Non-Western Christians in Scotland: Mission in Reverse

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Introduction: Immigration and Christianity in the West

Though Christian mission has been re-thought substantially during the past half-century, the territorial "*from* the West *to* the rest" model which predominated during the heyday of the Western missionary movement 1850-1950 still holds sway in popular consciousness. Indeed, the widening global economic gap between rich and poor and the American hegemony in international affairs have strengthened the expectation that initiative, in mission as in other spheres, lies with the West. It therefore comes as a surprise that there is growing evidence that Christian mission is proceeding in the opposite direction, i.e. non-Western Christians are attempting to be the agents of a re-evangelisation of the West. A primary factor making this possible is the movement of migration which is bringing unprecedented numbers of people from the non-Western world to western countries. As Andrew Walls has observed: "The great new fact of our time – and it has momentous consequences for mission – is that the great migration has gone into reverse. There has been a massive movement, which all indications suggest will continue, from the non-Western to the Western world."[1] Among those on the move are the refugees uprooted by the many conflicts which have afflicted the developing world in recent times. Despite the widespread resentment against immigrants from the South and the barriers put in their path, it seems safe to predict that South-to-North migration will continue to occur on a massive scale for the foreseeable future.

The wide-ranging effects of immigration on Western societies are frequently debated today. One which receives relatively little attention is the effect on the composition of the Christian church and on the shape of its missionary outreach. Yet there is a profound impact on church life as congregations which have all along been ethnically and linguistically homogeneous, find themselves welcoming newcomers whose origins lie in distant continents and cultures. It also brings a remarkable new dimension to Christian mission worldwide since a great many migrants carry with them their faith in Jesus Christ and seek to express it in their new context.

The Scottish Situation

In 2005, the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland received for the first time a report which assessed the impact of this development on church life in Scotland.[2] Being located somewhat remotely on Europe's north-western seaboard, Scotland has rarely been a first port of call for non-Western immigrants to Europe. Nonetheless such immigration is clearly increasing and Scottish society is consciously taking on a much more multi-ethnic character as a result. The report therefore asks what effect this development is having on the life of the church and on the profile of Christianity in Scotland. Though the Church, like the nation, of Scotland has a strong history of

[1] Andrew F. Walls, "Mission and Migration: The Diaspora Factor in Christian History", *Journal of African Christian Thought*, Vol. 5/2 (December 2002), p. 10.
[2] "Mission in Reverse", *Reports to the Church of Scotland General Assembly 2005*, Edinburgh: Church of Scotland Board of Practice and Procedure, 2005, pp. 24/22-24/32.

international involvement, its home base has remained strongly ethnic Scottish in character. Will this change as the proportion of the population of non-Western origin increases, including in its ranks a significant number of professing Christians? The findings of the report are that non-Western Christians are coming to Scotland and contributing to Christian mission through a number of channels.

(1) There has been an intentional effort by the Church of Scotland to bring members of overseas partner churches to share in the life of Presbyteries and congregations in Scotland, usually on a short-term basis, under a "Faithshare" programme.[3] Between 2000 and 2004, 48 students have come to Scotland under this programme while 36 Faithshare partners have come for periods of ministry in Presbyteries and congregations. The students have almost invariably spent a year in Scotland, usually taking a Masters course. The Faithshare partners have normally served for 4-6 months hosted by a Presbytery, though some have been longer term. For many church members the arrival of the Faithshare partner or student has been their first opportunity to be "on the receiving end" of Christian life and witness originating in another part of the world.

