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Dealing with Ethnocentrism in this Generation
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SUMMARY

This article discusses how the Christian Church can respond to the current wave of ethnocentrism and how she can avoid ethno-confessionalism. Ethnocentrism is to be distinguished from healthy patriotism. The author points to the biblical concept of *ecclesia* and argues that the Church is by definition inclusive. He criticises the well-known concepts of homogeneous churches and 'church for others' as inadequate, and points instead to a 'church with others' as a representative of God's kingdom, whose aim is the transformation of the whole of life. Finally he argues that the kingdom orientation of the Church has a number of consequences for her development on earth.

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ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Dieser Artikel erörtert, wie die christliche Gemeinde auf die gegenwärtige Welle von Ethnozentrismus reagieren und Ethnokonfessionalismus vermeiden kann. Ethnozentrismus ist von gesundem Patriotismus zu unterscheiden. Der Autor weist auf die biblische Vorstellung von *ecclesia* hin und argumentiert, dass die Gemeinde *per definitionem* allumfassend ist. Er kritisiert die bekannten Auffassungen von homogenen Gemeinden und von „Kirche für andere" als unzureichend und verweist stattdessen auf eine „Kirche mit anderen" als charakteristisch für das Reich Gottes, dessen Ziel die Umwandlung des Lebens insgesamt ist. Abschließend legt er dar, dass die Ausrichtung der Gemeinde auf das Reich Gottes eine Reihe von Konsequenzen für ihre Entwicklung auf Erden hat.

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RÉSUMÉ

Cet article traite de la réponse que l'Église chrétienne peut apporter à la vague actuelle d'ethnocentrisme, et des façons d'éviter l'ethno-confessionnalisme. Il faut distinguer l'ethnocentrisme d'un sain patriotisme. L'auteur renvoie à la notion biblique d'*ecclésia* et défend l'idée que l'Église a par définition une attitude d'accueil. Il critique l'idée d'Églises homogènes comme étant inadéquate, et recommande plutôt une Église ouverte aux autres comme une manifestation du Royaume de Dieu ayant pour visée la transformation de toute la vie. Il soutient que la nature du Royaume de Dieu entraîne de nombreuses conséquences quant à la manière dont l'Église doit se développer sur la terre.

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1. Is there a problem?

I visited Ukraine at the end of the so-called Maidan revolution. This beautiful central square of Kiev was still occupied by the peaceful protestors against the Yanukovich regime. A Pentecostal pastor picked me up at the airport and on the way to the city suggested to me to see the place of revolt. It was late night already. The place was guarded and foreign people like me would not be allowed to enter. 'They know me well here,' the pastor explained. 'In fact I am one of them. The only thing you have to do is to say "Praise to Ukraine". Raise your hand like I do and say the parole and they will let us pass.' So I did and I saw the Maidan.

Praise to Ukraine? Many Ukrainians may not associate these words with nationalism or ethnocentrism. They claim to express their patriotic feelings, as some Russians, Georgians, German or British may also do. Surely there is what we may

call a healthy love for your own nation, culture and language. We do not discuss this patriotism in our paper, but we address the negative side of patriotic attitudes: ethnocentrism. And we do so with a view on the Church and her role in fostering ethnocentrism, or helping to overcome ethnocentric and nationalistic behaviour.

Reflection on this issue is urgently needed since millions of refugees have come to the West and ethnic tensions have become a real challenge to society in literally all European and other Western countries. Ukraine is only an example. The beautiful sentence 'Praise to Ukraine', praising the own nation, often turns in a blunt anti-Russian, hate-generating confession. And many churches are affected. Christians, however, are called to be messengers of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:18–20) and must, therefore, understand the dynamics of ethnocentrism. So what is ethnocentrism and how does it develop?

