The Priesthood of All Students? Historical, Theological and Missiological Foundations of a University Ministry: The International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (IFES)

TIMOTHEE LOUIS JOSET

Abstract

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This dissertation explores the development of the theology and missiology of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students, IFES. Drawing on archival records and writings by authors close to IFES, it shows how the *priesthood of all believers* has served as a fundamental building stone of the ministry of IFES and can continue to help the organization navigate opportunities and challenges facing its ministry.

The *priesthood of all believers* involves lay students examining Scripture together. It involves manifold expressions of mission which are constantly reshaped in the encounter with the diversity of cultures and theologies characteristic of World Christianity. Missionary engagement framed by the *priesthood of all believers* presupposes *immediacy, mediation,* and *participation.*

Immediacy presupposes individuals can encounter God directly, primarily in Scripture, hence the legitimacy of student-led missionary activities. Missiologically, lay leadership is congruent with the fact that university students spend most of their time developing skills as thinkers and leaders.

Students, staff and Christian university employees are *mediators* of their beliefs to the university, inviting others to consider the message of the Gospel. They also *mediate* some of the universities' concerns back to the Church, inviting theological thinking about significant academic issues. Such *mediation* happens at the margins of the structured ecclesial world.

In IFES, these commitments to immediacy and to mediation allowed the development of a missional ecclesiology that presupposes that God is already at work in the university. IFES people are *participating in the mission of God (missio Dei).* Hence, the work of IFES, as an expression of the priesthood of all believers, can be understood as an extension of the presence of the Church in places and ideological realms to which traditional ecclesial structures have only limited access.

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Dissertation submitted for the degree of *Doctor of Philosophy*

Submitted in October 2021, revised in April 2022.

List of Abbreviations

AGS	Associate General Secretary
CICCU	Cambridge Inter-Collegiate Christian Union
GC	General Committee
GS	General Secretary
IEC / EC	(International) Executive Committee
IFES	International Fellowship of Evangelical Students
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament
RCC	Roman Catholic Church
RS	Regional Secretary
WA	World Assembly
WCC	World Council of Churches
WSCF	World Student Christian Federation

Statement of Copyright

Acknowledgments

As it is customary to say, I will not be able to properly acknowledge all the people who have supported me in this long project. Yet I wish to specifically acknowledge at least the following:

My parents, Josiane and Pierre-André Joset, for their love of history, literature, music and theological reflection, which have paved the way of my academic journey in four countries, as well as and for their essential financial support of this PhD adventure.

Prof. Dennis Ngien, for his initial impetus to endeavour into doctoral studies with his empowering mentoring and support during my theological studies at Tyndale University (Canada); as well as to prof. Ronald Kydd for his extraordinarily wide Church history teaching perspectives.

Prof. Mike Higton, whose initial scepticism for my project turned into a committed, responsive and dedicated support. I always left the regular Skype and then Zoom supervision meetings encouraged and empowered even if it sometimes meant rewriting or cutting (large) parts of my work.

Prof. Pete Ward, for his insightful comments on the original thesis proposal as well as on earlier drafts of this thesis.

Dr Stefan Paas, whose writings I discovered late into my research but whose missiological acumen is deeply illuminating. It is an honour to benefit from your expertise as an external examiner.

Kirsty Thorburn, for her introduction into the innerworkings of IFES as I was a young student discovering an international board. For her patient help in supporting my navigating through the IFES history and for granting me access to electronic archives.

Tim Adams, IFES General Secretary, for his friendship and trust in granting me unlimited access to the IFES archives.

Dr Femi Adeleye and Dr Augustin Ahoga, for their patience in initiating a young white student into the intricacies of postcolonial Africa and the necessity of broadening my theological understanding.

Dr Vinoth Ramachandra, for his insightful reading of an earlier draft of the thesis and for helping me broaden my theological and missiological perspectives.

Dr Daniel Bourdanné, at the time IFES General Secretary, for his encouragement to venture into this research and to save enough time to complete the work. For the example of his humility in serving IFES.

Christian Schneeberger, the first GBEU staff worker who mentored me as I was discovering the world of the university at the same time as taking on the leadership of the local group. The almost sleepless nights we spent discussing theology during camps and trainings have greatly encouraged me to refine and be more charitable in my thinking.

Prof. Donald A. MacLeod, Stacey Wood's biographer, for his unexpected and supportive friendship as I was tentatively developing the research proposal which led to this work.

Tony Lai and Iris Youngsun Eom, who not only welcomed us into a new community in Canada but who mentored my wife and I in ministering to international students in eye-opening ways. The time spent with them was an extraordinary addition to formal theological studies. Many insights gathered during the weekly ISM meetings have flown into this research.

Igors Rautmanis and Dr Kosta Milkov, two dear mentors who have helped me keep spiritual and mental health during these frantic years of research and ministry.

Baptiste Bovay, former leader of the Neuchâtel GBUN group, who helped me with quotations and always encouragingly enquired about my progress.

Prof. Hannes Wiher, for his mentoring in developing my missiological acumen, his support, trust and friendship, for his urging to complete this dissertation within a reasonable timeframe and for his very efficient reading and astute commenting on an earlier version of this work.

Dr McTair Wall, for his friendship and mentoring into the complexities of the world of francophone missiology.

All those behind the ministry of GBEU Switzerland. Over the past five years, their financial support of my ministry has also made this research possible and kept it anchored in the reality of ministry to the university.

Jacqueline and Carmelo Cavaleri, my parents-in-law, whose table always offers rich and savoury meals, which are always welcomed breaks from writing at the desk.

My sister Anne-Eve Favre and her husband Cédric, whose apartment was an appreciated oasis of calm and rest when we too rarely took time off with them.

Dr Bonnie Aebi, who patiently and very efficiently proof-read the entire manuscript during the last weeks of final editing.

Many friends and colleagues who have – sometimes hesitantly – regularly asked about the progress being made in this work. I have often declined invitations, delayed answering emails or WhatsApp

messages, or shortened time spent together in order to carve out enough hours for academic work. Your encouragements and prayers have meant a lot.

My dearest and unabatedly supportive wife Natacha, without whom neither my initial theological studies, nor the painstaking work involved with such a long-term project would have been possible. Concentrating on academic work has often meant weekends were short, holidays few and the appartement not as clean and tidy as it should be. It is an incommensurable blessing to journey in the Lord with you, for "*Qui trouve une épouse trouve le bonheur: c'est une faveur que l'Eternel lui a accordée.*" Proverbes 18:22.

And, most evidently, to the One in Whom I live and move and have my being, *Soli Deo Gloria.*

Dedication

To the many women and men of all five continents, whose names never appear in this thesis but whose often unnoticed, yet faithful, prayerful, sacrificial and humble missionary commitment have made the history, theology and missiology of IFES. One day we shall know and rejoice about your world-changing witness.

Introduction

The *International Fellowship of Evangelical Students* (IFES) is one of the most ethnically diverse, geographically widespread and interdenominational student ministries. This thesis explores how its theology has developed throughout its history and suggests a new way to make sense of its work. I propose that the doctrine of the *priesthood of all believers,* combined with a missiological understanding of ecclesiology, offers a firm basis for understanding its work and development.

The idea of a *priesthood of all believers* suggests *immediacy, mediation, and participation.* Students, by faith, have an *immediate* connection to Christ and do not need to rely upon the mediation of a priestly order or any other hierarchy. Secondly, students *mediate* or *represent* Christ to the world, calling those around them to direct fellowship with Christ. Thirdly, students join in Christ's priesthood by virtue of their *participation* in the *whole priestly people of God:* The Church.

1 Historical Background

As modern universities develop in the 19th century, groups of like-minded students gather for activities of common interest. In many countries, Christian students assemble for prayer, Bible study, common witness and mutual upbuilding. These groups gather either under clerical supervision as in the case of "university congregations" or without such oversight as with "voluntary associations." Some aspire to deeply theological and political engagement with society and the University whilst others prioritize personal piety and missionary witness.

As with other voluntary societies consisting of individuals who are also members of local churches – most notably the burgeoning missionary societies – the question of the ecclesiological legitimacy of such gatherings is raised by theologians. On what account could laypeople gather and engage in churchly activities? What is their relationship to ecclesiastical hierarchies and especially what differentiates these groupings from local churches? Are they to be seen as "churches" or not, and if not, what should they be called?

Diverging answers are given to these questions. Opposition, suspicion, and in some cases, excommunication do not stop the emergence of such groups. In many cases, Christian students heavily involved in Christian student societies during their studies become deeply involved members of local churches and recognized leaders of other Christian organizations, soon to be called *parachurch organizations,* for lack of a better umbrella term. The most famous of these early organizations is the World Student Christian Federation (WSCF), founded in 1895.

Apart from groupings linked to state or mainline churches, evangelical groups also rise to prominence in the late 19th century. Such groups are not isolated from the theological currents of the times. As the University encourages hard thinking and broadening horizons, student groups often find

themselves taken into the deep theological debates over which churches divide. Correspondingly, Christian student groups split because of theological or missiological questions.

Founded in 1947 and promoting an ethos of decentralization through local leadership and insistence on student initiative, IFES rapidly grows in the decolonization era. IFES promotes a contextualized approach to evangelical missionary practice in advance of its time, whilst at the same time insisting on the universal validity of the core tenets of evangelical faith. This ethos allows the organization's survival through the turmoil of the 1960s' call for a *moratorium on missions*. Supporting student leadership implies supporting lay theological reflection amongst its member movements. Numerous IFES workers develop a "missiology from below," figuring out missionary engagement with the realities of vastly diverging university contexts throughout a very diverse world. As the world changes, new questions are raised by students on campuses, and new theological answers need tackling, such as the role of Christians in a world of (Marxist) revolutions, the cultural embeddedness of Christian doctrinal formulations or new challenges to traditional Christian ethical teaching.

Core activities taking place under the IFES umbrella are Bible study, prayer meetings, and witness to fellow students through friendships and public events on campus. Some student leaders develop a habitus of Christian reflection in contexts that train them to contextualize the Christian message in the Majority World in ways not often seen in Evangelical circles before. This becomes especially evident at the Lausanne 1974 Congress, where numerous influential speakers have an IFES background. The fellowship had been the context in which they had developed their leadership skills and theological acumen and were given a voice they would not necessarily have had in other more centralized missionary organizations.

It was never possible for national IFES movements to hire enough staff members to constantly oversee the activities of local student groups spread across their respective countries. In many cases, students had been meeting long before any staff member heard of the meetings. This firm belief in the ability of students to lead fellow students in Bible study, prayer and witness was, more importantly, the consequence of a deeply ingrained evangelical tradition of relying on the doctrine of the *priesthood of all believers*. This theological idea, highly disputed between the many branches of Christian traditions and rooted in later Lutheranism, reworked in the Free Evangelical Church tradition and especially in Brethren circles – out of which numerous early IFES leaders came – presumes that *any* Christian student can mediate God to his fellow students, whether Christians or not, by virtue of his or her *immediate* relationship to God.

2 The Priesthood of All Believers

I contend that the doctrine of the *priesthood of all believers* has been from the onset essential to IFES's specifically non-clerical approach to student ministry. Even if this theological foundation is only seldom explicitly mentioned in official documents, it provides the implicit rationale for encouraging

students to minister to students long before any of them could have formal theological training or official accreditation by ecclesial authorities. It also explains why most staff only receive theological training "on the way" and only a handful of the senior staff are ordained in their respective traditions. Such a *common sense* approach to ministry causes clergy members of all corners of the world to challenge the legitimacy of the ministry of IFES and to wonder whether student groups are considering themselves to be local churches on campus. Whereas this was sometimes incidentally the case, the IFES leadership always took great care to develop its ecclesiological thinking to affirm the fact that student groups made of Christian students and therefore members of the Church, were not churches but the *missionary arm of the local church* on campus, reaching a specific population requiring special understanding, and sociologically strategic for both society in general and future Church leadership.

This thesis concludes that despite the challenge of potential individualist excesses, the *priesthood of all believers* provides an essential building block on which to anchor a ministry flexible enough to take into consideration the high volatility of the world of higher education and the variety of social, geographical, ecclesial and economic contexts in which IFES movements operate. Such agility is necessary for practical reasons, but also for deeply missiological ones: if the Christian message is addressing every human being, he or she must be able to respond in ways appropriate to his or her culture, thought forms, language, and aspirations.