(2) A number of ministers from overseas have entered the ministry of the Church of Scotland and have been called to serve in parish churches.[4] Though their numbers are relatively small, they bring valuable experience and gifts for the benefit not only of their particular local situation but the life of the Kirk as a whole. The report recommends that; "The Church should take steps to ensure that it recognises the call of ministers from overseas who are led by God to offer for service in Scotland, that it provides the necessary affirmation and encouragement, and that it empowers them to make full use of their particular gifts as they minister in the Scottish context. At the same time, the Church should recognise its responsibility to its partner churches overseas and consult closely with them in regard to any question of calling one of their ministers to a charge or other appointment in Scotland. Otherwise the Church of Scotland could end up recruiting the most able ministers from partner churches to their great disadvantage."[5]

(3) Non-Western Ministers have come to Scotland with a missionary sense of vocation which they exercise outwith the formal structures of the existing churches.[6] The report gives the example of Lucas Njenga, who in 2003 founded "Heart for the City", a project in Glasgow which combines biblical witness with concern for social renewal. The report narrates that: "After six months dedicated to understanding the culture and the people, Lucas and his wife Helen began their work among vulnerable and needy communities. The project brings together people from different ethnic and socio-economic groups for Christian teaching and worship. Open air witness is offered at a branch of Asda where permission has been granted for singing, dancing and preaching to take place. Lucas has been welcomed by the Presbytery of Glasgow and has worked in a cooperative way with several of its congregations. The kind of ministry he offers is geared to the modern city and to reaching parts of the community which may not be regularly in contact with the existing churches."[7]

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[3] *Ibid*, pp. 24/24-25.
[4] *Ibid*, pp. 24/25-26.
[5] *Ibid*, pp. 24/25.
[6] *Ibid*, p. 24/26.
[7] *Ibid*.

(4) Christians from overseas who have come to Scotland for longer or shorter periods have become members or adherents of Church of Scotland congregations.[8] Whether as students, business people or asylum seekers, Christian immigrants arriving in Scotland from outwith the UK are more numerous today than ever before. They offer a vital expression of Christian witness in Scotland today. A question which the Group asked is to what extent these immigrants have been welcomed into Church of Scotland congregations. A questionnaire was distributed in the Presbyteries of Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Glasgow. It was completed by 85 congregations and enabled the Group to deduce the following results: "When asked how many of the regular congregation originate from outwith the UK, five congregations answered 15 or more, twelve congregations answered between 10 and 14, nine congregations answered between 5 and 9, twenty-four congregations answered between 1 and 4, and thirty-five congregations answered 0. In other words, 70% of the sample of congregations in the major cities have less than five immigrant Christians worshipping with them."[9]

(5) Christians from overseas who have come to Scotland for longer or shorter periods have formed congregations or fellowships with a particular ethnic and/or linguistic identity.[10] The report makes reference to twelve such congregations and suggests that there may be around twice that number in existence: "Some are worshipping in a particular mother tongue, such as Korean, Farsi, Shona or Tamil. Others are worshipping in English but sustaining a cultural and ecclesiastical identity from their place of origin. Some are formally part of a particular denomination. Others are independent. Some are functioning as churches while others aim to be more informal fellowships, encouraging their members to also participate in their local churches. Some restrict their witness and pastoral care to members of a particular ethnic group, intending to function as diaspora congregations for that community. Others see their function very evangelistically in terms of having a calling to bring the gospel to the people of Scotland. Some have arrived in Scotland through natural patterns of migration and continue express their Christian faith as they settle in their new location. Others have come to Scotland with a clear missionary sense of calling to proclaim the gospel. These purposes can be intertwined."[11]

These developments present a number of conceptual and practical challenges. This article seeks to identify what these are and to offer an initial attempt to meet them theologically.

Conceptual Challenges

Questions of Justice

Underlying the massive movement of people in our time are deep questions of justice. Why have people left their homeland? Often there are underlying injustices in the global economy which have rendered life practically unsustainable and we bear our share of the responsibility for that. As the Church of Scotland "Church and Nation" Committee pointed out in 2002 when commenting on the plight of refugees and

[8] *Ibid*, pp. 24/26-27.
[9] *Ibid*.
[10] *Ibid*, pp. 24/27-28.
[11] *Ibid*.

economic migrants: “the West and North are not neutral observers of their plight but bear part of the responsibility for their plight…. We cannot answer the question of why people become refugees simply in terms of internal politics and discrimination within a country, while ignoring international responsibility for the environment, and the effects of a globalised economy and politics on the poorest of the world.”[12] Hence it is not open to Western societies to dismiss the growing numbers of refugees and immigrants as someone else’s problem.

