

Partnership in Holistic Mission in the New Millennium: A Reflexion on Mission Practice and Missional Identity¹

KJETIL AANO

Background

We live in a world where we — in spite of the disparities between us regarding wealth and money, political power and influence and access to expressing our rights — as Christians depend on one another, and depend on learning from one another.

Partnership is an ideal. It is a way of expressing that although the different actors may play different parts or may have varying roles, we are of equal importance.²

But it is also a reality. And that reality is expressed - among other things — through sharing reflections and resources; through telling of our experiences of our victories and our failures; and through reflecting together on where we are, and where we wish to go.

The Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY) has for years been source of inspiration and strength to many overseas mission partners and sister churches. The spirituality of the church inspires, many are uplifted by tales of continued church growth and faithfulness.

In this article I wish to underline this partnership by demonstrating how EECMY and NMS mutually influence one another both in theology and in strategic development.

The grand scene

As a Western based mission society, NMS reflects the Western missionary character of the global church, as it was in the 19th and parts of the 20th century. For a long time Western mission agencies acted as if the mission task had been given exclusively to the Western Church; and as if Mission was genuinely and exclusively a part of the identity of the Western World³. This understanding may be summed up as follows:

It was the task of the West to bring the gospel to the rest.

It was the task of the Christian West to Christianize the rest.⁴

However mission orders and agencies that came out of catholic and protestant revivals in the West greatly changed the face of Christian church. Towards the middle of the 20th century these changes were becoming evident in many ways: The centre of world Christianity was moving southwards. Some of the historical churches were beginning to wane, and the Christian heartland of Europe was experiencing secularisation on many levels, and gross loss of members.⁵

While the nations of the South, whether former colonies or not, were questioning western political and economic dominance, the new churches in the south were challenging the domination of the western churches, missions and development agencies. This happened through ecumenical organisations like The World Council of Churches (WCC), and in bilateral conflicts as for example between the Africa Inland Mission and Africa Inland Church of Kenya.⁶

NMS as part of the Church in the West

Mission agencies reacted with different strategies to these challenges, and many are still in the middle of dealing with the cultural, economic and structural consequences of them.

Also NMS is influenced by changed conditions. The organisation tries to hold on to its basic vision, but at the same time to acknowledge that the globalisation of the church has fundamentally changed the role and function of a western mission agency.

Let me share with the readers some of the reflections in these changes.

The EECMY-letter of 1972

In 1972 the general secretary of the EECMY, Rev. Gudina Tumsa, was already a highly respected international figure. His influence, particularly on The Lutheran World Federation, was considerable. An evangelical church leader with such an international standing was at the same time a threat to the Dergue and its marxist regime.

Therefore, when the Mekane Yesus Church⁷ presented a letter to its mission and ecumenical partners⁸, the reactions were powerful. Both the mission partners and the ecumenical movement were impressed by the strong message of the letter.

The letter was influential in two ways: It criticized the ecumenical movement for not sufficiently supporting the churches in their evangelistic endeavour. And likewise, it pointed at the tendency within the mission bodies towards spiritualizing physical needs. Both were challenged to think and act holistically. The letter represents a kairos-moment for the EECMY, and was an eye-opener to many of the church's partners, both relating to the challenges facing the global church, and to the growing influence of the global south, here represented by the general secretary of the EECMY.

Europe as mission field?

The second element that contributed to a change was a practical decision to take up mission work in Europe. Towards the end of the 1970's NMS was challenged to start a mission project in Paris, to work in co-operation with the Lutheran church in France, with African students living in one of Europe's most secular capital cities as the main target group.

For NMS mission in Europe was a small revolution. It changed the world map. Until then there had been some places that were mission fields, and some that were not. Mission had until then been thought of merely in terms of geography — it was to bring the gospel from Jerusalem to Judea and the ends of the world.⁹

African mission activities

The theological lesson of this change is that mission is not an exclusive right of the western church. It is furthermore clear that the notion of mission fields can no more be restricted to the two thirds world. The traditional distinction between mission as something done among the non-western nations, while what is evangelisation is what the church does in the West, no longer holds water.