A shared common doctrinal heritage offers a solid and trustworthy orientation, but the "deposit of the faith" must be appropriated by those who receive it. Students are best placed to identify the challenges their fellow students encounter in the world of higher education. It is missiologically crucial to consider the target group on its own terms. If an essential dimension of university education involves training students to examine the world and critically reflect on it, the Christian message must also be open for thoughtful examination. Such "safe spaces" outside of the constraints of ecclesial traditions and loyalties allow for fruitful inter-traditional encounters that foster understanding amongst Christians and train them to engage with others, *mediating* the Gospel in respectful and thoughtful dialogue. Otherwise, a ministry to students runs the risk of allowing only for a faith that could remain sealed off from actual life and studies-related challenges that any student encounters, and hence not be sustainable once the support structures of the local student groups are left behind. For the principles of *immediacy, mediation* and *membership* in the Church and in God's mission can sustain the life of Christians much beyond their years at university.

3 Methodology

The idea that the priesthood of all believers could make sense of the work of IFES was firstly a personal intuition based on my extensive personal acquaintance with its work. Ultimately, I am not claiming that the priesthood of all believers is the way in which IFES leaders, and its constituency explain their work, but that it provides a way of gathering together key claims made within IFES and

key practices of IFES and providing them with theological missiological underpinnings that make sense of them.

I wanted to understand why IFES is going about its mission the way it does, and how it legitimates it theologically. Further questions included how laypeople gradually developed theological acumen throughout their involvement in the fellowship – this notably including women – and how this whole enterprise manages to work on such a global scale. For preliminary insights into these areas, I read published works of key actors like the IFES General Secretaries, but also of other senior staff like René Padilla, Zac Niringye, Samuel Escobar; and finally of theologians close to IFES like John Stott, Jim Stamoolis and Chris Wright, among others. None of them articulated the work of IFES in the way I am proposing in this thesis. Yet most of them made short allusions to the legitimacy of lay mission, attributing it to the importance of immediate access to God as the necessary premise for Bible study and missionary engagement. Prior to my dissertation work, I discussed my ideas with Lindsay Brown and Chris Wright notably and both confirmed I was on a promising track. In one of the few oral interviews I was able to conduct, both because of the space limitations of this work and of COVID, Escobar confirmed my insights and also pointed me towards further writings by Padilla which essentially made the case for lay ministry along the same lines as this work.[1]

These preliminary conversations framed the way I went about my archival work.[2] I surveyed internal papers – committee minutes, correspondence, discussion and position papers, conference documents. They document the way IFES has understood its own work and reflected at great lengths on how to present it to the outside world. Not all discussions are recorded in the minutes, for many also informally take place, yet the historian cannot access any of these, except through very extensive oral history, which also has the limitation of the memory and interests of any given conversation partner.

I read these archival documents, to which I have been granted unlimited access, looking at them thematically through three main "key concepts": theology (the legitimation of IFES's mission); Ecclesiology (the legitimation of the form of IFES's mission) and University (the context of IFES's mission). These concepts were sometimes explicit, sometimes implicit, understandable more in the context of the examined documents, their authors, their aims. I took very extensive notes of the main arguments of the documents I read – going from the most formal memorandums and vision papers to the more informal newsletters, and subsequently organized them in a large library of themes and subthemes. In the final stages of writing the dissertation, I retained only the documents which most articulately discuss the above "key concepts", reluctantly leaving aside a very significant number of

[1] Samuel Escobar, *Interview* (Coma-Ruga, Spain, 2018).

[2] The IFES archival records are preserved at the Billy Graham Archival Center in Wheaton, Illinois, for the years 1935–1991. The archives were still located at the IFES international service centre in Oxford for the following years when I started my archival work in 2016.

other sources – notably correspondence by more local actors– which altogether would make the description thicker yet would not significantly alter the argument I make in this thesis. This research combines insights from the different branches of theology – systematic, biblical, practical – but also of history, offering a combination of comparative thematic analysis with elements of contextualized discourse analysis. Though not following a strict social-scientific approach – like a formal coding methodology, it can be understood as a sort of hermeneutical spiralling through layers of normative texts, field experiences and accounts of these experiences. Beside internal documents, I read most IFES published documents – journals, books, newsletters, presentation document, etc. which were either directly published by IFES or by its member movements.

The historical part is neither a factual history nor a catalogue of the work of prominent figures. It is no "history of the great men" but rather a "theological history of ideas" focusing on how ecclesiological and missiological questions have arisen during IFES's history. Studying an organization spread, at the time of writing, throughout about 170 countries is a daunting task, and fairly representing the wealth of geographical, theological, socio-economic and cultural diversity would exceed the strengths of a sole author. I have tried as much as possible to give a voice to all the IFES regions. As it now stands, this dissertation is about four times shorter than my original manuscript, which was much more detailed in its historical and theological parts. However, I still realize that much more work will be needed in the future to give justice to the many anonymous yet committed actors who have shaped the fellowship throughout its history. An important area of work that could only be sparsely hinted at throughout this work but would be worth in-depth consideration is the whole field of high school ministry, which is extremely strong in many countries – much more important than university ministry. Similarly, careful study of the fellowship's leadership, structures and financial operations would certainly be worth the time of future researchers interested in the inner workings of an organization of the scale of the United Nations yet operating out of a fraction of the latter's budget.

One of the limitations I was aware of before starting the work is that a ministry like IFES, which works essentially with volunteer human power and a few generally humbly paid staff, does not usually invest great money in writing about its work. Some national movements have published histories of greater or lesser analytical depth – some are quoted in this work. IFES itself has published a few self-reflecting works. However, overall, an extraordinary wealth of wisdom about the ins and outs of parachurch ministry gets lost as each generation of students and staff members move on to other places of work or ministry.

Significantly, this dissertation is the first full-length work assessing the overall work of IFES from a scholarly perspective. Short articles and an in-depth biography of its first General Secretary have been written, but much remains to be done. This work aspires to shed some historical, theological and missiological light on an important actor in the world of Christian student organizations. Students

is used throughout as an umbrella term for the core IFES constituency. It can at times imply high school students and certainly encompasses postgraduate students. Moreover, if this thesis is convincing, it could support a slight reframing of the IFES vision such as to consider it more deliberately as a ministry to the university and not only to those with official student status – professors, non-academic staff and more generally, the whole academic endeavour.

4 About the Author

IFES has been a congenial part of my own academic journey. I became a student leader in my last year in high school and my first year of university. I have spent countless hours in student group activities of all sorts in Switzerland, Germany and Canada, assuming almost all levels of leadership. I have written this dissertation whilst working part-time with the French-speaking Swiss IFES movement, GBEU. From early on, I read almost anything I could on the identity and vision of our work. In my first year at university, the GBEU General Secretary suggested that my future master's thesis examine the history of my movement. That first thesis – defended in 2012 – was the beginning of a fascinating journey of which this dissertation is the culmination. As the first work was written in a history department, I was frustrated not to devote more energy to theological thinking. Throughout my subsequent theological studies, I realized that the theological world almost ignored everything about student ministry, especially in secular universities, and how its missiological insights might enrich theological thinking, including in ecclesiological matters. Most of my friends and colleagues simply lack time to write and reflect on their ministry.

Therefore I have launched into the daring endeavour to write an account of IFES, which, though that of an insider, aims at being as fairly critical as it can be. IFES readers with long experience might feel that some aspects of the ministry have been neglected; others that I have stressed some elements too strongly. Such is the fate of the historian navigating vast amounts of archival materials and the theologian who is forced to limit the themes he can focus on. Suppose readers from outside of IFES understand its work in most of its dimensions, including those they see most critically. In that case, the following account will have contributed to a better mutual understanding in the very complex world of Christian theology and ministry.

The consequence of what precedes is that my own *Sitz im Leben* means that theologically, this dissertation is written from *within* the *evangelical* theological tradition of IFES. Essentially, in what follows and in dialogue with other traditions, I will presume a low sacramentology, an *a priori* low account of Church order, and high confidence in the capacity of believers to make sense of the Bible. I am offering a contribution to an ongoing evangelical discussion and not trying to defend evangelical theology, for many authors have done so elsewhere.

5 Literature Review

In twentieth-century Christianity, the role of student ministries is acknowledged most of the time only in passing in historiographical studies[3] as well as in a few more specific scholarly articles.[4] Most writings are personal and institutional recollections, as for the *World Student Christian Movement*[5] or the *International Fellowship of Evangelical Students*[6] amongst others in general.[7] Country-specific studies have examined Christian student groups in Europe and North America. Two studies[8] have explored how an evangelical movement has navigated the modifications in leadership culture in the wake of the criticism of institutions and the "religious crisis" of the 1960s,[9] compared with the structures of the Student Christian Movement (SCM.)[10] These studies take as their starting point the strong commitment of lay organizations to the missionary enterprise.[11] Some works have discussed the role played by doctrine in ecumenical and interdenominational organizations,[12] and some doctrinal statements have been studied comparatively.[13]

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[3] David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989); Brian Stanley, *The Global Diffusion of Evangelicalism: The Age of Billy Graham and John Stott*, vol. 5, 5 vols, A History of Evangelicalism (Downers Grove: IVP, 2013); David Bebbington and David Ceri Jones, eds., *Evangelicalism and Fundamentalism in the United Kingdom during the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: OUP, 2013); Sébastien Fath, *Le protestantisme évangélique, un christianisme de conversion : entre ruptures et filiations*, Bibliothèque de l'Ecole des Hautes Etudes. Sciences religieuses (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004); Sébastien Fath, 'Evangelical Protestantism in France: An Example of Denominational Recomposition?', *Sociology of Religion* 66, no. 4 (1 December 2005): 399–418.

[4] David Goodhew, 'The Rise of the Cambridge Inter-Collegiate Christian Union, 1910–1971', *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 54, no. 1 (2003): 62–88; Donald A. MacLeod, *C. Stacey Woods and the Evangelical Rediscovery of the University* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2007); John G. Turner, *Bill Bright and Campus Crusade for Christ : The Renewal of Evangelicalism in Postwar America* (Chapel Hill, NC, USA: University of North Carolina Press, 2008).

[5] Suzanne de Diétrich, *Cinquante ans d'histoire : la Fédération universelle des associations chrétiennes d'étudiants (1895-1945)* (Paris: Ed. du Semeur, 1946); Philip Potter and Thomas Wieser, *Seeking and Serving the Truth: The First Hundred Years of the World Student Christian Federation* (Genève: World Council of Churches, 1996); Risto Lehtonen, *Story of a Storm: The Ecumenical Student Movement in the Turmoil of Revolution, 1968 to 1973* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998); Robin H. S. Boyd, *The Witness of the Student Christian Movement: Church Ahead of the Church* (London: SPCK, 2007); Johanna M. Selles, *The World Student Christian Federation, 1895-1925: Motives, Methods, and Influential Women* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2011).

[6] Douglas Johnson, *A Brief History of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students* (Lausanne: IFES, 1964); Pete Lowman, *The Day of His Power: A History of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity, 1983).

[7] David M. Howard, *Student Power in World Evangelism* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1970).

[8] Adrienne Prudente, 'Histoire des Groupes Bibliques Universitaires (GBU) en Suisse romande (de 1937 à 1953). Ou des stratégies pour une évangélisation efficace des étudiants' (unpublished master thesis, Université de Lausanne, 2004); Timothée Joset, '20 ans d'histoire des groupes bibliques universitaires de Suisse Romande: 1955-1975. L'histoire de la « Réformation » des étudiants en une période mouvementée ou comment concilier une foi séculaire dans un monde en mouvement.' (unpublished master thesis, Neuchâtel, Université de Neuchâtel, 2012).

[9] Hugh McLeod, *The Religious Crisis of the 1960s* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

[10] Ronald Preston, 'The Collapse of the SCM', *Theology* 89, no. 732 (1986): 431–40; Lehtonen, *Story of a Storm*.

[11] Deryck W. Lovegrove, *The Rise of the Laity in Evangelical Protestantism* (London: Routledge, 2002); Kenneth Hylson-Smith, *The Laity in Christian History and Today* (London: SPCK Publishing, 2008).

[12] Daniel W. Hardy, 'Upholding Orthodoxy in Missionary Encounters: A Theological Perspective', in *Christian Missions and the Enlightenment*, ed. Brian Stanley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 198–222; Danièle Hervieu-Léger, 'Le converti "évangélique", figure de description de la modernité religieuse.', in *Le protestantisme évangélique, un christianisme de conversion : entre ruptures et filiations*, ed. Sébastien Fath (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004), 207–13; Fath, *Christianisme de conversion*.