2. Defining the terms

Ethnocentrism describes 'a tendency to view alien groups or cultures from the perspective of one's own'[1] and evaluates 'other cultures according to preconceptions originating in the standards and customs of one's own culture'.[2] The values and standards of the other are solely measured by one's own culture.[3] James G. Kellas formulates:

> Ethnocentrism is basically a psychological term, although it is also used generally in the study of society and politics… It is essentially concerned with an individual's psychological biases towards his/her ethnic group, and against other ethnic groups.[4]

Ethnocentric individuals view their own culture as normative and judge other groups in relation to their own ethnic group.[5] They tend to apply self-centric views and criteria. Scholars speak of ethnocentrics as 'self-centric groups'[6]. Usually their judgment is favourable towards their own and unfavourable towards the other group.[7] Ethnocentrism forms a foundation on which nationalism and even racism dwells.[8] Ethnocentrism thus has a generally negative connotation.

Ethnocentric attitudes are found in all cultures and societies. Ulrich Rosar speaks of a 'normal pathology' of modern societies which are unable to resolve ethnocentric tendencies.[9] In Europe ethnocentrism has become a mighty river which endangers the political architecture that was developed after the second world war.[10] Ethnocentrism grows in a given society whenever migration is becoming a threat to the majority population. With the unending stream of refugees coming to our countries the question becomes crucial: how do we, the Christian Church, provide an adequate Christian answer to the growing ethnocentric feelings?

Ethnocentrism affects all dimensions of culture including religion. In fact, religion often is the main driving force of ethnocentrism, as studies in different countries show. Y.J. Katz describes the close relationship between conservative beliefs among white South Africans and their ethnocentric views which undergirded racism.[11] In America religious affiliation fosters ethnocentrism and determines political decisions.[12] Dave Capucao proves the immense influence of religion on ethnocentric attitudes among the Catholic and Protestant Dutch.[13] In Germany, and generally in Europe, religion increasingly dominates the debate.[14] A number of conflicts in Europe are religio-ethnically motivated. The wars between Azerbaijan and Armenia in Nagorno-Karabakh, Serbia and Kosovo, Georgia and Russia and even Ukraine and Russia are deeply motivated by tensions between Christians and Muslims, between Orthodox and Protestant, and others.[15]

3. Evangelicals and Mennonites

Does this affect us, the Evangelicals? Yes it does! Paul Freston has shown how Evangelicals play a decisive role in ethnocentrically polarising societies in many countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America.[16] Long ago Martin E. Marty characterised the American Evangelicals as creators of a very successful culture of a so-called chosen minority. He states:

> Their success, in a sense, lies in their ability to offer prospective converts and members the best of both worlds. On the one hand, they provide meaning, belonging, and identity apparently *over against* other Americans while on the other hand they are taught to *fit in with the other Americans* to be the real and true citizens. The Evangelicals address near majorities and then give them a sense of clear minority status.[17]

Evangelicals polarise by the very nature of their exclusive theology of the Church. Setting people apart creates divisions in society.

Nobody knows better how this works than the

Mennonites in Europe and North America. For centuries they lived as an introvert society, reaching only very few of their fellow citizens with the gospel. Evangelism and mission to the *other* took place on the mission fields of Asia, Africa and Latin America. How successful this mission was, can be seen in the growing fellowship of the World Mennonite Conference. The vast majority of the Mennonites today are non-white and come from the global South.

In Western countries the discussion about the danger of social exclusivity and ethnocentricity among the Mennonites was fuelled by the Canadian John Redekop's book entitled *A People Apart: Ethnicity and the Mennonite Brethren*. Redekop argued that the ethnocentricity of his fellow Mennonites was the major obstacle for effective evangelism in North America.[18] This book has become a source of much discussion among Mennonites in North America and beyond. I will not reflect this discussion here.[19] The enormous growth of some Mennonite denominations in traditionally non-Mennonite neighbourhoods in Canada and the USA is the best proof of the change which has since taken place. In other countries, Germany for example, such change is still in progress. Mennonite congregations, especially those with a Russian-German background, still practise ethno-confessionalism as their way of doing church. Reducing faith to their own German-Mennonite culture has literally saved them from extinction in the Soviet Union after the second world war. Ethno-confessionalism became a safe haven to preserve one's faith.[20] With the end of the Soviet Empire most of them migrated to Germany.