This leads to the question of the kind of reception which migrants receive when they reach their destination. As Andrew Walls remarks: “The developed world is faced with a paradox: it needs immigrants, but does not want them. In a public forum where the presence of Christian voices can be less and less taken for granted, Western Christians may find themselves increasingly called to take stances that are unpopular.”[13] Similarly Samuel Escobar observes that: “Perhaps the biggest challenge is the prophetic task of being a mouthpiece for the poor and downtrodden and pronouncing an unpopular prophetic word for a society that seems to be taken over by panic from seeing these waves of foreigners who have come to stay.”[14] The Church and Nation Committee has indicated some biblical principles which should govern the Christian approach to the immigrant, the economic migrant, the refugee and the asylum-seeker:

- To protect such persons from abuse, including protection from racially motivated violence and harassment;
- To protect them from unfair treatment in the courts;
- To offer varying degrees of social inclusion, depending on the foreigner’s wish to assimilate;
- Most radically, to love the alien.[15]

It does not take very much imagination to notice how much such principles set the Christian at odds with the mood of suspicion and xenophobia which prevails in society at large. Yet the biblical mandate is unambiguous as Christine Pohl points out, after an extensive review of biblical texts on the alien and hospitality: “The biblical focus on responsibility to resident aliens suggests that a concern for the physical, social and spiritual well-being of migrants and refugees should not be peripheral to Christian life, mission and witness; instead, it should be central. In setting priorities, churches and mission organizations need to be much more attentive to these vulnerable populations.”[16] This may well emerge as one of the points at which the political witness of the Western churches has to take on a radical and even offensive character if it is to be true to the faith.

The Nature of the Church

[12] Church of Scotland Church and Nation Committee, “Refugees and Migration”, *Reports to the Church of Scotland General Assembly 2005*, Edinburgh: Church of Scotland Board of Practice and Procedure, 2002, p. 12/36.
[13] Walls, “Mission and Migration”, p. 10.
[14] Samuel Escobar, “Migration: Avenue and Challenge to Mission”, *Missiology: An International Review*, Vol. XXXI/1 (January 2003), p. 19.
[15] Church of Scotland Church and Nation Committee, “Refugees and Migration”, pp. 12/38-39.
[16] Christine D. Pohl, “Biblical Issues in Mission and Migration”, *Missiology: An International Review*, Vol. XXXI/1 (January 2003), p. 9.

It is recognised that large-scale migration has brought many adherents of other faiths into Western Europe and it is widely acknowledged that the resultant growing pluralism has brought a major new dimension to our context. Indeed recognition of the multicultural and multi-religious character of European societies has become an axiom of social policy. What has received much less attention is the fact that a significant number of immigrants choose to belong to the Christian church and understand themselves as agents of Christian mission. Yet there can be little doubt that immigration has dramatically changed the character of Christianity in Europe today. In Cologne the largest worshipping congregation is a Korean one. The largest congregation in London is a Nigerian-founded one. The largest congregation in Europe is in Kiev and again it is Nigerian-founded. A recent press release from the Council of African Christian Communities in Europe claims that "there are more than three million Christians of African origin living in Europe".[17] This introduces quite a new composition to church life in Europe. As Walter Hollenweger observes: "Christians in Britain prayed for many years for revival, and when it came they did not recognise it because it was black."[18]

