

**Edinburgh 2010**

**Reflections on Commission VIII and WCC**

**Keynote Speech**

**by**

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Edinburgh 1910 visibly confirmed the passion for mission which marked the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the passion for unity, which was to become one of the main characteristics of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Mission and unity – two inheritances of Edinburgh. Any imbalance between these two would not do justice to the vision of that conference, nor to Christian history of the last 100 years. The report of commission VIII illustrates the link between both in a surprisingly actual way, as I will show by indicating how some of the major concerns of that commission have been addressed in the last 100 years: I will also introduce a discussion on some of the major challenges we face today.

## **1. Partnership, inter-church discipline and the healing of unjust relations**

Commission VIII's report and discussion emphasises the importance of "comity", of discussions and regulations between mission societies of different nationalities and denominations to find agreements in the "mission fields", so as to avoid duplication of missionary efforts. The main aim was to deal with the inadequacy of the forces with regard to the task to bring the gospel to the whole world. The commission insisted on the importance of learning to know each other, of consultation, discussion and agreement as essential ways to avoid waste of time, of human and financial resources. The report still deplores too much unconcerted policy, mutual ignorance, overlapping and competition among actors in mission.

However, it is striking to discern how many efforts at mutual knowledge and greater co-operation already existed in the years preceding the Edinburgh conference. The participants could build on success-stories brought from several parts of the world, in particular from Asia, as to concrete ways to organise inter-missionary co-operation, with examples of by-laws of conferences, or rules and regulations of meetings. The Edinburgh conference hailed these efforts and hoped they would be multiplied. It also expressed the wish to have the home base of missions and the related churches officially involved.

Reading the report nearly 100 years later, the following strikes the observer:

The questionnaire sent to missionaries as preparation for the work of the commission is very interesting. There was careful attention put e.g. to the potential difference between opinions of missionaries and those of "natives". We know that only very few Christians from the global South were present in Edinburgh. Their voice was not given the attention we would require today. Still, the care to try to find out potential differences is remarkable and a foretaste of the future culture of partnership. The commissioners had even included questions about relationships to Roman Catholics in their enquiry and had prior to Edinburgh also contacted Archbishop Nicolai of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Tokyo.

Commissioners were aware of the advantages of full missionary freedom, but emphasised the hindrances created by evangelistic free-lancers who were unwilling to accept self-restriction through agreements. This, too, is an indicator of future trends.

Mission societies saw the urgent need to find territorial delimitations between them, and requested new groupings intending to enter a country where other missions were already active to discuss with them and come to an agreement prior to new engagements. In its core intention, it prefigures the respect for the local church.

The care with which conference participants went into details of the discussion of the best practices in co-operation and delimitation of tasks shows how much the later discussion on partnership and ecumenical discipline is rooted in Edinburgh's deliberations.

### Highlights of the debate since 1910

Two key decisions taken in Edinburgh made of this conference the symbolic starting point of the ecumenical movement. It's the creation in 1912 of the *International Review of Missions*, and the formation of the Interim Committee, which in 1921 led to the International Missionary Council (IMC). As several scholars have underlined, this institutionalisation of communication and co-ordination between mission actors made the difference between Edinburgh and the former world mission conferences of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries <sup>1</sup>.

Let me then highlight few **important milestones** in the progress of co-operation between churches in different regions of the world. I consider the terminology of **partnership**, introduced in the mission debate in the late forties (Whitby 1947), as a key turning point, insofar as it was linked with a change of language, moving away from the idea of "mother" and "daughter" churches, or "sending" and "receiving" countries. The International Missionary Council (IMC) progressed over many years towards a clearer recognition of the fundamental equality of all partners in world mission. Of course the partnership terminology was somewhat ambiguous, since it had been used within the policies of the British colonial empire<sup>2</sup> and could be interpreted as to allow for autonomy in the South while retaining power in the North. That ambiguity remains until now, in particular because the terminology is misused in many circles.