The situation in Germany is now different. Mennonites are free to exercise their faith in whatever way they wish, but cultural integration proved to be difficult for most of them. Russian-German Mennonites had never lived in an open democratic society. The opportunities of democracy are being read as endangering faith. Understandably, the majority seek to preserve their belief system in what they know best – ethno-confessionalism. And this places them between tradition and mission.[21] As a result, the Russian-German Mennonites create a parallel world in which they keep their old ways alive. The Russian Baptists and Pentecostals tend to do the same. Consequently, these groups turn out to be completely inadequate to evangelise the other population groups in Germany.[22] Yet they invest millions in mission abroad.

The Mennonites are by far not the only church under ethno-confessional pressure. Many European churches are about to become culturally exclusive and at the same time missionally irrelevant bodies in Western society. How do we overcome this ethnocentrism?

4. Community of the kingdom

There can be no doubt that the Church of Christ must always be an alternative community. Jesus states in John 15:18–19:

> If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world (NIV; compare Jn 17:14–16).

The Church is in the world, but never of the world. It is a distinct community, a sign and a taste of God's kingdom. Jesus said, 'My kingdom is not of this world' (Jn 18:36), but he made it plain that it is in the world (Lk 17:21). The Church, therefore, is planted by Jesus in a place of tension. Howard Snyder puts it right by saying:

> We are to maintain that tension against the strong pull to a more comfortable position either out of the world or totally of the world. This tension of incarnation requires the church to be in some sense a counterculture.[23]

The Church is conformed to Christ, not to the world (Rom 12:2). But this does not imply that the exclusive nature of the Church must lead to an ethnocentric and ethno-confessional status. Although the Church is not of the world, she is sent to the world. As Jesus was sent into the world by the Father who loved the world (Jn 3:16), so he sends his Church (Jn 20:21). And he sends her to all nations of the world, not to preach cultural uniformity, but to disciple the nations as such (Mt 28:19–20). In his holy city the nations will walk in light (Rev 21:23–27). The Church of Christ is a new people of God – a holy nation formed out of many tribes and peoples. The Church is by definition multi-cultural. The community of God's kingdom is neither ethno-centric nor anti-ethnic, but rather integrative and pluriform. It incarnates into all the cultures of the world and transforms them into a divine culture of grace and welcome. God's kingdom is God's *ecclesia* 'called out of the world to accept responsibility for the world',[24] to become the salt of the earth and the light of the world (cf. Mt 5:13-15). How is it then that eth-

nocentric tendencies become so prominent in our churches? And what is the way out?

5. How do we deal with ethnocentrism in our generation?

Because the world around us is rapidly becoming multi-cultural, a comprehensive strategy to reach our multi-optional, multi-lingual and multicultural world is urgently needed. Ethnocentrism in the church prevents the free proclamation of the gospel. How do we overcome whatever prevents mission and evangelism? Let us consider the following:

5.1 New Testament diversity

Our church *is* in practice what we *believe* she has to be. In other words, ecclesiology determines the shape and the practice of a given church. In order to overcome ethnocentricity in our churches we have to develop an inclusive ecclesiology. Such an ecclesiology must be built on the Scriptures. What the Church is must be defined by God's revelation as spelled out in the Bible. The Holy Scriptures are the only valid foundation for our Christian theology and theological practice. A proper ecclesiology is a biblical ecclesiology.

Yet although most Christian traditions agree on this and base their views on the Bible, they still disagree and divide because the Bible does not offer us one theological vision of what the Church is. This conclusion of the Swiss theologian Eduard Schweizer, who conducted the most prominent study of the Church in the New Testament, saying that there is no unified church order in the New Testament,[25] is widely accepted. It is important, however, to add that Schweizer, although he stated this conclusion, still believed that there can be no other foundation for the Church than the New Testament.[26]

The New Testament offers us more than a hundred images for the Church. Church traditions have tended to base their ecclesiologies on some of these and neglected others. We suggest to incorporate them in an integral view and to establish a common ground for a global understanding of what the Church is. In this we follow Orlando Costas, who suggested using some *master images* of the Church while not neglecting the others, but using these master images to establish a hermeneutical matrix for all other New Testament images of the Church.[27] In this article I will examine one of these images, the term *ecclesia*, to prove

the approach.[28] Let us examine its validity for an integrative view on the missional Church.