Its changing composition raises questions about the nature of the church. Justo Gonzales tells of a traditional suburban American congregation which allowed a Hispanic congregation to worship in its sanctuary at 0900 on Sunday mornings, prior to their own service at 1100. What they had not reckoned with is that at 1100 the air was still heavy with the smell of garlic and this outraged the majority of the congregation. Can garlic-lovers and garlic-haters share the same church building?[19] How does a Western congregation respond to incoming Africans who want to dance during the hymns and make the service last at least two hours? An easy answer is for the church to worship in monocultural units but is that what the church is called to be? Jurgen Moltmann offers a clear answer: "The Church of the crucified Christ cannot consist of an assembly of like persons who mutually affirm each other, but must be constituted of unlike persons. 'Like seeks after like' as Aristotle says in his discussion of friendship (Ethics Book VIII). But for the crucified Christ, this principle of fellowship is fellowship with those who are different, and solidarity with those who have become alien and have been made different."[20] There is need to acknowledge the reality that this question takes a specifically racial form today, as it has done in prevous contexts in the history of Christian mission. A generation ago the Church of Scotland was facing the question of integrating its predominantly white congregations into the emerging black-led Presbyterian Churches in Africa. James Dougall, General Secretary of the Foreign Mission Committee, indicated the issue at stake when he remarked: "The question of the Church, one might say, the very test of the existence of the true Church, is whether it can demonstrate to the world a living fellowship which bridges the gap between the races."[21] This question is asked today not in distant lands only but also on Scottish soil.

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[17] *International Review of Mission*, Vol. LXXXIX No. 354 (July 2000), p. 304.
[18] Walter J. Hollenweger, "Foreword" in Roswith Geldoff, *A Plea for British Black Theologies: the Black Church Movement in Britain in its Intercultural Theological and Cultural Interaction*, Bern: Peter Lang, 1992, Vol. I, p. ix.
[19] Justo L. Gonzales, *For the Healing of the Nations: The Book of Revelation in an Age of Cultural Conflict*, New York: Orbis, 1999, p. 3.
[20] Jurgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, London: SCM Press, 1974, p. 28; cit. Graham Kings, "Multicultural Communities: Identity and Diversity", *Swedish Missiological Themes*, Vol. 90/4 (2002), p. 510.
[21] J.W.C. Dougall, *Christians in the African Revolution*, Edinburgh: St Andrew Press, 1963, p. 55.

Alan Lewis underlines the importance of this ecclesiological question in today's context: "The church [is] no agglomeration of atomistic members who decide to be together for reasons of self-interest, on the basis of whatever variant – colour, age, location, race, class, or race – sets them apart from other human groupings. Rather, Christ chooses our neighbours for us – including the uncongenial and quite unlike us, socially, ethnically, temperamentally – and connects us to them, his brothers and sisters and therefore ours, in an integrated fellowship which transcends both time and space and every boundary between races, classes, nationalities and generations. To practise such connectedness in the church is not only to be set in conflict with this era's highly individualised piety and with its ecclesiastical cognate of radically independent congregationalism. It is also to provide to the privatized and factionalized secular culture of the postmodern world an alternative understanding and enactment of humanness as such."[22]

Agency in Mission

Not only is the composition of the church changing, the shape of its mission is being transformed by the impact of migration. For Christian faith, this is not the first time it finds itself being carried across the world by migrant peoples. When we examine the pattern of expansion which took the early church around the Mediterranean world, we find that it followed the pattern of migration which had been formed by the Jewish diaspora. It was this which took the Jesus movement to Antioch and thence to Corinth, Rome, Philippi and the other centres that are familiar from the New Testament. The journey of Christianity from its original Jewish base into the Greek world of thought and into the political arena of the Roman empire is writ large in the New Testament. When we look at the subsequent history we see that Christianity has been a mobile faith, a travelling religion. It seems to be at its best when it is packing its bags and going somewhere new. As David Bosch remarked: "I believe that the church discovers her true nature only as she moves from one human world to another, when she crosses frontiers, whether these are geographical, cultural, ethnic, linguistic, or sociological."[23]

Many thought the Christian faith might be finished when the Roman Empire was collapsing but Christianity had already embarked on a new epoch among the so-called barbarians of northern Europe. Likewise in our own time, when its long-time European home is becoming inhospitable, Christian faith has already departed for new homelands in the great southern continents. It has been said that Christianity is the only world religion to end up as a minority faith in its region of origin. It seems to be not a faith to settle down permanently in one place. It comes into its own when it is crossing some new frontier and making itself at home in a new context. It is a migratory religion.

