Nationalism and Internationalism in the Young Ecumenical Movement, 1895–1920s

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The international video conference addressed the role of nationalism and internationalism in Christian unity movements at the turn of the 20th century. In this context, the conference's approach to the *young* ecumenical movement was twofold: On one hand, it referred to the early beginnings of the movement by focussing on the period from 1895 to the 1920s, thereby starting with the founding of the World Student Christian Federation (WSCF) and ranging to the difficult inter-war years. On the other hand, the experiences and actions of the student movements and young church leaders were of particular interest.

The concepts of „nationalism" and „internationalism" provided the framework to explore these ecumenical movements and activities outside of church relations to consider the diverse individual and group efforts behind them. Scholars from Asia, Europe and the U.S. reflected on tensions between national identities and an overarching vision of a global Christian unity as well as newly emerging networks.

In her introductory public lecture, DANA L. ROBERT (Boston) gave insights into the multifaceted dynamics of the 1920s. In these post-war years, when life in Europe was shaped by destruction, national divisions and aggressive imperialism, young Christian leaders decided to put new hope in the transforming and healing power of fellowship. Thereby, cross-cultural friendships became a political act. Robert illustrated how new theologies of fellowship emerged and inspired Christians of different nationalities and denominations to strive for unity, social reconstruction and peace. By promoting the vision of a global Christian community, theology was able to gain new meaning within the public sphere.

The conference was held in two parallel panels over three days with plenary introductory and concluding sessions. The first three papers of day 1 focused on the role of individuals and their networks, personal connections and specific motivations in the ecumenical movement.

JOHN WOLFFE (Milton Keynes) from The Open University examined the work of Philip Schaff and the Evangelical Alliance as significant forerunners of the ecumenical movement. The aim of both Schaff and the Evangelical Alliance to structure Christian unity in both spiritual and social ways and the emerging challenges regarding the relations with the Roman Catholic Church as well as tensions between nationalism and internationalism can be seen as a prelude to the work of later generations. Wolffe suggested to regard the young ecumenical movement at the turn of the 20th century as rather evolutionary than revolutionary.

SARAH SCHOLL (Geneva) discussed the reception of John R. Mott and his part in the foundation of the WSCF in Switzerland against the backdrop of the particular Swiss nationalism grounded in neutrality and confessional diversity. Scholl compared Mott's travel notes with press coverage and commentary during his visits to Switzerland. The travel reports allow tracing the development of Mott's worldview and self-perception as „world citizen" trough his nomadic *modus operandi* that fundamentally shaped his growing awareness of a Union world. While his praise for Switzerland as a European hub fostering liberty and religious freedom corresponded well with the growing Swiss national narrative at the time, his extensive internationalism and its major role in his understating of Protestantism proved unsuccessful in the Swiss context.

BENJAMIN L. HARTLEY (Seattle) also reflected on John R. Mott, tracing four different motifs regarding Mott's stance on (inter-) nationalism in his biography. First, his relationship with diplomacy, which is characterised by strong connections with U.S. diplo-

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matic efforts during the Wilson administration. Second, Mott's attempts to engage „younger churches", especially in African and Asian countries, in the context of his internationalism, by strengthening their nationalism. Third, Mott's views on race relations, which changed considerably during his lifetime and led him to realise underlying racist tensions in Christian internationalist efforts. Fourth, his emphasis on the practice of „conferencing" to support his internationalist ideals.

The second panel opened with three papers on Anglican, Methodist and Lutheran perspectives.

Analysing the debates and resolutions of the Lambeth Conference in summer 1920, CHARLOTTE METHUEN (Glasgow) presented the Anglican bishops' views on nationalism, internationalism and ecumenism. She identified two competing approaches to church unity: one nationally focused in which churches first unite on a national level before building international relations; and one confessionally focused where churches create global confessional structures before collaborating. The Anglican bishops from the Lambeth Conference tended to favour the first option.

DAVID W. SCOTT (Boston) dealt with the Methodist Episcopal Church in America, which celebrated the mission Centenary in 1919. The representatives combined a strong nationalist self-understanding with a global vision for their church that emphasised the outstanding role the United States should play in the world. Scott highlighted the connections between the Centenary and Wilsonian internationalism, both visioning a new international order and moral reform led by the U.S.