5.2 *Ecclesia*

Jesus says in Matthew 16:18 that he will build his Church, and he calls the Church *ecclesia*. He says to the apostle Peter: 'And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.' The Greek term used here for church, *ecclesia*, means *calling out*. In the ancient world this word described a meeting of all citizens of a given city for basic political decisions.[29] Whatever the city did to promote, improve and protect life in the city was decided by the *ecclesia*. Jesus also uses this term as a direct translation of the Hebrew *qahal Yahweh*, which is similarly used in the Old Testament for political gatherings of all Israel (1 Chr 28:8; 29:1, 10; 2 Chr 29:28, 31; 30:2–3; etc.).[30]

Ecclesia in the view of Jesus is a community of people *called out of the world to accept responsibility for the world*. Consequently, as we said already, Jesus calls his disciples 'salt of the earth' and 'light of the world' (Mt 5:13–15). His followers are called out of the world as they do not belong to the world around them any longer; they are not of the world, but they are left in the world (Jn 17:16–18) to be ambassadors of God. They are indeed sent to proclaim to the world that God reconciled himself with the world through Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world (2 Cor 5:18–20). Whatever they will bind or loosen on earth will be bound or loose in heaven (Mt 16:16–17).

Wherever the Church of Christ is being built, she will have to focus on her *ecclesial* nature. There can be no Church of Christ not following Christ's own standard. The ecclesial character of the Church presupposes a number of distinctives.

First, *ecclesia* is always *a local reality*. Nowhere in the New Testament is the term used structurally in a global, or even regional, manner, except where it describes the nature of the Church in relation to God (Eph 1:22; 3:30; 1 Cor 1.2). It is, as a rule, the particular church in Jerusalem, Ephesus, Rome or elsewhere. As soon as an ecclesial reality in a region is mentioned, for instance in Asia, it will be marked by the use of a plural form, 'churches' (1 Cor 16:19).

Secondly, *ecclesia* nowhere describes a homogeneous group of people. It covers the *whole of the community* in all its diversity: men and women, poor and rich, Jews and Gentiles. The term means a social territory in principle and never a social cat-

egory or a selected homogeneous group of like-minded or like-classified people.

Thirdly, *ecclesia* describes a *responsible gathering facing all issues of communal life*. Nothing relevant to the life of the local community is excluded. The Church is life-driven and not task-driven. Her responsibility is to represent and to communicate the values of God's kingdom because the gospel she preaches is the gospel of the kingdom (Mk 4:23; 9:35) which encompasses all spheres of life.

The ecclesial nature of the Church is *inclusive* in principle. Ethnocentricity has no place in such a concept. Whoever becomes a member of the Church must understand and accept this. Thus teaching the biblical foundation of the Church becomes crucial in overcoming ethnocentricity.

5.3 Theocentric and made by the Spirit

The *ecclesia* is God's agent of mission on earth. This said, everything the Church is and does is aiming to fulfil God's own mission on earth. She is missionary by her very nature. In today's world we call her missional.[31] The difference between missionary and missional churches is: 'Missionary churches *do mission* (among other activities), missional churches *are mission*.'[32] The missionary nature of the Church is her major characteristics. As such the Church is God-centred.