The vulnerability of the migrant has often proved to be an opportunity for evangelism as, through their experience of uprootedness, people on the move have been brought to faith. Christine Pohl observes that, "As refugees attempt to rebuild lives out of fragments of their past and within new situations, they are often far more open to the gospel than they previously might have been. Wrenched from all that is familiar, and betrayed by what they had often held to be precious, many are looking for ways to

[22] Alan E. Lewis, *Between Cross and Resurrection: A Theology of Holy Saturday*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001, p. 350.
[23] David Bosch, *Spirituality for the Road*, Scottdale PA: Herald Press, 1979, p. 58.

make sense of their experience, survival, and loss."[24] It has been observed that even people who have been fairly indifferent about religious practice in their own context, become much more seriously committed when they find themselves suddenly in an alien environment. It is difficult to survive as a migrant and so networks of kindred spirits are highly valued and such networks often revolve around a religious identity. The many Scots Kirks or St Andrew's or St Columba's on distant shores bear witness to the experience of Scottish migrants in previous generations and it is a powerful current among the migrant peoples of today.

The organisational pattern of mission also starts to look quite different from that which prevailed in the Western missionary movement. There is no mistaking the fact that the gospel is spreading through migratory movements but there is no sign of anything like a missionary society. There is no head office, no organising committee, no command structure, no comprehensive strategic direction. It seems to be a disorganised movement of individuals making their own connections, developing their own perspectives and functioning within networks which they themselves have constructed. How could the older a missionary movement relate to the new pattern?

One of the sharpest critiques of the Western missionary movement was published by Roland Allen almost 100 years ago. In a book called *Missionary Methods St Paul's or Ours?* he contrasted the Pauline mission which was powerless in worldly terms and therefore dependent on the Holy Spirit with what he saw as the alliance of the modern missionary movement with the power of the Western world.[25] Were Allen alive today he might be surprised to see that the identification of Christianity with the powerful is increasingly a thing of the past. More and more the agents of Christian mission come from among the weak, the broken and the vulnerable. It is a new kind of agency but is it not one which has greater affinity to Paul – and to Jesus – than the form of missionary presence which often appeared to be allied to imperial power and economic exploitation? Increasingly we see emerging a situation opposite to the one which troubled Roland Allen. More and more it is the poor who are taking the gospel to the rich. Africa is the world's poorest continent and unsurprisingly the one from which the greatest number of migrants originate. It is also the continent with the most vibrant expansion of Christian faith. Hence many migrants come from the new heartlands of Christianity and bring the flame of faith to the old centres in the north where the fire is burning low. What will be the effect of this 21st century movement of mission? It is hard to say but it certainly looks already very different from the one which prevailed in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Already the impact of this new missionary movement begins to be felt in Europe. Andrew Walls observes that "It is clear that [African and Afro-Caribbean] churches are among the few expanding sectors of European Christianity. It is also clear that they are beginning to have an impact on the indigenous Western population, for some of whom, being untouched by traditional culture-Christianity, immigrants from Africa or Asia (and in Spain, from Latin America) provide the first contact with Christianity as a living faith."[26] African church leaders are starting to see this as part of the mission of their churches. Archbishop Onaiyekan, Archbishop of Abuja in Nigeria, observed that: 'The stream of Africans coming to Europe has become a river. Even if

[24] Pohl, "Biblical Issues in Migration and Mission", p. 4.
[25] Roland Allen, *Missionary Methods: St Paul's or Ours?*, London: World Dominion Press, 1912.
[26] Walls, "Mission and Migration", pp. 10-11.

the Church did not want to take notice of this fact before, it should now. I believe priests from places like Nigeria can re-evangelise Europe. One hundred and fifty years ago, it was Europeans who were doing the evangelising. Now we should have two churches at work – African and European."[27]