Both the mission and ecumenical movements wrestled with these issues all along the 50s. Mission bodies affiliated to the IMC tended to reduce too strong missionary presence and influence in favour of increasing self-government by local churches. In the same period of the 50s, however, diaconal institutions had been created to help refugees and damaged countries after the war. Once their immediate reconstruction work done, these organisations extended their operations in direction of the global South. In the 50<sup>th</sup> thus, one could witness two dynamics. Whereas mission bodies linked to the IMC tended to reduce their direct activities in favour of leaving the control of mission to the local churches, the inter-church departments at national and international levels<sup>3</sup>, increased their diaconal involvement in the same countries. I would not hesitate to say that we are still struggling with the consequences of these double dynamics.

The most radical attempt at putting the partnership ideal into practise happened in the early seventies. As a consequence of the failure of the first development decade and the increasing injustice between North and South, partner churches in the South called for radical solutions, which surfaced internationally at the Bangkok conference in 1972/73. Representatives from Asia and Africa advocated for the idea of a "**moratorium**", consisting in calling back all missionaries to their countries of origin for a certain period of time, and stopping all transfer of financial resources from rich to poor churches during that same period of time. Persons and finances were to be used to change the structures of injustice in the power centres, thus addressing some of the root causes of the injustice between North and South. This time-bound

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<sup>1</sup> Cf Keith Clements on Oldham

<sup>2</sup> Bauerochse

<sup>3</sup> such as DICARWS in the WCC

“ascetism” in mission would also create a space of freedom for churches in non-Western cultures, allowing them to develop theologies, church policies, ethics and spiritualities really rooted in their own cultural identity, without imposition from anywhere else.

The moratorium was rarely put into practice, but it had deep consequences. Where imposed, often by political authorities, the moratorium eventually proved fruitful for church development, like in China. But its proposals were so radical that even its most vocal advocates did not put it into practice in their own churches and organisations. In the North it allowed many people to involve themselves in advocacy movements for justice and peace. However, it also reinforced a growing anti-mission mood in mainline churches. The related negative publicity on traditional mission influenced a whole generation of pastors and militants within mainline churches, leaving many of them highly critical towards mission and evangelism until the present days.

An important alternative to the moratorium was also highlighted at the Bangkok conference. It's the **structural change of the Paris Mission** which led to the creation of a community of churches in mission, called Cevaa, in which all involved partner churches share power of decision-making, independently of the resources put by each church into the common basket. In the Cevaa, and later in other similar mission communities such as the Council for World Mission, the structural changes bear the mark of transformative justice, by changing the power and decision-making on sharing of financial and human resources between churches of North and South. I believe that this was an attempt of a “best practice” realising some of the dreams of Edinburgh's commission VIII. It has unfortunately not received the attention it would have deserved, in particular in North America, Northern Europe, among evangelical mission circles, nor among those criticising mission.

This model of sharing in mission was adopted by the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism and the WCC as a whole and led to programmes such as Ecumenical Sharing of Personnel and Ecumenical Sharing of Resources. The culmination of these efforts was the declaration adopted at **El Escorial in 1987** providing the framework and formulation for a holistic ecumenical discipline of sharing of power, resources and persons in the relations between churches in different parts of the world. I would definitively affirm that El Escorial and similar texts represent, of course coined in the language of their period, what the ecumenical movement developed as a direct consequence of the aims and efforts of 1910. CWME gave it the missiological formulation in chapter 6 of its statement “Mission and Evangelism in Unity Today” of the year 2000<sup>4</sup>.

What are the **challenges** now on this question? Unfortunately, political, economic and cultural developments of the late eighties and nineties jeopardised these remarkable efforts at self-restraint, respect of the partner and common discipline. The development of the **charity market** and the increased mediatisation of actions, the explosion of numbers of development organisations, renewed individualism in particular in postmodern cultural contexts and the tendency of churches in the North to abandon the effective control of and decisions on development work to relatively independent agencies led to trends quite opposite to the ideals of El Escorial. The increasing necessity to be performant, efficient, rapid, as well as excessively technocratic interpretations of planning, monitoring, evaluating and reporting, jeopardised the partnership sharing model. Old practices of bilateral (not to say “colonial”) relations came to the front again, allowing for projects to be easily controlled and responding

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<sup>4</sup> §§ 68-77

to the needs of donors. It is not without concern that one can observe how past control strategies of mission societies are reinvented today.