The Church is a 'Body of Christ' (Eph 1:23) created by the Spirit who implants the individual members of the body in an act of spiritual baptism (1 Cor 12:13). As such the Church is not of this world (Jn 15:19). She is a Spirit-made, a Spirit-guided spiritual reality. It would be completely wrong to identify the Church with any societal institution. In God's view she needs to be preserved as holy, without blame (Eph 5:27) and clearly distanced from any organisational patterns the world follows (Rom 12:2). She is the place where God, her creator, lives and nothing else is as important for her as living for the glory of God (Eph 1:3–11). The missional Church represents God in her midst. And whatever she is and does, she is and does it *in him*. The missional Church never does her own thing, never works to satisfy her own interests and programmes. She has joined God and, therefore, follows him in everything. And it is God who cares for her need, God who satisfies her basic desires. He is her Father who gives her what she needs. God cares for his Church because only through his care she will be able to accomplish her task on earth. Without him she can do nothing (Jn 15:5). God and God alone is the

warrant for her effectiveness and spiritual success. As a spiritual reality, the Church is God-centred and not ethno-centred. She indulges in his mission and not in her own. And his mission is global and never reduced to a single *ethnos*. To overcome ethnocentricity means to teach the Church what her mission is and what she stands for.

5.4 Incarnational – not homogeneous

The Church is a spiritual reality, but a reality which exists in this world. She is not of the world, yet sent into the world (Jn 17:16-19). The world is the place she is engaged in. And she does this in human terms. Thus she is also *human* by nature. Her members are humans among humans, her means are of human culture and her forms are socio-cultural forms. She is among the people. And the world she is in is first and foremost the local community. The church is ecclesia, a local assembly of believers called out to accept responsibility for the place she is inhabiting – for the Jews in Jerusalem a Jewish Jerusalem church, for the Greeks in Ephesus an Ephesian Greek church. A missional church is identified as this local *ecclesia*. And this in turn means there can never be a globally unified church structure or form. The Church of Christ is contextual in principle. She adapts the language and cultural form understood by the local people, becomes flesh amongst the people in order that the locals may see the glory of God among them and comprehend. A missional understanding of the Church creates the opportunity to plant churches all over the world while preaching the only true gospel in a variety of ways, languages and forms.[33]

The local nature of the church always includes the *total local ethnos*. To divide the social space into certain homogeneous groups as suggested by the North-American Church-Growth-Movement for the sake of evangelism[34] is biblically irresponsible. In no way does the New Testament teach us such an approach.[35] The concept is theologically as well as missiologically problematic, as Wilbert Shenk points out in his study on the consequences of this theory for the Muslim world.[36] Concentration on certain groups in society will soon create what C. Wayne Zunkel once called 'People and Kingdom Blindness'.[37] The church will lose sight of the people around her, stop to see the context she is in, and miss the target to develop a kingdom presence in the surrounding context. Homogeneous churches easily tend to advocate ethnocentric ideas. Concentrating all church activity on a local

social territory with all the specific characteristics and heterogeneity which this context yields will soon give rise to ethnocentric tendencies.

God's mission in the world is motivated by selfless love (Jn 3:16), seeking the restoration of humans into his image. To achieve this God sent his Son, Jesus Christ, into the world. In Jesus he reconciled himself to the world (2 Cor 5:18). Following Jesus, the master, the Church concentrates on reconciling the world to God. The whole world! Her mission can never concentrate on parts of humanity, nor even on humanity only. The Church is a messenger of reconciliation to the world. And nobody is excluded. All creation waits for the revelation of the children of God (Rom 8:19).

5.5 For others or with others

The whole Church is sent to the whole world. Her mission is in the world. She is there for the world. It is widely accepted in missiological circles that mission requires involvement, contextualisation and enculturation. You cannot reach people with the gospel without learning their language, rituals and rules, values or other religious and cultural settings. Only when we understand the people will we start to communicate meaningfully to them so that they may understand what we have in mind. The mission of the Church is for the people and the Church is 'a community for the world',[38] or as Dietrich Bonhoeffer puts it, 'The church is the church only when it exists for others … The church must share in the secular problems of ordinary human life, not dominating, but helping and serving.'[39]

But how do we find in-routes into a foreign culture? How do we become such a *church for others* without falling into the helper syndrome of 'pro-existence', as Theo Sundermeier critically observes in his reflection on Bonhoeffer's phrase and its liberal-humanist background?[40] Too often the *church for others* knows better what the others need and the helper soon dominates those in need of help. Sundermeier therefore suggests that, instead of talking about a church f*or others,* we should speak of 'the church *with* others'.[41] Not pro-existence is required in mission, but co-existence.[42]