What is less clear is how far European churches have awoken to this new dimension of mission on their continent. As Miguel Palomino observes: "Latino evangelical immigrants are already doing mission among their peers, and also among their host Europeans in what could be called mission in reverse. It remains to be seen, however, whether European churches will endorse what they are doing."[28] In the path of such endorsement stands a range of presuppositions and prejudices which are challenged by this new missionary movement. Gerrie ter Haar indicates some of the dynamics which are at play: "The reversal of roles implied by the notion of an African mission to Europe stands many conventional ideas on their head. Europeans traditionally see Africans as being on the receiving end, and themselves on the giving end, of a relationship which is often equated with black-white relations. Moreover Europeans are inclined to believe that the proper place for Africans is in Africa. The idea of an African mission to Europe thus appears inappropriate to the marginal status of black immigrants in their society. To many native Europeans the recent foundation of African Christian congregations is an anomaly. In fact, the rise of African and other non-Western Christian congregations is nothing less than a new phase in the religious history of Europe."[29]

Practical Challenges

Openness and Accessibility

Widespread testimony suggests that European congregations are not readily accessible to incoming non-Western Christians. Gerrie ter Haar goes so far as to say that, "In Britain the unfriendly reception accorded to black immigrants by the established churches was the immediate reason for Africans and Afro-Caribbeans to found independent churches."[30] Likewise she observes that: "Remarkably, with the exception of the Roman Catholics, none of the traditional mainline churches in Africa and Europe, such as the Presbyterian or Methodist Church, has been successful in attracting the support of significant numbers of African Christians living in Europe. This is no doubt related to the particular structure of these former mission churches, whose organisation appears less adaptable than that of the African international churches to the unique circumstances created by migration. Members who attended one of the mainline churches when they lived in Africa have therefore usually been more or less obliged to join one of the newly emerged African international churches."[31] This is not a record on which European churches can look back with any pride. It is clearly important to incoming non-Western Christians that they should be received hospitably by the European churches. The report to the 2005 Church of Scotland General Assembly concludes that: "In their vulnerability immigrant congregations look to the Kirk for affirmation, solidarity, and support. At the same

[27] "African Bishops Come to the Aid of Europe", *The Tablet*, 20 November 2004, p. 33.
[28] Miguel A. Palomino, "Latino Immigration in Europe: Challenge and Opportunity for Mission", *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, Vol. 28/2 (April 2004), p. 58.
[29] Gerrie Ter Haar, *Halfway to Paradise: African Christians in Europe*, Cardiff: Cardiff Academic Press, 1998, p. 3.
[30] *Ibid*.
[31] *Ibid*, p. 98.

time, they have a capacity to reach parts of Scottish society which the Kirk does not easily reach and collaboration in mission to Scotland has rich potential. What makes it difficult is the cultural, liturgical and theological differences between the immigrant congregation and the local kirk. Yet these differences can be a source of mutual enrichment once the initial barriers are broken down."[32] Immigrant Christians are in need of a hospitable response from long-established churches.

Perhaps equally important are the lessons which can be learned by the European churches through the experience of being hospitable. Irene Pluim and Elza Kuyk comment that: "The realisation that the Uniting Protestant Churches in the Netherlands are so 'white' in comparison to the rest of society gives food for thought, for it says something about the closed character of our churches. What applies to migrants could also, mutatis mutandis, apply to 'newcomers' in general."[33] They therefore urge the European churches to be proactive in their approach. "We encourage the European churches who invest a lot of money in exchange programs with partner churches abroad that similar investment is necessary in the migrant churches in our own villages and cities."[34] Martin Affolderbach and Heike Vierling-Ihrig argue for a twofold approach: "Wherever this is possible, immigrant Christians should be offered a chance to integrate into the local congregations on the one hand, while on the other hand it should be tried to preserve their identity."[35] In Germany, for example, the United Evangelical Mission has established a Programme for Cooperation between German and Immigrant Congregations which aims to:

- Assist immigrant churches to establish presence within the context of German churches and society;
- Help German churches to understand and appreciate the movement of reverse mission that is taking place through the presence of immigrant congregations;
- Develop projects of common mission/intercultural evangelism.[36]

Much more could be done to draw immigrant Christians into the worship and witness of the Church of Scotland. Its Board of National Mission's provision of "statistics for mission" allows Presbyteries and congregations to identify the ethnic minorities in their vicinity and to form strategy accordingly. Learning from congregations which have been effective in receiving immigrant Christians into their fellowship, it is possible to suggest that good practice will include:

- Identifying immigrant communities locally and reaching out with a welcoming invitation.
- Introducing pictures, food or furniture which enable newcomers from a particular cultural background to feel at home.