This builds on sheer observation: Mission is no longer solely a Western activity. It becomes obvious through the development of missionary movements in and from the churches of the global south. Some of them invited western agencies like NMS to work with them, f. ex. in a joint mission to the Fulani-speaking population of West Africa¹⁰.

Another factor was our introduction to the theological thinking that was inspired by and developed around Lesslie Newbigin. He was for 35 years a British missionary to India, at the same time a leading missiologist and ecumenist, and when he returned to Europe in the late 1970's he took up the challenge of the mission to thy western (European) world. Parallel with him, a group of primarily of American theologians developed the idea of the missional church. On the outward scene, the fall of Communism exposed western churches to the results of 50 years of atheistic propaganda in Eastern Europe. All this resulted in a new reflection on the nature of the task of mission¹¹.

Mission: From task to dimension, from Western to global

NMS thus had to ask the question what it means to be a missionary movement within a church, when churches are established many places around the world. When Christendom does not make sense in the same way as previously, what do we then do? NMS was set up to share the gospel where it is not known, and we have — to some extent — or to a large extent — done that. What now?

Western mission organisations have tended to respond in accordance with one of the three following patterns:

- a) Accept that the role of the organisation is over, the role as finished, the job done.

- b) In self critical assessment of the negative outcome and non intended irreversibility of western mission activity, lay down the work, and say: "Sorry, the time for cross-cultural mission is over. In view of all the criticism and negative side-effects, we don't believe in imposing our religion on anyone anymore", and change focus from mission to development and from proclamation to dialogue.
- c) Seek ever more remote, unevangelized groups to target. There are still many areas almost unreached by Christian missions. A whole new world is being revealed f. ex. in Central Asia. More areas in the Far East are opening up. And more locally, NMS has worked in the Blue Nile Valley, and built churches among the Gumuz. Is the role of a mission agency now to cross the river, and do the same on the north bank?

There are elements I believe are vital to any mission movement in all of these reactive patterns, and western mission agencies need to relate to them. However the thrust of the approach chosen by NMS has been a different one:

Mission is central to the christian church. It is not merely a task for the few, but a task and a privilege that the Lord has given to his Church. Essentially Mission is God's. That means that we in our acts try to reflect God's sending. As church, we are sent to bear witness to all our people, *and beyond*, in word and deed of God's saving acts in Jesus Christ, and to make visible the signs of his presence among all nations and all people.

As mission organisation, the task is therefore:

1. To make the church to which we belong (national churches) aware of this. Every church is a missional church. By the word 'missional' I am referring to the nature of the church. It is sent, and its very being means to be sent to others.
2. To find ways whereby this mission character is transformed into practical structures so that the gospel flows to the people, and the signs of God's presence through his saving acts and daily Divine blessings are allowed to flow into the lives of men, women and children in this complex and difficult world.
3. To fill these structures and working methods with people who are empowered by the spirit.

As a Church based movement, NMS has rediscovered mission as a dimension of the church. Mission is more than certain activities undertaken by agencies or individuals aiming at achieving certain goals. It is a way of seeing all that the Church does. It is a defining factor in all the Church's activities; in church worship, in confirmation classes, in diaconal projects, in the pastors' encounters and laypeople's meetings; mission understood as sharing the gospel, and the power of the gospel ever more widely, is always present. This understanding of mission as a dimension does not exclude other, equally central aspect of the church: The diaconal dimension is also always there, in church worship, in classes, in encounters; as is the dimension of praise¹².

Rediscovering mission as a dimension of the church and of all the church does forced NMS to review our understanding, and praxis: The major task of our mission is to reinforce that dimension, to contribute towards strengthening the presence of this understanding of mission in all the churches that we work with. This is a threefold task:

The missional dimension of the Church must be preached, presented and shared.