FRIEDER LUDWIG (Stavanger) described the tensions between the Norwegian Church and the Norwegian Missionary Council regarding the integration of the International Missionary Council into the WCC in 1961. In order to obtain an elaborated picture of the Norwegian Lutheran Mission, Ludwig suggested not only investigating the tensions between nationalism and internationalism, but also paying attention to the different nationalisms and internationalisms.

Three papers of day 2 drew on the specific experiences of Asian Christians.

JOHN THOMAS (Guwahati) explored the admiration of the Indian ecumenists towards M. K. Gandhi in the early 20th century. While the conflicts in the 1930s on the issue of conversion are well researched, the affinities between them have received little consideration. Thomas showed how the ecumenical movement in the 1920s felt reassured by Gandhi as both sought to transform the social and moral life of India through religion, starting in rural areas.

KLAUS KOSCHORKE (Munich) presented a pan-Asian perspective by exploring the ecumenical movement in Asia prior to WWI. He described the Asian YMCAs as a training centre for future church leaders and a place where Asian Christians established pivotal networks through visits and journal collaboration.

YEONSEUNG LEE (Boston) discussed the role of the YMCA in Korea under the specific political challenges of the 1920s and in opposition to communist endeavours of the time. The collaborations of Christian internationalists and cultural nationalists of the YMCA was exemplified by the life and work of Yun Ch'i-ho. The author of the Korean anthem was Chairman of the National Council of the YMCA, and a pioneer of agro-industrial education, thus contributing to the aim of rural reconstruction in Korea.

In the other panel, two papers focused on international entanglements and their impact on ideas of Christian unity.

JUDITH BECKER (Berlin) examined the ecumenical youth movement in Germany during WWI in view of undergirding ideas of nationalism and internationalism. For this, the complex relationship between German ecumenical youth associations (i.e. CVJM, DCSV) and their respective world federations (i.e. YMCA, WSCF) were analysed based on their correspondence. The ways in which the young members conceptualised Christian unity against their nationalist views and war experiences demonstrate the complex questions that German ecumenical Christian associations faced in the aftermath of the war.

ADA FOCER (Boston) looked into the role of Ruth Rouse and her influence within the WSCF. Given the strong collaboration be-

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tween Rouse and John R. Mott, their work is in parts difficult to distinguish. In fact, both founders' works were grounded in what can be called an Anglo-American Revival Evangelical culture and share similar visions and assumptions with regard to their unifying vision. It was this specific culture as well as Mott's and Rouse's talents as „community organisers" that tied the WSCF together and rebound its members in the difficult post-war years.

Further international perspectives on the ecumenical movement were presented by two scholars on day 3, drawing on developments in Japan and the Middle East.

NORIKO ISHII (Tokyo) addressed conceptualisations of the „other" by Japanese and British women within the WSCF after the Russo-Japan War. For this, the relationship between Ruth Rouse (British) and Kawai Michi (Japanese), two outstanding female leaders within the Christian unity movement, were analysed based on their writings, correspondence and travel notes between 1907 and 1919. The Tokyo conference in 1907, Kawai's visit to Europe in 1909/10 and Rouse's visit to the U.S. in 1912 were important events in this context and these transnational experiences fundamentally affected both women's conceptualisations of otherness, internationalism and nationalism.

DEANNA FERREE WOMACK (Atlanta) examined the Protestant internationalism of the young ecumenical movement in the Middle East and its complex relationship to Islam. The competition and collaboration between different missionary bodies indicates the diverse manifestations of Christian internationalism in that region. At first, the British and American missionary work in Syria and Lebanon showed clear signs of rivalry. However, examples of common literature production and joint organisation of conferences indicate a distinct shift from competition to collaboration. Simultaneously, there was also a formation of solidarity between Christian and Muslim Arabs against missionary work, feeding from a growing „Arab proto-nationalism". The various contributions of Arab Protestants to cultural Arabism and pan-Arab solidarity allow considering similarities between pan-Islamism and Christian internationalism.

The references to (inter)nationalism within the Chinese context in the 1920s were the focus of two further contributions, paying particular attention to David Z. T. Yui (Yu Rizhang).

YUN ZHOU (Canberra) focused on Yu as the general secretary of the Chinese YMCA. She shed light on how the organisation under his leadership managed to integrate China into the global community with the help of networks and communications and showed how they negotiated the relationship between Christianity, the Chinese nation, and the world.