[13] Jean-Paul Willaime, 'La formule d'adhésion, la déclaration de foi et le problème ecclésiologique du protestantisme: un point de vue sociologique', in *Vers l'unité pour quel témoignage? La restauration de l'unité Réformée (1933-1938)*, ed. Jean Baubérot (Paris: Les Bergers et les Mages, 1982), 288–304; Jean-François Collange, 'Les confessions de foi «évangéliques»', *Autres Temps. Les cahiers du christianisme social* 3 (1984): 72–82; Rob Warner, 'Evangelical Bases of Faith and Fundamentalizing Tendencies', in *Evangelicalism and Fundamentalism in the United Kingdom during the Twentieth Century*, ed. David Bebbington and David Ceri Jones (Oxford: OUP, 2013), 328–47.

As for parachurch organizations, systematic academic research is still lacking as only handbooks exist, but with no specific focus on the particularities of student ministry itself.[14] Sociology has proved a fruitful approach to student groups generally considered as religious movements.[15] After the seminal work of Bruce,[16] comparing sociologically the two movements in Britain (SCM and IVF), Bramadat[17] has deepened and underlined the complexities of a "fortress mentality" and the necessary engagement in a secular context. Others have emphasized the characteristics of the student years[18] in the development of a worldview and a commitment to challenge societal values and practices.[19]

In the Evangelical tradition, the study of the Bible is generally strongly emphasized; consequently, a student-led parachurch ministry implies hermeneutical consequences and Village[20] provides a good starting point.

Several publications have explored the complex relationship of Evangelicals with the rite of passage that university represents for young adults[21] in the context of the intellectual pursuit for Protestants and Evangelicals,[22] Catholics, and more generally students.[23] Indispensable in this respect are

[14] Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, 'Cooperating in World Evangelization: A Handbook on Church/Para-Church Relationships', Lausanne Occasional paper (Lausanne Movement, 1983), http://www.lausanne.org/content/lop/lop-24; Jerry E. White, *The Church and the Parachurch: An Uneasy Marriage* (Portland, Or: Multnomah Pub, 1983); Wesley Kenneth Willmer, J. David Schmidt, and Martyn Smith, *The Prospering Parachurch: Enlarging the Boundaries of God's Kingdom* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998); John Pellowe, 'Leading Ministries into Christian Community: A Practical Theology for Church-Agency Relations' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Gordon-Conwell Seminary, 2008); John Pellowe, *The Church at Work: A Manual for Excellent Church-Agency Relations* (Elmira: Canadian Council of Christian Charities, 2012).

[15] Robert A. Stallings, 'Patterns of Belief in Social Movements: Clarifications from an Analysis of Environmental Groups', *The Sociological Quarterly* 14, no. 4 (1973): 465–80; James A. Beckford, 'Explaining Religious Movements', *International Social Science Journal* 29, no. 2 (1977): 235; James A. Beckford, *Social Theory and Religion* (Cambridge: CUP, 2003).

[16] Steve Bruce, 'The Student Christian Movement and the Inter-Varsity Fellowship: A Sociological Study of Two Movements' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Stirling, University of Stirling, 1980).

[17] Paul A. Bramadat, *Church on the World's Turf: An Evangelical Christian Group at a Secular University* (Cary: Oxford University Press, 2000).

[18] Christian Smith and Patricia Snell, *Souls in Transition : The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults* (Oxford: OUP Premium, 2009); Sonya Sharma, 'Navigating Religion between University and Home: Christian Students' Experiences in English Universities' 14, no. 1 (2013): 59–79.

[19] Jean-Philippe Legois, Alain Monchablon, and Robi Morder, *Cent ans de mouvements étudiants* (Paris: Editions Syllepse, 2007); Valérie Becquet, 'Moment étudiant, moment d'engagement: regard sur les activités bénévoles des étudiants.', in *Cent ans de mouvements étudiants*, by Jean-Philippe Legois and Alain Monchalbon, ed. Groupe d'études et de recherches sur les mouvements étudiants (Paris: Syllepse, 2007), 141–55; Françoise Hiraux, ed., *Les engagements étudiants : des pratiques et des horizons dans un monde globalisé* (Academia-Bruylant, 2008); Françoise Hiraux and Paul Servais, 'Les figures de l'engagement étudiant', in *Les engagements étudiants: des pratiques et des horizons dans un monde globalisé*, ed. Françoise Hiraux (Academia-Bruylant, 2008), 31–58.

[20] Andrew Village, *The Bible and Lay People : An Empirical Approach to Ordinary Hermeneutics*, Explorations in Practical, Pastoral, and Empirical Theology (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2007).

[21] Edward. Dutton, *Meeting Jesus at University : Rites of Passage and Student Evangelicals* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008).

[22] John R. Fry, 'Anti-Intellectualism in the Church Today', *The Christian Scholar* 45, no. 1 (1962): 22–27; Mark A. Noll, 'Common Sense Traditions and American Evangelical Thought', *American Quarterly* 37, no. 2 (1985): 216–38; Mark A. Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 1994); Cornelius Plantinga, *Engaging God's World: A Christian Vision of Faith, Learning, and Living* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002); Carl R. Trueman, *The Real Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2011); Alvin C. Plantinga, 'On Christian Scholarship', in *Christian Scholarship in the Twenty-First Century: Prospects and Perils*, ed. Thomas M. Crisp, Steven L. Porter, and Gregg Ten Elshof (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 18–33.

[23] Mathew Guest, *Christianity and the University Experience: Understanding Student Faith* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).

important works that have been influential in the history of recent Evangelical movements[24] and recent theological reflections on the idea of human flourishing and higher education.[25]

6 Chapters Outline

The first part is of this work is a historical survey of how IFES developed from its foundation in 1947 until 2000. The survey focuses primarily on theological reflections and debates. As a selective account, it does not provide a complete narrative account of the rich history of how independent national movements came together, networked, debated theological and missiological issues, and at times, fought against each other. Other historical sketches published need updating. However, this work is the first to systematically examine the explicit and implicit theological convictions underpinning the development of IFES.

This part will show that in relation to *immediacy*, the work of IFES revolves around a commitment to the authority of the Bible and to the capacity of all believers to discover the plain sense of Scripture for themselves. Questions have emerged in the history of IFES about the relationship between that capacity and the authority of IFES as a body to determine and express what scriptural plain sense is. IFES responded to this challenge by crafting a *doctrinal basis*, serving as an authoritative summary of the theological essentials of the fellowship. This basis arose in a particular historical context and has since played the role of an identity and boundary marker. Hence, questions arise in the history of IFES about the relation between that context of origin and the many other contexts in which IFES operates.

In relation to *mediation*, I will firstly be showing how the history of IFES displays different attitudes to the intellectual contexts of student ministry, including especially an embattled defensiveness early on which has continued to shape the movement in many ways. Secondly, the history of IFES displays a striking and early move towards missiological indigenization, albeit one in which there are persistent tensions between indigenization and central oversight, and all sorts of complexities about the role of (foreign) staff.

In relation to *participation*, I will be showing how the insistence on the immediacy of each student's access to Scripture, and on the indigenization of the ministry in each national context, has gone along with all kinds of support and encouragement flowing around IFES; but also that there are persistent questions about how far IFES as a whole body is able to receive the gifts of intellectual and international indigenization from each of the contexts in which it operates.

Part two supplements the historical account by offering a description of the core activities of IFES groups, based on archival evidence. These activities rely on deep theological assumptions linked with

[24] John Stott, *Your Mind Matters the Place of the Mind in the Christian Life* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1973); Oliver R. Barclay, *Developing a Christian Mind* (Leicester: IVP, 1984); Clifford Williams, *The Life of the Mind: A Christian Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002); Mark A. Noll, *Jesus Christ and the Life of the Mind* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011); David A. Horner, *Mind Your Faith: A Student's Guide to Thinking and Living Well* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2011); Alister E. McGrath, *The Passionate Intellect: Christian Faith and the Discipleship of the Mind* (IVP Books, 2014).

[25] Mike Higton, *A Theology of Higher Education* (Oxford: OUP, 2012).

my understanding of the *priesthood of all believers*. Witness, prayer, Bible reading, and fellowship are all activities of local student groups which question and answer issues of *immediacy*, *mediation* and *participation*; so does the complex role of staff members, finding themselves at the intersection of student-led groups and Church authorities.

The third part shows that substantial ecclesiological and missiological reflection has taken place within IFES. I argue that the *priesthood of all believers* is best articulated with a *missional ecclesiology* slowly but steadily developing within the fellowship in dialogue with its context and the wider Christian world. This reflection took time to emerge. The first context in which some of it was outlined was the key theological statement of IFES, its doctrinal basis, which I examine in some detail. It was also articulated in theological and missiological writings penned by people influential in the IFES world as well as increasingly beyond it. The experiences gathered by these authors gradually shaped the way they conceived ecclesiology in a missional way congruent with each believer's calling to *mediate* his or her beliefs to his or her environment.

The fourth part deepens the theological pool of resources by examining first how a missional reading of sample biblical texts can sustain *a missional understanding of the priesthood of all believers and a corresponding ecclesiology* starting with the calling of the people of Israel and continuing in the priestly understanding of the people of God in the Church. Initially far from the theological seedbed of IFES, Roman Catholic official texts, as well as the writings of Hans Küng, convincingly map out what I then go on to argue; namely that "parachurch" organizations, once properly understood in the context of a missional ecclesiology, are neither besides nor outside of the Church but its very incarnation outside of the walls of traditional gathered assemblies. Missiologist Roland Allen, famous for his reflection on the realities of foreign missions is helpful here in understanding what it means to *mediate* a message in distant lands and to focus on essentials. For ultimately, what all believers do, when they share the message of their faith, is joining into the *missio Dei* which by its incarnational nature, is shaped by the contexts in which the Gospel is proclaimed and received. This *participation* in the mission of God shapes the identity of believers who understand themselves as *pilgrims and priests* of the apostolic Gospel.

The fifth and last part of this work is the constructive proposal of a *missiology for the university*, formalizing the way in which the *priesthood of all believers* helps to understand the ministry of IFES and can inspire student ministry more broadly. Students are a *specific public* with *special needs*, and they represent a challenge to ecclesial structures in the same way that university studies challenge their faith – or absence thereof. As students are leaders in training, a robust missiology takes their sociology seriously. It considers their needs for experimenting, critically assessing their faith and its articulation to the world of the university, which in essence, is at the frontline of epistemological exploration. This is congenial to how the *priesthood of all believers* is understood and practised: In the same way students

have *immediate* access to God, they have close access to knowledge and to people. An intense, *multidimensional mediation* takes place as the university *mediates* knowledge to students who, in turn, are called to *mediate* the Gospel to the University. Ultimately, this means *participating in* the *missio Dei* and being a blessing to the campus, which in many cases is an ecclesial foreign land. What is at stake is a creative and faithful engagement with contextual realities. The articulation of *apostolicity* as "sentness" is explored in the context of IFES as an organization spanning over the two thought worlds of *imperialism* and *postcolonialism*. As the university world is also a globalized world under heavy Western influence, this last part comes full circle with considerations of how a mentality of *pilgrims and priests* can encourage students to be *faithful witnesses* in the fascinating world of academia to which God has called them.

Part One: A Selective Overview of the IFES History

Officially founded in 1947, the IFES was built upon existing models of ministry to students but separated from other structures for a variety of reasons. In what follows, a brief historical sketch of the significant events, people and orientations of IFES will allow the reader to be more familiar with the background of the theological considerations that follow this historical part. This account is highly selective, concentrating on events, people and discussions which are most illustrative of the theological and missiological developments within IFES, especially in relation to the thesis of this work.

1 Student Work Before IFES (1800–1909)[26]

Precursors of IFES[27] include the Jesus Lane Lot, a group of young students involved in Scripture teaching and literacy work amongst underprivileged people in Cambridge, founded in 1827; the "Daily Prayer Meeting" (DPM) founded in 1862 by undergraduate students who had experienced daily prayer in their former school; and the Cambridge University Church Missionary Union, formed in 1875, which came to include 10% of the local undergraduate constituency, and provided structure for a growing concern of British students for world mission at this time of world colonization. In rapid succession, the Cambridge Inter-Collegiate Christian Union (CICCU, 1877) and the Oxford Inter-Collegiate Christian Union (OICCU, 1879), were founded. They were led by students, independently from university chaplains and aimed at gathering students for prayer, Bible study, and mutual encouragement for witness in the university context. Witness mostly took the form of personal discussions with fellow students. However, CICCU students soon felt the need for a more public proclamation of their beliefs and called on American evangelist Moody to serve as a speaker for a university-wide mission in 1882, aimed at reviving – or giving birth – to a personal faith amongst students. Moody agreed to come despite not being a university graduate himself. One student who led noisy resistance to the meeting commented that "if uneducated men will come and teach the Varsity, they deserve to be snubbed."[28] Many students did not welcome this rise of more evangelical piety.