Similarly, Sandra Gourdet suggests that identification with the people can only be reached through realistic participation in the life of the people, which requires that we less work *for* the people but rather *with* them.[43] Without being close to the people we will not be able to develop proper ways

of missionary communication because we will not be able to learn from and with them.[44] Learning together with those whom we seek to evangelise is a crucial precondition for any meaningful evangelism.[45] Evangelisation requires an open space in which all participants in the process are welcome to share their part of the story without limits. Such an open space presupposes a culture of welcome,[46] which again lays the foundation for trust. And mission requires trust. Marvin Meyers even speaks of a 'question of prior trust' which rules all effective Christian mission.[47] Living with the people, joining hands with the people for a transformation of life, builds trust and consequently wins people for the kingdom of God. In relationships of trust there are no egocentric or ethnic feelings of superiority. By teaching the Church to work on building trust, we will soon discover a major reduction of ethnocentric and ethno-confessional attitudes.

6. Sign and messenger of the kingdom

Let us summarise. The missional Church proclaims the gospel of the kingdom in times of globalisation and growing ethnocentric tendencies in the world. She prays as Jesus taught, 'Your kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven' and in everything she concentrates on the kingdom first, well knowing that her good Lord will provide whatever she needs (Mt 6:33). She is first and foremost kingdom-driven, a kingdom community, a sign and messenger of the kingdom of God. The kingdom orientation of the Church has a number of consequences for any church development on earth.

First, the Church representing God's kingdom can never be totally at home on earth. In everything she is and does she is an expression of God's kingdom. Her form, expressions and programmes must communicate God's ideas on life, community and culture. In consequence, let us teach the Church who she is and she will embrace the world – the people in their contexts – as her master did.

Second*, the Church representing God's kingdom is holistic and integral in principle.* She covers the whole of life. She is interested in spiritual as well as social and material matters of life. There can be no dualism between the sacred and the profane, the spiritual and the social. In fact, all aspects of life are covered by her interest to transform the socio-cultural space, the ethnos, into a disciple of Christ as the great commission suggests (Mt 28:19–20). In consequence, let us teach the Church what her mission is, and she will concentrate on transform-

ing lives rather than on particular ethnic or confessional interests.

Third, *the Church representing God's kingdom is community-centred*. She is God's ecclesia, called out of the world of the people to accept responsibility for the world in which the people live. Community development is what she does in her mission also. In consequence, let us teach the Church to concentrate on local issues, see the local people and needs, and she will soon be less self-centred. The love for her neighbours will change her attitude towards them.

Fourth, *the Church representing God's kingdom is intrinsically evangelistic*. She is set to proclaim the gospel, the evangel, and she communicates the gospel in life, deeds and words. Evangelism here is an integral process and includes elements of life-witness, social engagement for a better life and verbal proclamation.[48] It is built on mutual trust, which grows out of joint action for good life. In consequence, let us teach the Church to live gospel-mindedly among and with the people around her, and she will soon overcome any ethno-centric feeling of superiority.

Fifth, *the Church representing God's kingdom is a sign and example of the new humanity*. As God's people, she represents a matrix of God's idea of a good and righteous life (2 Cor 5:21). God realises his idea of peoplehood in her with all the elements that establish a nation. But she is never national, never ethno-centric. The mission of the Church, therefore, targets nations, disciples nations and teaches them to live according to what Jesus taught (Mt 28:19). In consequence, let us involve the Church in her mission of the kingdom, and she will overcome all egoisms of ethnocentricity.

Back to the introductory story. I am deeply impressed by the Ukrainians' love of their nation. However, there is a fine line between patriotism and nationalism, and that line is marked by whom we praise. Christians are called to live for the glory of God (Eph 1:3–11). They consciously praise God and not their own tribe. They invest time and strength patriotically to build up their own nation to become a disciple of Jesus (Mt 28:19–20). This opens the horizon to God's kingdom, which embraces the whole world, all nations and tribes and overcomes ethnocentrism inviting mission to become the new and only motivation for our feelings and dealings.