The mission dimension has to be transformed into goals and aims. It must be transformed into something operational, the missional dimension needs to be shaped into missionary structures.

The missional dimension and the missional structure need to be transformed to action and activity. And actions and activities need people. Someone has to do it.

Rediscovering the geographical perspective

In this process we rediscovered the geographical perspective. Geography has been the decisive factor defining mission activity. Through the re-discovery the importance of the *missional character* of the global church, the geographical dimension was highlighted anew, but now as an important aspect of the mission of the church: Scriptures clearly promotes the vision of reaching further and further, and of peoples from farther and farther away turning to the centre and the crux, the Cross.

In NMS this has led to a breach with the slightly humoristic – but none the less historically important - notion of Stavanger as the new Jerusalem from where the good news flows. This allows

us both to cherish the historical importance of Stavanger as a global mission centre. However it also has a liberating aspect and NMS sees its present and future role in light of a global mission partnership.

The global role of Norwegian Christians: "we are all mission agents, and we are all mission fields"

A smaller, but none the less significant challenge in this process was how to understand ourselves Norwegian Christians?

As representatives of the Norwegian Church and mission agencies as NMS we tend to think of ourselves as agents of God, called to do his work. We pray that this may still be true. Accepting a missional understanding of the church necessitates a turning around: Norwegian missions need to see ourselves also as the object of God's mission, by seeing that like the rest of the World, we are his mission field.

This is a theological truth. None of us are there, we have not reached the goal, as Paul says in his letter to the Philippians¹³. But we are working at it, and we are being worked on.

But also on a practical level, we see that this is true. A large part of the population of Norway is de-churched: They, or their parents or grandparents have had a church connection that is now passive or negative. At some time they stopped going to church and relating actively to Christian faith. An even large part of the population is non-churched¹⁴. They have never been part of church, and have no church family tradition. Many are immigrants. Others are secularized in third or fourth generation.

In view of this insight, NMS, like all mission societies based in the West needs to learn how to acknowledge its new role in the new, global church. That may still be a role of great importance, because we still possess tradition, personnel, and finances, we may still be an instrument that can be played by the Lord of the Church. But it will be a different role.

This implies that while also even the church in the West sees itself as a field that needs to be worked on, it is equally important to underscore the fact that in God's world all creatures are primarily *subjects*, men and women are not primarily objects to be worked on by someone else. This has been a learning experience.

Let me share a personal experience with you:

I live in a suburb of Stavanger, an urban area with a population of about 250 000. My suburb has 15000 inhabitants, most of which are members of the Lutheran church. But we have only two small congregations, with an average church attendance of perhaps 200. In other words, there is ample room for church growth and for mission activities.

One November morning I was waiting for the bus. November is cold, wet and dark in our country. There was one other man standing at the bus-stop. He looked rather lost. It turned out he was lost, he was from Texas, and was a Methodist missionary come to preach the gospel to the heathens of Hundvåg, the place where I live. That is how he saw us.

Something strange happened to me there. I felt irritation and aggression coming up, starting from my toes, and finally reaching my head that was thinking: Who do you think you are? What do you, from Texas, think you can teach us? What do you know about Norwegians and our religious timidity that hides faith under layers of culture? About the value of traditions, whereby children are baptized and brought to church by their parents, even when they don't come to church that often. I was about to start on a mini-lecture about all that, but I was saved by the bus that arrived just then.

There is an important lesson here for missions and mission leader: No-one likes to be missionized. But we all appreciate being addressed as co-workers in God's world, and co-walkers in his field.

Words and deeds:

Holding together diaconia and proclamation

In the new missional paradigm, the relation between proclamation and diaconia becomes pivotal. What is the relationship between preaching the gospel and witnessing the kingdom-reality through fighting evil and sharing the gifts God has bestowed on us?

