

■ ABSTRACTS

Andrea Strübind, The International Fellowship of Reconciliation as an ecumenical and interfaith forerunner for human rights

This article examines the significance of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation for the Civil Rights Movement in the USA. Under the leadership of Martin Luther King, the Civil Rights Movement had been able to mobilise the first non-violent mass protest in the Montgomery Bus Boycott in 1955. The history of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation, this major ecumenical-pacifist organisation, has generally been subject to very little research, especially with regard to Europe. The International Fellowship of Reconciliation supported the developing Civil Rights Movement in the USA in idealistic and materialistic respects and in terms of staffing and organisation. In particular, it introduced »know how« and insight into the Gandhi-style methods of non-violent resistance. Nevertheless, the Civil Rights Movement had indisputably generated its own unique character and had a very distinctive profile with respect to theology, practice and spirituality, which was irrevocably associated with the Black Church.

Gerhard Besier, 80 Years of the World Council of Churches: Theological, Political and Societal Ambiguities

The journey of the World Council of Churches (WCC) [*der Ökumenische Rat der Kirchen or ÖRK*] from 1948 to 2018 is a clear reflection of the great hopes that many people placed in the creative power of Christianity in the post Second World War years. However, despite its promising new beginning, it soon became apparent that the WCC was not able to maintain its course of being a committed, bridge-building neutral body in the face of Cold War hostilities. Increasingly, the Council fell under the influence of those socialist concepts claimed by »real existing Socialism« in the Eastern Bloc as its own. It was not only the increasing influence of the Russian Orthodox Church, as well as churches from the so-called »Third World« countries as they were known at the time, that contributed to this reality, but also the social change and upheaval caused by various freedom and emancipation movements. At the same time, large scale secularisation, the breaking up of the Christian environment and the loss of binding religious beliefs steadily reduced a large part of the Christian churches' earlier influence over various societies. Against the background of this erosion of belief, it comes then as no surprise that the WCC sank into a state of almost total insignificance at the beginning of this pragmatic century after it had so unequivocally assumed a prophetically-political left-wing positioning in the years between 1966 and 1989. From a theological point of view, the question remains of whether a commissioning of theological figures for political purposes was, and is, inevitable.

Gerhard Ringshausen, George Bell's Political Engagement in Ecumenical Context

In 1940 George Bell, bishop of Chichester, published »Christianity and World Order«. Gerhard Leibholz, Bonhoeffer's brother-in-law, emphasized that Bell's »book is not only that of a Christian, but also of a politician. This is not accidental considering that, in the long run, politics and Christianity are connected with each other.« By contrast in May 1949 Bell reckoned with Bishop Berggrav's question: »How are the Churches to take a specific Christian line, on a Church basis, in international Affairs?« This implies a distinctive difference between the functions of church and state; and as Lord Spiritual in the House of Lords Bell focused his speeches on political questions without specific Christian references.

As the paper shows, Bell distinguished service of the church to the common good in state and society according to the Natural Law from its proper duties of preaching the gospel and leading Christians. In preparing the first task Bell discussed the matter in question with laymen. In some cases he brought the problem into the consideration of the World Council of Churches. Apart from this public disclosure mandate stood the special ministry of the church. In cases such as supporting the Confessing Church Bell worked in touch with ecumenical churchmen. The leading line was the unity of church, the solidarity of brethren and the moulding of an ecumenical Christian ethics. One consequence of this distinction was Bell's often-criticised reaction to the Jewish victims of the Nazi regime. Whereas providing help for the so-called non-Aryan Christians was a specifically Christian duty, the fate of the Jewish people was rather a political and humanitarian challenge.

Antti Laine, Juha Meriläinen & Matti Peiponen, Ecumenical Reconstruction, Advocacy and Action: The World Council of Churches in Times of Change, from the 1940s to the early 1970s

This article sheds light on the history of the World Council of Churches (WCC) from the vantage points of three different programmes that helped transform the new inter-church organization into the flagship of the modern ecumenical movement of the 20th century. Reconstruction, advocacy and action were the strategic methods the WCC resorted to in the turbulent times of the 1940s the 1960s. Besides representing three different approaches to achieving certain aims of ecumenical work, these three methods also developed into programmes within the WCC: the Reconstruction Department, the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs and the Programme to Combat Racism.

