resist on our own” (italics his, - bold, my emphasis).

Forde writes,

Without forgiveness of sins not only salvation but life itself is threatened ... When we sin the future is closed by the past (:306). ... Jesus did not come into the world exhorting people to stop sinning. He came to forgive *sin*. Where there is forgiveness, sin is ultimately powerless. Nothing else can reveal the penultimate power of sin and the ultimate powerlessness of sin (:307).

Volf (1996:116) puts it this way, “Repentance ... empowers victims and disempowers oppressors.” It both “humanizes” and prevents “dehumanization.”

Wink (1992:48) correctly observes that, “what is at stake is a veritable revolution in our God-images. Nothing could be more crucial, because our images of God create us ... .”

Volf (1996:81) gives an insightful perspective to the “**paralysis of contrast**” which Buthelezi (1995:6) is also concerned about as we have seen in chapter two of this study. (See page 174 above.) Volf observes that, “As we begin to acknowledge our own shadows we become more tolerant of the shadows in others.” Referring to Bosnia and Rwanda, Volf further states that, “The world is not neatly divided between guilty perpetrators and innocent victims ... the closer we get the more the line blurs ... [however] solidarity in sin does not imply equality in sin ... All are sinful does not mean all sins are equal ... the others need not be perceived as innocent in order to be loved ” (Volf 1996:82).

Gittins (1989:128) writes that, “such is the nature of relationships between strangers and guests [read also partners - PJK] that they tend to preclude real reciprocity, frankness and collaboration ... they sense the inadequacy of the formal relationship and the need to move to something else. But who is to take the initiative ... Neither knows what the other has in mind and what the consequences will be.”

This study proposes that one of the reasons there has been no real progress in unity talks between black and white Lutherans in South Africa is that there has not yet been a mutually accepted process for the “healing of the memories.” The same could be said of the various historic ELCSA partners. Chapter two of this study contains numerous examples of these frustrations as older and younger voices enter and leave the long conversation.

As Schreier (1992:65 ) puts it, “. there can be no reconciliation without justice.” The same can be said of partnership, that partnership without justice is also a “mere papering over of differences.” Schreier gives two reasons for seriously exploring the quality of otherness.

(1) To identify how the other has been made “other” in order to overcome this form of alienation and; (2) In the moment of reconciliation, ‘we may have to decide how the other will be viewed hereafter’. [since] “Christian reconciliation never takes us back to where we were before.” “Reconciliation takes us to a new place The oppressor and the victim will be in a new place as well” 55-56).

Sponheim writes about “transforming solidarity” and quotes David Tracy who said, “All the victims of our discourses and our history have begun to discover their own discourses in ways

that our discourse finds difficult to hear, much less listen too ... only by beginning to listen to those other voices may we also begin to hear the otherness within our own discourse and within ourselves ... (Tracy in Sponheim 1993 :133).

This study is concerned with this process of listening with regard to partnership discourse among Lutherans in South Africa and the US.

In the words of Volf (1996:109): “The crucial question is not how to accomplish the final reconciliation, ... but what resources do we need to live in peace in the absence of the final reconciliation?” The same can also be said for living in communion in the “absence of full contact.”

This study concludes that the ambiguity of guilt and forgiveness cannot be easily resolved in any partnership relationship but must be constantly acknowledged and addressed theologically, liturgically and practically and not avoided. This can only happen through life in communion, in, with and before the Other to use Sponheim’s words (1993: v).

### **A Biblical Excursus: Mismeeting in the Gospel of Mark**

Johannes Verkuyl (1978:109) stressed that the entire New Testament is a book of mission and devoted three paragraphs to the implied if not explicit missionary mandate in the Gospel of Mark. Senior and Stuhlmueller devote a whole chapter to the mission theology of Mark which, in their eyes, earns the title of “A Mission Book” (1984:229). Mark and John had been largely left out in favour of Matthew, Luke-Acts and the Pauline literature in Bosch’s *Transforming Mission* (1991:55). Bosch (:32) did however refer to the central importance in Mark and Matthew of Jesus’ announcement that the reign of God was near (Mark 1:15). Bosch points out that, “The future has invaded the present. There remains, however, an unresolved tension between the present and the future dimensions of God’s reign. It has arrived, and yet is still to come” (:32). Bosch agreed with those scholars who hold that **this tension**, “... belongs to the essence of [Jesus’] person and consciousness and **should not be resolved** ” (:32 - my emphasis).

Vernon K. Robbins of Emory University, in his book, *Exploring the Texture of Texts: A Guide to Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation* (1996), writes, “ People use language to establish friendships, to set certain people off as enemies, to negotiate with the kinspeople among whom they live ... and

to create a view of the world that offers a sense of security and a vision of greater things to be achieved both in this life and after it” (:1). For Robbins, “Underlying the method [of socio-rhetorical criticism] is a presupposition that words themselves work in very complicated ways to communicate meanings that we only partially understand” (:3). Robbin’s integrated approach to rhetorical analysis includes, examining what he calls, *(a) inner texture (b) intertexture (c) social and cultural texture (d) ideological texture and (e) sacred texture* (:2). “... **The interplay among these textures** initiates a **dialogical environment** among multiple modes of perceiving a text and multiple modes for a text to function within the lives of people” (:4 - my emphasis).

The following survey of the Gospel of Mark indicates numerous examples of what this study chooses to call mismetings in Jesus’ name. The ambiguity and complexity of these meetings are not resolved or eliminated but are in fact specifically intended to describe the dynamics of Christian life and mission “in communion.”

In chapter one of Mark’s Gospel, John the Baptist called the people with the words of the prophet Isaiah to “prepare the way,” to make certain preparations for “meeting” the Lord (Mark 1:1-2). These preparations included confession, repentance, restitution, and baptism in response to the question voiced by the people viz., “What shall we do?” For Juel (1994:36), Jesus’ baptism, accompanied by the tearing of the heavens, is about, “the intrusion of God into a world that has become alien territory.” In response to the post-modern discomfort with “presence” Juel suggests that, “One of the great surprises of the engagement with Mark may be the discovery that God will not be excluded, that the tearing of the heavens and of the temple curtain may result in an irreparable breach in our own defenses against the real presence the narrative mediates” (:10). Juel also points out that Mark’s Gospel does not blunt the scandal when the expected one does not meet expectations (:39). Juel makes the crucial point which this study supports that, “Truth is not identical with appearance but must in some way be in tension with it ... The tension is not a simple misperception but is in fact constitutive of the Gospel Mark knows” (:102).

Jesus sees and calls four fishermen, who, to use a key Markan adverb, “immediately” follow. But in Mark 2:16 the question is being raised, “Why does he eat [have communion/meet] with such people?” Jesus boldly replies, “I have come to call outcasts” (Mk 2:17). Bosch (1991:48) refers to the “new relationships” that came into being as diverse people accepted each other as brothers and sisters and recalls Hoekendijk’s words that the early Christian church was “a sociological

impossibility.” Senior and StuhlmueLLer (1985:218) emphasize Jesus’ concern in Mark’s Gospel to unite both Jew and Gentile in one community and point to the significance of Jesus’ journeys around and across the Sea of Galilee , saying that, in effect the “barrier becomes a bridge” (:220).

In Mark 3:33 there is confusion about who Jesus’ mother, brothers and sisters are. Once again a new and open-ended answer is suggested.

Chapter 4:24 contains a discussion about perceptions as Jesus admonishes his listeners: “Pay attention to what you hear.” For Juel (1994:51) the use of irony is not just part of Mark’s redactional style but central to Jesus’ message. The real irony in Mark is that “**no one** sees or hears” (:51 - my emphasis).

In Chapter Six, Mark records that Jesus is thrown out of Nazareth, his home town. The point is made here and throughout the Gospel that Jesus cannot be finally defined, excluded or contained by one place, community or culture. In an article in *Word and World*, entitled *Saul and the Mayor of Casterbridge: a Study in Shared Human Experience* Kent L. Johnson (1997:259) concludes, “In both narratives, family members, or ones thought to be family members, are the source of greatest pain ... The common human experience shared by us and by figures in biblical stories encourages us to read diligently - to meet not only Saul and David in their encounter with God but also ourselves and those we know in our own similar encounters.”

In Chapter Seven, a Gentile woman’s perception (faith) as an outsider is highlighted in contrast to that of the insiders. Throughout Mark’s Gospel the identity and position of insiders and outsiders is constantly in flux. Mismeeting stresses the view that we are always **both** insiders and outsiders in any relationship or partnership with different and changing consequences for those interacting.

The “Transfiguration” is a momentous mismeeting between Jesus, Moses, Elijah and the three disciples. Mark 9:8 reads, “Suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them but Jesus only.” As Rhoads (in Anderson/Moore 1992:157) points out, “The Markan Jesus redraws the boundary lines but prohibits the people in the network from guarding those lines ... there is no margin to the boundary.

In Chapter 13:22, Jesus warns the disciples that, “Many will come and say ‘I am he’... No one knows however, when that day or hour will come. Be on the watch, be alert.” Senior and StuhlmueLLer (1984:226) point out that, “the disciples’ perception of Jesus seems to deteriorate as the Gospel progresses. ... By failing to recognize Jesus, the disciples fail to recognize their mission

... the prediction [by Jesus to the disciples] of reconciliation is on a par with the prediction of failure” (:228). This statement emphasizes for this study the ambiguous status of partnership, mission and communion in the past, present and future as we “meet in Jesus’ name” during the “in-between-times.”

One of the insiders, Judas, betrays Jesus and becomes an outsider again (Mk. 14:10). The Passover meal is also a mismeeting, a scene of intimacy and betrayal (4:12 ff.). Later Peter denies knowing Jesus. “I do not know this man of whom you speak” (14:71). While it is a shocking denial of declared friendship in another sense it is very true. Marcus Borg (1995:17) writes of his personal experience of going “beyond belief to relationship” in his controversial book, *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time*.

On the cross Jesus is abandoned by God (Mk. 15:34). The women look on from a distance (Mk. 15:40). What do they see? Is the Passion not the ultimate mismeeting of Divine and Human?

At the empty tomb there is another mismeeting which is described with an absolute minimum of words by the gospel writer -- no more and no less is said -- the women are told, “Do not be amazed, you seek [to meet - PJK] Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified. He has been raised, he is not here, see the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see [meet - PJK] him, as he told you” (16:7). Commenting on Mark 16:7, Moore (in Anderson/Moore 1992:93), observes that Mark’s Gospel never settles the argument of insiders and outsiders. He points out that although verse seven of the final chapter does seem to promise the long differed establishment of the outsiders as insiders, Mark 16:8 leaves it open ended again.

“And they went out and fled from the tomb ... and they said nothing to any one, for they were afraid” (Mark 16:6-8). They did not find what they expected and yet “not meeting” as they hoped and expected was a most significant event, which would lead to radically new mismeetings with the crucified and risen Lord.

As Moore 1992:95) insightfully observes, “Mark holds opposites in painful tension: inside/outside, speech/writing, presence/absence

For most readers it is shocking to observe that there is no “Resolution,” no “Answer” or “Ending” to these mismeetings or to the Gospel itself.



According to Bruce Metzger (1971:126), “Four endings of the Gospel are current in the manuscripts.” The last twelve verses are absent from the two oldest Greek manuscripts. Metzger explains, “Out of deference to the evident antiquity of the longer ending and its importance in the textual tradition of the Gospel, the Committee decided to include verses 9-20, ... but to enclose them within double square brackets to indicate that they are the work of an author other than the evangelist.”

One can only speculate on *who* appended the longer and shorter endings to Mark’s Gospel and why. (cf. Mark 16:9-20 and 16:9-10.) Was it to “tie up some of the loose ends” and supply a more “appropriate” conclusion? Metzger (1975 :125) believes that the long ending was composed *ad hoc* by someone “to fill up an obvious gap” and “supply a more appropriate conclusion.”

Juel does not agree with some modern existentialist interpreters who only see a “realistic” and unresolved ending to the Gospel as with life. Juel writes, “Interpretation must respect the two impressions with which the story concludes : disappointment and anticipation ... The story has generated momentum that carries beyond the ending. Jesus will precede his disciples into Galilee, **as he told you**’ (:233 - his emphasis). Juel concludes, “None of the Gospels can really end the story of Jesus Mark ends with a **greater sense of the mystery yet to be resolved and a deeper appreciation of the gulf that still separates “God’s things” and “human things”** - or to use Paul’s language, the wisdom of this age and the wisdom of the cross” (:234 - my emphasis).

According to Juel, “It is only fitting that just as the tomb will not contain Jesus, neither can Mark’s story. Jesus is not bound by its ending; he continues into the future God has in store for the creation. In the meantime there is only the Word, the bread, and the wine, and the promise that ‘you will see him’ ” (:235).

Juel often uses terms such as “in the meantime” (:235) and “between the times” (:234).

In the last sentence of his commentary Juel writes, “We can only trust that God will one day finish the story, as God has promised” (:235 ). As Juel (1994:121) rightly puts it, “The deeper we delve into the narrative the less control we are promised.”

Mark's Gospel narrative does not cover up the mismetings but challenges the reader to plumb the depths of these transforming and paradoxical relationships which come about in Jesus' name.

### **Beyond Partnership and towards Communion**

In chapters two and three of this study we have seen how certain Biblical, Reformation and missionary impulses have shaped the self-definitions and practices of Lutheran churches and mission bodies especially with regard to the understanding of relationships both in and outside of the church. Clearly there is no super model or single paradigm at work.

While the discovery of partners and partnership was seen as a breakthrough in mission relations and a major step away from previous hierarchical and paternalistic patterns of interaction the concept of partnership, like that of contract, has been shown to be limited and problematic. In recent years Bishop Manas Buthelezi has discussed various models of partnership and examined how they reflected the beliefs of the time. He has been very critical of the partnership model which, in his view, has been borrowed from the commercial world and is based largely on enlightened self-interest. As seen in chapter two of this study (page 171) Buthelezi (1987:4) called partnership, "... One of the most ill-conceived models of relationship "

As stated above (page 202) the question of self-definition lies at the heart of the matter of identity and relationships.