[26] This is a very cursory account. For good historical overviews, see Tissington Tatlow, *The Story of the Student Christian Movement of Great Britain and Ireland* (London: SCM, 1933); Clarence Shedd, *Two Centuries of Student Christian Movements : Their Origin and Inter-Collegiate Life.* (New York: Association Press, 1934); Donald Coggan, *Christ and the Colleges: A History of the Inter-Varsity Fellowship of Evangelical Unions* (London: Inter-Varsity, 1934); Ruth Rouse, *The World's Student Christian Federation: A History of the First Thirty Years* (London: SCM, 1948); Johnson, *Brief History*; Howard, *Student Power in World Evangelism*; Douglas Johnson, *Contending for the Faith: A History of the Evangelical Movement in the Universities and Colleges* (Leicester: IVP, 1979); Oliver R. Barclay, *Whatever Happened to the Jesus Lane Lot?* (Leicester: IVP, 1977); Lowman, *The Day*; Potter and Wieser, *Seeking*; Oliver R. Barclay and Robert M. Horn, *From Cambridge to the World: 125 Years of Student Witness* (Leicester: IVP, 2002); Boyd, *SCM*. Shedd, *Two Centuries*; Howard, *Student Power in World Evangelism*.

[27] These are mostly English-speaking groups, which does not mean that there were no earlier similar groups in other countries. Their history mostly remains to be written, however.

[28] Barclay, *Whatever*, 24. He later personally apologized to Moody.

The Christian Unions[29] soon decided that some closer links between them were necessary, and hence the Student Christian Movement was founded in the context of the Keswick conferences in 1893. The early SCM was essentially evangelical, "drawing on the Evangelical traditions of the CICCU, on Keswick and on the American revivalism of Moody, Wilder and the Northfield Student Summer School;"[30] it was also interdenominational, comprising notably Anglicans, Presbyterians, Free Churchmen; and thirdly, that it was characterized by "missionary zeal."[31]

A towering figure of this period is the American John Mott, who had himself been converted through the teaching and counselling of a British student, in a university mission in the United States in 1886.[32] Mott was the chairman of the new Student Volunteer Movement founded in 1888 and travelled widely to recruit students for missions.[33] Firmly convinced of the importance of recruiting lay people,[34] he proclaimed that the aim of the SVM was "The Evangelization of the World in this generation."[35] The SVM committee was "optimistic that if the 10 million Christians in the world would each witness to 100 people within fifteen years, then the entire current population of the earth would hear the gospel by the year 1900."[36] One key theological aspect of this view was the premillennialist hope that Christ's second coming might be hastened if the whole earth was reached.[37] This task was deemed achievable, provided enough personnel could be found. Universities appeared to be one of the most promising grounds for recruitment. As a pivotal figure of the WSCF later recalled,

> This fundamental maxim of WSCF philosophy was not chosen fortuitously by a certain group of leaders. Does it not seem that the thought of Christian students as an ordained instrument for the redemption of the world must be a fragment of the eternal thought of God made manifest in history at His chosen time?[38]

Mott's approach was very influential for the structural understanding of international missionary ministry. As one of his colleagues recalls, Mott thought

> that instead of attempting to organize the Christian students under any one name and according to any one plan of organization, it would be better to encourage the Christian students in each country to develop national Christian student movements of their own, adapted in name, organization and activities

[29] In the rest of this work, the abbreviation "CU" will be used to designate local student groups connected with IFES. In this introduction, we stick to this usage, even if it is somewhat anachronistic.

[30] Martin Wellings, *Evangelicals Embattled: 1890-1930: Responses of Evangelicals in the Church of England to Ritualism, Darwinism and Theological Liberalism 1890-1930* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 2003), 275.

[31] Wellings, 275.

[32] Studd is said to have advised Mott "not to rely on any dogmatic conclusions arrived at by other people, whether doctrinal or otherwise, but pointed him back to the original sources, directing him on the one hand to study his New Testament and, on the other hand, in particular to place his reliance upon a personal relationship with Christ for the guidance of his life" Basil Mathews, *John R. Mott, World Citizen* (New York: Harper, 1934), 47–50.

[33] On Mott, see Mathews, *John Mott*; Robert C. Mackie, *Layman Extraordinary: John R. Mott, 1865-1955* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1965); Charles Howard Hopkins, *John R. Mott, 1865-1955: A Biography* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979).

[34] John Raleigh Mott, *Liberating the Lay Forces of Christianity* (New York: Macmillan, 1932).

[35] Dana L. Robert, 'The Origin of the Student Volunteer Watchword: "The Evangelization of the World in This Generation"', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 10, no. 4 (October 1986): 146–49.

[36] Robert, 147.

[37] Robert, 147.

[38] Rouse, *WSCF*, 308.

> to their particular genius and character, and then to link these together in some simple yet effective federation.[39]

Mott aimed at encouraging local initiatives for mission in as many contexts as possible. This prioritizing of ministering to the lost world over ecclesiological divisions and separations was a fundamental characteristic of contemporary missional currents, as expressed at the 1910 Edinburgh Congress.[40] It rested not only on pragmatic premises but on the theology of the activist Evangelicals:

> For Evangelicals, "the church" was the body of true believers,[41] united by a common experience of grace and devotion to Christ as saviour, wherever they were to be found. Unity consisted in a shared openness to the Bible and its teaching, spiritual friendship and cooperation in common causes, especially mission. This ecclesiology was the basis of the "ecumenism" that characterized the movement. In addition to being transnational, Evangelicalism was transdenominational. This capacity for wider affinities had important organizational consequences. Apart from sympathizing with one another, the men and women of the evangelical diaspora came together in parachurch organizations that became a distinctive feature of the movement.[42]

These movements gathered around a set of core beliefs – notably the authority of the Bible, the virgin birth, the deity of Christ, universal sinfulness, etc. – which formed a consensus broad and especially transferable enough for worldwide dispersion. This, in turn, created the "capacity to create the cross-denominational organizations that sought to turn aspiration into achievements. Such organizations in turn fostered a sense of belonging to a community committed to social service and, above all, to evangelism and mission."[43]

Some of these organizations later formed the IFES. Its movements emerged from these earlier student movements concerned with devotion, mission, and (to a lesser extent) Christian social action; in a context of emerging interdenominational evangelical unity in mission, underpinned by agreement in some theological fundamentals; and in the context of an emerging idea of students as key local agents for worldwide mission. Yet, these movements were sometimes challenged.

2 The Master Narrative of a Separation (1909–1935)

> All schism within Christian circles must be regretted; but when our most precious possession, the free gospel, is at stake, we dare not compromise on a single point.[44]

It might seem peculiar to give sustained attention to the story of a specific local group, the CICCU, in a historical sketch on IFES. Yet most existing IFES historical accounts mention the events around 1909-11, leading to a split between the CICCU and the national SCM as *the* foundational event legitimating the existence of IFES.

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[39] John Mott, *The World's Student Christian Federation: Origin, Achievements, Forecast. Achievements of the First Quarter-Century of the World's Student Christian Federation and Forecast of Unfinished Tasks* ([London?]: World's Student Christian Federation, 1920), 4.

[40] Jeremy Morris, 'Edinburgh 1910-2010: A Retrospective Assessment', *Ecclesiology*, September 2011.

[41] The IFES doctrinal basis (clause d) explicitly mentions "all true believers" as forming the Church.

[42] Geoffrey Treloar, *The Disruption of Evangelicalism: The Age of Torrey, Mott, McPherson and Hammond* (London: IVP, 2016), 3–4.

[43] Treloar, 5.

[44] Johnson, *Brief History*, 45. Johnson quotes an early leader of the Norges Kristelige Studentlag, later the Norwegian IFES movement.

The story will only be sketched here.[45] Founded twenty-two years before the SCM, CICCU remained for some time one of the SCM's main member groups. However, approximately from 1890 onwards, divergences arose between the CICCU leadership and the SCM leading to a disaffiliation vote from the SCM in 1910.[46] Many actors tried for several years to influence the CICCU in one direction or the other, the last failed attempt at reverting the split taking place in 1919. The question was considered settled, despite agitating the spirits of many students and church leaders for many more years. The "precise reasons for the disaffiliation remained contested territory."[47]

2.1 Status of the Bible

The role and status of the Bible in the life and witness of Christians was intensely debated. Manley[48], later commenting on the events, asserted:

> It is not so much a question of the "verbal inspiration" or "inerrancy" of the Bible but of the deep conviction that the Bible is the word of God, and therefore true. The IVF [Inter-Varsity Fellowship] goes to the Bible to be taught by it: the typical SCM attitude is to discuss it. This involves two distinct and opposing attitudes to current theories of biblical criticism. In the IVF, we regard these theories as undermining faith.[49]

The reaction to contemporary trends of biblical criticism did not only relate to private devotions and public events: it had broader implications for the cultural involvement of the CICCU students and especially for the student's attitude to intellectual challenges. Two main approaches seemed available, either "to engage with the intellectual challenges but that perhaps risked lessening its view of the Bible,"[50] or to "withdraw from the intellectual questions, on the premise that engaging with the debates would be to deny biblical truth and reduce the simplicity of Christ."[51]

This contributed to the growing division between the two factions:

> The SCM was most frequently attacked for arid intellectualism; for neglecting the spiritual life in favour of study. Their bible studies were regarded by the Evangelicals as being studies "about" the Bible rather than "of" it. The SCM members in turn saw the conservative Evangelicals as *untutored readers of ill-understood shibboleths*; sincere but blinkered. (…) By artificially restricting the meaning of "intellectual" and "spiritual" both sides in the controversy made the label they gave themselves a compliment and the label attached to their antagonists, an insult.[52]

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[45] Concurring and diverging accounts in Cambridge Inter-Collegiate Christian Union, *Old Paths in Perilous Times*, 1st ed. (Cambridge, 1913); Bruce, 'SCM and IVF'; Barclay and Horn, *Cambridge to the World*; Goodhew, 'Rise'; Justin Thacker and Susannah Clark, 'A Historical and Theological Exploration of the 1910 Disaffiliation of the Cambridge Inter-Collegiate Christian Union from the Student Christian Movement. Unpublished Conference Paper.' (Evangelicalism and Fundamentalism in Britain, Oxford, 2008).

[46] Thacker and Clark note that the vote was carried out by only 22 students and that furthermore, "Few people outside of the Christian environment in Cambridge considered the events significant" Thacker and Clark, 'Exploration', 1.

[47] Thacker and Clark, 4. CICCU leaders exposed their views of the story in Cambridge Inter-Collegiate Christian Union, *Old Paths in Perilous Times*, 1913.

[48] Former Fellow of Christ College, Cambridge, chief editor of the influential G. T. Manley, G. C. Robinson, and A. M. Stibbs, *New Bible Handbook* (London: IVP, 1947).

[49] 'G.T. Manley to J.C. Pollock', n.d., J. C. Pollock, Papers on the history of CICCU, Cambridge University Library; quoted in Thacker and Clark, 'Exploration', 9.

[50] Thacker and Clark, 'Exploration', 5–6.

[51] Thacker and Clark, 5–6.

[52] Bruce, 'SCM and IVF', 209–10, italics mine.

2.2 Understanding the Atonement?

The doctrine of the atonement has usually been assumed to be the crux of the matter,[53] and is one of the critical theological markers of the later IFES doctrinal basis.[54] However, the latest archival research tends to demonstrate that theories of the atonement did not play a significant role in the 1910 split. Thacker and Clark make the observation that supports this view, that in the archived correspondence dating immediately from before or after the split, neither letters from CICCU members nor from SCM members have any significant mention of the atonement as being a contested cause.[55] So what seems to have happened is that the atonement was later retroactively thought to have been central in 1910, as the result of the 1932 account of the 1919 reunion meeting later described by the in-house historian Oliver Barclay as "one of the most famous conversations in IFES history."[56] Grubb reported that

> after an hour's conversation which got us nowhere, one direct and vital question was put: "Does the SCM consider the atoning blood of Jesus Christ as the central point of their message?" And the answer given was, "No, not as central, although it is given a place in our teaching." That answer settled the matter, for we explained to them at once that the atoning blood was so much the heart of our message that we could never join with a movement which gave it a lesser place.[57]

The 1919 decision not to join the SCM was not the only approach of the future IVF group members. In 1925, the OICCU decided to become the "devotional wing" of the local SCM but broke away again in 1927-8.[58]

2.3 A Social Gospel?

A frequent scholarly motive presupposes indifference from early Evangelicals to social justice issues, yet this approach has been challenged.[59] Treloar underlines that

> far more substantial than generally supposed, early twentieth-century evangelical social commentary provided impetus to the ongoing application of the gospel to the conditions of contemporary society. (…) Seemingly wherever there was a need, Evangelicals of the era developed a ministry or created an institution to alleviate that need's effects and remedy its causes.[60]

Treloar further notes "numerous books analysing contemporary social problems, explaining relevant biblical teaching and advocating various responses"[61] written by evangelical theologians,

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[53] Barclay, *Whatever*, 82.