ANDREAS FELDTKELLER (Berlin) reflected on the National Christian Council in China. The Harvard graduate Yu, who was also the initial chairperson of the council, explicitly stated in 1926 what many other papers during the conference also brought into light: nationalism and internationalism were not opposing principles, but rather interrelated in the Asian context.

The concluding discussion was initiated by three short recapitulating keynotes.

Drawing conclusions from the conference papers, Heike Liebau (Berlin) pointed out different conceptual points that need to be considered: first, the historicity of concepts, the clear differentiation from other terms and concepts (such as „translocalism" or „cosmopolitanism"), secondly, power relations and economical aspects, and third, the relevance of new ways of mobility and growing connections for the Christian internationalism.

MARINA WANG (Stavanger) also highlighted the multi-layeredness of the terms „nationalism" and „internationalism" and the variety of approaches and agendas that have been historically connected to them. Future research on these concepts should reflect on the dynamics of (inter)nationalism through times and generations – both internationally and domestically. Thus, the different motions and dimensions of the ecumenical movement can be carved out.

JENNIFER WASMUTH (Strasbourg) emphasised that the extent to which the young ecumenical movement was decisively shaped in Asian contexts needs to be further re-

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searched. This might be particularly insightful to grasp the complexity and even contradictions of different concepts of "(inter)nationalism". Furthermore, the question of theological foundations of national ideas in international ecumenism and the use of specific theological arguments in conflicts and discussions within the movement should be further pursued.

In the discussions, participants highlighted the multi-layered meanings of relevant terms that have to be adequately considered. The different definitions and understandings of these concepts and their cultural embeddedness have to be recognised and questions of interchangeability of terms addressed. In addition, the relevance of the pre-histories of the ecumenical movement in Asia and their distinct differences to Western developments and ideas require further research. Furthermore, questions on the fundamental influence of archives and their collections need to be raised, regarding the choices of preservations, incomprehensiveness of archives and accessibility of sources.

The need to analyse the interconnections and interrelations of the ecumenical movement from interdisciplinary and international perspectives and the important insights gained from such undertakings have been pointedly demonstrated during the conference.

Conference overview:

Judith Becker (Berlin) and Dana L. Robert (Boston): Welcome and Plenary Meeting

Public lecture
Dana L. Robert (Boston): Finding Fellowship. The Search for Transnational Christian Community during the 1920s

Chairs: Judith Becker (Berlin), Dana L. Robert (Boston), and Katharina Stornig (Giessen)

John Wolffe (Milton Keynes): Ecumenical Prehistory. Philip Schaff and the Evangelical Alliance 1868–1893

Sarah Scholl (Geneva): Travelling with John Mott: Switzerland and the World Student Christian Federation

Benjamin L. Hartley (Seattle): Negotiating Nationalism and Internationalism in the Life of John R. Mott, 1895–1925

Charlotte Methuen (Glasgow): Nationalism, Internationalism and Ecumenism at the 1920 Lambeth Conference

David W. Scott (Boston): Leading the World Parish: American Methodist Nationalism in an International Framing

Frieder Ludwig (Stavanger): The Norwegian Missionary Society between Nationalism and Internationalism

John Thomas (Guwahati): Towards Resolving the Nationalist Dilemma: Gandhi and the Indian Ecumenists in Early 20th Century

Klaus Koschorke (Munich): „At the Special Request and Invitation of the Indian ... YMCAs". The YMCA as a Platform and Networking Site for Asian Christian Leaders in Early 20th Century

Yeonseung Lee (Boston): Currents of Christian Nationalism and Internationalism: Yun Ch'iho and the Korean YMCA in the 1920s

Judith Becker (Berlin): The German Ecumenical Youth Movement between Internationalism and Nationalism during World War I and in the Post-war Period

Ada Focer (Boston): Ruth Rouse. Binding and Re-binding the World Student Christian Federation

Noriko Ishii (Tokyo): Nationalism and Internationalism. Japanese and British Women's Imaginations of the Other in the World Student Christian Movement after the Russo-Japan War

Deanna Ferree Womack (Atlanta): Islam and Early Ecumenical Thought: Protestant Internationalism in the Arab Middle East

Yun Zhou (Canberra): Between China and the World. Yu Rizhang and the Chinese YMCA in the 1920s

Andreas Feldtkeller (Berlin): The National Christian Council in China during the 1920s between Nationalism and Internationalism

Concluding discussion
Heike Liebau (Berlin), Marina Wang (Stavanger) and Jennifer Wasmuth (Strasbourg)

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