Some would ask: Why should the church do good works? If it does not aim at discipling people and making them Christian,

why should we build hospitals, schools, or do development work? What is the point of it does not directly benefit the church or the mission agencies?

On the other hand, others would say: Is it not now the primary task of the global Christian church to face the real, down to earth, challenges of poverty, inequality, fighting HIV-aids and other pandemics like malaria? These are the real, the pressing needs. When these basic needs are met, there might be room and space for religious convictions or conversions. – There are many voices in the West, also within the churches, that would reflect along these lines.

In NMS a discussion on this relationship has been lively and long. The organisation was one of many western agencies that were deeply influenced by the EEMC-letter of 1972 that was sent to the LWF and the co-operating agencies. I would like to share some of the steps of our reflections on this issue.

1. Until late 1970s, our organisation tended to express our understanding as follows:
Diaconal witness is secondary to the preaching of the word. Without the word, good works don't speak. Preaching has a primary position. Following that notion, good works were seen as secondary and diaconia as a means to an end: Good works may be methods that reach the heart of people, so that the gospel message can be heard and the heart leap for joy.
2. During the 70's and 80's we changed our way of speaking and we saw diaconia as part of our partaking in God's mission. We have learned from the *dimensional approach*: As mission is a dimension of being church so is diaconia a dimension of being church. As mission agencies in our missional approaches, we are not faithful to the gospel or to God of the gospel if we try to leave out the diaconal dimension. God is creator and saviour; he is upholder of creation and renewer of creation; he is the ground on which we walk – and our hope for the future. Diaconia is not mute. It speaks in two ways: It always points at the giver of all good things. And even more importantly, diaconal acts represent the power God's kingdom – transformed into circles of blessing hitting the heart of women and men that live in a world – where evil and sin, suffering and despair, is a reality.

3. Our largest challenge as a western based agency, at this stage, is no longer seeing diaconia primarily as a means to an end, but how to counter the forces that estrange it from its Christian basis. This has a very practical side for us, as supporting bodies in the West demand that funds for development project are not used to support specific religious activities, such as preaching, evangelisation or church construction. We have constant quarrels with them regarding how these limitations are to be understood. And sometimes we are so afraid to cross the line and loose our legal credibility and financial support that we become more Catholic than the Pope, so to speak.

But it also has an ideological dimension. By accepting this western division whereby development is mentally and financially divided from church structures, one may achieve and support a professionalization of these activities that may seem beneficial in the short run. But if diaconal activities are cut off from the communion of believers, from which they flow, we stands the risk of contributing to the secularisation of the church that neither benefits the church nor society.

Development work can be good diaconia. But by weakening the ties with the church, diaconia may deteriorate into becoming an instrument of the ongoing western project of developing the not quite so much developed world, Kjell Nordstokke, director of Department for Mission and Development (DMD) in the LWF, says¹⁵. When that happens, it is no longer a genuine agent of change, and ceases to be an expression of and witness to God's sacramental presence in the world, the in-breaking kingdom of God.

Several of our African partner churches have recently seriously challenged ecumenical mission and development agencies on this point. They express clearly that they do not want a development where the ties that bond diaconia to the church are broken¹⁶. Recently we (NMS) have also been challenged particularly by our partner in Madagascar who says that this may be the way you wish to do things in your part of the world, but it certainly is not the way he wishes to see diaconia in his church¹⁷.

The question a mission organisation and a local church must always ask, is: How do we retain the message that our development work is an expression of our faith? And at the same time that diaconia is not done in order to impose our faith on others through the back-door? And how do we express the close ties between hope and help, between diaconia and the communion of believers, between development works and the in-breaking kingdom of God – and can we do it without losing our funding from secular, governments and other back-donors? And how do we communicate this to the back-donors. We have an ongoing ideological conflict in the West, and perhaps we might loose some of the battles. But perhaps that is better than selling out our soul for money?