The motivation of the WCC can best be located in the Christian principles of helping those in need and strengthening the fellowship of churches in an inter-church body. Nonetheless, political intentions and ideological goals also underlay the activities of the WCC, which evidently intended to secure the standing of Christianity in difficult times and in the midst of such menacing ideologies as communism, secular humanism and apartheid. The active role of ecumenically minded American mainline Protestants in exerting pressure on the WCC in these endeavours is indisputable.

Although the WCC can be seen as an active political agent against the background of the Cold War, it in fact functioned more as an international body engaged in ideo-

logical battle to safeguard the operational preconditions of churches and respect for human rights. Since action and prophylaxis were needed to maintain and strengthen Christian fellowship across political and ideological lines, the three programmes concentrated not on Christian dogma but on social ethics.

Katharina Kunter, Revolutionary Hopes and Global Transformations: The World Council of Churches in the 1960s

This article explores some of the deep structural and political transformations which the World Council of Churches underwent in the 1960s and 1970s. One of these changes included the growing proportion of new independent Christian churches in Africa and Asia, which had begun to join the WCC since 1961 as a result of the decolonisation process. This change marked the beginning of the de-Westernisation of the World Council of Churches, which transformed over the course of the »long sixties« (Marwick) from a mainly Anglo-American network to a modern international non-governmental organisation. Simultaneously, as the North-South conflict was coming into the centre, the East-West conflict began moving to the periphery of ecumenical debates.

Aila Lauha, Trends in Ecumenical Thinking and Cooperation in Finland since the 1800s

This article gives an overview of religious developments in Finland from the perspective of religious tolerance between different Christian confessions, describing the main steps towards ecumenical understanding. It reflects on the extent to which the general political and social circumstances and changes thereto have impacted the willingness to promote ecumenical thinking and activities in Finland.

Until 1809, Finland was a part of Sweden, a relationship that, because of Swedish state church policy, necessitated strict Lutheran religious uniformity. Nevertheless, until the beginning of the 20th century, more than 98% of the Finnish populace still belonged to the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Interest in ecumenical cooperation is shown in this article to have gradually increased over the years of Finnish autonomy (1809–1917), when Finland was a part of the Russian grand duchy. Ecumenical contacts were first formed already during this period, with the predecessor of the present-day Finnish Ecumenical Council founded in 1917. Prior to the establishment of Finnish independence in 1917, leading Finnish ecumenical activists, reacting to the oppressive policy of Russia, also used their international and ecumenical contacts toward nationalist ends.

In 1923, a new law establishing freedom of religion came into force in Finland, but even thereafter no more than 1% of the population left the Lutheran Church. During the interwar period, interest towards ecumenical cooperation waxed stronger. The key features of this development are explored in this article especially by looking at the extent to which the foreign policy of the nascent Finnish state and other typical political tendencies of the time coloured these endeavours. The article also sheds light on ecumenical developments after the Second World War, concentrating on the main features and strategies of the Lutheran Church.

Mikko Ketola, Did Finland become an Ecumenical Model Country? Developments in Lutheran-Catholic Relations in Finland from the 1960s to 1990s

This article focuses on the history of ecumenical relations in Finland between the 1960s and the early 1990s, hypothesizing that, during this period, Finland developed into an «ecumenical model country». When and by whom this concept, occasionally used since the late 1990s, was first developed and whether or not it remains a useful term today are further questions explored in this article.

In the Finnish context, the primary source for exploring these questions is the progress in the Lutheran Church's relations to its Catholic and Orthodox Sister Churches. Every decade witnessed occasions that signalled important steps toward the establishment of ever friendlier relations. The Second Vatican Council, with its ecumenical aims, left a considerable effect on Finland and planted the seed for other changes. Finnish church leaders' joint »ecumenical pilgrimage« to Rome, the first of which took place in 1985, took interchurch collaboration to a new level. This effort was furthered when Pope John Paul II visited Finland in 1989, where he was welcomed not only by the Lutheran Church leadership but also by the Orthodox Metropolitan. The 1990s saw ecumenical relations grow even closer.