In addition, the impressive growth of **Pentecostal and neo-charismatic missions** (both in and from North and South) shows how limited the co-ordinated mission efforts are if considered at world level. I want to acknowledge with satisfaction that both the Lausanne movement and particularly the World Evangelical Alliance have made important attempts at more co-ordination and mutual discipline in mission, in ways quite parallel to some of WCC's main concerns. We should network much more on that. But there are many evangelical, Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal churches and movements for whom discipline like the one dreamt of by Edinburgh is not - or not yet - an issue. In addition, work has only started to build authentic contacts of co-operation in mission between long-established churches and more recent churches of other-cultural origins in North and South. Finally, in the globalised competition economy and related neo-liberal ideology, **denominationalism** is increasing also among "mainline" churches: each attempts to strengthen its own identity and "uniqueness". At the threshold of a new century, we feel we are again faced with similar concerns as our forefathers were in 1910.

We are all members of the same body of Christ – despite our ecclesiological differences -. To what discipline does that call us? How can we define "comity" in a way to be sustainable in the present economic and cultural conditions? The WCC is ready to work with its member churches, but also with the wider mission and development networks to find contemporary and credible answers to the concerns of commission VIII.

## 2. Mission and Unity – ecclesiology and mission

At nearly every page of the report of commission VIII, one can discern a strong advocacy for moving towards much greater unity than seemed possible and reasonable to expect at that time. A united church was considered to have more success in mission *and* also to be the essential aim of mission: " for the achievement of the ultimate and highest end of all missionary work - the establishment in these non-Christian lands of Christ's one Church - real unity must be attained" <sup>5</sup>.

Commission VIII was able to formulate with fascinating clarity two very different ways of approaching the task and challenge of unity. I summarise in the language of the report:

For a *first group of Christians*, the essential lies in the transcending significance of faith in trinity, forgiveness of sins, life everlasting and Christian scriptures seen as authority and guide. Christians are already united by faith and experience in intimate fellowship. Matters on which they still differ - as serious as they are - appear as secondary and subordinate. They should be reconciled within the essential unity that exists. The model of co-operation which could be developed on that basis is that of a federation of churches in which every church retains the full freedom of doctrine and polity, but recognising the ministry and ordinances of the others, and allowing members to freely transfer from one to the other federated church. No complete uniformity would have to be reached. Divisions should not be imposed on churches born of mission work, but let them develop themselves as best adapted to their own life.

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<sup>5</sup> p. 5

In opposition, a *second group* insists that the full and rich tradition of Christianity has to be transmitted to newly planted churches. They agree that there is essential unity, but consider the matters on which there is disagreement as also being essential to divine revelation and the means of grace. There is a responsibility to transmit both the essentials of faith and the safeguards that secure them to the future generations, at home and abroad. Forms of church polity are not indifferent, but embody fundamental truths, essential for the future of Christianity. As a consequence, one cannot join a federation organised following the above-mentioned model, because there is no recognition of ministry. Unity will have to be sought by patient and prayerful thought until one reaches a form in which all that is true in principles and practices can be reconciled<sup>6</sup>.

The commission didn't want to choose between these two positions, but thought of its duty to bring it forward to the delegates. In the report, the necessity to address ecclesiastical differences appeared more than once, in full awareness of their importance. However it was not the task of the conference to enter into debate on those matters. Nor was it recommended to missionary conferences and other means of co-operation to do so. But healing of divisions and of broken unity, as well as the visible demonstration of unity, definitely were among the major concerns of the participating missionaries and church leaders in Edinburgh.