One of the ongoing (human) questions which remains open for debate is well summarized by Solomon (1977:306) in his book, *Introducing Philosophy*, when he asks, "How much should we conceive of ourselves as individuals and how much as organic components of a larger community." Concerning *The Individual and The Community* he writes, " it becomes evident that the individual self is largely, if not entirely, a social product and a self defined by society ... We have all had the experience of finding ourselves in company in which we 'could not be ourselves' or, even worse, in which we acted according to an identity which was imposed upon us by other people" (:294). Solomon further observes that, "The idea that self-identity is really social-identity flies in the face of that whole Cartesian tradition - and much of Western thinking that begins with the autonomy of the self and self-consciousness" (:297). Solomon refers to existentialists like Nietzsche who attacked what he called the "herd-instinct" and Kierkegaard who urged an end to "collective identity" and argued for renewed respect for the individual

(:299). As Solomon points out, “This individualist movement is not unique to existentialism, it is in the mainstream of Western thinking, from ancient Socrates through Reformation Christianity to contemporary Capitalism” (:301). Solomon points out that Karl Marx in his “Early Writings” argued for a view of self as essentially social, a part of a community, a “species-being” (:304).

Persons coming from a more community-based society would heartily agree with Gritsch and Jensen’s (1976:131) statement that, “...The church is not individuals, the church is a “gathering (assembly) of people” - “not the persons simply as such, but **something that happens with them** ... ” (My emphasis). Similarly, Brand (1988:78) writes: “The Gospel event is what is central and constitutive of the church, not theological correctness or historical structures. Thus a Lutheran approach to *communio* places a heavy emphasis on confessional communion” (My emphasis)

As Rainer Albrecht (1976:3) argued in a paper entitled, *Partnership - A Model of Christian Brotherhood - Within the Context of the Evangelical Church in Berlin (West)*, “Communio and Communication belong together; they cannot be separated i.e. Christians share all they have and all they lack.

Once again, however, the question must be asked whether this actually happens in an unequal world?

While Lochhead argues for an “ideology of dialogue,” as opposed to ideologies of isolation, hostility, competition or partnership, he admits that this approach is “precarious since it involves unconditional openness to the other.” As he correctly observes, “Even with the best will on both sides, dialogue may not happen.” He quotes Buber’s statement, “the I - Thou relationship requires both will and grace” (:81).

There are strengths and limitations to each and every model, be it partnership, communion and/or accompaniment. As seen in chapter two of this study the intense and ongoing debates around partnership are related to different social and theological perceptions of what life and the church is or ought to be.

The following section follows the conversation as it has developed in the Lutheran World Federation

## The LWF since 1947 : More than a Free Association

In 1947, in Lund, the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) was founded as a “free association” of churches. Regarding its *Nature and Purpose*, the 1947 constitution stated that,

The Lutheran World Federation shall be *a free association* of Lutheran churches. It shall have no power to legislate for the churches belonging to it or to interfere with their complete autonomy, but shall act as their agent in such matters as they assign to it (Article 3, Par. 1).

Eugene Brand (1988:31) in his book, *Towards a Lutheran Communion*, surveyed Lutheran developments from the Reformation until the 1920's in Europe and North America showing that the issue of pulpit and altar fellowship among Lutherans was of rather recent origin. Until the advent of separatist pietistic groups in Germany and the Nordic Countries, *communio* was ‘guaranteed’ by the territorial or national church structure. German union efforts and the problem of immigrant churches raised the problem of theological purity in teaching and sacramental practice. Brand pointed out that a reading of the New Testament yielded,

...no instance of detailed theological agreement among Christians...” [He went on to point out that], “For two hundred years, Lutherans had the same understanding and practice until it was disrupted by individualistic and denominationalistic assumptions. Not that theology is irrelevant to pulpit and altar fellowship, but the ecclesiological approach is to ask whether differences are or need to be church-dividing. **Communio-ecclesiology assumes there will be theological diversity.** Its question is whether or at what point these differences constitute a denial of the integrity of confessional fellowship (:32 - my emphasis) .

According to Brand, “That difference - whether the basis for *communio* is ecclesiological (confessional) or theological - underlies the refusal of some Lutheran churches to practice pulpit and altar fellowship with others .” (:31).

Michael Root (in Schjorring 1997: 216 ff.) outlines the ecclesiological issues, debates and studies that took place over the past 50 years focusing mainly on what he calls ontological and relational questions. The first question was whether the LWF was or should be a “free association” or a “super church.”

The second question asked was what sort of fellowship or communion should exist (:218) Peter Brunner’s paper (in Schjorring:221) delivered in 1959 and entitled, *The LWF as an Ecclesiological Problem*, contended that the LWF embodied a two-sided contradiction. It was a free association of churches but constantly obliged by its doctrinal and confessional basis to act and live as a church.

As Root points out the apartheid issue forced the question of confessional integrity such that the LWF felt “constrained to take concrete action in accordance with the appropriate article in the constitution regarding the withdrawal of membership” (:230).

The implication of the “status confessionis” statement adopted by the LWF Assembly at Dar es Salaam in 1977 was that the LWF was assuming the character of a community of churches and not merely that of an agency or instrument. Root further observes that, “While the ontological question remained in the background during this period significant progress was made with the relational question” (:232). As he pointed out, what was significant was the growing recognition that, “Fellowship in Christ could not stop at pulpit and altar” (:233).

The statement on “*Models of Unity*” made it clear that unity and reconciliation do not mean mere coexistence: “They mean genuine church fellowship...” (:233).

Root writes, “The oddity of this period was that momentous actions were taken without ‘typical’ Lutheran theological reflection ... A new language had not yet been developed to reframe the question. That came later in the 1980’s” (:234).

According to Root, the expanded membership of the LWF from churches in Asia, Africa and Latin America also subtly redefined the questions, “... Smaller churches in a minority situation had a marked tendency to support a stronger more ecclesial structure. They were more concerned with identifying with world Lutheranism than in protecting local or national autonomy” (:235).

Prof. Simon Maimela (in Schjorring:242) emphasized at the 1991 LWF Assembly in Curitiba what many rejected, “communion as a concept which interrelated the spiritual and the organizational.” Root comments, “For those from the Southern hemisphere ‘communion’ allowed a more flexible, organic understanding of the spiritual with the social and institutional.”

Regarding the meaning of “Life in Communion,” Root observes that there are still unresolved issues of self-definition. One view is that the new organic structure does not give leaders of member churches as much influence as before (:243). Root also notes that, “Life in communion at the international level in its present form is a new reality, possible only through the means of communication and travel possible in recent decades” (:244). With Root this study agrees that the meaning of communion, in light of the great discrepancies of wealth among members, is still unresolved.

Quoting Peter Brunner, who said in 1959, “The LWF is less an *esse*, a being, than a *fieri*, a becoming,” Root concludes, “...The LWF remains a becoming, and so the history of its identity is not closed” (:245).

LWF General Secretary Gunnar Staalsett admitted that, “It will take years to transfer the decisions to the member churches and to our attitudes. When you advance the idea of a communion of equals between North and South, there is a lot of paternalism to reverse” (:413). (See the discussion on the LWF, ELCSA, LUCSA meeting, chapter two, page 169 above.)

### **Recognizing communion at Curitiba 1990**

As already noted above the most intense debate at the 1990 Eighth Assembly of the LWF at Curitiba, Brazil centered on the concept of **communion**.

In Curitiba the LWF recognized that its nature as a **confessional** communion also implied a self-understanding as an **ecclesiastical** communion. ... Events fed the developing of this self-understanding. Apartheid in Southern Africa, especially its effect on the relationship among the Lutheran churches there, moved the LWF to pass a strong statement on apartheid as a confessional question at the 1977 Dar es Salaam 6th Assembly and to suspend two member churches at the 1984 Budapest Assembly. ... These actions helped to revive the discussion about the nature of the LWF, as this affirmation and action gave the LWF an ecclesial role (LWF 1997:18).

At Curitiba the new constitution was adopted where the *Nature and Functions* of the LWF were re-stated as follows:

The Lutheran World Federation is *a communion of churches* which confess the triune God, agree in the proclamation of the Word of God and are united in pulpit and altar fellowship (Schjorring: 530 - italics mine).

The significant point made in the new constitution was that the LWF saw itself not only as a facilitator of communion but itself as a communion of churches. Following this new self-definition, the term “partnership” was seen to be less than adequate.

### **Partnership in the Context of Communion : Windhoek 1995**

Aware of the tension between the concepts of partnership and communion the LWF Council meeting in Windhoek, Namibia from 20-27 June 1995 discussed a paper entitled, “*Partnership in the context of Communion: A Discussion among Lutherans.*” The paper acknowledges the wide variety of partnerships which exist within the global ecumenical family of churches but for this meeting the paper focuses on the issue of partnership within the LWF itself.

The document states that to be in communion with one another means,

...to understand ourselves as called by God into communion in the body of Christ. Instead of choosing to be a part of the communion, we are chosen and called together by God (through baptism), and therefore experience communion as a gift of God and not of our own doing. ... We may disagree with our brothers and sisters, we may even physically separate ourselves from them, but in the end we will always be part of that family (LWF 1995:1).

The discussion paper acknowledges that,

... while partnerships should demonstrate the most positive aspects of communal and family life ... and while we find many examples of healthy partnerships, we must also acknowledge that within the communion all do not feel equal as partners. There are deep inequalities related to the sharing of resources, gender relationships, access to power and decision-making. ... We have lived too long with partnership relationships and structures which are neither healthy nor helpful ... .

As our self-understanding as a communion of churches deepens, are we not compelled to move beyond such limited and damaging stereotypes? (:2).

The document further suggests that,

... a communion of churches is one where partnerships are marked not by independence, but rather by mutual dependency as well as mutual commitment ... .

It is true that many within the communion seek to break out of the old partnership patterns, ...however, there are others who want to preserve the traditional partnership structures... .

... One might be tempted to ask the question : if there was no exchange of funds involved, what would be the common ground upon which these relationships would be built?

It is obvious that much creative thought and discussion is needed within the Lutheran communion to move us forward to a quality of partnership which better reflects who we say we are. As a beginning, we can start to name and describe those characteristics which define partnership relationship as we would like to see them (:3). viz.:

1. Honesty and the willingness to openly discuss difficulties.
2. Trust, respect, transparency and a willingness to relinquish some power and some control.
3. Interdependency and accountability ... since all resources ... come from God .
4. Commitment ... to each other and to a goal which goes beyond ourselves (:4) .
5. The willingness to give and accept new kinds of "gifts."
6. A mutually agreed upon division of labor that recognizes one's own limitations to ensure, as much as possible ... the efficient, effective functioning of the partnership.

In the end ... partnership is a question of attitude and interpretation of our interdependence. If one thing has been learned from the partnership discussion so far, it is the necessity to break out of old partnership patterns and seek new ways to relate to each other (:5).

Again, many nice words are used to express why all of us who belong to the Lutheran communion are or should be dependent upon each other. But will we ever believe those words ... that regardless of where we come from or who we are, alone, we are less but together we are more? (LWF 1995:6).

The report of the discussion in Windhoek reflects a genuine attempt by the LWF to honestly grapple with the complex issues of partnership and inequality. The invitation to go beyond "nice words" and to name and describe what partnership should and could be is a creative one. But this

study stresses the ongoing ambiguity of being together no matter how sophisticated the language may be and the difficulty of completely “breaking out” of old patterns.

### **A Lutheran World Communion? : Hong Kong 1997**

The challenge facing the LWF Ninth Assembly in 1997 as declared in the Assembly Study Book (ASB) was that of shaping, “... what communion looks like as it is translated into programs and priorities, commitments and relationships of mission and ministry in the world” (LWF 1997:18).

The name of the LWF was also to be a topic of debate, the new proposal being : “The Lutheran World Communion” (:52). Regarding unity and diversity the ASB stated that:

The LWF acknowledges that it is a communion of some, but not all, Christian churches and therefore it seeks to widen the communion beyond its own confessional boundaries. The worldwide dialogues with Roman Catholics, Orthodox, Anglicans, Baptists, Methodists and Reformed churches are significant steps (:51). The LWF affirmed in 1984 [Budapest] that the true unity of the church, which is the unity of the body of Christ and participates in the unity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is given in and through the proclamation of the gospel in Word and sacrament. ... It is a communion where diversities contribute to fullness and are no longer barriers to unity ... (:52). Unity must not flatten out legitimate theological, cultural and ethnic diversity, nor must diversity become the excuse for maintaining the status quo in churches which simply become more tolerant of each other (:65). ... The provisional character of our achievements points us toward the coming Kingdom of God which expands the horizons of our communion” (:52). [The document stresses the point that], ... The communion concept is eschatologically conditioned (:72).

The ASB goes on to admit that,

In practical decision making however, the alternatives are not that simple. Effective cooperation often implies giving up some autonomy ... the balance between autonomy and communion is dependent on the will of the member churches (:53). ... How far member churches are willing to go in giving up some ecclesial authority to increase concrete communion remains to be seen (:53).

This study continually asks the question, “Who are the insiders and outsiders,” stressing the point that “the lines” are not the same on all issues. Who draws the lines, makes the definitions and enforces them and for how long? Regarding the suspension of two “white” Lutheran churches from the LWF in 1984 the ASB argues that,

...The act of suspending a member says something about the outsider and about those who remain inside. ... The self-understanding of the Lutheran Communion has grown through the positions taken in regard to other groups (:53).

Common formulations slowly grow into a common language which is able to express adequately the common Christian experience. A continuous dialogue thus paves the way to specific decisions (:54).



The document points out that at regional and local levels there are already a variety of concrete ecclesial communions. e.g. In Europe and Asia.

...As a result of this development, one church often participates in a number of different communion relationships, thus displaying the different dimensions of the unity we seek. Whether all these communions are mutually compatible is a new issue which the ecumenically minded Lutherans are facing ... There is a great need for exchanging information and establishing relationships with other Christian groups as well (:54).