[54] Most notably by Bruce, 'SCM and IVF', 219–20; as well as Barclay and Horn, *Cambridge to the World*, 86. The IFES doctrinal basis affirms "Redemption from the guilt, penalty, dominion and pollution of sin, solely through the sacrificial death (as our representative and substitute) of the Lord Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God." See below Part Three, I.

[55] Thacker and Clark, 'Exploration', 9.

[56] Oliver R. Barclay, 'Guarding the Truth: The Place and Purpose of the Doctrinal Basis. Workshop at Formacion 89.', *IFES Review*, no. 27 (1989): 30.

[57] Coggan, *Christ and the Colleges*, 17; John Pollock, *A Cambridge Movement* (London: John Murray, 1953), 195; also in Barclay, *Whatever*, 82; Thacker and Clark, 'Exploration', 10.

[58] See Bruce, 'SCM and IVF', 228–29; Wellings, *Evangelicals Embattled*, 279.

[59] A notably balanced and in-depth treatment can be read in Brian Steensland and Philip Goff, eds., *The New Evangelical Social Engagement* (Oxford: OUP, 2013).

[60] Treloar, *Disruption*, 99.

[61] Treloar, 93.

besides the signing of petitions. CICCU people, however, did not consider social involvement to be their task. In fact, *Old Paths in Perilous Times* sets the scene with the strong affirmation that

> while believing that it is always part of Christian duty to try and ameliorate distress, the CICCU cannot be enthusiastic about schemes for bringing about world peace by means of political bodies such as the League of Nations, or social uplift by methods of reform. It holds that in the gospel of Christ alone lies the only hope for the world by regeneration of the individual.[62]

Bruce interprets this as implying a case for "the uselessness of social reform."[63] An alternate way of understanding this reluctance to be diverted from "sole Gospel preaching" is proposed by Barclay in his own account of the CICCU story:

> At a time when few nominal Christians knew the gospel, concern with social questions seemed a fatal distraction from the main job in hand, and CICCU leaders thought that they could see that social concern had led the SCM into spiritual ineffectiveness. The CICCU overreacted to the SCM as did Evangelicals generally. The questions to be asked should have been, first, is such concern biblical and second, what sort of priority does it have?[64]

This line of explanation fuses two main threads: the pragmatic need to focus a group's energy and a strong sense of the priority of the individual's conversion over that of social involvement. The latter would come later in life.[65] Contemporary documents give the impression that the rejection of social involvement rested on essentially theological reasons. Yet, the socio-economical origins of students and senior supporters might have played a role hitherto underestimated. Boyd observes that "most university students at the time came from well-to-do families with little experience of how other people lived."[66] Their social location may have obscured darker realities outside of the wealthier circles.

2.4 Long-Term Consequences

Reflective of the importance of this episode for the later self-understanding of IVF Britain and even later of IFES, Coggan summarizes the deliberately separatist stance of CICCU after 1919:

> From that time onwards, it was perfectly clear to the members of the C.I.C.C.U. that their decision had to be the same as their predecessor before the war. Although they gladly recognized that individual members of the S.C.M. might be true servants of Christ, yet as a movement it had apostatized from the truths upon which it had been founded, and the C.I.C.C.U. must remain absolutely separate, in order to give a clear witness in the University to God's way of salvation through Christ. This decision was also the real foundation of the I.V.F., for it was only a few months later that the realization dawned on us, that if a C.I.C.C.U. was a necessity in Cambridge, a union of the same kind was also a necessity in every University of the world, with the isolated exceptions of those where the S.C.M. still maintained its original witness to the truth of God's Word.[67]

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[62] Cambridge Inter-Collegiate Christian Union, *Old Paths in Perilous Times*, ed. David Atkinson, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, 1932), 38.
[63] Bruce, 'SCM and IVF', 220.
[64] Barclay, *Whatever*, 119.
[65] Barclay, 120.
[66] Boyd, *SCM*, 29.
[67] Coggan, *Christ and the Colleges*, 17.

IVF leaders took great care to ensure undesirable speakers would not be allowed to speak at IVF events so that influences outside of the agreed line would not gain traction. The primary device for this was the doctrinal statement, for

> the CICCU now realized that a clear and explicit doctrinal statement was needed in a world in which almost all the great doctrines were being doubted or denied by leading theologians and church dignitaries.[68]

This historical boundary marker would significantly shape the British IVF but also the future IFES. Treloar observes that instead of remaining a local accident, the CICCU split was an event with wide-ranging effects: "The disposition to take a separate stand in the name of biblical faithfulness spread as the students of 1910 became leaders at various points around the world."[69] Many times indeed, former CICCU members became the active member of pioneer IFES groups in several countries, especially in the context of the new universities founded in the wake of decolonization. They took the narrative with them.

If during the 1920s CICCU was rather marginal,[70] the decade would pose the basis for later strength and resurgence, culminating in the 1928 foundation of the Inter-Varsity Fellowship. Conferences would prove to be one of the most important tools for connecting student groups, both nationally and internationally.[71] After Grubb restarted the Oxford-Cambridge conferences,[72] they were broadened so that in 1921, the first official "Inter-Varsity Conference" was convened in 1921 in London.[73] The adventure was a combination of strategic thinking and vision. Grubb recalls that the impetus for the foundation of the British IVF came to him in a vision which from its onset was oriented towards worldwide development:

> I cannot remember the exact day, but it was sometime about the middle of that Michaelmas term, 1919, *That one day in my room, God gave me the clear vision of the I.V.F. that was to be. I saw that not only must there be this witness in every University, but that God was going to do it.* Probably the fact of Noel Palmer's catching the vision of starting an O.I.C.C.U. at Oxford and his going to do it, enabled God to open our eyes to the much bigger thing: Anyhow, the immediate outcome was that we saw that the first step towards the realization of the vision would be to have an annual Inter-Varsity Conference, at which we would get as many as we could from other Universities, and enthuse them with the vision of starting a branch in their own Universities.[74]

A consequence of this world vision was the habit of the British movement to be influential through inviting other students to attend their camps. Even if no such direct mention can be found in the IVF

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[68] Barclay, *Whatever*, 87.
[69] Treloar, *Disruption*, 88.
[70] Goodhew, 'Rise', 65.
[71] Rouse notes pointedly about the British IVF that "It uses the S.C.M. methods – conferences, a volunteer missionary movement, travelling secretaries, etc., and by the date of writing has branches in many countries." Rouse, *WSCF*, 293.
[72] Bruce, 'SCM and IVF', 230–31.
[73] As to the intriguing name, which is still used by numerous movements in the world today, it goes back to a very specific event: "in December, students from Oxford, Cambridge and London met for an 'Inter-Varsity Conference' – so called because the date chosen: was that of the 'Inter-Varsity' rugby game between Oxford and Cambridge, and therefore the time (it was thought) when the most Christian Students would be in London." Lowman, *The Day*, 50.
[74] as quoted in Coggan, *Christ and the Colleges*, 19, italics mine.

writings, the underlying assumption of British leadership was of a movement spread by Britain and held together by inviting people to conferences in Britain. Not everything happened in Britain, however: camps and conferences were happening in Canada, Switzerland, Norway, Sweden and other countries.

At this point, IFES did not exist, but some of its foundations – studied here in the example of IVF Britain – were laid in movements defining themselves in part over against liberal theology, or more positively as a defence of biblical authority, and of a soteriology focused primarily on individual conversion. That left questions about the relation of these movements to social issues and contemporary intellectual developments, unresolved.

3 Meeting for Conferences (1934–1946)

In September 1934, the first *International Conference of Evangelical Students* was held in Oslo with delegations from Britain, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Norway and Sweden.[75] Keynote speaker Hallesby gave a noted address titled "The Hour of God." He insisted that theological currents had recently pushed student movements towards liberal theology and that the time was ripe to take a firmer stand. Hallesby stressed the traditional character of his message *contra* the modernist influence:

> We did not wish to start something new, we desired only to work on the old lines on which Christian student work had been run from the beginning. Right from the beginning our programme has been the old, full gospel, preached for revival, conversion, and new life in service for our Lord, at home and abroad in the mission field.[76]

A year later, the second conference gathered in Sweden drafted a constitution aimed at structuring the conferences adopted. The first clause of the objects of the meeting was programmatic of the structural understanding to prevail in the future:

> The objects of the Conference shall be, consistently with the doctrinal basis of the Conference, – (a) to unite and strengthen the national Evangelical Unions, (b) to seek by all means amongst students in all the countries of the world to stimulate personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and to further evangelistic work. (But nothing in this clause or elsewhere in this Constitution contained shall be so construed as to give any power to the Conference or its Committees in any way to control the activities of the national Evangelical Unions, which shall remain autonomous.)[77]

The meeting was a milestone in ensuring durability and fostering collaboration between the countries.[78] Most of the 1935 conference senior actors gathered again in Beatenberg, Switzerland, in

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[75] Lowman, *The Day*, 67.

[76] Ole Hallesby, 'The Distinctive Message of the Conservative Evangelical Movements. Adress given at the First International Conference of Evangelical Students, Oslo, September 1934', in *A Brief History of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students*, by Douglas Johnson (Lausanne: International Fellowship of Evangelical Students, 1964), 180, italics mine.

[77] 'Constitution of the International Conference of Evangelical Students', 9 September 1935, pt. 3, BGC #193, italics mine.

[78] "This sometimes took the form of Christian academics associated with the student movements *(e.g.* Professor Hallesby or Professor Rendle Short) making speaking tours of other countries; but it also involved the exchange of student teams, most of whom travelled at their own expense." Lowman, *The Day*, 68.

1936 for an *International Conference for the Revival at Universities in Europe*. Described by one of its preeminent figures and later IFES President Pache as "a little international convention,"[79] it was significant in strengthening student work in continental Europe, but also tightening the number of similar groupings which might later join the common cause: "since we had placed ourselves firmly on the ground of the inspiration of the whole Bible, many personalities, well-known in the student world said they could not join with us."[80]

The same senior leaders were invited to gather again in Budapest in 1937 and then for the last important meeting of the pre-IFES era convened in Cambridge in June 1939. One thousand delegates from thirty-three different countries gathered, including 800 students.[81] *Christ, our Freedom* was a programmatic title on the eve of the World War. The main sessions treated topics such as "*The All-Embracing Claims of Christ and the World of Thought, The Evangelical World View, Christian Service and Professional Life, The Christian and the Orders of Society, The Challenge of the Open Gates."*[82] The aspect of enjoying a "fellowship with like-minded people" seems to have marked the participants and the stories they told subsequent leaders, as Chua tells the story of the Cambridge Conference many years later:

> Since 1934, European evangelical students had profited enormously from these fraternal gatherings. Many had to maintain their evangelical position amidst ridicule from theologically liberal church leaders. They were greatly refreshed by the excellent Bible expositions and their faith was confirmed through fellowship with like-minded student believers.[83]

If the organizers of the Cambridge Conference had envisaged the foundation of a larger movement, the outbreak of World War II put these plans on hold. "Within a year some of those present, entering the armed forces, had fallen in active service for their countries,"[84] but this did not prevent students from gathering and national movements from continuing their work as well as they could. The delegates were aware of the world situation:

> There was a general opinion in most circles in Britain that a great European War was inevitable + that only a miracle could prevent War from breaking out in the early Autumn. "It was agreed that in the event of war, contact be maintained with each other as long as possible + all available help given between movements both during + subsequent to hostilities. It was incumbent upon the Executive Committee to feel a very special responsibility to get into contact with each other as soon as communications have been restored between their several countries + to seek to strengthen the surviving friendships + to press forward with the task of Christian co-operation.[85]

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[79] Quoted in Paul Gruner, *Menschenwege und Gotteswege im Studentenleben: Persönliche Erinnerungen aus der christlichen Studentenbewegung* (Bern: Buchhandlung der Evangelischen Gesellschaft, 1942), 389. Unless otherwise noted, quotations from non-English sources are translated by the author, sometimes assisted by the online translation service DeepL.

[80] Quoted in Gruner, 389.

[81] Barclay, *Whatever*, 107.

[82] Douglas Johnson, 'CHRIST OUR FREEDOM - International Conference of Evangelical Students Cambridge - Advertisement Paper', 1939, BGC Box #193.