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Endnotes

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25 Eduard Schweizer, *Gemeinde und Gemeindeordnung im Neuen Testament* (Zürich: Zwingli Verlag 1959) 7.

26 Schweizer, *Gemeinde und Gemeindeordnung.*

27 Orlando Costas, *The Church and its Mission. A Shattering Critique from the Third World* (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1974) 4–10; Reimer, *Die Welt umarmen,* 40–41.

28 See in more detail Reimer, *Die Welt umarmen,* 40–52.

29 Lothar Coenen, 'Kirche', in L. Coenen, E. Beireuther and H. Biedenhard (eds), *Theologisches Begriffslexikon zum Neuen Testament* 3rd edn (Wuppertal: Brockhaus, 1972) 784.

30 Coenen, 'Kirche', 785; see the discussion in Reimer, *Die Welt umarmen,* 42.

31 David Barrett, 'Defining Missional Church', in James R. Krabill, Walter Sawatzky and Charles E. Van Engen (eds), *Evangelical, Ecumenical and Anabaptist Missiology in Conversation. Essays in honor of Wilbert R. Shenk* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2006) 178–179; Johannes Reimer, *Leben. Rufen. Verändern. Chancen und Herausforderungen gesellschaftsrelevanter Evangelisation heute* (Marburg:

Francke, 2013) 70–71.

32 Reimer, *Leben,* 71.

33 Eddie Gibbs and Ryan K. Bolger, 'Post-Modern Forms of the Church', in Krabill, Sawatzky and Van Engen, *Evangelical, Ecumenical and Anabaptist Missiologies,* 186.

34 See in this regard Donald A. McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), German: *Gemeindewachstum verstehen. Eine grundlegende Einführung in die Theologie des Gemeindeaufbaus* (Lörrach: Simson, 1990) 199. A famous example of application of this principle is the Saddleback Church in Los Angeles with Pastor Rick Warren, who believes that many kinds of church are needed in order to reach a social space with the gospel; see Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995); German: *Kirche mit Vision: Gemeinde die den Auftrag lebt* (Asslar: Projektion J., 1998) 31.

35 Rene Padilla´s study of the validity of McGavran's theory shows that there is no base for such a theory in the New Testament; Rene Padilla, *Mission Between the Times. Essays on the Kingdom* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985) 168.

36 Wilbert R. Shenk, *Exploring Church Growth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983) 144–147.

37 Wayne C. Zunkel, *Church Growth under Fire* (Kitchener: Herald Press, 1987) 105–110.

38 Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* IV/3 (Edinburgh: T. &T. Clark, 1962) 762–764.

39 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison.* Enlarged edition (London: SCM, 1971) 382–383.

40 Theo Sundermeier, 'Konvivenz als Grundstruktur ökumenischer Existenz heute', *Ökumenische Existenz Heute* 1 (1986) 62; see also David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission. Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2011) 384.

41 Sundermeier, 'Konvivenz', 62.

42 Sundermeier, 'Konvivenz', 65.

43 Sandra R. Gourdet, 'Identification in intercultural communication', *Missionalia* 24.3 (1996) (399–409) 407–408.

44 David J. Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally. An Introduction to missionary communication* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991) 46.

45 Jacob A. Loewen, *Culture and Human Values: Christian Interpretation in Anthropological Perspective* (Pasadena: WCL, 1977) 36; see also Gourdet, 'Identification', 407.

46 More on the concept of participation in a culture of welcome in Johannes Reimer, *Hereinspaziert: Willkommenskultur und Evangelisation* (Schwarzenfeld: Neufeld, 2013) 140–144.

47 Marvin K. Meyers, *Christianity Confronts Culture* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981) 32–33.

48 More in Reimer, *Hereinspaziert,* 226–246.