Challenging EECMY

How does this story of the challenging reorientation undertaken by NMS as a Western Mission society relate to the EECMY?

I would argue that my main points would relate constructively to issues that are being discussed and worked on in the different settings, not only in Ethiopia and Norway. But allow me to mention some points that would directly challenge the EECMY¹⁸:

Reflection on the local congregational theology and courageous contextualisation

Think highly of your theology and your theological tradition! Why does the EECMY grow? Off course it is the fruit of the Spirit. And fortunately we do not control the movements of the Spirit. But I am convinced that there is a connection between what people experience and what the church communicates. EECMY thrives on theological work that is being done on a daily basis, and on a theological tradition that is being lived and practised, reflected on and shared by thousands of catechists and pastors, every week, every day.

According to the professor at Harvard University, Lamin Sanneh, the Christian Church is the most diverse of all religions. Just look at local expression, vernacular languages; immense variation of music, dress, liturgy and roles¹⁹!

The uniqueness of Christian faith is that what is holy to us, is the living person of Jesus Christ, whom we encounter in the story

that tells of his life, and in the sacraments that make him present here and now, and in the diaconal acts that point at him, and not primarily in holy books or places. African Christianity has not yet taken out in full the spiritual assets that are hidden here. By a more bold approach to context, our churches can be even more renewed. I think we have a long way to go, and a lot of genuine spirituality that is waiting to be exposed.

We too often think of theology primarily as what takes place in the seminaries and academic institutions. Although this is of importance, basically theology is what takes place when the word of God is implanted into the minds of women and men, and when they try to make sense of what they hear, and relate it to the lives they live, with all the relational, existential, practical and spiritual challenges.

Therefore, be proud of your theological traditions. And work on them also at your institutions. There are thousands of stories to be told, of how text meets context, how the encounter with the risen Christ touches the heart, changes the lives and challenges minds and decisions of women and men, and how they structure their lives.

Theology is what happens locally, and theology is a response to particular challenges. As Lutherans we should know this better than most. Therefore I challenge you also to reflect in your studies and seminary/ies and bible schools the challenges that come out of the encounter between Christian faith and the real world that people live in.

The western Church needs it. In a recent book Andrew Walls reflects on the role of African theology, and writes:

“Africa is already revealing the limitations of theology as generally taught in the West. The truth is that Western models of theology are too small for Africa. Most of them reflect the worldview of the Enlightenment, and that is a small-scale world view. Since most Africans live in a larger, more populated universe, with entities that are outside the Enlightenment’s world view such models of theology cannot cope with some of the most urgent pastoral needs. They have no answer for some of the most desolating aspects of life, because they have no questions. They have nothing useful to say on issues involving such things

*as witchcraft or sorcery, since these do not exist in an Enlightenment universe. (...) Western theology has difficulties coping with principalities and powers, whether in relation to their grip on the universe, or to Christ's triumph over them on the cross*²⁰.

There are issues and questions, challenges and reflexions from the life in the EECMY that deserve to be studied locally and reflected on globally; and there are many that would benefit from it.

However, no theology of value comes out of a situation without opposition. It is in the struggle where my own traditions and reactions, convictions and culturally endorsed opinions encounter the vision and wisdom of the global church, over time and space that we may reach and touch on theological depth.

The prophetic voice of the church

The EECMY has in our lifetime gone through a period of persecution and political insecurity that has left it deeply touched. This would have been painful for any church. It is my perception that the fact that, while the church experienced a deep vulnerability due to political and other tension, you had in the late General Secretary, Rev. Gudina Tumsa, one of the few genuinely prophetic voices of the global church. This voice was effectively silenced by the powers that be. Ethiopian Christians know more about the price of prophecy than most, and the painful experience that it entails.