Edinburgh also addressed other than theological factors jeopardising unity. The commission took up an urgent request by correspondents arguing that "national churches" should be encouraged. Obviously there had been disagreement within the commission on this question. The report sees the danger that churches could be drawn to favour national antagonisms and, limited to a "single nation", could offend the principle of unity. Finally, the commission found a medium position:

"We desire only to lay emphasis on the importance of planting a united church, which would embody all that is deepest and truest in national life and which would make it possible for national gifts of mind and character to contribute in the largest possible way to the perfect and complete interpretation of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of Man"<sup>7</sup>.

### Comments and developments

It is fascinating how a conference which had decided not to address divisive theological questions did in fact emphasise the importance of ecclesiology and the visible unity of Christ's church. It looks as if Edinburgh prepared the agenda for the Faith and Order movement which was to start in Lausanne, Switzerland, some 15 years later (1927). The Edinburgh report and decisions prove that a reflection on mission cannot and must not be de-linked from basic questions related to what the church is, how it is constituted, what its mandate and organisational form are, including church discipline and pastoral care.

The relation between church and mission became particularly important at the IMC Tambaram mission conference in 1938, leading to what some have called a period of **ecclesiocentrism in ecumenical mission thinking**. One can consider that this lasted from the middle-thirties until the early sixties. A very fruitful emphasis indeed, which led to the formation of the WCC and the merger of the IMC and the WCC. During that same period, the Church of South India offered in 1947 both a model of unity and a form of integration of mission and church, in particular due to the personality of Lesslie Newbigin, a key figure of

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<sup>6</sup> p. 137

<sup>7</sup> p. 9

all these debates. The legacy of that time is kept and developed in the regular meetings of United/Uniting churches, many of them born during that period and in countries of the global South. In some way, these churches and their movement incarnate one of the dearest visions encompassed in the report of commission VIII: having one united church of Christ as consequence and bearer of mission.

It became however soon clear that this kind of move towards unity could not be generalised, and that some of the ecclesiological questions which are highlighted in the report of commission VIII called for other approaches, in order to take seriously the increasing number of Orthodox churches in the WCC and the new relationships with the Roman Catholic Church after Vatican II.

In 1961, the IMC merged with (and not “into”) the WCC, and this marks one of the most important consequences of the work started at Edinburgh, both as far as cooperation is concerned as well as in terms of the interdependence between mission and church.

**Integration** happened both at world level with the formation of the Division on World Mission and Evangelism in the WCC, but also at national levels in various countries. This has become one of the **major points of debate between Christians of the evangelical mission family and Christians of the conciliar or ecumenical mission family**. It seems that the questions raised during the late 50s and early 60s have not yet been sufficiently dealt with. We still need “healing of memories”, which I consider very important for any progress in co-operation around 2010 and following.

Let me try to briefly mention what is at stake:

**First**, it is essential to find structural forms of church life showing that the ultimate responsibility for mission lies with the church and not with particular groups of Christians, or para-church organisations. Matthew 28 is addressed to all disciples and not just to a few specialists. Those taking decisions in terms of mission must be church leaders or directly accountable to leaders and members of the church. Integration in that sense is an essential point of “no return” in ecumenical missiology.

**Second**, one of the important fears raised by integration was and is that church authorities and politics would hinder missionary freedom and prevent missionaries from taking risks so as to allow the gospel to cross new frontiers. This is a serious concern, as appears already in the Bible in the conflicts between James and Peter, or James and Paul. Keeping unity within an existing community can be in conflict with the move towards new forms of inculturation of the gospel among new groups of people or new sectors of society. Yes, mission can endanger existing forms of church or unity, just as prophecy does. It is thus essential to safeguard both the final responsibility of churches as well as the freedom to engage in mission. Forms can vary, as one can see with the existence of missionary congregations in the Roman Catholic Church, the mission boards of evangelical free churches and their missions (many of whom do practise integration) or the history of CWME within the WCC. We must all struggle to find the right balance between freedom and responsibility.