[83] Chua Wee Hian, 'With Evangelical Students', in *Martyn Lloyd-Jones. Chosen by God*, ed. Christopher Catherwood (Crowborough: Highland Books, 1988), 111.

[84] Johnson, *Brief History*, 68.

[85] 'Minutes of Meetings of the Executive Committee of the IFES' (Examination Hall, Cambridge, 27 June 1939), 3, IFES e-archives.

Collaboration took the form of inter-personal contacts and correspondence, as well as theological writing. These contacts formed the seedbed for the foundation of IFES.

4 It All Began in a Changing World (1946–1962)

4.1 Founding a Fellowship

In the immediate aftermath of World War II, the mood was one of energetic reconstruction. As Hutchinson and Wolffe remark, "Across the board, Evangelicals sought to cooperate with the energies released by war and reconstruction in order to remake the religious face of the world."[86]

The Evangelical leaders of the interwar were determined to meet again and resume the constituting work of a worldwide fellowship for Evangelical students. In March 1946, the Executive Committee appointed at the 1939 conference gathered in Oxford with delegates from twelve countries. Whereas there were some misgivings before the war regarding doing more than organize conferences, the war had altered minds. Johnson recalls that "those who had been hesitant about the danger of developing a top-heavy international organization – and this was probably in the minds of most of the delegates present – felt that further hesitation would be disobedience to a call of God."[87]

The main task of the 1946 meeting was to prepare a constitution to be approved by the delegates of an official foundational meeting of IFES the following year. Amendments to the draft constitution were summarized by Martin Lloyd-Jones,[88] soon taking a prominent role in the IFES Committee meetings.[89] In terms of personnel, "It was agreed that it might be some time before a Travelling Secretary of the right kind would be available – but eventually such a worker or workers would become indispensable for adequate co-ordination."[90]

Mail discussions continued about the creation of an organization supporting national student movements. The main concern remained to ensure the strength of missionary vision and motivation amongst students. The same year, the First American Foreign Mission Conference gathered in Toronto. 575 students attended what would be later known as the "Urbana Conference."[91] IFES-linked circles were being true to the roots of the Student Volunteer Movement. Many were convinced as half of the delegates of the Toronto Conference went abroad as missionaries.[92]

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[86] Mark Hutchinson and John Wolffe, *A Short History of Global Evangelicalism* (New York: CUP, 2012), 180.

[87] Johnson, *Brief History*, 73. Johnson attended himself all of the pre-IFES conferences.

[88] Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981), Welsh Calvinist preacher – though not formally theologically trained, was very involved in the early days of the British IVF, Chairman (1947-57) and president (1957-67) of IFES. D. Eryl Davies, 'Lloyd-Jones, David Martin', in *Biographical Dictionary of Evangelicals*, ed. Timothy Larsen (Leicester: IVP, 2003).

[89] The Chinese movement notably requested affiliation to IFES. The Delegates also discussed the situation of the German movement which they wished to include as soon as possible.

[90] 'Minutes of a Meeting of the General Committee of the IFES' (Library of Regent's Park College, Oxford, 28 March 1946), 7, BGC Box #193.

[91] Named after the Urbana-Champaign campus where many of the subsequent conferences would take place.

[92] Lowman, *The Day*, 305.

The IFES founding meeting eventually took place in August of 1947 in Boston, Massachusetts.[93] Student-workers, pastors and some significant figures attended the committee meeting,[94] thereby showing a broader sponsorship than only that of Church dignitaries or aspiring youth pastors. Notably, however, no student delegates were present. In an anecdotal tone, Lowman renders Stacey Woods's stereotyped memories of the interplay of national and church sensitivities to be navigated during the meeting:

> When it came to planning, there was the careful precise British way of doing things – "It's always been done this way;" there was the brash American assurance that the American way was God's way; there was the intolerant Australian conviction that everyone was out of step but the Australians; there was the quiet immovable strength of the Orient – regardless of anyone or anything, without discussion or debate they would do it their way.[95]

The relationship of national movements to the new organization and the inner workings of the national movements regarding the role of students were discussed at length. National autonomy was preserved as

> It was emphasized that the I.F.E.S. was in no sense a hierarchical super-organization which would interfere with the National Evangelical Unions but was essentially more a fellowship of likeminded National Evangelical Unions for mutual strengthening and for evangelism throughout the student world.[96]

The second question was also complex: what organizational role should be granted to students? One can only guess the tone of the debates summarized by Lowman: "The Americans present felt that the British were trying to impose IVF's way of working on the USA, including a national student committee. The British, on the other hand, found it very hard to see how a genuine movement of students could exist without one."[97]

Woods recalls that "simplistic, activist Canada and USA were eager to get things going with a full fanfare of publicity, but conservative Europe wanted to move carefully, deliberately and with little public notice."[98] The foundation was communicated through Church newspaper, letters, telegrams. The same meeting nominated Woods as part-time General Secretary, whose role would be to link together the IFES movements, travel the world to encourage the emergence of new national movements, and strengthen existing ones. Inaugurating a tradition of honouring people supporting

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[93] Most of the costs for the pre-1947 meetings were covered by IVF Britain, as well as IVCF USA (especially through the funds of a German American businessman, John Bolten, later to become IFES treasurer.

[94] "The Canadian delegation was headed by one of their senior friends, Justice John Reid, of the International Court of Justice at the Hague; the Americans included the president of Rotary International, Herbert Taylor, the chairman of their board; amongst the Australians was the Archbishop of Sydney, Howard Mowll, who had been president of CICCU the year after it broke with SCM." Lowman, *The Day*, 79.

[95] Lowman, 80.

[96] 'Minutes of the First Meeting of the General Committee of the IFES' (Phillips Brooks House, Harvard University, Cambridge Massachusetts, 18 August 1947), 4, BGC Box #193.

[97] Lowman, *The Day*, 80. Lowman builds essentially on Johnson's and Woods's recollections.

[98] C. Stacey Woods, 'IFES History Draft' (unpublished manuscript, Lausanne, 1977), 4.

its cause and recognizing his credentials in student work, the General Committee invited Hallesby to become the first honorary President.[99]

4.2 Constitution

Based on the IVF Britain constitution and the 1935 constitution of the *International Conference of Evangelical Students*, the 1947 constitution was painstakingly crafted by the delegates, who had to consider the concerns of many different prospective members. I highlight here three major aspects of the constitution.

4.2.1 Objects

The objects of IFES are stated in the second clause:

- Seeking to awaken and deepen personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and to further evangelistic work amongst students throughout the world.
- Strengthening the National Evangelical Unions and providing for fellowship on a worldwide and regional basis.
- Arranging at regular intervals united and regional international conferences.[100]

The emphasis on the personal aspect of the Christian faith is unmistakable, as is the absence of any mention of social concern. This priority is illustrated in a comment by a former CICCU and OICCU member writing to explain to a fellow ecumenicist about the "Conservative Evangelicals":

> The Conservative Evangelical says with St. Paul "Woe is me if I preach not the Gospel," and, having made due provision for the studies which are his prime reason for being at a university and the physical and social recreation necessary for health, he aims to give what time he can to Bible Study, prayer and personal evangelism. Thus, when the College Chaplain or his minister or the secretary of the S.C.M. or a denominational society comes to him and says "I admire your zeal – I share your desire to evangelise – but shouldn't we also do X, Y and Z?", the Evangelical honestly answers "I haven't time". To this the retort comes "If you don't study the problems of faith and order, of the church and society, how can you present the Gospel in a relevant way?" "But don't you see" replies the C.U. member, "that you are falling for the chief temptation of the intellectual Christian talking about preaching the Gospel instead of preaching it"?[101]

4.2.2 Ecclesiology

Ecclesiology did not seem to concern the meeting delegates. They came from different churches and had to set aside confessional differences. The constitution mentions the Church only twice. The first is part of the Doctrinal Basis, which states that IFES affirms belief in "the fundamental truths of Christianity, including," amongst ten other points, "The One Holy Universal Church which is the Body of Christ and to which all true believers belong."[102] Note that what matters here is the Church invisible, which frees its members to associate with whomever they might see fit. The second mention

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[99] The IFES leaders had a strong historical awareness and commissioned already the following year an official history of IFES, which became Johnson, *Brief History*. All historical accounts of IFES have hitherto been written by Anglo-Saxon authors.
[100] 'Constitution of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students', August 1947, sec. 2, BGC #193.
[101] Martin H. Cressey, *The Conservative Evangelical in the Ecumenical Movement* (London: Student Christian Movement, ~1960s), 3.
[102] '1935 Conference Constitution', pt. 4.

of the Church is the provision that "The Fellowship is not committed to any particular form of Church Order inasmuch as it is interdenominational."[103]

4.2.3 Non-Collaboration

A clause on non-collaboration, derived from the 1924 British IVF Constitution,[104] was approved:

> The International General Committee and the International Executive Committee may arrange joint activities in the name of the Fellowship only with those religious organizations whose basis of faith and purposes are equivalent to those of the Fellowship.[105]

Occasioning numerous debates over the years,[106] the clause aimed at preventing any association with the WSCF. It was called upon at the first meeting where "It was decided that the student movements of Finland and South Africa, which at present have expressed a desire to maintain relationship with the WSCF, should be invited to become associate members of the I.F.E.S.,"[107] for "It was impossible for us to permit a National Evangelical Union to have full standing as a member of the I.F.E.S while maintaining affiliation with the WSCF."[108] This pattern of opposition characterized the relationships between IFES and ecumenical circles in the 1950s.

IFES considered itself as a fellowship oriented to mission as did the WSCF, yet its theological fundamentals were stricter. It accepted ecclesiological differences within that doctrinal framework and defined itself in opposition to liberal approaches. The logical consequence of applying a principle of non-collaboration would be the reality of Christian witness on campus that could not demonstrate – at least structurally – unity. This was a major point of contention between IFES and WSCF, as the very existence of IFES was threatening the supposedly unified WSCF front.

5 Good News for a World of Revolutions? The 1960s

The 1950s were marked by confrontations with the WSCF,[109] which did not significantly alter IFES's self-understanding. For the interest of space, I now jump to the eventful 1960s. Numerous authors have noted important changes in the social atmosphere of the decade, especially from a

[103] 'IFES Constitution 1947', sec. 5.

[104] It reads "That in connection with the Conference no joint-meeting shall be arranged with any religious body which does not substantially uphold the truths stated in the Basis of the Conference." Constitution reprinted as Appendix 2 to Johnson, *Contending*, 262. In the WSCF circles, this clause was well known as this quote by Rouse demonstrates: "Fidelity to its principles in most countries is held to require non-co-operation with any movement which does not accept all its theological beliefs in their entirety, and this has made it a divisive factor in the universities." Rouse, *WSCF*, 293.

[105] 'IFES Constitution 1947', sec. 9.

[106] The most recent attempt from the IFES board to drop the clause was at the 2015 General Committee but the board had to retract the proposal in the face of significant opposition.

[107] 'Minutes of the First Meeting of the General Committee of the Fully Constituted IFES' (Phillips Brooks House, Harvard University, Cambridge Massachusetts, 23 August 1947), 3, BGC Box #193.

[108] 'GC 1947 Minutes, First Meeting', 3.

[109] For a detailed analysis of the diverging views, mediation attempts and controversies, see Appendix 1.

religious perspective.[110] Gebara's summary of the feelings of the day will remind the reader of the context into which the following developments in the IFES history took place:

> Anti-authoritarian demonstrations of all kinds became the guideline of the new world order and a reference point for alternative forms of human coexistence. Terms such as freedom, participation, responsibility, democracy, citizenship, and social justice were a constant part of our vocabulary and dreams. The right to be different, to break with the established norms, to create one's own group, one's own art, music, or sexual life, were elements that kept being found in many places.[111]

Similarly, Woods's report to the IFES 1963 meeting was the evident sign that the times were changing:

> IFES is at a crossroad; because of growth and acceptance there was the danger of complacency, coldness and ineffectiveness; that in the world today there were changing patterns of world evangelism, particularly in relation to traditional forms of the foreign missionary enterprise; that evangelism must be the task of every national movement, and that above all, today was a call for a fresh commitment, a life of sacrifice and a new commissioning from God.[112]

That the GS would issue a warning against *complacency* reflects his pioneering spirit and concern about losing the adventurous spirit characteristic of the early days: IFES was now totalling twenty-six national movements.