Anders Jarlert, Nathan Söderblom and »Nationalism«: Riga, Uppsala, and the Ruhr

Due to his ecumenical internationalism, the Swedish Archbishop Nathan Söderblom has been regarded as an opponent of nationalism, contrary to some other Swedish theologians of his time. However, as has been demonstrated by Kjell Blücker, Aila Lauha and others, Söderblom was not without nationalist tendencies. Other scholars have tried to explain his nationalism as mere patriotism. By closely examining exemplary actions of Söderblom in Riga, Uppsala and Ruhr, this article seeks to demonstrate that Söderblom was motivated by nationalist tendencies even while he distanced himself from more extreme forms of nationalism. Additionally, this article calls into question a common method of inquiry in both History and Church History, namely the drawing of contrasts between two positions to their extremity, neglecting any common ground and sometimes even ignoring the obvious and self-sufficient elements in the development of one or the other.

Aappo Laitinen, Religion and Politics in Malta During the Interwar Years: Between »Protestant« Britain and the Holy See

Incorporated into the British empire in the early 19th-century, 20th-century Malta hosted a peculiar blend of influences from Britain, Sicily, and Italy to name but a few. The Maltese population was, for the most part, Roman Catholic, and Catholic authority loomed not only over the lives of the faithful but also over the political and cultural climate of the islands. Britain, on the other hand, was largely conceived as a Protestant power, and, thus, Malta straddled the thin line between these two religious and cultural contexts. In this article, I examine the influence of religion upon Malta during the interwar years. Special focus is paid to the politico-religious crisis of 1927–1933,

when a local conflict between politicians and the Roman Catholic bishops resulted in a diplomatic impasse. I argue that the traditional division between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism was not at the core of the dispute. Rather, it was the unrealistic idea, shared by most participants in the crisis, of a complete separation between religion and politics that characterised the debate on religion in Malta. Both the Roman Catholic Church and the British Government believed that religion and politics could and should be separated. However, as the case of inter-war Malta highlights, such a separation cannot be attained.

Ville Jalovaara, Meetings of the Nordic Bishops during the Cold War: Co-operation or Confrontation?

The purpose of the article is to examine whether or not the political differences engendered by the Cold War were apparent in the Nordic bishops' meetings from the 1940s to the 1980s. These gatherings had started in the 1920s. In these meetings, convened every third year, bishops from the Finnish, Swedish, Norwegian and Icelandic Lutheran Churches meet in one of the Nordic countries to discuss common questions. This study, based on archival and press material, argues that the discussions during and the statements after these meetings adhered to the different foreign policy lines of the respective representative of participating countries. Finland, as a neighbour of the Soviet Union, evidenced the most cautious approach. Sweden's neutrality was apparent in its willingness to understand Finland's position. Norway and Denmark, as NATO countries, were most inclined to support western Cold War views on the Soviet Union; this was especially apparent in the early 1970s, as the Norwegian bishops wanted to use the meetings as a platform to criticize communist countries about their antireligious politics. Views of the small Icelandic church about the foreign politics were not often heard during these meetings.

Stefan Gärtner, Contemporary History as Orientation? On the Importance of the Integration of Expellees into Post-War Germany for Integration Today

Firstly, the article presents in an overview the history of German expellees in the post-world-war II period. A distinction is made between their social and religious integration. The analyses follows the fundamental question to what extent the historical events also have significance for the current migration movements into Europe. Beside differences, there are parallels between the refugees at that time and today. For instance, one can positively refer to the importance of religious ties, the solidarity between compatriots of the identity-creating narratives and symbols in the region of arrival, which can provide a framework for the integration of the newcomers. On the other hand, this integration is hampered today as it was then, if it is presented as an asymmetric adjustment of migrants to a supposedly homogeneous society. This has the opposite effect and reinforces a counter-identity of refugees.

Gerhard Besier, Keeping Boundaries – Local Self-Government, Territorial Integrity, Cultural Peculiarity, and Protection of Minorities: A Partially Common Nordic Perspective to the Åland Islands, 1938–1945

The dispute regarding the planned fortifications to be built as a safeguard for the Åland Islands against potential intervention from the major powers between 1938 and 1945 clearly demonstrates the inherent flimsiness of the intended collective defence of Nordic neutrality. Ultimately, only Finland continued to be exposed to pressure from the USSR. Certainly, the inhabitants of the Åland Islands wanted to preserve their autonomy, but no efforts were made to actually ensure this protection. To this day, the issue remains unresolved under international law as to how small neutral countries can evade the imposition of »protection« from major powers. Nevertheless, the Åland Islands remain one of the few examples of where the intervention of the League of Nations met with a moderate level of success.