Regarding what it calls the *Foundations of Communion and Our Communal Life Today* (:54-58) the ASB makes the following points:

*Koinonia* discourses developed in the Christian communities in the process of transition from the Palestinian homeland of the Christian faith to the world of Greco-Roman culture. There they encountered a social reality that was significantly shaped by groups, associations and communities ... practicing *koinonia* in many aspects of private and public life ... Christian forms of *koinonia* discourse developed in creatively appropriating modifying and transforming ... *koinonia* ... according ... to the formative insights of the Christian faith. The outcome of this process was **not a uniform concept of *koinonia* but a network** of different but related dimensions of meaning employed for different purposes in different contexts (:55- my emphasis).

The ASB resists the trap of proposing a particular model when it says.

...The biblical image of one body with its many members affirms diversity and reciprocity within the church. ... Much of the attraction of the notion of communion can be seen as a response to a widely felt absence of structures of communal life in our societies ... The N.T. does not provide us with ready-made structures but it certainly provides **orientation** (:56 - my emphasis).

Cultural contexts differ significantly ... and the churches have to answer the specific questions arising from their particular context. ... Despite the differences ... there are a number of common features that have global significance ... e.g. commodification.. Both enculturation and counter-cultural difference should characterize a church's relation to the various institutions of modern society. ... The distinction between law and gospel and creation and redemption are part of Lutheran theological tradition and may offer answers which are both authentic and relevant (:57).

The ASB acknowledges the complexity of these relationships,

There is no easy way of organizing institutions which belong both to the ecclesial communion and to the human community ... every communion remains a mixed body, a *corpus permixtum*, in many and puzzling ways ... In this life there is no temporal, geographical or moral separation between the spheres of creation and redemption but **always a complex coexistence** (:58 - my emphasis, italics in original ).

Under the heading "*Worship and Ministry as Expressions of Communion*" the study document makes the important observation that

Worship and liturgy show ... how the Christian communion is both local and universal at the same time. It adopts cultural and counter cultural as well as transcultural, universal

elements to locate itself in a given time and place and also to provide an alternative to the ways and fashions of the surrounding world (:59). (cf. Stauffer 1996:14ff.)

... All share in the universal priesthood of the baptized ... specific gifts, different tasks and roles for building up the body for the common good and common mission of the church (:59).

The ASB takes up the controversial issue of the role of the episcopacy and the laity:

...The relevance of the issue of ministry for our understanding of the church as communion becomes clearer if we ask the historical question: what has been the most successful and vital guarantee of the unity of the church? good will? structures? leadership? The strong historical argument which the episcopal churches put forward is that an ordained ministry of oversight, of *episcopate*, is always needed and that it is therefore better to define its mandate properly in order that misuse can be prevented. Therefore the ministry of the bishop has throughout the church emerged as a vital bond of communion. <sup>2</sup> ... At the same time we need to be aware of the growing practical importance of lay leadership ... (:60).

Lutheran theology has always affirmed the holiness of the church and that it is in constant need of repentance and forgiveness. ... Every ecclesiology remains in this sense unfinished, since the church does not exist for its own perfection but for its missionary task. (:60) ... We can speak of *communio* indicatively: there is a Lutheran Communion ... because there are dimensions of the communion (e.g. socio-political and ethical) which require constant reinterpretation and reapplication. ... We must also speak of *communio* imperatively: *communio* as task (:73).

Brand (1988:66) refers to Budapest (1984) as the “*kairos*” for the recognition of the Lutheran communion and the pulpit and altar fellowship which that step necessitated. Brand declared that, “While this theological debate had been on the agenda especially since the formulation of the Minneapolis Theses (1957) it required the melding of the old argument with the new situation created by the twin challenges of apartheid and ecumenical engagement.”

In 1987, LWF General Secretary Staalsett stressed the importance of promoting, “... partnership as an inclusive participation which breaks patterns of dominance and makes the voices of all churches equally heard” (Brand 1988:70). Brand observes that,

The socio-political and ethical tasks of the Lutheran communion by their very nature, require constant reinterpretation and reapplication of that which is theological fundamental to *communio*: its eschatological vision, interdependence, ecumenical commitment and solidarity (:74).

This experience of the LWF with regard to apartheid as *status confessionis* has subsequently lead to the call by some for the global economy to also be declared a matter of *status confessionis*. This has been expressed by Ulrich Duchrow in his book, *Global Economy: A Confessional Issue for the Churches?* (1987:133). The difficult question remains: At what point are differences

confessing church is its own repentance, not the exclusion of others. If boundaries are drawn they are drawn by those who exclude themselves.”

The view is expressed by some members of ELCSA that ELCSA has compromised too much by allowing the “white” Lutheran churches to be readmitted to the LWF before unity was achieved after their membership was suspended in 1984 (Van Wyk 1997).

Brand reflects on the ambiguous nature of koinonia,

Our communion now, imperfect though it will always be, signifies the fullness of communion in the coming age (1988:88). ... The perfect communion in Christ is, John tells us, nothing less than participation in the communion of the Son with the Father in the Holy Spirit (:89).

Scherer (1998:6) observes that the ratification of ecumenical agreements between the ELCA, the Presbyterian Church USA, the Reformed Church in America and United Church of Christ which accepted “full communion” in 1997, “... cry out for clarifications of their missiological significance lest ‘full communion’ be downgraded to the level of pulpit and altar fellowship.

Scherer challenges these churches to consider integrated mission structures as well as the legacy of “dominance and dependence” with overseas partners as the “ultimate test of koinonia and mission in Christ’s way.”

### **ELCA Ecumenical Proposals for Full Communion 1997**

The *Ecumenical Proposals* (ELCA 1996) provided for study and action by the 1997 ELCA Churchwide Assembly, proposed “full communion” between the ELCA, the Episcopal Church, the Presbyterian Church (USA), the Reformed Church in America and United Church of Christ. Also included for consideration in the study document was the final draft of the *Joint Declaration on Justification* between the LWF and the Roman Catholic Church (ELCA 1996:24-35).

More than 60 years of official dialogue in the case of Anglicans (:5) and 30 years for Reformed are outlined in summary form (:14). What is most relevant to this study is the conscious way in which **doctrine and language** are being interpreted and understood. The study document refers to a statement from the 1993 report, *A Common Calling: The Witness of Our Reformation Churches in North America Today* (in ELCA 1996:20):

We have become convinced that the task today is not to mark the point of separation and exclusion but to find a common language that will allow our partners to be heard in their honest concern for the truth of the Gospel.

The members of the theological conversations acknowledged that it was not possible to reconcile the confessional formulations from the sixteenth century with a “common language which could do justice to all the insights, convictions, and concerns of our ancestors in the faith” (*A Common Calling* in ELCA 1996 :21).

The members of the theological conversations respected the different perspectives and convictions from which their ancestors professed their faith, affirming that those differences are not church-dividing, but are complementary. It was agreed that both sides could say together that,

the Reformation heritage in the matter of the Lord’s Supper draws from the same roots and envisages the same goal. ... Over the centuries of our separation, however, there have developed characteristic differences in practice, and these still tend to make us uncomfortable ... We affirm our conviction, however, that **these differences should be recognized as acceptable diversities** within one Christian faith. ...(from *An Invitation to Action*, Fortress, 1983:16-17 in ELCA 1996:21 - my emphasis).

An important breakthrough in the process was the recognition of the complementarity of **mutual affirmation and mutual admonition**, pointing toward,

...new ways of relating traditions of Reformation Churches that heretofore have not been able to reconcile their diverse witnesses. ... The new concept insists that, while remaining **differences must be acknowledged, even to the extent of their irreconcilability**, it is the **inherent unity in Christ that is determinative**. Thus the remaining differences are not church dividing (:19 - my emphasis).

It is significant that the terminology of “mutual affirmation and admonition” has been included in the 1998 ELCA-DGM draft document (GM21) on *Accompaniment in God’s Mission: A New Paradigm for the 21st Century* (1998a:24). (See the discussion of GM21 in chapter two, page 194ff.)

### **Mismeeting : A Dimension of Communion?**

What the preceding chapters have attempted to show is that in a pluralistic world, mission theology and concepts such as partnership and communion are not monolithic or complete but are always in process and that models are necessary but always limited.

The language of documents, statements and reports relating to the issue of partnership and communion by the ELCA-DGM, ELCSA and the LWF during the past decade especially reflects an ongoing and conscious effort to pay more attention to text and context, tradition and change,

to voices from partner churches in the northern and southern hemispheres. But not all Lutherans feel the need or know how to listen to each other and to “nontraditional” denominations.

While there is much truth to the view (LWF 1997:54) that, “Common formulations slowly grow into a common language which is able to express adequately the common Christian experience [and that] ... a continuous dialogue thus paves the way to specific decisions,” this study has shown that this process is not straightforward and not yet complete.

Clearly the concept or model of communion (*communio/koinonia*) has much to offer. The concept is biblical and not restricted to being defined or expressed by one culture or tradition. It includes past, present and future relationships. This study stresses the point that integral to change and multidimensional growth is the fact that old and new models continue to exist simultaneously and influence each other. With Bosch (1991:349) this study agrees that past paradigms are not completely lost but added onto.

In 1985, in the second edition to his book, *Models of the Church*, Avery Dulles added a chapter entitled, *The Church : Community of Disciples*, stating his preference for the model of **communion** over that of “sacrament,” since “communion” in his view was more personal and human. He linked this to the image of the church as an “**alternative society**,” where the whole church is called and sent in mission (1985:210 - my emphasis).

“Communion” is the Latin equivalent of the Greek word *koinonia* and related to the words, “community” and “communication,” all of which are only made possible through a relationship of one kind or another. But the concluding chapter of this study argues for the need to augment the concept of Christian communion with that of “mismeeting in Jesus’ name.”

In Matthew’s Gospel, in a statement not recorded elsewhere, Jesus says, “Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matthew 18:20). Emmanuel Levinas has argued that the relationship with the other must not be isolated from “the third” (Levinas in Sponheim :69). Levinas argues for a foundation of justice rather than love. While Sponheim makes the important point that, “Appeal to the other is vulnerable to romantic distortion in which the reality of difference is compromised,” this study cannot accept the elimination of divine love from the horizon. It is the view of this study that the Gospel commands and promises more than justice. Sponheim points out that, “morally speaking, the kingdom of God is in your midst, that is,

it is *between* you (:71 - italics in original). Sponheim (:69) quotes Ecclesiastes 4: 9-12, “A threefold cord is not quickly broken.” For Christians it is the participation of “the third” (in the case of two coming together) whose name is Jesus who enables, makes, shapes and keeps open-ended, our relationships, our partnerships and life in communion.

It is for this reason that this study argues that tri- or multilateral partnerships are preferable to bilateral relations as a way of challenging oppressive binary hierarchies of power. However even multilateral partnerships, though more open to complexity, are not exempt from ambiguity.

In their study of mission in South Africa the Comaroffs spoke of the “long conversation” between “missionaries” and “Batswana” which was never a simple one- or two-way exchange (1991:311). The same is true for Lutherans in South Africa. Many words have been spoken. Many voices are still not heard. How much has been said, heard and understood is not easy to measure. As Bishop Buthelezi (1995:1) frankly put it to the ELCSA Partners, “Do we still mean the same thing when we talk about mission ...?”

Earlier in this chapter the importance of the apartheid issue to the self-understanding of Lutherans and the LWF was stressed. However, the fact that Lutherans in South Africa are still not united and despite Dar es Salaam (1977) and Budapest (1984) are all full members of the LWF, continues to raise old and new questions about unity, reconciliation and the meaning of communion for the church in this region.

The previous chapters have indicated how complex the conversations and negotiations have been and continue to be. The final chapter of this study is an attempt to add a word to the vocabulary of the long conversation regarding partnership in mission and Christian communion and argues that an important dimension or element of Christian Communion is also, always and necessarily mismeeting in Jesus’ name.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### MISSION AS MISMEETING IN JESUS' NAME?

#### Why Mismeeting?

Zygmunt Bauman, in his book, *Postmodern Ethics* (1993), suggests that, “maybe we need to rediscover the arcane art of mismeeting.” The problem of modern society he argues, “is not how to eliminate strangers but how to live in their constant company ... strangers stay and refuse to change or go away’ 159). For Bauman, “Unlike real encounters, mismeetings are events without a prehistory, episodes-not-part-of-the-story [mismeetings] leave everything as it was or so it is hoped.”

However, in making use of the term “mismeeting,” this study argues the case that **all meetings are mismeetings**. In this definition there are not “real” meetings as opposed to “false” mis-meetings. Rather, we need to attend to the differences and continuities present in each and every meeting. This study emphasizes that in a mismeeting (spelled without a hyphen) a “meeting” of one kind or another does take place. Mismeeting in this definition does **not** denote the absence or failure of meeting but **stresses the asymmetry, open-endedness and complex nature of every meeting**. Reference to a mismeeting in this definition is not meant to prejudge or indicate *a priori* a value of good or bad, positive or negative, successful or unsuccessful. In each encounter all of these values or characteristics are present to one degree or another. Mismeeting is defined in this study, not as a new paradigm or as a new model, but as a word to describe a complex and interrelated combination of continuities and differences in human relationships.

#### Incomplete contact as opposed to incommensurability

If, as Newbigin (1989:33) and others have argued, reality is always mediated reality, and if the possibility of direct contact with the other is ruled out (see pages 3 & 17), is incommensurability the inescapable result? Quite correctly Sponheim (:172) raises the concern that we may be stunned into silence by the talk of incommensurability between paradigms but he makes the very important point that, contrary to Kühn, “Perhaps ‘complete contact’ is not needed or desired if creativity and individuality are to be affirmed.” Sponheim (:172) argues for this on the basis that, we are not locked in our linguistic prisons, because language does depend on something other than itself - the actual experience of life together with the other.

Richard Bernstein, in his book *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism* (1983), argues that “there is always some overlap between rival paradigms.” Bernstein sees the dichotomy between objectivism and relativism as misleading and distortive since, in his view, both are parasitic upon acceptance of what he calls the “Cartesian Anxiety” (:19). Bernstein argues for making careful distinctions between incompatibility, incommensurability and incomparability (:82). He calls for the nurturing of forms of communal life in which dialogue, conversation, practical discourse and judgment are concretely embodied in everyday practices through the recovery of a sense of “practical rationality” (:229-230). Likewise, Philip Hefner (1998:257) has spoken of the need for “ ‘honest realism,’ an unflinching honesty about our past, future and present.”