Theology, as well as practice, would need some rethinking. James Houston, one of the founders of Regent College, the influential Vancouver Evangelical Seminary founded in 1968,[113] recalls that in the wake of the student revolts and the crisis around the Vietnam War,

> Everybody began to see things more holistically. We were looking for connectedness and life. The technocratic mindset and the impact of living with science and scientism – there was a strong reaction to that. Their reductionism was cheating us. There came to be a greater desire for theology to be something that should produce wisdom, that should produce healing of the soul and caring of the soul, as well as teaching of the soul. And this is what spiritual theology was purporting to do, to be more holistic, more integrated.[114]

The IFES leadership needed to adapt to a new context to ensure the organization's fitness for the new times. Revolutionary challenges had been met for some time already by IFES movements, most

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[110] For a thorough account for the West, see McLeod, *The Religious Crisis of the 1960s*, 2007. Other important treatments include Sydney E. Ahlstrom, 'The Radical Turn in Theology and Ethics: Why It Occurred in the 1960's', *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 387 (January 1970): 1–13; Robi Morder, 'Années 1960 : crise des jeunesses, mutations de la jeunesse', *Matériaux pour l'histoire de notre temps*, no. 74 (2004): 62–69; Callum G. Brown, 'What Was the Religious Crisis of the 1960s?', *Journal of Religious History* 34, no. 4 (2010): 468–79.

[111] Ivone Gebara, 'The Movement of May 1968 and Theology in Latin America', *The Ecumenical Review* 70, no. 2 (23 September 2018): 266–67.

[112] 'Minutes of the Meeting of the Sixth General Committee of the IFES' (Nyack, New-York, 1963), 27, IFES e-archives.

[113] Regent has played an important role in the history of IFES, because of the many staff members who studied theology there, mostly during sabbaticals. The 50% discount on tuition fees for IFES workers is a strong incentive, especially for applicants from the Majority World. See 'Tuition Discounts', Regent College - Admissions & Finance, accessed 14 July 2020, https://www.regent-college.edu/admissions-finance/costs/tuition-discounts.

[114] Mark Filiatreau, 'Honouring Our Elders: Dr. James Houston, Founder of Regent College', BC Christian News, June 2001, https://canadianchristianity.com/cgi-bin/bc.cgi?bc/bccn/0601/supelders. Hutchinson and Wolffe note that under Houston and "with the later addition of Jim Packer, Regent would have significant influence in funnelling British influences into American evangelicalism and developing a worldwide network of graduates (on the IVCF model)." Hutchinson and Wolffe, *A Short History*, 197.

notably in China, where students had been under significant pressure by the Communist authorities.[115] The depiction of the challenges facing Chinese students served as an example of the challenges other students might face elsewhere at any time, which explains Adeney's plea for in-depth intellectual engagement with the issues of the day:

> It is important that Christians honestly face the criticism that comes from the non-Christian world. *Too often we have lived in a ghetto-type existence, out of touch with many of the challenging questions which are being discussed in student groups around the world.* If reading is limited to a small range of evangelical authors, there is little incentive to face the burning questions of our day or to understand the thinking of a vast number of people whose outlook is diametrically opposed to the Christian view of life.[116]

5.1 The Two Ways of Listening and Assertion

Commenting on student protests in the late 1960s and early 1970s, IFES publications mostly present two possible approaches: listening or asserting.[117]

5.1.1 Listening to the World?

As the events around 1968 show, WSCF circles were keen on listening to what the world had to say to Christians, even if this meant harsh critique. This was no novelty in ecumenical circles; listening to the world has been on the agenda for long as the following excerpt from 1953 shows:

> In order to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ, Christians should be able to see what is actually happening in the world of today. Because the order which God introduces in Jesus Christ embraces all people and the whole of human life, judging and saving, the Christian mission is a concern for people seen in relation to God and to one another. It cannot be merely a concern of people in one aspect of their lives (e.g. "the spirit" rather than "the body") or for people out of relation to one another. It must therefore reckon with social and political structures, because it must reckon with people as they are in their actual daily life. Christians themselves are God's people only in this kind of world, and are not an enclave separated from the world.[118]

Contextual awareness, receptivity from contemporaries was high on the agenda and exemplary of this missiology was the publication of the famous *Honest to God,* published by Bishop Robinson in 1963, notably published by the British SCM.[119] The book's main aim was to "reveal the unsatisfactory imagery which Christian theologians had commonly used to talk about God,"[120] trying to discredit the

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[115] The vivid story is told in David H. Adeney, *China: Christian Students Face the Revolution* (London: IVP, 1973).

[116] Adeney, 63, italics mine. Adeney was not alone in advocating thoughtful engagement with Communist doctrine. An *ad-hoc* working group during GC 1963 had notably recommended that IFES people coming in contact with Communism were to "Understand and admit the shortcomings and crimes of nominal Christianity which have indirectly contributed to the rise of communism. Despite total incompatibility between Christ and communism show warm, Christlike love to the individual adherent. Love is stronger than hatred. In criticizing certain aspects of communism, we should also clearly express our support of social progress and justice." 'Report on the Working Party Held on Suggestions for Our Behavior toward Communism.' (Nyack, New-York: IFES General Committee 1963, 1963), 1, IFES e-archives, GC 1963 Minutes, Appendix H.

[117] This framework renders synthetically the main approaches which can be read, even though in reality, more nuances were also present within the fellowship. An articulate categorization à la Niebuhr is not, however, found in the archives. The idea of "letting the world set the agenda" was never part of the IFES picture.

[118] 'Minutes of the WSCF General Committee' (Nasrapur, 1953); as quoted in Potter and Wieser, *Seeking*, 163.

[119] John A. T. Robinson, *Honest to God* (London: SCM Press, 1963).

[120] Michael Walsh, 'The Religious Ferment of the Sixties', in *World Christianities c.1914-c.2000*, ed. Hugh McLeod, vol. 9, Cambridge History of Christianity (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 306.

conservative vocabulary with which theologians close to IFES were associated. For the Anglophone world, Packer responded in clear terms with *Keep Yourselves From Idols*[121] and for the Francophone countries, Blocher wrote a scathing review in the same vein.[122] Viewed from conservative circles, the social impact of the book was significant, as McLeod points out:

> Liberals like Robinson fatally opened the way for doubt and a massive growth in agnosticism. The debates which he sparked off enabled doubters "actually to admit their unbelief" and alienated many of those who had accepted Christianity in a passive and unreflecting way. He quotes one ex-church-goer as saying that "now the parsons are contradicting everything they have said."[123]

The very idea of "admitting one's unbelief" was utterly foreign to the IFES rhetoric. As the sixties were dancing, Woods was still General Secretary and going out of his way to deplore the changing moods of the time, stressing the incommensurable differences between Christians and the world:

> The Christian has an utterly different standard of values from the non-Christian. He thinks differently, he reacts differently, he has a different set of value judgments. His life is lived in the perspective of eternity; whereas the unconverted man lives only in the context of time. The unconverted man is of this earth, and the Christian man is essentially an eternal, spiritual, heavenly being.[124]

The reader notices a sense of embattlement within IFES. Robinson's rhetoric was seen as the exact opposite of what they aspired to, looking conspicuously reminiscent of the demythologizing enterprise of the 19th century which they had battled against. Accepting this new framing of theological existence would have amounted to a capitulation, endangering the existence of IFES. Correspondingly, the first response to the times was the reassertion of the truth, but with a strong sense of context. *Mediating* the Gospel was seen as a one-way movement and not much could be learned from the world.

5.1.2 Asserting the Truth in Context

Aware of the changes happening, Woods was assessing the situation with which his fellow evangelical Christians were faced: "an exploding world population, a declining ratio of professing Christians in the world to say nothing of the proportion of those within Christendom who are truly regenerated."[125] He deplored a growing secularism and the loss of influence of the Church, together with the problem that "Many Evangelicals, particularly graduates, in an effort to find acceptance in the current sociological-scientific society, will continue to compromise their biblical Christianity."[126] The historical narrative of the *slippery slope* of the SCM was resurfacing. However, the IFES assessment of the WSCF theology was not only the result of internal prejudice and propaganda. Stacey Woods tells the story of a study carried out by the Yale Divinity School to examine

[121] J. I. Packer, *Keep Yourselves from Idols* (London: Church Book Room Press, 1963).
[122] Henri Blocher, 'Lu et commenté: Dieu sans Dieu', *Chantiers*, 1965.
[123] Hugh McLeod, 'The Religious Crisis of the 1960s', *Journal of Modern European History* 3, no. 2 (2005): 207.
[124] C. Stacey Woods, 'The Medium Is the Message', *IFES Journal* 21, no. 1 (1968): 9.
[125] C. Stacey Woods, 'God's Initiative and Ours', *IFES Journal*, no. 1 (1966): 3.
[126] C. Stacey Woods, 'Perspectives and Priorities in the 1970's', *IFES Journal* 23, no. 2 (1970): 2.

> the essential difference in ethos between the Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship in Canada and the United States – burgeoning, growing student Christian fellowships – and the Student Christian Movement (World Student Christian Federation) which was already showing signs of decline. I fully expected that this difference would be seen as our doctrinal position regarding Scripture. Not so. The conclusion was that Inter-Varsity consciously depended upon the Holy Spirit, upon his leading and enablement. We believed in supernaturalism, in contrast to the Student Christian Movement, which was judged to be much more naturalistic and humanistic.[127]

The problem was missiological and sociological: how would IFES best *mediate* what it considered the "core Gospel" to its audience in a rapidly mutating world? Woods advocated for a reaffirmation of biblical faithfulness but also the idea that IFES people might, after all, belong to a small minority group of faithful remnants, contextually flexible. Woods's overall tone was pessimistic as the following report exemplifies:

> I think all of us are conscious of a growing confusion, both in doctrine and in practice in the evangelical world, as well as pressures from the ecclesiastical world and the secular world. Questions such as the biblical doctrine of evangelism, the true nature of regeneration and conversion, the doctrine of sanctification, are instances of this confusion. There is the danger of succumbing to quick and simplistic methods which appear to guarantee longed-for results in great numbers. In some respects, Evangelicals seem to be stronger numerically and to be exercising a wider influence. Yet on the other hand, our influence upon the ecclesiastical world situation seems slight and there is little response to the message of the Gospel on the part of the secular world. We do not seem able to arrest to any appreciable extent the moral and ethical rot and decay which are destroying the Western World. Our greatest need is for a God-given revival.[128]

The reader notices a disillusioned disorientation. Woods had started student ministries in the 1930s when Christian influence was still powerful but felt that everything was going downhill.[129] Yet Christian influence in the world was not declining everywhere. Even in Europe, Christianity was still very influential in the immediate post-war period,[130] and such a well-travelled man could have noticed that many leaders of the decolonization movements were Christians, as were members of the US Civil Rights movement. What he saw, however, was that "numbers of countries are closing their doors to professional foreign Christian propaganda and evangelism."[131] So whilst Woods was adamant that national IFES movements were much more local initiatives than foreign imports, he was nevertheless deploring the lost possibilities of sending "professionals" for ministry. The appeal to professionals is

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[127] C. Stacey Woods, *The Growth of a Work of God: The Story of the Early Days of the Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship of the United States of America as Told by Its First General Secretary* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1978), 145.

[128] C. Stacey Woods, 'Report of the General Secretary to the Seventh General Committee of the IFES' (Wuppertal-Barmen, Germany, 1967), 4, IFES e-archives, EC 1967 Minutes, Appendix B.

[129] He would write in 1975 that "We have a new lifestyle. Society has become permissive and indulgent. A frightening increase in violence, cruelty, brutality and crime is deeply troubling. Relationships between men and women, husbands and wives, parents and children are no longer what they were in the 1940s." C. Stacey Woods, *Some Ways of God* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1975), 21.

[130] Many in-depth studies explore the ebb and flow of Christian influence in the Post World War II era, notably Grace Davie, *Religion in Modern Europe: A Memory Mutates. European Societies.* (Oxford: OUP, 2000); Detlef Pollack and Gert Pickel, 'Religious Individualization or Secularization', in *The Role of Religion in Modern Societies*, ed. Detlef Pollack and Daniel V.A. Olson (New York: Routledge, 2008), 191–220; Brown, 'What Was the Religious Crisis of the 1960s?'