The **third problem** could well have been the most important one. Seen in retrospective, the movement towards integration of mission and church and the formation of the new WCC after 1961 became parallel to the intensive search for involvement in transformation of society in North and South. One must admit that in the sixties and early seventies, the mission of the church was somewhat neglected in the missiological discourse of the WCC. The emphasis

was on discerning God's mission in the secular world and on the socio-political involvement of Christians for liberation and peace, rather than on the role of the church and the importance of evangelism. As we move towards 2010, we need to unwrap history and distinguish how much of that theological development was really linked to the idea that mission depends on the church and vice-versa, and how much of it was a response to specific political situations.

A clear **turning point** is found in the Ecumenical Affirmation on Mission and Evangelism of 1982, which still is the official WCC document on mission:

“ The mission of the church ensues from the nature of the church as the body of Christ, sharing in the ministry of Christ as Mediator between God and his creation. This mission of mediation in Christ involves two integrally related movements – one from God to creation, and the other from creation to God. The church manifests God's love for the world in Christ – through word and deed, in identification with all humanity, in loving service and joyful proclamation; the church, in that same identification with all humanity, lifts up to God its pain and suffering, hope and aspiration, joy and thanksgiving in intercessory prayer and eucharistic worship. Any imbalance between these two directions of the mediatory movement adversely affects our ministry and mission in the world.”<sup>8</sup>

Enriched by contributions from Catholics and Evangelicals, and taking more seriously its own Orthodox constituency, WCC continued to move towards a renewed affirmation of the relation between church and mission. CWME worked hard to keep a holistic understanding of *missio Dei* keeping the eschatological establishment of God's kingdom of justice and love as the overall horizon of mission. From 1982 on, but in particular since the nineties, CWME revisited the specific calling of the church to witness to Jesus Christ and to form reconciling and healing communities, as part of *missio Dei* and not opposed to it. The formulation of the theme of the world mission conference in Athens in 2005 related *missio Dei* and *missio ecclesiae* in a clearer way than before. Language and content of CWME's work came thus very near to the study of the Faith and Order Commission on *The nature and mission of the church*.

We think these are good preparations for the contribution WCC wants to make to the 2010 celebrations. The following year will also allow us to remember New Delhi 1961, as the key moment in which the theological affirmation of the intimate link between missiology and ecclesiology took an interdenominational and institutional form at worldwide level. We have a 50 years experience and theological wrestling with the relation between church and mission. We know we share this concern with the Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches, as well as with a number of missiologists and mission leaders from evangelical organisations and churches. We want to do whatever is possible to deepen the dialogue with all.

### **3. From the “evangelization of the world in this generation” to “this generation's mission in a globalised world”**

The famous watchword of Edinburgh was not the matter of the debates of commission VIII. It seems however important to include in this presentation a reflection on the way our

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<sup>8</sup> § 6

understanding of mission has changed since 1910 and how we would formulate the most urgent priorities in mission from an ecumenical point of view as we come nearer to 2010.

The world has profoundly changed since 1910 and despite all missionary efforts of all the churches, including the impressive growth of Pentecostalism, there are today still as many or as less Christians in the world as at the time of Edinburgh, i.e. roughly a third of the world population. Realistically speaking, it doesn't make sense thus to just repeat the Edinburgh watchword. The debates during the whole history of the IMC indicate the width of matters, concerns and struggles which were key to our missionary forefathers. Think of their involvement in the question of racism, peace, education, health, economic injustice, secularisation, among others. When the WCC defends a holistic approach to mission, it is in the tradition of the missionary movement and has not left it for politics. This should of course not be interpreted in the sense that there is nothing to criticise in the WCC! But discernment is requested as to what precisely is faithful or unfaithful to the gospel... or the Edinburgh tradition.