But the church is still called to have a prophetic voice. The biblical basis for its prophetic calling is summed up in one verse in St. Paul's letter to the Galatians:

There is no such thing as Jew and Greek, slave and freeman, male and female. For you are all one person in Christ Jesus²¹.

Here Paul outlines the prophetic task of the Church clearly as battling with three different areas of conflict²²:

- There is the area of ethnic conflict, Jew and Greek
- There is the realm social divisions, slave and freeman
- There is the sphere of gender or sex, male and female.

All these challenge us. It is part of our identity to speak for the rights of men and women. As Christian church we know the value of human beings, we know that we were all created in the image of God. Therefore we cannot allow political powers to act as if men and women are pawns on a chequer board.

Dr. Øyvind Eide has talked and written extensively on the church in revolutionary and post-revolutionary times. He has suggested that what the Mekane Yesus is called to today, is prophetic witness primarily through body language. Such an understanding of the prophetic role of the church would be both challenging and liberating. It means that the prophetic witness of the church is primarily expressed through its social and visible activity, and not necessarily through official protests in the public sphere²³.

Social differences: First relating to the challenge of social differences and injustice: One can not underestimate the power of the example.

When the church treats the poor with respect, the persecuted with love, the enemy with care, the sick with compassion and the excluded with inclusion and embrace, then that is more forceful than most verbal expressions of protest.

I would like to challenge EECMY to think highly of your diaconal work through projects, and not least through the daily running and diaconal witness of your pastors, catechists and lay Christians as the prophetic body language of the church.

On this the church does much.

Ethnicity: I challenge you to reflect on the role of the Church as nation-builder. Perhaps there are more resources in what the church actually is and does that we tend to think. Where else do people from perhaps 50 ethnic groups co-operate, share, plan and strategise together. What other organisation is so ethnically diverse, and where do such a varied group of people share the same vision, joy, faith and hope? The role of the church as a home where not ethnicity nor power struggle between ethnic groups is the main theme, has an enormous effect, when it is used effectively to counteract hatred and divisions. When political and economic tensions arrive, as in Kenya in 2008, who else than the church is able to voice a strong opposition to the violence and hatred, distrust and between the groups?

Even in a situation where you may not be able to speak openly in the public sphere on these issues, or perhaps you may – the way the church lives its life talks loudly enough.

The other side of the coin is when a church becomes the spokesperson of only one specific ethnic group or social interest group it is detrimental and destructive to both church and society.

Gender equality. Understanding the power of imago Dei, or understanding the Pauline teaching on the equality of women and men.

In a number of societies there is an underlying notion not only of different roles between the sexes, but of varying value or worth. I would like to challenge the church to boldly counter such notions. They are not biblical. We all created in the same image of God. When such notions are allowed to prevail in our midst, it must be because we have not taken in the groundbreaking biblical teaching about imago Dei, that we are all created in the image of the same God, and Paul's interpretation of what that should mean in the Church of Jesus Christ. We are all equal in the church. And we all have equal worth.

Where a Christian understanding of mankind is preached, the idea of equal worth is sown, and with varying speed bears fruit. This is also a matter of body language of our church. How does this church make use of the wide varieties of gifts that our women are endowed with? Or are not all their gifts from God or are they not intended for the benefit of his church, his people and his creation?

I note with satisfaction that there are several projects that support the rights of women, that work to counter discrimination and unethical practices, such as female sexual mutilation. But I still think that we here have a long way to go.

This has to do with our prophetic calling our understanding of being created in the image of God, and what we do about it.

Final remarks

Two short remarks:

According to Andrew Walls, all renewal comes from the periphery²⁴. I would like to rephrase it a bit, and say that the renewal of

the Church always comes from unexpected sources. Perhaps we together, the far north and the peripheral centre, are called to play a part, who knows? I think that the Mekane Yesus Church by doing what you are good at, already contribute in a significant way.