The preceding chapters of this study have referred to numerous efforts in the past, and which are still ongoing, to define and negotiate relationships among different Lutheran mission partners in Southern Africa. As we have seen, in some ways the partners are closer and in some ways still far apart, despite countless meetings, negotiations and personal encounters over the years. Attie van Niekerk, in his book, *Sáám in Afrika* (“Together in Africa”), expresses the view that there are two worlds in South Africa and there is still no answer as to how the two can be accommodated together in the same space (1992:6).

Part of “honest realism” for this study includes a greater awareness and respect for spaces and gaps in relationships, communication and perspectives. While these too can be manipulated and exploited this study agrees with Hefner (1998a:261) that we should not be focusing as much attention on harmonizing or unifying our diversities as on listening to them

One of the intriguing observations made in Richard White’s study, *The Middle Ground* (1993), is the way in which “middle ground” can be maintained by means of what he calls, “convenient cross-cultural misunderstandings” (White in Elliot 1993:39). But maintaining “middle ground” is not a simple matter and can easily degenerate into a struggle to dominate or manipulate the other.

With a personal knowledge of Bosnia, Volf (1991:91) argues that, “The will to be oneself, if it is to be healthy, must entail the will to let the other inhabit the self ... but since the other is often not the way I want her/him to be and is pushing me to become the self that I do not want to be ... I slip into violence ... instead of reconfiguring myself to make space for the other, I seek to reshape the other.”



As this study has shown, relationships and partnerships, even communion, remain very much a journey and a site of struggle. To repeat the words of Molefe Tsele (1991:2), “ Partnership is a struggle, a process of falling and growing.”

Mismeeting in this definition therefore does not mean incommensurability but stresses that contact is always ambiguous, mediated and incomplete

### **Different Differences**

The use and usefulness of the term mismeeting does raise a number of questions. If all meetings are mismeetings does that not mean all mismeetings are so ambiguous and relative as to be meaningless? Is the concept of mismeeting, as defined above, not “too blunt of an instrument” for the excavation of the nature and meaning of relationships? This study argues that sameness and difference are often assumed in superficial ways. If that is so, on what basis shall distinctions be made? Can criteria or signposts be identified without reverting to a static list or recipe of “shoulds” and “shouldn’ts” as discussed at the end of chapters one and two of this study?

Quite correctly, Sponheim asks how pluralism is to be kept from developing into full blown relativism and therefore continually seeks, “some kind of ordering structure to accommodate or adjudicate the differences” (1993:18). As Sponheim correctly points out, “There are different differences.”

Paul Cilliers (1998:1) is correct when he says, “... without difference there can be no meaning. ... [But] an overemphasis on the notion of difference can prevent meaningful social interaction between heterogeneous groups.” Cilliers (:2ff. argues that, “Difference is constrained, by a certain economy (complex systems are vast but not boundless) and in the second place, by the inescapable presence of the same (identity).

The problem of relativism is addressed in this study by deliberately using the phrase “mismeeting in Jesus’ name” and placing it into the vocabulary of and conversation with the narratives of Christian mission which speak of a relationship and of communion in Christ, in the past, present and future. This chapter explores and probes the concept of mismeeting from three perspectives, viz: “We have already met” - Mismeeting and the past (Memory); “As we meet for the first time” - Mismeeting in the present (Newness); and, “We still have to meet - Mismeeting and the future (Eschatology)

The previous chapters of this study have engaged the question of the possibility and manner of meeting in the context of colonial and mission history in Southern Africa in particular. This study has argued that as we meet (even for the first time) it becomes evident that we have already met, that we have not yet met and that we still have to meet in the future. After several years of gestation this perspective found both support and challenge from a former professor, Paul Sponheim, and especially through his book, *Faith and the Other* (1993), in which he seeks, as he puts it, to “excavate” an understanding of relationships that includes, life in three senses: *within* the other (cosmology), *with* the other (sociology) and *before* the other (theology).

This study has focused attention on the commonly stated goal of mission partnerships (see page xiii) to “overcome differences” for the sake of “Christian unity.” Hefner (1998a:258) has also made the observation that, “No matter what we [Lutherans] say about multi-culturalism, our fundamental intention seems to be to make our diversities into one homogeneity, instead of acknowledging and celebrating them for what they are.”

As one keenly interested in the whole issue of complexity Paul Cilliers (1993: xxiv) has argued that, “Instead of looking for a simple discourse that can unify all forms of knowledge we have to cope with a multiplicity of discourses ... that are determined locally, not legitimated externally ... The obsession to find one essential truth blinds one to the relationary nature of complexity and the continuous shifting of those relationships.” Cilliers argues that “the strategy to find ‘a master key’ constitutes an avoidance of complexity” (:185). “Because of the overwhelming amount of information available ... we often live under the illusion that we can get the complete picture ... Since we are in part creating the society through our actions there is no complete picture possible” (:201). As he rightly points out, “Individuals co-operate to form clusters but also compete for the resources in the network. The system is therefore not, and can never be, symmetrical. ... To generate meaning ... the system has to be as diverse as possible, not as structured as possible” (:192). Cilliers continues, “To combat exploitation there is only one option: you have to enter into the agonistics of the network. You have to make your hands dirty” (:197). But as Cilliers has put it more recently, “There is, however, a fundamental tension between the necessity for rules and the necessity for difference (1998:6).

This study would argue, however, that an openness to a “multiplicity of discourses,” which are “as diverse as possible,” would mean openness not only to those discourses that are “locally determined” but also those that claim to be “externally legitimated.” As Sponheim puts it, “If we are to speak of God, our talk will be of a different kind of boundary (:76). This study agrees with Sponheim when he says, it seems clear that we face here a different difference, one not easily

characterized (77) we speak of one who is truly other than we. But even this difference [is] somehow to be understood in relationship” (:87).

### **The question of criteria**

The definition of meeting as mismeting developed in this study, agrees with Sponheim (1993:172) that there is no neutral, universal, ahistorical or unambiguous framework for understanding and evaluation. Sponheim supports Lochhead’s view of faith as dialogue comments that, “the criteria for the dialogue process should reflect our differences and our connection” (1993:155). As pointed out in chapter one of this study, partnership contracts often end up as an ever lengthening list or prescription of what *should* happen rather than an honest and open description of past, present and future relations. As we have seen in chapter two (:189) the GM21 document by contrast acknowledges and outlines errors and problems in relationships, past and present, and proposes twelve signposts that give direction for relationships in the future. This study has pointed out some of the many documents that have been produced to define mission priorities and partnership relations for more than 150 years by Lutheran mission societies, churches and partners in Southern Africa, Europe and the United States and witnessed the shift as other voices are heard and added to the conversation.

For Lochhead, “A theology of mission is nothing else than a theological understanding of the relationship between the Church and the world.” As he points out, that relationship can take different forms, “. The Formula of Chalcedon solved the problem not so much by defining an adequate Christology as by naming the problems that an adequate Christology might avoid. ...The divine and human are both present in every aspect of both the person and work of Jesus Christ. Each nature is open to the other. ... At every moment Jesus *is* this dialogue” (1988:96).

Sundermeier proposes that, with his concept of “*konvivenz*,” a xenological hermeneutic finds its goal, since, unlike “*koinonia*,” *konvivenz* does not prescribe a particular structure for coming together. *Konvivenz* rather, “respects the differences and does not conflate perspectives. As he puts it, “Identities are protected ... but no one stays the same as before” (1996:227 translation).

Welker (1994:323) also emphasizes the point that the Spirit does not act according to a “global formula” but in diverse ways and contexts. This approach therefore relativizes all models but does

not propose a super model or existence without models. This study does not reject models but rejects the innocence of models. (cf. Rosenau on the rejection of the innocence of theory, 1992:83.)

Chapters two and three of this study have supported the move to the more open-ended metaphors of accompaniment and communion rather than prescribed generic partnership contracts.

### **The power and limitations of language**

As we have seen in the preceding chapters, through numerous encounters, meetings, consultations, letters and conversations, much has been said and heard by the mission partners. However, this study argues that in spite of the many years of interaction much remains as yet unsaid or unheard.

Lyotard speaks of the 'différend' in *The Différend: Phrases in Dispute* (1988) as follows,

...a différend would be a case of conflict between (at least) two parties, that cannot be equitably resolved for lack of a rule of judgment applicable to both arguments. ... One side's legitimacy does not imply the other's lack of legitimacy. ... A universal rule of judgment between heterogenous genres [of discourse] is lacking in general (:xi).

He explains further,

The différend is the unstable state and instant of language wherein something which must be able to be put into phrases cannot yet be (e.g. a "feeling"). What is at stake in a literature, in a philosophy, in a politics perhaps, is to bear witness to différends by finding idioms for them. In the différend, something "asks" to be put into phrases and suffers from the wrong of not being able to be put into phrases right away. This is when the human beings who thought they could use language as an instrument of communication learn through the feeling of pain which accompanies silence ... [and] recognize what remains to be phrased exceeds what they can presently phrase ... (:13).

Lyotard speaks of "the expectant waiting for an occurrence," for the "portentousness, ... that indeed everything has not been said." He speaks of "the vigil," the "waiting," the "tension that every phrase regimen exerts upon the instances" (:80).

This study argues for greater patience and respect not only for the power of language and the translation process but also for the ambiguity and limitations of language.

## Deconstruction: double reading - double bind

As Critchley (1992:28), explains in his book, *The Ethics of Deconstruction: Derrida and Levinas*, “Derridian deconstruction points to that which philosophy is unable to say ... to keep open dimensions of alterity which can neither be reduced, comprehended, ‘grasped’, even thought by philosophy.” “Deconstruction is a double reading that operates within a double bind of both belonging to a tradition ... while at the same time being incapable of belonging to it ... the paradox that haunts Derrida’s and all deconstructive discourse is that the only language that is available ... is that of philosophy or logocentrism” (:29).

As Moore points out, for Derrida and others, Western thought has almost always based itself on binary oppositions which are necessarily oppressive (1994:25). “In a classical philosophical opposition we are not dealing with the peaceful existence of a vis-a-vis but rather with a violent hierarchy. One of the two terms governs the other or has the upper hand” (Derrida in Moore:26). As Moore explains, “To deconstruct a hierarchical opposition is not simply to argue that the term ordinarily repressed is in reality the superior term ... deconstruction attempts to show how each term in the opposition is joined to its companion by an intricate network of arteries. In consequence, the line ordinarily drawn between two terms is shown to be political and not a natural reality” 30). As we have seen in the excursus on Mark’s Gospel (see page 222 above) this study points out the destabilizing effect the Gospel narrative has on dualistic, hierarchical and binary thinking.

This study argues that mission partners, meeting in Africa, Europe and America, engaged in the process of communication with each other, operate within these binds and hierarchies. Mission as *mismeeting* argues for a deconstructive reading of both official and unofficial texts and conversations.

By examining missiological literature, statements, minutes and reports in chapters one, two and three this study has pointed out some of the numerous *mismeetings* where Lutheran mission partners in South Africa have met and still struggle to meet with regard to their declared common call to partnership and life in communion. The intention is to show how these long, complex and ambiguous conversations, like threads, all have a place in the tapestry of mission discourse. The final chapter of this study seeks to emphasize the importance of *mismeeting* in the ongoing

development and understanding of mission including the more recent metaphors of “Accompaniment” and “Communion.”

### **“We have already met” - Mismeeting and the past (Memory)**

**“Remembrance is a contested activity”** (Simon in Giroux 1994:133).

Julia Kristeva, in her book *Strangers to Ourselves* (1991:1), examines images of the barbarian, foreigner and stranger in Greek, Biblical, Renaissance and Enlightenment literature and concludes, “Strangely, the foreigner lives within us, he is the hidden face of our identity” She observes that, “We are all in the process of becoming foreigners in a universe that is being widened” (:97). Kristeva sees the blurring of distinctions between natives and immigrants in France and speaks of an emerging paradoxical community made up of foreigners who are reconciled with themselves as foreigners (195).

Similarly McLaren and Giroux (1994:37) observed that “As American life becomes more hybridized the distinctions between ‘original and alien’ cultures have become more difficult to maintain theoretically and politically. ... This has led to ... a proliferation of competing discourses of power, conflict and struggle which seek to retrieve the betrayed stories of history.”

In reviewing the book, *Negotiating the Past: The Making of Memory in South Africa*, edited by Carli Coetzee and Sarah Nuttall (Oxford:1998) Claudia Braude, in her article *Many Versions of the Past*, (1998:26) points out the dangers of historical relativism as well as of homogenizing the many versions of the past. In the article Ingrid de Kok is quoted as saying that, “... despite powerful resistance to it, the apartheid state’s discourse may have become so deeply introjected that its constructions and representations still determine the way we define ourselves in space and time.”

In chapters one and two of this study competing discourses and almost forgotten voices are recalled as well as dominant and official voices ranging from the CLM, JCSA, Church Councils, and the All Africa Lutheran Consultations (pages 41ff.) to the Kairos Document and Germiston Statement (page 158ff).

This study agrees with Sponheim (1993:12) when he writes, “The history that is over is the linear whole that moves to a fulfilling telos ... We are not sure where we are or how we got here. Thus

our grasp of reality cannot be restored by historical review (:12). That we are without such an ordering framework is now a commonplace” (:14).

Similarly Küng (1991:112) talks about the realization of the ways, “history can no longer be written” and calls for “new paradigms along with the understanding of how previous even rival paradigms persist even within the same religion” (:126).

Maluleke (1995:9) recalls Buthelezi’s criticisms in 1972 and 1978 of missionaries’ overemphasis on the “old traditions” of Africa in their quest for an indigenous theology, and remarks that, “Even the most enthusiastic ‘user’ of Africa’s past cultural heritage still has to work out his/her mix of Africa’s past, present and future.” For this study the challenge is not to establish the superiority of a linear model of time over against a cyclical one but to understand that both models have strengths and limitations.