We have of course experienced in the middle of last century a significant shift with the move to understand mission first and foremost as God's own concern and involvement, expressed since Willingen 1952 by the famous concept of *missio Dei*. This was a turning point in the sense that the question of faithfulness was not just hooked to the best way the church could fulfil a great commission, but to the discernment of the trinitarian God's own presence and action in the world, inside and outside the faithful Christian community. The new watchword which could have been "God's mission for this generation" led to a liberation of mission from legalistic forms of interpretation of Jesus' mission command and allowed for an opening up to the Spirit's new and surprising involvement within all of humanity. In particular in the sixties and around the Uppsala assembly of the WCC, a specific focus on humanisation of structures and the development of peoples<sup>9</sup> empowered thousands of communities of the poor and downtrodden, the victims of colonialism, to raise up, feel called by God, respected and liberated for a realistic hope of change towards an embodiment of the most intimate values of the gospel. This may have been linked with extreme interpretations of mission and with at times uncritical appreciations of political or social developments. Evangelical mission movements have reacted strongly against these tendencies, which they thought were unacceptable forms of "social gospel". We moved into a huge confrontation, disastrous for the mission movement in general and alienating efforts at more unity. As we turn our eyes to 2010 and beyond, we should find a way to confess mutual exaggerations and disrespect, and progress *in this generation* with the healing of memories on the way of an authentic reconciliation process.

The Lausanne covenant of 1974 appeared at the highest point of the conflict. Thanks to its recognition of the importance in mission of both evangelism (considered as priority) and socio-political involvement, it provided also a first step towards a renewed approach. At WCC level, following the debates at the Nairobi assembly in 1975 and the publication of Pope Paul Vs encyclica "Evangelii nuntiandi", we were able to find a new synthesised formulation of mission in the 1982 Ecumenical Affirmation. I have already quoted the foundational double mission of the church and want here just to remind ourselves of another key formulation on our way towards renewed faithfulness:

"There is no evangelism without solidarity; there is no Christian solidarity that does

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<sup>9</sup> it was the time of the encyclical *Populorum progressio*

not involve sharing the knowledge of the kingdom which is God's promise to the poor of the earth. There is here a double credibility test: a proclamation that does not hold forth the promises of the justice of the kingdom to the poor of the earth is a caricature of the gospel; but Christian participation in the struggles for justice which does not point towards the promises of the kingdom also makes a caricature of a Christian understanding of justice"<sup>10</sup>

This is faithful mission as we still understand it.

The world has profoundly changed in comparison with the context of the debates just mentioned – let us remember that the whole debate on mission in the 20<sup>th</sup> century was caught up in the conflict between capitalism and socialism from 1918 to 1989. Since then, we are in a period of a unilaterally polarised world with one superpower and an economic and political structure sometimes referred to as the “empire”. With the rise of new powers in East Asia and the developments both in Europe and Latin America, that political context may change in the coming decades. Still, we are confronted with a globalisation having both economic and cultural consequences, many of them most dangerous for humanity and creation. At the same time, the landscape of Christianity has profoundly changed, with strong acceleration of the growth of neocharismatic churches in the last 30 years. Edinburgh was not one of the most powerful mission centers in 1910, it will definitely be at the periphery of Christian majorities in 2010. The strongholds of Christian spirituality have moved towards the South and the East, even if formal power centers remain for a certain time in what is called the North. What then are the priorities of mission in this generation?

Actually, I am tempted here to quote an article of the WCC constitution, because I believe it provides the guidelines for our understanding of mission and embodies the emphasis of Edinburgh on cooperation, unity and mission:

" The primary purpose of the fellowship of churches in the WCC is to call one another to visible unity in one faith and one eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and common life in Christ, *through witness and service to the world*, and to advance towards that unity *in order that the world may believe*".<sup>11</sup>

**Two forthcoming events** can help us grasp what we think are priorities in Christian witness in the coming months and years:

The first meeting of the **Global Christian Forum**, scheduled for November this year, is an attempt at creating at world level a space of dialogue for representatives of the major Christian churches and movements of this generation. It will include invitations to many more churches and mission movements than was the case in 1910. The most recent world mission conference in Athens was like a foretaste of such a Forum meeting. It seems essential to offer such possibilities of encounter and dialogue to acknowledge publicly how the face of Christianity has changed in one century. Some of the most dynamic mission movements are to be found among Christian traditions not represented in any of the formal fora that exist as a consequence of the structures of last century. We must imagine new forms of meetings and dialogues, to give visibility and credit to the spiritual revolution brought by the Pentecostal and charismatic movements and churches. This is the pre-condition for starting with them a fruitful theological dialogue on priorities and disciplines in mission. **In that sense, we need a**

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<sup>10</sup> § 34

<sup>11</sup> Constitution of WCC, article III. Mission-related formulations in italics here. Not so in the original.