Secondly, we should not, any of us, have haughty thoughts about what and who we are. In spite of all the difficulties and challenges, we are actually basically called to be what we are, children of our Father, disciples of Jesus. Let me end by sharing with you an experience that I had with Kenneth Kaunda, former president of Zambia.

A few years ago he was invited together with among others archbishop Desmond Tutu to speak to the political leaders and heads of civil society of Norway, organisations like NMS and Norwegian Church Aid (NCA), on poverty and global problems like Hiv and Aids. He gave a powerful message, but what really made an impression, was how he started. He said:

– Before I speak I would like to sing a song. I always sing before I speak, so that you know who is speaking to you.

Then he sang: – Day by day, all my life, till I die, I will Follow Jesus.

Then added: – Now you know who I am.

That is what it is all about! How can the Church be holistic in our mission? By being who we are, and knowing who we are and what our day to day calling is all about.

Noter

- ¹ This paper was originally delivered at the Committee for Mutual Christian Responsibility (CMCR), in Addis Abeba, January 31st 2008, at the invitation of the leadership of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church, Mekane Yesus, (EECMY).
- ² Norwegian Missionary Society: *Worldwide Joy. Basic Document on Mission*, NMS, Stavanger 2004. Kjetil Aano: "Partnership og accompaniment", i *NyMission* nr. 4, Fredriksberg, 2003, and The Lutheran World Federation: *Mission in Context. Transformation, Reconciliation, Empowerment* Geneva 2004.
- ³ Discussions in Mission Conferences in Madagascar in 1968, 69 and 70 reveals this point of view. It is the task of the independent Church to run the church and its institutions; however, the outreach activities are the responsibility of the mission organisations. Report for NMS Mission conferences; 1986, FK 23/68 p. 100 ff; FK 29/69, p 92 ff; FK 1970 07/70 p. 57 ff.
- ⁴ This is my summing up of the message og the groundbreaking internation mission meeting of Edinburgh 1910. Walls, Andrew: "From Christendom to World Christianity", in *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History*, New York, 2002.
- ⁵ Jenkins, Philip, *The Next Christendom. The Coming of Global Christianity*, Oxford 2002. In the 2nd sequel, *God's Continent. Christianity, Islam and Europe's Religious Crisis*, Oxford 2007, he moderates his thesis, and still has hope for the future of Christian faith in Europe. Davie, Grace, *Europe: the Exceptional Case. Parameters of Faith in the Modern World*, London 2002. Andrew Walls, in "Christianity in the Non-Western World", (Walls A., 2002, p 44), sais: "Colonialism, in fact, helped transform the Christian position in the world by forcing a distinction between Christianity and Christendom. Colonial experience undermined the identification of Christianity with territory, and immobilized the idea of crusade."
- ⁶ In 1973 John Gatut suggested a missionary Moratorium as a means of liberating the mission-dominated churches. Se Gerald H. Anderson: "A Moratorium on Missionaries?" *Christian Century*, January 16, 1974. www.christiancentury.org.
- ⁷ The official name of the Church was for a long time Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (ECMY), as the epitath 'Ethiopian' was strictly restricted to the Orthodox Church of Ethiopia. However, this changed, and in 1975, 'Ethiopian' was added to the name. For short, in daily dealings with the church, it still carries the name Mekane Yesus, which means the Place where Jesus resides.
- ⁸ EECMY Officers: "On the Interrelation of Proclamation of the Gospel and Human Development. EECMY Letter to the Lutheran World Federation and Partner Churches and Organisations", May 1972, in Gudina Tumsa Foundation: *Witness and Discipleship Leadership of the Church in Multi-ethnic Ethiopia in a Time of Revolution*, Addis Abeba, 2003. Gudina Tumsa Foundation: *On the Life and Ministry of the Rev. Gudina Tumsa, late General Secretary of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church, Mekane Yesus (EECMY)*, Addis Ababa, 2002.