Hefner (1998:258) makes the very important point that, “There is no single undifferentiated past to which we can refer, and therefore no single identity that we bring into the present.”

As seen in the previous chapter, Lutherans have been struggling at local and at a global level to define themselves in light of apartheid and the *status confessionis* debate as well as the challenges of their confessional and theological understandings.

### **Remembering and forgetting the past**

Volf (1996:133) asks, “. How can the past be redeemed when time does not run back?” Volf goes on to propose that, “... since no redemption is possible without the redemption of the past ... final redemption is unthinkable without a certain kind of forgetting ...”(135). Why does God “forget?” Volf’s reply is that, “God remembers in order to name the iniquities as iniquities and then forget them.”

Schreier (1992:11) observes that this century has been “uncommonly violent” [and] “...that the experience of violence and suffering has changed us irrevocably that we are not the same people we were, and so any return is not a return; it is coming into a new place ... not to remember what has happened will likely mean that we will end up inventing new ways of continuing that cycle of violence.”

Schreier’s point is well taken that not to remember what has happened may result in a repetition of past mistakes but at the same time it can be said that remembering without forgiveness or redemption may also be too heavy a burden to bear.

Also true, as Gittins observed, is that, “one crucially significant issue is that strangers [guests] and hosts are cut off from each other’s pasts. They may bond in the present and commit themselves to each other for the future, but they remain strangers to each other’s socialization processes ... and past experiences” (1989:127).

It is therefore important in the view of this study for “new” partners in mission to realize that when they meet they remain strangers even as they celebrate or confess a long history of association and affirm their desire for a relationship in the future. The “covered” self and other remains to be discovered as seen in chapter one of this study. (See the discussion referring to the “covering” of America and Africa, pages 17 & 26.)

The point made by Gittins regarding inaccessibility is a troubling one. Part of the reason for this study, as is evident in the preceding chapters, has been to “re-excavate” and re-evaluate past and present partnership relationships. While the past is inaccessible as Gittins rightly points out, it still impinges on the present in many ways. When we meet, even for the first time, we come with considerable baggage which we have inherited or brought from the past, including unconscious perceptions, preconceived ideas and myths about others and ourselves, as seen in chapter one of this study (page 19).

This study strongly agrees with Hefner (1998a: 258) when he says that, “ We will have to understand our past in new ways. We will have to re-create our history so that it more adequately represents our actual past and thus our actual identity that is borne by that past.”

This study argues that those seeking to be engaged in “partnership” or companionship have the obligation to listen carefully to each others’ versions of the past, what was “discovered” or rather “covered” and to seek a healing of the memories. Michael Lapsley’s view that every South African has three stories to tell is a conscious attempt to work against a one-sided, homogenized history. The same three stories need to be shared among Lutheran partners in mission in Southern Africa.

This study agrees with the view expressed by Newbigin and others that reality is always interpreted reality (1989:21). According to Newbigin, “No coherent thought is possible without presuppositions. What is required for honest thinking is that one should be as explicit as possible about what these presuppositions are” (:8). Newbigin could not put it more clearly when he said, “... We do not defend the Christian message by domesticating it within the reigning plausibility



structure. ... It is obvious that the story of the empty tomb cannot be fitted into our contemporary world view, or indeed any world view except one of which it is the starting point” (:10-11).

This study argues that to speak of all meetings as mismetings is a way of admitting that we are not possessors of the truth but are all, in a way, “agnostics,” as Newbigin puts it, “... - with others - seekers after the truth.” Karl Barth, quoted by Charles van Engen (in Gilliland 1989:75), spoke of the paradox of divine disclosure: “... We confess that, knowing God, we do not comprehend how we come to know Him... .” Van Engen speaks of the Covenant as “a series of hermeneutical circles” (:81) - of “discontinuous continuity” (:83) which is “continuous with previous revelation and discontinuous in its radical contextualization” (:91).

This study argues that mismetings do not take place without presuppositions and when mismetings in Jesus’ name are proposed there is the admission that we come with a particular story but a story that is not yet complete. As Newbigin (:12) points out, “The dogma, the thing given for our acceptance in faith, is not a set of timeless propositions: it is a story which is not yet finished.”

### **Concerning ontology, past origins and future possibilities**

Questions of ontology, concerning past origins, and eschatology, concerning future possibilities, influence every memory, every story and every mismeting including this study.

Milbank (1990:4) compares the basis and results of what he calls a “peaceful ontology” and a ‘violent ontology.” For Milbank the hidden thread linking antique reason and modern secular reason is the theme of “original violence.” Milbank builds his case on the argument that, “Antique reason assumes chaos that must be tamed while modern reason assumes chaos that cannot be tamed but controlled. Christianity however recognizes no original violence and construes the infinite not as chaos but harmonious peace.” Milbank has raised crucial questions in a debate which is far from over. However this study still holds that reality reflects a deep dialectical nature.

Schreier compares a “consensus” with a “conflictive” view of the world and asks, “Is a conflictive view of humanity compatible with Christianity?” (1992:24). Schreier believes that, “We can hold to a conflictive view of reality without making conflict the ultimate view of reality. This is essentially what Christianity does. It acknowledges the enmity between God and the

world, and that this enmity will be overcome completely somehow in the future, eschatologically” (:24).

Whether one looks at Biblical, political or mission history there are any number of vantage points. As Placher (1989:111) points out, “We always stand somewhere and where we stand affects what we see ... still horizons are not fixed.”

One of the most contested aspects of the TRC was arriving at a starting date and a cutoff date for submissions concerning gross human rights violations in South Africa. Some argued for 1652, the date marking the arrival of Jan van Riebeeck at the Cape; others argued for 1910, the year of the Union, or 1912 with the institution of the Land Act. The Commission finally decided on 1960, the year of the Sharpeville Massacre, as the starting date and 1994, the year of the first democratic elections as the cutoff date. For practical purposes the time was limited to the relatively recent past and yet as we have seen, there are three stories to be told and heard with regard to each date or era, early and late. Ongoing archeological, historical and scientific exploration around the world and in space expand and challenge our individual and collective memories and horizons. For American Lutherans partnership did not start with the launching of 65 Companion Synods by the ELCA in 1990. Chapters one and two have demonstrated the many places Lutheran mission partners have already “met.” In each mismeeting there have been agreements and differences; in each encounter new visions and numerous blind spots.

This study emphasizes the importance of the awareness of a long history of mismeeting in the past, of the asymmetry of relationships which remains even after expressions of guilt, forgiveness and reconciliation. (See chapter three of this study, page 216 ff.) In this sense we are no better or worse than previous generations. But that does not excuse or exempt us from taking positions and developing relationships, ambiguous though they may be. With Placher (:133) this study agrees that, “The Biblical narrative keeps forcing us back to considering our relation to these stories ... .” This study also argues that mismeeting in Jesus’ name forces us to continually reconsider our relations to each other.

In Hefner’s (1998a: 252) view, “the Biblical narrative is the narrative of a tradition of always receiving what cannot be possessed, never a tradition of having once and for all arrived at the destination.” The narrative reveals, as Hefner points out that, “most of the time the ancient Hebrews held to the image of themselves as having arrived in thinking thus they had missed the point of their own history the transformation is never complete. We demand closure, whereas God grants only new visions of open-endedness.

The historical survey of partnership relations and mismeeting in the past emphasizes that while no one is without baggage, and while no one ever comes with a clean slate; and while in many ways partners have not yet met, there has also been connection and newness in each and every meeting.

## **“As we meet for the first time”- Mismeeting in the present (newness)**

### **Differences and connections**

The term mismeeting used in this study expresses the incompleteness and open-endedness of meeting and does not indicate, *a priori*, a value or predict the outcome for a meeting as good or bad, positive or negative, successful or unsuccessful. Rather we need to attend to the differences *and* continuities present in each and every human encounter. It must be emphasized that a “meeting” *does* take place. Sponheim speaks with great emphasis of the need to recognize and embrace the concept of a “live” meeting, or [the] “actual meeting of actual others” (Sponheim 1993:173).

There is the real danger that this focus on mismeeting can be seen as negativism and extreme relativism. But in addition to the ongoing experiences of ambiguity, difference and division there are also countless experiences of “ubuntu,” communion, hospitality, solidarity and acceptance. How can one hold honestly onto *both* experiences, the differences *and* the connections? To say that we have not met at all would be untrue. To say that we have truly met and understand each other and ourselves, even after 150 years of contact in Southern Africa, would also not be true. As a result this study has come to express the dialectical nature and ambiguity of meeting with the term, “mismeeting.

Sponheim (1993:51) argues that in order to understand human life we must take account of th(e) difference within connection ... [since, as he puts it], “we are ‘together’ in a nature that differs from us in a way we do not differ from each other.” “The human person has some ethical responsibility *toward* nature ... But we human beings have responsibility *with* each other ethically. We are together in needing to work out - again, together - how we are to live” (:52 - italics in original). The numerous meetings, consultations, negotiations, agreements and letters referred to

in chapter two of this study underline the ongoing commitment and understanding of the partners of the need to meet, to work out, again and again the basis of and purpose for the relationship.

Thomas A. McCarthy (1988:647) responded to Derrida's article, *The Politics of Friendship*, by saying that, Derrida, "helps make us attentive to what gets left out of generalizing schemes or what is ignored, excluded or assimilated by them." But McCarthy argues that the "curvature of social space" is *not* fundamentally "asymmetrical and heteronomical." In his view, " 'originary sociality' is marked as well by relations of symmetry, reciprocity and mutual recognition. ... There is a need to preserve **both** the integrity of the individual and the web of interpersonal relations in which they form and stabilize their identities ..." (:646 - my emphasis).

Sponheim (1993:116) also argues that, "In every relationship there is an independence as well as interdependence ... continuity and discontinuity." However this study also stresses with Sponheim that, "We are not on the same plane." In this regard he refers to Levinas who writes of the "height" of the other to counter the tendency to regard the other as "simply another being alongside me ... and readily accessible." Levinas speaks of the other as one who has already "passed by" [cf. Exodus 33] (Levinas in Sponheim:52-53).

To speak of mismeeting is, in the view of this study, to endorse the view expressed by Sponheim that, "For Christians, faith is not exempted from the experience of otherness ... Faith is caught up in such differences; it does not itself create or control them" (:111). We agree with Sponheim that, "... the life of faith cannot be oriented, cannot get its bearings without recognizing precisely such disorientation" (:112).

This study proposes that a true meeting is a mismeeting and that "knowing Jesus" does not exempt or protect one from mismeetings but rather enables one to be open to and in fact to look forward to mismeetings!

We agree with Sponheim that, "... human life cannot be understood apart from a deep structure of otherness, for it is - respectively - life *within*, *with* and *before* the other ... Human life is inextricably life with otherness." Sponheim puts it well, "If in happening upon a boundary we dig beneath the surface, we come to find that boundaries run through the very center of our being, for they mark the relationships that come together to constitute that being" (:112).

In Critchley's (1992:28) view, "[Western] philosophy has always attempted to understand and think the plurality and alterity of a manifold of entities through a reduction of plurality to unity and alterity to sameness." Sponheim also correctly remarks, "Sadly Christians seem resistant to difference and excessively troubled by disagreement within the flock. Christians need each other precisely in their respective otherness ... in order to be Christian" (1991:130). For Sponheim it is proper that, "The Christian seeks the intimacy of communion not union" (:119).

As we have seen in chapters one and two of this study the search for "union" has often been seen as the ultimate goal of partnership resulting in an overemphasis on central control and a resistance to diversity. Sameness and difference have been assumed in superficial ways. The LWF has felt compelled to redefine itself and encourage its members to do the same as seen in the discussions around *status confessionis*, and the Botswana and FELCSA/ELCSA confrontations. Chapter three observes the significant shift in discourse from that of partnership to that of communion and accompaniment where diversity contributes to fullness and is not accepted as an excuse for isolation or discrimination. (See page 233 above.) These recent shifts are acknowledged in this study as a positive, open-ended and humble approach to partnership in mission though not without persistent ambiguities and limitations of their own. Old paradigms persist within the new.

### **How do we meet?**

The 1994 DGM-sponsored handbook, *Embracing God's World*, designed for global mission education in the congregation, suggests ways of meeting:

There are many practical and positive ways for congregations to embrace God's world. People want to see, hear, smell, taste and touch things related to mission and also to do mission, like packing medical supplies for Liberia... (ELCA 1994a: 4).

But the question must be asked: Can we meet by objectifying, packaging, commodifying the other; parading people in so-called "traditional" costumes and displaying crafts, foods, aromas, sounds and cultural "artifacts"? (cf. *Embracing God's World* 1994: 40-42). At a DGM sponsored "Global Fest" in 1996, where booths were set up with "traditional" or "ethnic" foods, and where clothes and music from different parts of the world were displayed, one of the guest speakers from Africa pointedly asked *what* world was being celebrated in this festival and *who* could really celebrate when there was so much hunger, injustice and racism in the world?

If African theologians themselves, like Maluleke (1995:260) and others, are still pondering in the 1990s, *what* African culture is, how to define traditional religion and AICs and *how* these may be useful for a black theology of liberation, and if culture is an “arena of social struggle,” how can we, as white North American settlers, with respect, dress up like Africans and expect to taste, feel and hear and understand “Africa” at a Global Mission Festival held somewhere in the United States?

David Tracy, in his book, *Dialogue with the Other* (1990), argues that, “Dialogue demands ... the ability to struggle to hear another and respond ... to a real, not a projected other.” Tracy stresses the crucial need, “to rethink the Christian relationship to indigenous traditions (still often misnamed ‘pagans’ or ‘primitives’) by facing the history of Christian projections and oppression of those traditions” (:4). Tracy also underlines the efforts of G. Gutierrez and others who stress the need for a hermeneutics of suspicion, “... which calls for retrieval of largely ignored and forgotten, even repressed aspects of the [Christian] tradition e.g. feminism, sexism, racism” (:77). Tracy concludes his argument by saying, “I now realize more must be risked ... We cannot stay with the Buddhist - but only those who have allowed the challenge of the other to be real ... can move on” (:93). While this study agrees with Tracy that more must be risked in dialogue (and partnership), the problem of projection and “covering” the other remains. Every time that we meet, even as we meet for the first time and with the best of intentions, we “cover” the other.