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[32] "Mission in Reverse" p. 24/28.
[33] Irene M. Pluim & Elza Kuyk, *Relations with Migrant Churches: Experiences and Perspectives*, Utrecht: Kerkinactie, 2002, p. 17.
[34] *Ibid*, p. 19.
[35] Martin Affolderbach & Heike Vierling-Ihrig, *Culture Divides – the Gospel Unites? Migrant Churches in European Countries*, Brussels: Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe, 2002, p. 14.
[36] Claudia Wahrisch-Oblau, "From Reverse Mission to Common Mission … We Hope: Immigrant Protestant Churches and the 'Programme for Cooperation Between German and Immigrant Congregations' of the United Evangelical Mission", *International Review of Mission*, Vol. LXXXIX No. 354 (July 2000), p. 467.

- Encouraging immigrants to take leading roles in the life and worship of the congregation and being open to innovations which they bring.
- Organising a study or fellowship group particularly geared to the needs of immigrant Christians.
- Inviting newcomers from overseas to share meals or other occasions in the homes of church members.

It is time to recognise that many Christian immigrants bring to Scotland a fresh and vibrant faith with a capacity to refresh local Christian life and witness. For congregations which have always been ethnically and culturally homogeneous, it requires a considerable adjustment to absorb new members from very different backgrounds. Yet is this not one of the great challenges to the integrity of the Church in our time?

Learning Mode

A deep challenge for European churches is that they have been accustomed to being "in control" of the Christian message and its expression in church life. The opportunity to go into learning mode and discover from the experience of others new ways of understanding, experiencing and communicating the gospel is not easily grasped. Christine Pohl observes that: "… it is easy for people from more privileged settings to imagine that resources and assets flow one way; they easily overlook the gifts of guests and strangers. At times, people familiar with the role of host resist strangers' and guests' desire to give, and resist any acknowledgement that they themselves might have needs."[37] The extent of this challenge to learn again the meaning of the gospel by responding to a new global movement of Christian faith is explained by Philip Wickeri: "… the most dynamic sections of Christianity today are in movements emerging outside its established centres: The African Initiated Churches (or AICs), Pentecostals all over the world; the rural churches of China; new indigenous Christian communities throughout Asia, Africa and Latin America. They represent a popular Christianity, a mission from below, a mission of transformation. Their emphasis is on oral tradition, lay leadership and maximised participation confront historic Protestant churches with our carefully scripted, over-clericalised approaches to church life…. Those of us from the historic Protestant churches need to be in dialogue with popular Christianity, both to share our understanding of the gospel with each other, and also to better understand and learn from the spirit which moves new Christian communities."[38]

Conclusion

It is clear that through the immigration of non-Westerners, Christianity in Scotland is finding new forms of expression. What will be the chemistry between the old and the new? Will they react against each other and go their separate ways? Will well-established churches give the cold shoulder to new groups whose spirituality seems strange? Will newcomers shun the older churches, writing them off as dull or dead? Or will they find fruitful forms of interaction? Will Christianity be found fragmented into groups united by their ethnicity, including groups of ethnic Scots? Or will ways

[37] Pohl, "Biblical Issues in Migration and Mission", p. 13.
[38] Philip L. Wickeri, "Mission from the Margins: The *Missio Dei* in the Crisis of World Christianity", *International Review of Mission*, Vol. 93 No. 369 (April 2004), p. 195.

be found to show that the faith which unites is stronger than any identity which divides? These are questions to be answered in the next generation.