**new Edinburgh** and one can only hope that the celebration we foresee for 2010 will be a step in that direction! The history of the IMC and CWME holds important lessons of successes and errors in mission, from which some of the newer movements with centers in the South could profit. At the same time, the older Christian traditions need the revigorating experience and theologising on the Holy Spirit if they want to be renewed in their own missionary and evangelistic motivation.

We prepare a **convocation on just peace** for 2011, which will be the concluding event of the *Decade to Overcome Violence*. In the present world context, with rising temptations at all levels to justify the reference to violence in conflicts, this is a priority. In particular because religions, Christianity included, are more and more misused to fuel conflicts and so increase their destructive effect by absolutising issues at stake. Fundamentalists of all religions, ours included, join ideological or nationalistic fundamentalists to win their cause by taking over power and might. It is urgent to react against such a trend which is today's major form of the temptation to which our Lord was submitted at the very beginning of his ministry. We believe it's the truth of the gospel which is at stake, because Christ's death on the cross is the core of our message – a message confirmed on Easter: God chooses not to dominate the world "from above" through a politically reigning Messiah, but to offer himself "from below", in and through the person of the suffering servant. The convocation will highlight the best of the ideals defended within the IMC, where the struggle for peace was at the top of priorities<sup>12</sup>. We call on all to combat the logic and ideology of violence, the structures and traditions, the economic and political systems that favour and increase violence and destruction, both of humanity and God's creation.

It is of particular urgency that mission be understood and practised in a way which does not lead to an increase of hatred and violence. Some methods, thus, we believe, must be rejected, be they "efficient" in the short term. Mission, as we use to affirm, must be "in Christ's way" or must be challenged. In that sense, we hope that 2010 and 2011 will enable us to progress towards a better theory and practice of non aggressive or non violent form of evangelism or proclamation, keeping the bold witness to Christ and God's kingdom in creative tension with respect for men, women and children of all convictions, all made in God's image. That's one of the reasons we are involved with Roman Catholic, evangelical and Pentecostal churches in searching for a code of conduct on conversion. In Athens, we managed to point towards the essential importance of the multiplication of healing and reconciling communities, whose radiating and welcoming influence would lead to such an ecumenically responsible evangelism.

WCC has not abandoned the concern for evangelism, but we think it has to be embedded as part of a holistic mission, and must be connected with the illumination and radiation brought by living missional communities. Ecumenically responsible evangelism has to be a proclamation which, while critical of human pride and sin, makes it clear that God wants peace and not war, life and not death, unity and not division, forgiveness and not vengeance.

Why should we insist so much on the necessity to overcome violence and move towards a just peace and non aggressive ways to witness? Edinburgh had a wonderful watchword and vision. However the most radical challenge to it didn't come from liberal theologians or early ecumenical missiologists, but was brought by the first world war, just four years after Edinburgh – violence resulting from excessive nationalistic power struggles and ideologies

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<sup>12</sup> Let us remember that the IMC contributed to create the Commission of the Churches for International Affairs even before the WCC existed.

and performed by "Christian" nations where all the missionary headquarters of that time were situated. What a counter-witness – from which we in the South at least haven't yet recovered!

This generation's mission in a globalised world includes healing of Christian divisions, building communities of healing and reconciliation, challenging all justifications of violence, striving for peace as God's gift and sharing the gospel in Christ's way.

To be enabled for this mission, we need to pray to God the Holy Spirit to challenge, guide and transform us, both as persons, as churches, so that the world may believe and be transformed.