Lochhead identifies and critiques four approaches to religious diversity which are summarized below. This study argues that these ideologies are all present, to varying degrees, in the baggage we carry with us each time as we meet as old and new partners.

For Lochhead the **ideology of isolation** is one in which the isolated community defines reality for itself and is accountable only to itself for its view of reality. The theology of isolation continues to be reflected in much of the ideology of the missionary movement even into the nineteenth century (1988:9). He argues that while the provincialism of North Atlantic theology was brought into serious question by Third World liberation theology, contemporary theology, including liberation theology has presented the theology of isolation in a new form “... by affirming secular categories ... as if religious knowledge is a form of ignorance. ... A secular world view and its secular theology is no less imperialistic, no less isolated than the colonial world view.” (:11).

Lochhead explains that the ideology of hostility occurs when a community is no longer isolated and intact. If not, the structure of reality is perceived differently and points to the Reformation. In fact, such rhetoric. Lochhead refers to the writings of Martin Luther and the image of the Antichrist (1989, 106) and shows that the roots of the theology of hostility are not without biblical proportions. It represents the general monotheism itself.

According to Lochhead, the ideology of competition, while it does not deny the religious reality of other traditions, assumes that they are in competition for truth and therefore sets forth the ultimate superiority of its system over all others (22).

The ideology of partnership characterizes the ecumenical movement of the 20th century where, in general, similarities were primary and essential while differences were secondary and accidental (1989, 106). According to Lochhead, the idea of partnership is based both by those who would minimize religious differences and those for whom religious differences are of the greatest importance. The logic is the same. It is an intention to find different ways to achieve unity. John Hick, as described by Lochhead, is a prominent proponent of the ideology of partnership. In fact, Lochhead (1989, 106) states that Hick's position demands that representatives of different religions admit that their differences are essential to their faith (1989, 106).

The point is that Lochhead has analyzed all of these ideologies that they depend upon to evaluate other traditions. He pertinent asks: Must we know the place of another tradition? Go to the scheme. In his belief, we can faithfully converse with other traditions. Must we have a relationship with other religious traditions? He defines it as prior. We need to be reminded that every tradition, including our own, has a dark side as well. Lochhead admits that. In fact, he says, we have seen too many religions that are not resistant to seeing their dark sides. We have seen them reversed. Similarly, Wilfred M. Moberg, in *Evangelical Theology* (1989, 106), argues that. It is not a primary appeal to other religions. It is a general confession. It is a suspension of all previous beliefs that are possible. Berns, in his book *Beatitude, Judgment and Relationship* (1989, 106), says that the dichotomy between the true and the false is as misleading as the religious itself. It can be true and false.

How do we meet? This study observes that we keep falling into the traps all over again by *demonizing, romanticizing, colonizing, generalizing, trivializing, homogenizing* and *vaporizing* the other, to use Schreier's terms (1992:52-53). We do well to recall Lochhead's (1988:27) categories of isolation, hostility, competition and partnership and Sundermeier's (1996:73-77) critique of the models he describes as: "Das Gleichheitsmodell," "Das Alteritätsmodell," [and] "Das Komplementaritätsmodell," which homogenize, dehumanize or use the other.

### **Reality is between - the Kingdom is in [y]our midst**

Lochhead (1988:49) explains Buber's and his own understanding of dialogue as the way to truth. For Buber, "I-It" and "I-Thou" are not to be understood as compound but primary words. There is no independent self which relates now to "It," now to "Thou." In "I-It", reality is centered in the self. In the "I-Thou" relationship, "the cosmos centers not in me, but in a point **between I and Thou**. The difference between 'It' and 'Thou' is not the distinction between a person and a thing but where reality is centered." (My emphasis.)

Lochhead goes on to point out that this depiction of the I-Thou as an encounter with otherness occurs and reoccurs throughout Buber's work. Lochhead explains that this view is quite different from what might be described as a "common sense view of dialogue." In the common sense view, according to Lochhead, "Dialogue is made possible, not by otherness, but by sameness. Common sense holds that dialogue is possible only when the parties to dialogue have 'something in common' " (:51).

Lochhead, reflecting on Plato and Buber, argues that, "Dialogue is not understood as a way of sharing truth that one or both parties already have. ... Truth is not a possession that exists before the encounter. It is not a byproduct but it is the encounter. For Buber, God, like truth, exists not in the I, not in the other, but **between I and Thou**" (My emphasis). "How," asks Lochhead, "can Buber's account be reconciled to a Christian doctrine of the Incarnation?" (:51). Lochhead observes that in many traditions, including the Christian tradition, truth has been considered to be a possession that has to be defended against dialogue and syncretism. He is correct in saying that dialogue as negotiation, as a search for agreement, is not helpful if it means both parties must reduce their claims to the lowest common denominator. Rather the purpose of dialogue, for Lochhead, is a search for understanding (:65). As he points out, common ground may be



discovered in the process. Lochhead (:65) sees this as a gift of grace not a pre-planned achievement.

This study argues that in a mismeeting the truth lies not with one or the other but “somewhere in between.”

### **The Precariousness of dialogue**

Lochhead (1988:71) correctly points out, and chapter two of this study gives ample evidence of this, that there are all kinds of conversations: “In some conversations the search for mutual understanding may not be present at all ... by conversing, we learn to dialogue. ... We may also unwittingly do many things that subvert the dialogical process.” (See page 105 above regarding the search for mutual understanding.)

The same can be said of the principle of translation. Walls (1998) makes the proposition that Christianity is serial not progressive. As he puts it, “God uses discontinuity.” Walls argues that there is a “built-in vulnerability” to Christianity. He speaks of Christianity continually dying and rising; not belonging solely or permanently to one culture, place or time.

This study has argued that there is no neutral ground, recipe or progression which takes us from constant mismeeting to constant meeting. Some people will be uncomfortable with the term mismeeting and seek to overcome the discomfort. But it is not simply a matter of happy meetings versus unfortunate mismeetings. One could also speak of unfortunate meetings and fortunate mismeetings.

Niklaus Luhman (in Welker 1994:313) speaks of a “domain of resonance” or “centered multiplicity of relations which are only partially dependent on our activity.” “One and the same person can at the same time be loved and hated. One person can be understood, misunderstood and consciously misunderstood - all in the same affair in ways that are different than the ways in which she understands herself or would like to be understood.”

Chapters one and two give evidence of this ongoing multiplicity of relations and perspectives over a relatively long period of time. Chapter two of this study supports Lochhead when he says, “A dialogical relationship does not happen easily. It is a precarious relationship, vulnerable to being converted to monologue without notice ... Even with the best of will on both sides, dialogue may not happen. In Buber’s words, ‘the I-Thou relationship requires both will and grace.’ Christian

discipleship then, involves unconditional openness to the neighbour. The call to dialogue is not ambiguous, but our lives are” (1988:81).

As seen in chapter one and two of this study so often the desire is expressed by churches in the “North” for a partnership with the “South” and then specifically without financial expectations and obligations, that it should rather be a sharing of “spiritual gifts.” This study accepts that financial obligations are unavoidable, especially if one is concerned with the whole person and the global context of poverty and inequality. (See DGM priorities page 193.)

### **Living on the boundaries**

Sponheim (1993:165) asks a pertinent question, “How does one live faithfully and fruitfully on the boundary?

converted to Christianity in the conversation will not cease to be other” (

The preceding chapters contain many stories of mismetings in Jesus’ name. This study has emphasized that partnership or companionship means participating in a long conversation and that the ambiguity of mismetings will not cease or decrease over time.

Sponheim insightfully points out that, “Such an uncertain life on the boundary is difficult,” and asks the question,

Is it too difficult? Clearly some find it so ... Indeed it is [rather] the denial or exclusion of genuine differences which seems dear to the heart of darkness. Christian faith can, then, welcome the life on the boundary as gift and task ... It is all right to remain on earth with earthen vessels, to exist in history where the end is not yet. The “ground” on which this faithful person stands turns out to be a boundary and the boundary a path - a path we do not walk alone, for the other is given (:175).

Gittins (1989:130) writes, “Instead of resisting our identity as stranger is it not more important to ask: Is it possible to be truly missionary in the spirit of Jesus without undertaking to be strangers? ... To allow oneself to be a stranger is to allow oneself to be placed at the disposition of the God who call” (:132). While St. Paul declares that, ‘You are no longer aliens or foreign visitors’ (Ephesians 2:19), McKenzie (in Gittins 1989:130) reminds us that, “we are indeed ‘ger’ in reference to the world, [since] we have no abiding city.” This study argues that we all have multiple identities.

As Volf (1996:) make two very important observations, when he says that there is, “no neutral standpoint located in a power-free zone (:249), [and that] ... We cannot avoid living in overlapping and rapidly changing social spaces” (:210).

Living in partnership or communion in South Africa means living, moving and working each day in several “worlds.” To remain for too long in one place becomes stifling. So we continue to move back and forth physically and mentally, often standing in or torn between several places or paradigms at the same time. Living on boundaries, straddling and crossing boundaries has become a way of life and of faith, a path, a pilgrimage, a journey - integral to the gift and task of life and mission in Christ’s way. This study argues that mismeeting means we meet the other in Jesus and meet Jesus in the other.

### **Narratives of identity and the stories of Jesus**

Schreier is correct in saying that, “We must begin by realizing what fragile constructions we humans and our societies are. We are largely bereft of instinct and so feel deeply insecure in an uncertain and often dangerous world ... To remedy this sense of vulnerability and to avoid perishing in fear, we need to construct and reconstruct constantly for ourselves a sense of safety and a sense of selfhood” (1992:31).

As Schreier (1992:31) has correctly observed, “It is our symbol-making activities that give us the capacity to construct those senses of safety and selfhood. ... The record of the encounters of the self with events is preserved for us largely in narratives - the stories that we tell about ourselves, both to ourselves and to others” (:32) “... We humans cannot survive without a narrative of identity That is why narratives - any narratives - are better than no narratives at all” (:34). But importantly Schreier goes on to speak of, “Violence as a narrative of the lie.” Similarly, Wink (1992:88ff) speaks of “the delusional system” and “the quest for a redeeming narrative.

Umberto Eco (1986:44ff) has insightfully observed in his book, *Travels in Hyperreality*, how technology is used, for example in Disneyland, to create an illusion, “a faked nature,” an imitation which is willingly accepted as being more satisfying than reality.

Schreier is correct and honest when he says, “Our own narratives lie in disarray and even if reconstructed, cannot be the same again. We need to find other narratives that pick up the fragments of our own and piece them back together again” (1992:37). Schreier concludes that, “The new narrative that overcomes the narrative of the lie is the story of the passion, death and

resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1992:61). Also in a similar vein Sponheim (1993:133) says, “The resources of which we have spoken are not available ‘through’ the other in the sense that the other can be used and then dispensed with. Faith should be able to see this. The Christian would not seek the gifts of God without God.”

If we are serious about meeting in the present and in the future then we have to tell and listen to the three stories that Michael Lapsley has proposed, “What was done to me, What I did and what I did not do” This study would add yet a fourth and fifth, namely: “What I experience in the present and hope for in the future.” This study agrees with Milbank (1990:385) when he says, “These stories are not situated within the world; for Christians, the world is situated within these stories. They define for us what reality is and function as a ‘metanarrative.’

Milbank (1990:280) has argued that,

A differential ontology is only another mythology ... this mythology is the best, the least self-deluded self-description of the secular but which fails only at the point where it will not admit it is but another ‘religion.’ One cannot oppose antiquity or dialectics with a better logic but only with a different mythos (:375). ... The task of ... theology is not apologetic but to tell again the Christian mythos, to pronounce again the Christian logos and call again for Christian praxis” (:381). ...The relationship of God to the world becomes after Christianity, a rhetorical one and ceases to have anything to do with “truth.” Christianity does not claim that the Good and True are self-evident to objective reason or dialectical argument ... [rather] ... we need the stories of Jesus for salvation ... (:392).

Carl Braaten puts it this way, “ God has become enmeshed in history; entangled in stories ... the humanity of God can best be talked about in narrative form” (?:113). As Gritsch and Jensen explain, “In Reformation language, ‘faith’ is *not* the label of an ideological or attitudinal state [but] ... evokes a *communication-situation*: the situation of finding oneself addressed with an unconditional affirmation [by the Gospel] and having now to deal with life in these new terms ... all life becomes a *hearing* ... (1976:41-43 - italics in original).

But this hearing is not a passive, one-way exercise. As A.F. Walls (1996:27) puts it, “Christ is Word translated. ... Christian faith rests on a massive divine act of translation and successive lesser acts of translation (:47). There is no escape from the labour of translation with all its complexities, ambiguities and in the last analysis its impossibility (:xviii).” Walls points out that the faith of Christianity is “infinitely translatable” (:25) although “exact translation is impossible” (:27).

Newbigin (1989: 227) argued that “the only hermeneutic of the gospel, is a congregation of men and women who believe it and live by it.” Drawing on his experiences in South America and Africa, Sundermeier (in Bauerochse 1996:407) has developed the concept of *konvivenz* for the church which is defined as being not only *for* but *with* the poor, a community that helps, learns and celebrates together.

Moltmann (1977:225) speaks of the church as a “story-telling fellowship which narrates the story of Christ and its own story with that story.”

Placher (1989:133) argues that, “Biblical narratives keep forcing us back to considering our own relation to these stories. If we are honest we will admit we stand somewhere. If we are serious we will feel serious commitments to the place we stand as well as openness to change and a sense of how significant changing one’s faith would be” (:149).

To speak of mismeeting in Jesus’ name is to consciously situate these encounters in the narratives of the Christian faith, of the Bible and of the church.

### **“The drama of God’s embrace”**

But how does God who is wholly other, “meet” and “embrace us”? The Biblical narratives of the incarnation strive to give answers to that very question. Wayne Weissenbuehler (1998) refers to the biblical stories as the stories of God’s “incursions, forays and improvisations” to create, restore and sustain life and relationships (*koinonia*) pointing out that paradoxically, in spite of God’s absence, the disciples sensed the presence of Christ!