- ⁹ The general Secretary of NMS at that time, Odd Bondevik, was a strong supporter of this decision, and there is no doubt the implications of this decision for the understanding of mission in NMS are considerable and consequential.
- ¹⁰ Joint Christian Mission to West Africa, JCMWA, was established as a result of both Western and African initiatives in 1980. Presently it is run as a joint venture, with African leadership and western co-operation.
- ¹¹ Newbigin has written extensively on the subject. His books and articles include: *The other side of 1984. Questions for the Churches*. Geneva 1983, *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture*, London 1986. "Can the West be converted?" *Evangelical Review of Theology*, 11, 1987; "Ecumenical Amnesia", *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 18, 1994. Another source of the shift has been the The Gospel and our Culture movement: Darrell L. Guder (ed): *Missional Church. A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*, Grand Rapids, 1998, and *The Continuing Conversion of the Church*, Grand Rapids, 2000.
- ¹² Influenced by the Missional Church-movement (and The Gospel in our culture-movement) I here challenge the traditional western based distinction between 'mission' is something that takes place beyond the geographical boundaries of the historical churches, while 'evangelism' is the word used for outreach within these geographical areas, and argue that it is outdated and theologically unsound. The basic notion here is that mission in this respect is the dimension of the church where the boundaries of faith and non-faith are challenged.
- ¹³ Phil. 3:12-14.
- ¹⁴ This terminology is taken from the *Mission Shaped Church. Church planting and Fresh Expressions of Church in a Changing Context*, a report to the Archbishop of the church of England, London, 2004. p. 37 – 39.
- ¹⁵ Lecture given at School of Mission and Theology, Stavanger, Feb 2007.
- ¹⁶ There has been a discussion in the Ecumenical Movement regarding the role of the Churches in the newly established global agency ACT-Development. <http://www.actdevelopment.org/pages-en/about-en.html>
- ¹⁷ Response given by Dr. Rakoto Endor Modeste, president of the Malagasy Lutheran Church, (Fiangonana Loterala Malagasy, FLM) at at the NMS' partners meeting in Stavanger, October 2007.
- ¹⁸ The challenges that I here mention are addressed to the EECMY. In spite of their direct address, I include them in the paper, because I would argue that these are challenges relevant to many churches not only in Ethiopia, or Africa for that matter; but that they are pertinent to the purpose and credibility of the global church.
- ¹⁹ Lamin Sanneh: *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture*, New York, 1989.
- ²⁰ Andrew Walls: "Globalization and the Study of Christian History", in *Globalizing Theology. Belief and Practice in an Era of World Christianity*. Grand Rapids 2006.
- ²¹ Gal. 3:26; New English Bible.
- ²² I owe this presentation of Gal. 3:26 to Dr. Øyvind Eide.

- ²³ Øyvind Eide: *Revolution and Religion in Ethiopia: A study of Church and Politics with Special Reference to the Ethiopian Evangelical Church, Mekane Yesus, 1974-85*, Stavanger/Uppsala 2996, Oxford 2000. Eide, Engedal, Kimi-like, Ndossi: *Restoring Life in Christ. Dialogues of Care in Christian Communities. An African Perspective*. Makumira 2008.
- ²⁴ Andrew F. Walls: "Christianity in the Non-Western World. A Study in the Serial nature of Christian Expansion" in: *The Cross-cultural Process in Christian History*. New York, 2002.

Kjetil Aano, b. 1949. Cand.theol., School of Mission and Theology, Stavanger. Missionary pastor, The Norwegian Mission Society (NMS), Madagascar, 1978-88, as evangelist, as head of the evangelism department of the Central Synod in the Malagasy Lutheran Church, and as director of Atsimoniavoko Regional Theological Seminary. General Secretary, NMS, 2000-. Previous work: Immigrant work, Stavanger; editor of the NMS mission journal *Misjons-tidende*; parish pastor; assistant to the diocesan bishop in Stavanger. He has written books and articles on mission and the global church.