Parker Palmer (1981:26) states with insight and conviction,

There is nothing more persistent than God’s promise, that the brokenness within us and between us can and will be healed. ... But God uses the stranger to take the scales from our eyes (:57). ... We find our deep unity with others not by seeking to embrace them but by letting God embrace us (:109). ... The health of democracy [read also partnership/communion - PJK] is premised on the assumption that ... you and I will be on the opposite side of some causes but on the same side of others ... we are related despite our differences (:85).

Miroslav Volf’s four stage “Drama of Embrace” is a graphic example of the complex dimensions of any relationship. There is “the invitation,” “the waiting,” “the embrace” and “the letting go” (1996:140-144). As Volf explains, this “drama,” and it is a drama not a system or programme,

... take place literally in a matter of minutes, or it could take decades or longer, going in fits and starts, getting stuck at a certain stage, reversing halfway through and so on. Volf adds to that our more ingredients: The *fluidity of identities*, the *nonsymmetry of the relationship*, the *underdetermination of the outcome* and the *risk of the embrace* (:145-146).

Gittins (1989:115) also makes the important point that strangers may actually be necessary for a society to flourish. "Cultures need outsiders." "Even the incorporated stranger remains a stranger ... at least for a very, very long time (:125). This stands in stark contrast to the Hermansburg Mission slogan (Bauerchse 1996:412), "*heute sind wir partner.*"

Gittins (1989:115) writes, "If missionaries [read also partners - PJK] were more willing to allow themselves to be contextualized as *strangers*, rather than trying to position themselves as controllers, initiative takers or proselytizers, then perhaps mutual relationships would be more conducive to a responsible and creative sharing of stories and thus authentic evangelization.

In his book *The Company of Strangers* Palmer focuses on public life but I believe the same can be said of partnership to a large extent, [that it is],

... simply and centrally our life among strangers, strangers with whom our lot is cast, with whom we are interdependent whether we like it or not ... despite the fact that we are strangers ... and will remain strangers for the most part ... We occupy a common space, share common resources, have common opportunities, and somehow must learn to live together ... We are members of one another (:19). But, the irony of the quest for intimacy is that it drives us apart ... We try to cling to each other and in clinging we distort the other person and ourselves through false dependencies, unreasonable expectations, unjustified hopes (:109).

A relationship or a family does not work according to blueprints, guidelines or recipes no matter how good they look on paper. Palmer points out that,

Scripture does not idealize the family, Jesus' own family was filled with tensions (Mk. 3:33). We project an idealized "family" image on the church of comfort not conflict, intimacy not distance - heterogeneity suffers as we cultivate the familiar (:119). ... The way of the cross challenges our natural tendency to avoid contradiction, conflict and tension (:115).

No matter how new or old our partnerships may be, this study agrees with Palmer that, "Christianity understands all our relations - even the closest ones - to be broken and imperfect but forgiven and redeemed" (:122).

As Bonhoeffer (1976:27) put it in his book *Life Together*, “He who loves his dream of a community more than the Christian community itself becomes a destroyer of the latter, even though his personal intentions may be ever so honest and earnest and sacrificial.”

Prof. Lee Snook in a paper entitled, “*Power and Spirit: The Presence of God in the World and the Church*” (1997) reflects on, “... [his own] encounter as an American theologian with the Spirit of God in Africa [and] ... How Spirit and power are linked not only in the Bible but also in experience, in contrast to the way in which the Spirit and secular forms of power are separated in western thinking” (:9). He writes,

There is no place in the world where the Spirit is not. We cannot say the same thing about the church (:14). ... While every kind of church (ecclesiastical, confessional, pentecostal) makes some claim for how the Spirit calls and empowers the churches, it is very rare for churches to pay attention to how the Spirit is present in the many forms of power in the world. ... That shortcoming of the churches is what can be called a failure of imagination (:15). To witness to the Spirit does not mean taking the Spirit into the world but it does mean discerning and witnessing to the Spirit of God already present in the world... (:16).

Senior and Stuhlmüller speak of the value of religious experience, observing how, “The creative imagination of the biblical people was able to transcend the narrow confines of its official theology and structures” (1983:342). “In the Bible there is no fixed pattern for mission but a plurality of responses to different circumstances” (:343).

Similarly, Bosch concluded his book with a chapter entitled, “Mission in Many Modes” (1991:511-519). He made an appeal for “poesis,” and for “images, metaphors, events and pictures of Christ rather than logic or analysis alone” (512).

Parker Palmer points out that the irony of the quest for intimacy and the avoidance of tension, is that it drives us apart, creating further distortions. For Palmer the place between us is a “holy space” (:109), which “marriages of convenience” (:107) cannot bridge. As he puts it, “We will come close not directly but through God’s mediation” (:109) which, for Palmer, is the “way of the cross” (114).

This study agrees with Palmer when he says, “We find our deep unity with others not by seeking to embrace them, but by letting God embrace us” (:109).

## **“We still have to meet” - Mismeeting and the future (eschatology)**

Bosch (1991:499) gave a summary of the rediscovery of eschatology by twentieth century theology in *Transforming Mission* and highlighted especially its historical nature according to which the “God of the future sets himself against the gods ... of the eternal return.” He pointed out that the “new eschatology” was not monolithic itself but was “a reaction to the blurring of the eschatological horizon which focused on mystical or ecclesiocentric goals” (:502).

Bosch reminded us of the problem of the extreme eschatologization of mission by Protestant orthodoxy and pietism which was pessimistic about the world but by contrast was optimistic about the missionary enterprise (:505). If the extreme eschatologization of mission is to be rejected so must the extreme historicization of mission which, as Braaten puts it, “reduces the Gospel to ethics” (Braaten 1977:39). Bosch correctly argued that, “We need a way beyond both. ... There is no choice between either salvation history or profane history ... There are not two histories but there are two ways of understanding history, ... not a different set of facts but a different perspective, Christian eschatology then, moves in all three times: past, present and future” (:508).

In this study mismeeting and partnership have been explored “in three times” - As we meet it becomes clear that we have already met and yet still have to meet.

### **Will the messiness remain?**

For Bauman (1993:32) human reality is messy and ambiguous, “... the messiness according to the postmodern view is not temporary and repairable. The truth is the messiness will stay whatever we do or know. The struggle like the waiting knows no end” (:88).

“But faith will not settle for staying modestly within the boundaries of what we now know, argues Sponheim. “Christians are not satisfied with the way things are” (1991:135). We look to something we do not now possess. Sponheim speaks of a *telos* which combines, “continuity and discontinuity in relationship to God who is immanent in the world and transcendent” (:143). He goes on to say, “The faith which hopes for this *telos* joins those who protest when talk of the future contributes to moral paralysis in the present” (:145).

Bosch recalls Braaten’s words that there are, “paradoxes, gaps, riddles and mysteries in all history” (Braaten in Bosch 1991:508). Welch (1990:34) points out that the “desire for complete



invulnerability leads to the ethic of control” and that “the search for consensus is a continuation of the dream of domination” (:133). Welch argues that, “The intention of solidarity is potentially more inclusive and more transformative than the goal of consensus” (:132).

Kathryn Kleinhans (1997) argues that Luther’s theology challenged the positivistic and rationalist enterprises of both medieval and enlightenment thought with a “negative-dialectical” method similar to that explained by Theodor W. Adorno in his book *Negative Dialectics* (1973). She writes, “Faith functions chiefly in Luther’s theology not in a cognitive capacity but in a **relational one**” (:495 - my emphasis).

With Kleinhans this study agrees that,

Luther does believe in the ultimate resolution of our sinful dilemma, but this longed-for, trusted-in closure is not naive. Faith has, for Luther, no inherent value apart from Christ as its object ... To the extent that there is a reconciliation or synthesis posited by Luther’s theology, it remains an eschatological one. ... Faith functions not so much to create presence or bring synthesis to Luther’s negative dialectic but to allow the believing subject to stand within the dialectic as both saint and sinner .... God’s promise of resurrection for believing sinners joined to Christ is taken on faith: “In the meantime” Luther writes, “we can only *believe* this” (:495, LW 33:292, *The Bondage of the Will* - emphasis in the original to Luther’s Works).

Volf says that, “From the outset, all human relations are fraught with the tension between equality and difference in the context of which the relation between the self and the other has to be negotiated” (1996:95) [and] “... that the crucial question is not how to accomplish the final reconciliation ... but what resources do we need to live in peace in the absence of the final reconciliation” (:109). Volf advocates for “a struggle for a non-final reconciliation based on a vision of a reconciliation that cannot be undone” (:110).

This study holds that mismeeting in Jesus’ name does avoid or suppress the messiness of life, nor does it accept things they way they are. Christians are not pessimistic or optimistic but hopeful about the future.

### **The future that awakens hope**

Moltmann, in his book, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* (1977:133-134), observes that, ‘centre and horizon will always be lost or won together ... the formulation of hope’s horizon affects both sides, ... without this comprehensive framework of hope the relationships remain without meaning ... [but] ... turn into contradictions, lead to deadly conflicts and die.’ He goes on to declare that, “It is not hope that makes the future into God’s future; it is this future that awakens hope” (:197). “As the proclamation of Christ, the gospel is the revelation of the divine

future, the fact of this happening ... must be termed the presence of the Holy Spirit” (:220). According to Hefner (1998a:256), Heidegger’s dialectic of existence recognizes that the determinative dimension of human life is its becoming what it is destined to become as fulfilled life. For Hefner this means that “responding to the future is the first and defining characteristic of human existence.” Hefner goes on to say that, “Nevertheless, the dreams of the past and the lure of the future must pass through the narrow gate of our present situation (:256). Our future is not an abstract fantastical future, but a future of which our past is capable” (:257).

Gittins (1989:143) calls for an “appropriate spirituality ... which acknowledges our mobility, impermanence, vulnerability, strangeness and cultural nomadism and yet our actual incarnation or contextualization ... for if we go in the name of the Lord, yet hope to find God, we must develop a variety of ways-of-being-in-the-world-with-God.”

Bosch, in his book *A Spirituality of the Road* (1979:85ff.) wrote, “We live on the borderline between the already and the not yet ... in two worlds.” Regarding Paul’s spirituality he wrote, “[It] is never fixed or finished, it is a spirituality that journeys from stage to stage ... His is a spirituality of the road” (:20).

Hefner (:253) speaks of the church as a *communio viatorum*, a community of pilgrims... [which is] always receiving what cannot be possessed.”

This study agrees with Snook (1995:126) when he argues, “Endings never end. What will be the end of our endings? Nothing! If we ask *who* will be the end of our endings (i.e. the fulfillment or purpose), the book of Revelation says - Christ. At the end there waits for us not the final solution but Christ” (italics in original).

Similarly Hefner (1998:252) writes, “We demand closure, whereas God grants only new visions of open-endedness. ... When we think of God’s good gifts and God’s good presence, we think of that which is new, not yet fully known nor yet fully possessed.”

Sponheim writes of the “Enemies of the conversation” (1993:168) and argues for “A Living Conversation” (:171), “What must be avoided is the tendency to suppose that I have a self and an identity fully secured somewhere else, held back, not giving itself and not at risk in the conversation we cannot claim to know in advance what will transpire” (:171).

For Sponheim, faith speaks of the future as indeed “other” and “given” (1993:175).

Hefner (1998:256) speaks about the dialectic and rhythm of “future-past-present.” Quite correctly he puts the challenge of the future first. He speaks of “... the open future, of the very concrete and unrepeatable identity that we have assumed in the course of our history up to the present.”

This chapter has stressed that mismeeting in Jesus’ name is shaped by the work of the Triune God in the past, present and future.

### **Mission as Mismeeting in Jesus’ Name**

Referring to *aporias* as points in literature at which the reader’s path (*poros*) becomes impassable (*aporos*), Moore (1994:70-71), points out that for deconstructionists such as Derrida, “*aporias* are not accidental features of the text, unhappy contingencies that could have been avoided had the author been more careful, or more skilled, or had a more efficient plane with which to even out the roughnesses of the narrative.” In this regard Derrida uses the term “undecidables” (Derrida in Moore:72).

This study has argued that all meetings are mismeetings, and that we cannot avoid or plan to avoid the asymmetry and complexity of human relationships and encounters.

Sponheim recognises that, “in this actual meeting of actual others it is clear, then, that no single method holds sway. **We meet to work together at meeting**” (1993:173 - my emphasis).

With Todorov (1984:247) we agree that “the other remains to be discovered ... [that] each of us must begin it over again in turn, the previous experiments do not relieve us of our responsibilities but can teach us the effects of misreading the facts.”

Referring to the conquest of the Americas Todorov writes, “We are like the conquistadors and we differ from them; their example is instructive but we shall never be sure that by *not* behaving like them we are not in fact on the way to imitating them, as we adapt ourselves to new circumstances. But their history can be exemplary for us because it permits us to reflect upon ourselves, to discover resemblance’s as well as differences [as] self-knowledge develops through knowledge of the Other” (1984:254 - his italics).

This study has demonstrated that the seeking after partnership or rather communion involves us in a very long and open-ended conversation made up of countless meetings in a “rhythm of

continuity and discontinuity” (Sponheim 1993:175). As Todorov (1984:250) points out, “The dialogue of cultures that characterizes our age is a dialogue in which no one has the last word.”

Reflecting on the “long” history of Lutheran partnership relations in South Africa this study agrees with Sponheim when he says, “The sorting out of the different differences takes time” (1993:150).

This study of Lutheran partnership discourse and activity in South Africa has sought to retrieve and listen to some of the stories of continuity and discontinuity, and to show that each mismeeting consists of connections and differences, dangers and opportunities.

This study agrees with Volf (1997:129) that at the table of the Eucharist we begin to learn to make space in ourselves for the other as we learn to give of ourselves to the other.

To argue for a mismeeting in Jesus’ name is to argue that a “true meeting” *is* a mismeeting. Knowing Jesus will not bring protection from mismeetings. This study proposes that it is the presence of the crucified and risen Jesus who uses discontinuity, creates and sustains connections and keeps them open to the future. The mismeeting at the foot of the cross and open grave keeps all meetings and therefore the future open.

Meeting the other in Jesus’ name, I point to the Jesus I know, and I point to the Jesus neither of us knows - who calls me to meet God in the other.

The mismeeting of the cross is a result of and a vindication of God’s openness to me and to others.

*As we meet for the first time, in Jesus’ name, we realize that we have already met, that we have not yet met and still have to meet.*

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Gleanings from the "Fields" of Lutheran Mission Terminology and Language 1930s-1990s

Pre-1940s

1950s

1960s

1970s

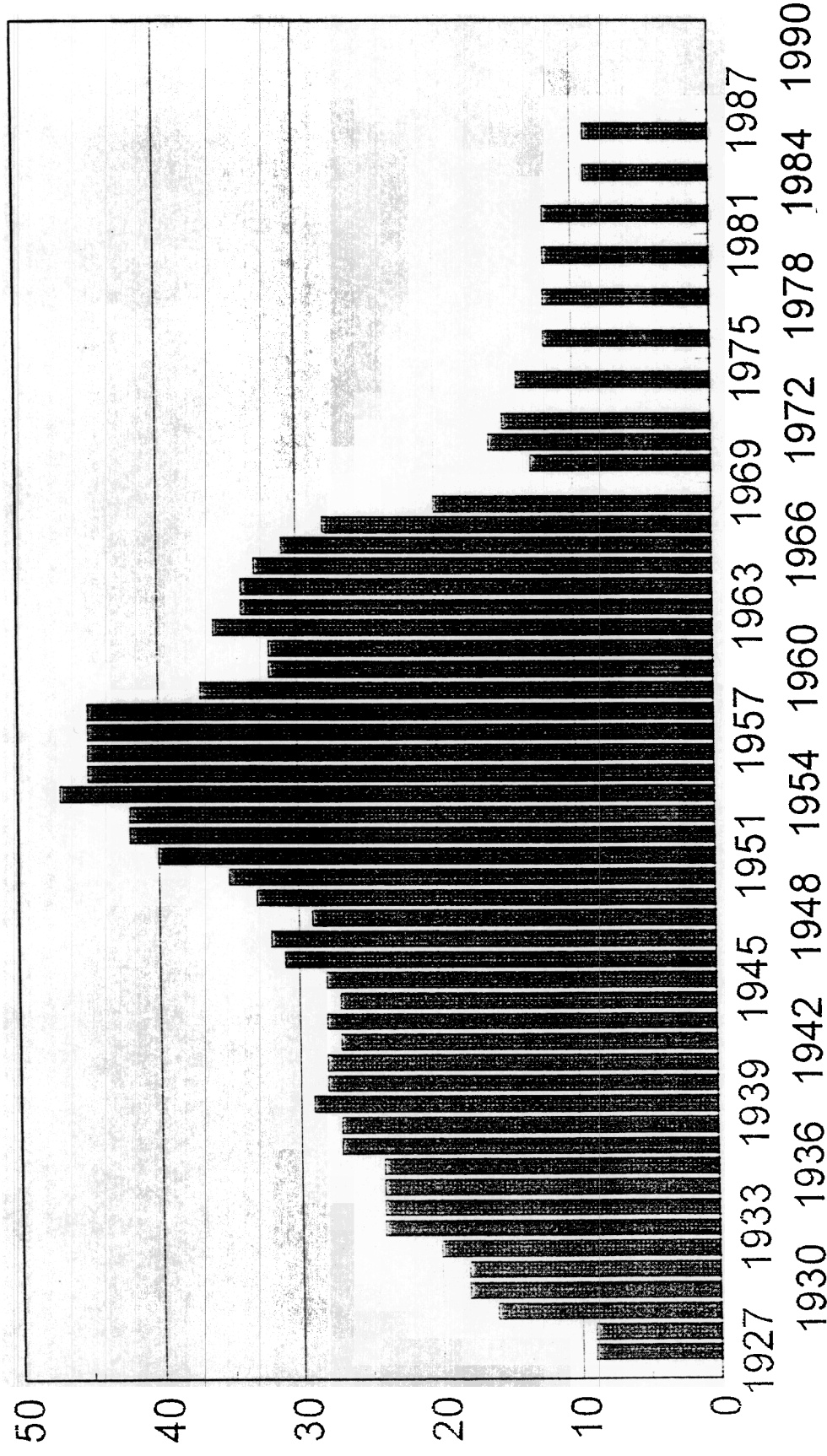
1980s

1990s

<p>Macedonian call, the great commission, harvest, ripe fields, open doors, closed doors, the native worker, the black man's heart and mind, sickening and devilish forms of heathenism, groping masses, piercing the darkness, uplifting Zulu womanhood, self-help, 3 selfs, natives, the black races, black brothers and sisters, Board of Foreign Missions, winning souls, establishing congregations spirits and witch doctors superstition, new problems, a new Africa, grievances, native agitators, the heart of Africa, the white man's town</p>	<p>Macedonian call, the field, the plan, opportunity, boldness, good missionary activity, opposition, interference, peace, younger churches, self-support, indigenous, fellowship, mutual understanding non-European, differences of opinion, apartheid, maturity, responding to the cry, forward march, natives, Bantu, mission schools, training leaders, superstition, tribal influences, godless customs, Bantu education, evangelists, outstations, locations, unrest, racial tension,</p>	<p>"mission fields", the people of Africa, spirit of independence unfinished task, developing churches, stewardship, political changes, transition, great experience, transition, rapid changes, horizons broadened, injustice, exploitation, tension, resistance, co-workers, negotiation, mutual understanding mutual agreement, self-governance, whites, non-whites, Bantu, resettle, relocate, outreach, separate development, race relations,</p>	<p>missionary presence, contribution, mutual partnership, negotiations, identities, relationships, moratorium, indigenous church, black consciousness indigenous theology, black pastors, material conditions, colonization, the local church, multilateral relations, equalization of salaries, friendship relations, coordination, dehumanize, struggle, radical, global context, Division for World Mission and Inter church Cooperation interdependence (1974) inter-relatedness ambiguous, disadvantaged, context, emerging church, complex, neo-paternalism embracing and being embraced, equal partners, two way cooperation, joint responsibility, receiving partner, autonomous,</p>	<p>share God's gifts, reconciliation ambiguity, deeply involved, "third world" personal involvement, gap between rich and poor, exchange, divestment, monitoring, interpreting, making relevant, global mission, internationalization of mission, contextualization, holistic mission, challenge, disease and poverty linked, unjust economic systems, cross-cultural dialogue, moving back and forth, advocacy, sanctions, ethnic, willing and unwilling participants, lives enmeshed, justice and justification, transformation post-missionary era, cultural identity, African American, perpetuate, kairos, legitimacy, perceptions, multilateral Division for Global Mission (1989), the struggle,</p>	<p>dependency, decolonization (of the black female mind), Diaspora, renegotiate, healing of the memories, companion synods, ministry of accompaniment, gender issues, translation, the Other, the Stranger, resident aliens, the invention of Africa, the invention of America, pluralism, Communion, reconstruction, post-modern, participate, a new discipline of sharing, mutual accountability networking, South-South, globalization, re-positioning informal settlements,</p>
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# NLCA/ALC Missionary Staff

## South Africa: 1927-1990



# ELCA COMPANION SYNODS - DIVISION FOR GLOBAL MISSION

## SYNOD

## COMPANION SYNOD/CHURCH

### Region 1

A Alaska  
B Northwest Washington  
C Southwestern Washington  
D Eastern Washington - Idaho  
E Oregon  
F Montana

Russia - ELC of Ingria  
Ethiopia - Northern Synod  
Namibia - ELCIN  
Tanzania - Ulang Kilombero  
Indonesia - HKBP Silindung & Poland  
South Africa - Cape Orange Diocese & Bolivia

### Region 2

A Sierra Pacific  
B Southern California (West)  
C Pacifica  
D Grand Canyon  
E Rocky Mountain

Taiwan  
Hong Kong  
Ethiopia - South Western Synod  
Lithuania & Senegal  
Madagascar- Mahajanga Synod/Antsirana Synod

### Region 3

A Western North Dakota  
B Eastern North Dakota  
C South Dakota  
D Northwestern Minnesota  
E Northeastern Minnesota  
F Southwestern Minnesota  
G Minneapolis Area  
H Saint Paul Area  
I Southeastern Minnesota

Central African Republic  
Central African Republic  
Cameroon  
India - AELC  
India - SALC  
South Africa - South Eastern Diocese  
Nigeria & Germany-Leipzig  
Tanzania - Iringa Diocese  
Tanzania-Central Diocese & Columbia

### Region 4

A Nebraska  
B Central States  
C Arkansas - Oklahoma  
D Northern Texas - Northern Louisiana  
E Southwestern Texas  
F Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast

Tanzania-Northern Diocese & Argentina  
Papua New Guinea - Kate District  
Great Britain  
Sierra Leone  
El Salvador  
Peru

### Region 5

A Metropolitan Chicago  
B Northern Illinois  
C Central/Southern Illinois  
D Southeastern Iowa  
E Western Iowa  
F Northeastern Iowa  
G Northern Great Lakes  
H Northwest Synod of Wisconsin  
I East-Central Wisconsin  
J Greater Milwaukee  
K South - Central Synod of Wisconsin

South Africa - Central Diocese  
Tanzania Pare Diocese  
Madagascar Tolognaro Region/Ambovambe Synod  
Tanzania Pare Diocese  
Tanzania Southern Diocese  
Namibia - ELCRN  
Tanzania Eastern & Coastal Diocese  
Brazil Region  
South Africa - Western Diocese  
El Salvador & Tanzania - Meru Diocese  
India NELC

L La Crosse Area

**Region 6**

- A Southeast Michigan
- B North/West Lower Michigan
- C Indiana - Kentucky
- D Northwestern Ohio
- E Northeastern Ohio**
- F Southern Ohio

**Region 7**

- A New Jersey
- B New England
- C Metropolitan New York
- D Upstate New York
- E Northeastern Pennsylvania
- F Southeastern Pennsylvania
- G Slovak Zion

**Region 8**

- A Northwestern Pennsylvania
- B Southwestern Pennsylvania
- C Allegheny
- D Lower Susquehanna
- E Upper Susquehanna
- F Delaware - Maryland
- G Metropolitan Washington D.C.
- H West Virginia - Western Maryland

**Region 9**

- A Virginia
- B North Carolina
- C South Carolina
- D Southeastern
- E Florida/Bahamas
- F Caribbean**

Ethiopia - Central Synod

- Tanzania - Mbulu Diocese
- Papua New Guinea - Papua District
- Indonesia - KKBP Toba District & Chile
- Tanzania - Dodoma Diocese
- South Africa-Northern Diocese**
- Tanzania - E. Lake Victoria Diocese/  
Mecklenberg (Germany)

- Namibia ELCRN
- Brazil Region 2 & Brazil
- Tanzania NW Diocese
- Zimbabwe
- Germany - Saxony & Argentina
- Tanzania North Eastern Diocese
- Slovakia

- Germany - Thuringia
- Madagascar - Tulear Synod
- Kenya Synod
- Tanzania - Konde Synod
- Liberia & Germany - Ansbach
- Finland (Tamere Diocese)- Estonia
- Namibia ELCIN and ELCRN Slovakia
- Madagascar Southwest Synod

- PNG - New Guinea Islands District
- PNG - Yabim District
- Japan
- Malaysia - Singapore & Germany - Augsburg
- Haiti/Jamaica/Guyana/Suriname/Cuba
- South Africa - Eastern Diocese**

## THESIS EXTRACT

This study, entitled "*Partnership in Mission: Mismeeting in Jesus' Name?*," questions the frequently stated goal or purpose of partnership in mission as that of overcoming differences and presents the case that **all meetings are mismeetings**. The definition of mismeeting in this study does *not* mean the absence or failure of a meeting but stresses along with connection the asymmetry, complex nature and need for openness in every meeting.

Chapter One, *In a World of Difference is Partnership Possible?*, examines various missiological as well as historical materials which have taken up the question of partnership and the problematics of the encounter with the "other." This chapter looks at some of the powerful perceptual "grids" or paradigms inherited from the past and specifically what is being called the "invention" or "covering" of America and Africa. Material from All African Lutheran Conferences (1955-1983) concerning the development of the concept of partnership and mission is included. The study finds that most models or critiques of mission partnership stress the need for equality and connection and do not go far enough in acknowledging ambiguity and difference.

Chapter Two, *Bridges and Gaps : Lutherans and Partnership in Southern Africa*, examines the long and ongoing process of negotiating and renegotiating relationships between Lutheran partners from the United States, Europe and South Africa. The main historical focus of this study is on the relationship between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (ELCSA). The first section focuses on the period 1927 to 1975 (the year in which ELCSA was formed); while the second part looks at relationships, policies and actions from 1975 to the 1990's. These include agreements and disagreements regarding Church-Mission relationships, unequal salaries, stewardship, political involvement and the establishment of various partnership programmes. The issue underlying the long conversation is not how to achieve equality or complete consensus but how to respond to the challenges of Christian Mission as unequal partners walking and struggling together.

Chapter Three, *Beyond Partnership - Towards Communion*, examines various ecclesiological and theological aspects of partnership and stresses the necessity and limitations of models. *Communion* and *Accompaniment* are becoming central to discourse in the Lutheran World Federation and member churches around the world over-against the discourse of partnership. While *communio/communion* has much to commend it as a model for mutual partnership this study argues that lack of attention to difference may weaken the concept.

The final chapter, *Mission as Mismeeting in Jesus' Name?*, proposes that the ambiguity and asymmetry of Christian dialogue and communion with the "other" can be described as "mismeeting in Jesus' name" which includes three interrelated perspectives: past, present and future. The thesis is put forward that even when we meet for the first time, it becomes evident that we have already met; that we have not yet met; and that we still have to meet. A "true" meeting is a mismeeting. Knowing Jesus does not protect us from mismeetings. The Cross is the result of and vindication of God's openness to others. The dissertation proposes that mismeeting in Jesus' name is an important dimension in the ongoing development of mission paradigms.