[131] Woods, 'God's Initiative and Ours', 3.

particularly interesting because it went against the grain of Woods's otherwise strong emphasis on student initiative:

> Student initiative and responsibility does not mean that only students do the teaching, preaching, evangelizing in the university. Constantly these students call in assistance in terms of graduates, teachers and pastors. However, the burden of witness to the unconverted student body is assumed by the Christian students themselves. They must take the initiative in intercession, personal witness and organization. They must think and plan and prepare. It is their vision, their God-given task.[132]

That an older man would affirm the duties and responsibilities of younger students in such strong terms could have smacked of paternalism to some external observers. It nevertheless reflects the contextual flexibility of IFES's approach to student ministry: unabating was the conviction of the earlier and later leaders that Christian ministry needed to be carried out by students. Having a *direct* access to God, students would know how best to *mediate* him in whatever circumstances they would find themselves. In the words of Voelkel, long-term associate of IFES in Latin America,

> Change has dislodged students from their traditional framework. As never before, they are open to new ideas and a cause worthy of their life and death. It seems very likely from glimmers here and there that change has actually prepared them to hear Christ's call – to become His eternal revolutionaries.[133] This is our moment to act. Laborers are all too few in this growing important segment of society. May God raise up a vast army of bold harvesters to do the job![134]

The articulation between preaching and listening was not considered an easy task. Stott's summary of the positions commonly held at the time is worth showing here:

Traditional "ecumenical" approach	Traditional "evangelical" approach
▪ God's first concern is the world. ▪ God's actions in the world primarily aim at establishing his peace (shalom). ▪ Mission means the Church "discovers in the world" what God is already doing, sometimes through political revolutions. ▪ The Church is to "join with Christ" in his fight against social injustices.	▪ God's prime concern is the salvation of human souls. ▪ God's actions are manifested in the conversion of individuals. ▪ Mission means the Church proclaims the Gospel, mostly through preaching. ▪ Social activism is too closely linked to the "social Gospel" and should be avoided.

Ultimately, the currents were too strong for either "opposition" or "capitulation" to be sustainable positions, and it took the theological acumen of John Stott, whose influence was growing within IFES,[135] to propose a typically *via media* between two main approaches for Christians in relation to the world. For Stott, simply retreating from involvement would be unbiblical, because it would mean forgetting that "God did not create souls but body-souls called human beings, who are also social beings, and that he cares about their bodies and their society as well as about their relationship with

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[132] C. Stacey Woods, 'Student Work - Strategy and Tactics', *IFES Journal*, no. 1 (1966): 14.

[133] Voelkel had put an interesting quote from Nicolas Berdyaev as incipit of his book: "*The Christian is the eternal revolutionary who is satisfied by no regimen of life because he seeks the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, because he aspires to the more radical transformation of men, of the society, and the world.*"

[134] Jack Voelkel, *Student Evangelism in a World of Revolution*, Contemporary Evangelical Perspectives (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Pub. House, 1974), 37.

[135] Based on John Stott, *Christ The Controversialist* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1970), 188–89. One of the theological distinctives of Stott was his ability to mediate between diverging positions within Evangelicalism.

himself and their eternal destiny."[136] Yet, it would be equally unbiblical to adopt a purely this-worldly perspective confusing theological liberation with the spiritual needs of human beings. Hence, for Stott,

> The whole church is called (and every member of it) as much to involvement in the world as to separation from it, as much to "worldliness" as to "holiness." Not to a worldliness which is unholy, nor to a holiness which is unworldly, but to "holy worldliness," a true separation to God which is lived out in the world – the world which he made and sent his son to redeem.[137]

Debates and discussions held in IFES during the following decades can be read against the backdrop of possible attitudes on the continuum outlined by Stott.

5.2 Whither Missions?

In the 1960s, the world of missions was subjected to intense scrutiny, which did not spare IFES. Whereas "among mainline Protestants, self-criticism of paternalistic mission practices led to new mission theories of 'partnership' from the 1960s onward,"[138] IFES people took notice of the changes without changing their overall approaches to mission. Having been founded later than many other missionary organizations and operating out of a federalist framework, IFES was more contextual and emphasized local leadership more than many older ventures.

In this regard, Woods's account of IFES's pioneering work in Africa in the wake of decolonization is illuminating. In the late 1940s, it was apparent that the foundation of numerous new universities in the newly independent nations of Africa represented an extraordinary potential for growth for IFES. However, there were not alone on the field and the old conflicts with the WSCF soon resumed in the form of a "proxy war."[139] In Woods's account,

> Quickly the World Student Christian Federation moved to head off the possibility of the formation of any evangelical student movement in these new universities. The doctrine of ecumenical unity was proclaimed. University authorities promised not to permit a second Christian movement on their campuses. In some cases, university chaplains were appointed to control student religious activity. The World Student Christian Federation sent out its own staff to Africa.[140]

The decolonization era opened the competition for student movements on the continent and ecumenical circles seemed decided to avert the divided witness that the Western universities had shown so far. IFES was relatively powerless in the face of such pushback: "The door seemed shut fast to the IFES. But unknown or unrealized by us, God had his own strategy. He had his own 'fifth column' in these same universities with their widespread campuses and impressive buildings."[141] Not much was left to chance, and in the same way as the former settlers were to "serve" the colonies, "As

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[136] Stott, 188.
[137] Stott, 190.
[138] Dana L. Robert, *Christian Mission: How Christianity Became a World Religion* (Hoboken: Wiley & Sons, 2009), 71.
[139] Sensitive to political issues, IFES moved its headquarters to neutral ground in Lausanne, Switzerland, to prevent the organization from being perceived as "American." A further shift outside of the Anglo-Saxon world was the acquisition, in the mid-1960s of Schloss Mittersill, a medieval castle in the Austrian Tyrol, as an international training centre for IFES. For more on Schloss Mittersill, see Alex Williams, *Holy Spy* (Budapest: Harmat, 2003); MacLeod, *Woods*, chap. 15.
[140] Woods, *Some Ways*, 54.
[141] Woods, 54.

the call went out for a teaching staff for these new institutions, Christian graduates, largely from Great Britain and all formerly active in local evangelical unions, had applied and received lecturing appointments."[142]

There was a deliberate approach to putting allies in place within the universities and then making it much easier for local IFES groups to emerge with the help of these lecturers. In a fascinating exercise in storytelling, Woods presents the situation thus:

> Quite naturally they did what any other Christian lecturer or professor would have done. On a Sunday afternoon these men invited students, many of whom had had their secondary school education in missionary schools and some of whom were Christians, to their homes for a Bible exposition, or as it is known in England, a Bible "reading." This was followed by questions, discussion, prayer, tea and biscuits. Some of these students were converted. Spontaneously on their own initiative they banded together, formed Christian Unions and applied for recognition as student societies. There was no propaganda from the outside. The IFES was never mentioned. In the face of such student initiative and responsibility, the authorities had little alternative but to grant the requested recognition.[143]

The "quite natural" aspect of these initiatives might be overstated. These invitations were probably the result of thorough strategic reflection aimed at fostering the emergence of evangelical groups. As Johnson explains, "We put up all our graduates overseas to the idea of getting students together for prayer and Bible study; leaving the initiative in the hands of the students, except for the jobs they hadn't the time to do."[144] The fascinating aspect of Woods's and Johnson's affirmations is that the local groups emerged "spontaneously" and that there was "no propaganda from the outside." There might not have been poster advertising or shiny launching ceremonies. However, that these IVF-UK graduates were so instrumental in encouraging these groups to "band together" is proof enough of the importance of support for these "indigenous" groups.

IFES leaders were not ready to question the relevance of every Christian's calling to missionary witness, including internationally. This was also in line with the WCC's motto of "mission in six continents," adopted in 1963. Accordingly, "Missionaries should be appointed to go from anywhere to anywhere, according to need."[145]

The same year, one of the eight national movements welcomed into IFES was a federation of burgeoning movements, the *Panafrican Fellowship of Evangelical Students* (PAFES), founded in 1958. This infusion of African blood into the life of IFES brought new questions, one of which was the relationship of foreign missionaries to newly independent countries. The General Committee (GC) minutes record a very long discussion in which "delegates from almost every nation represented" took part. They affirmed the "need to rethink the entire task of world missions with the realization that in many countries foreign missionary activity as we have known it will be restricted."[146] Questioning the

[142] Woods, 54.
[143] Woods, 54–55.
[144] As quoted in Lowman, *The Day*, 242.
[145] Robert, *Christian Mission*, 72.
[146] 'GC 1963 Minutes', 29.

role and conduct of missionaries was legitimate, not the universal validity of the missionary mandate. In congruence with traditional evangelical missionary ethos, the motion was accepted that

> the Executive Committee or a group of its appointees, including representatives from Africa, Asia and Latin America (that is, areas of the world where western missionaries have become politically *personae non gratae*) should reconsider the continuing role of western missionary effort in the light primarily of the universal commission, though not without reference to political situations in order that western Christians may know how their brethren in these countries wish them to continue to fulfil the Lord's command and that missionary endeavour from western sources be redirected if need be.[147]

That the British delegates moved the motion can either be seen as an implicit acknowledgement that their former leadership in Africa was questioned, and that they were ready to put it on the line; or as a way of keeping the upper hand in the process of discernment. Exchanges were neither free of controversies nor power plays, as even a cursory look into minutes of GC shows. Some movements appear much more often than others as spearheading charges against changes, potential theological moves, or rapprochement with other organizations. Some leaders take influence over other leaders and national movements or undermine some special ministries that they would not see as fitting into the overall priorities of the fellowship. In any case, the discussion about the role of foreign missionaries was far from closed in 1963. Indeed, Chua was later to recall that his "baptism into IFES was at the General Committee in 1967, where there were fierce ideological conflicts. Most of the delegates returned home depressed rather than refreshed."[148] Interestingly, the debates were rather those of staff members than of the student constituency – only 35% of the delegates were students.[149] All was not fine with neat procedures, however. As the minutes note,

> Asian delegates who attended the last two General Committee Conferences feel that there is a danger of giving a wrong impression concerning the nature of the IFES. So much time is spent on discussing organisational and constitutional details that the sense of being a true fellowship in the Spirit is obscured. It appears to us that the business sessions tend to be dominated by some delegates whose insistence upon the minutiae of organization have deflected us from discussing the really important issues. We feel the need for spending much more time in prayer, sharing and *facing up to the tremendous opportunities and difficulties in our individual countries*.[150]

This critique represents a rather rare highlight of the differences in perception between the West and the rest. With an intriguingly mixed-feeling voice, Bentley-Taylor, emissary of the GS and an important voice in the fellowship, reported from the 1967 GC meeting that

> when missionary work passed under review, the Europeans sat back and the note struck by the Asian, African and South American speakers was unmistakably critical. It was suggested that many have rejected the western interpretation of Christ, rather than Jesus Christ Himself. There was a call for more non-professional missionaries, Asians as well as Europeans. A demand was heard for fewer missionaries but of higher quality, for a change in their role, with more emphasis on training others, and the European

[147] 'GC 1963 Minutes', 30.

[148] Wee Hian Chua, 'IFES General Secretary's Report 1991' (Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois, UAS, 7-4.8 1991), 3, IFES e-archives, GC 1991 minutes, Appendix D.

[149] 'Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee of the IFES' (Casa Moscia, Ascona, Switzerland, 8-3.9 1968), 14, IFES e-archives.

[150] 'EC 1968 Minutes', 3, emphasis mine.

> was reminded of his duty to his own land and continent. Some felt that missionaries had failed to enter the most strategic areas of a nation's life, in particular that in Latin America almost nothing had been done in educated circles and in cities, so that today's low educational standard among Christian preachers was repellent to students.[151]

For somebody who spent more than eight years between 1966 and 1974 touring especially "pioneering fields,"[152] it was a rather abrasive assessment and he indeed went on noticing that he had hoped "that one non-European would be found to voice the balanced truth of missionary sacrifice and achievement."[153] Sifting through imperialism and sacrifice as motivational factors for mission was a complex task. It was not easy for Europeans to take the critique without cynicism, as contrary to ecumenical circles, they had not been confronted with the famous 1971 call for a "moratorium on missions" by Kenyan theologian Gatu whose famous address was unmistakably clear:

> I am going to argue that the time has come for the withdrawal of foreign missionaries from many parts of the Third World, that the Churches of the Third World must be allowed to find their own identity and that the continuation of the present missionary movement is a hindrance to this selfhood of the Church. […] I started by saying that the missionaries should be withdrawn from the Third World for a period of at least five years. I will go further and say that missionaries should be withdrawn, period. The reason is that we must allow God the Holy Spirit to direct our next move without giving Him a timetable. The Gospel will then have a deeper and more far-reaching effect than our mission Christianity has provided so far.[154]

Whilst not calling for such a moratorium, evangelical leaders in close association with IFES had expressed a somewhat similar view a year earlier in the 1970 Declaration of Cochabamba:

> We recognize our debt to the missionaries who brought us the gospel. At the same time, we believe that a theological reflection relevant to our own people must take into account the dramatic reality of the Latin American scene and must make an effort to identify and remove the foreign trappings in which the message has been wrapped.[155]

This nuanced appraisal of missionary activity runs contrary to many contemporary narratives seeing Western missionary presence in a much dimmer light.[156] The concern was overtly missiological: IFES leaders believed in the same Gospel and in the importance of sharing it with their fellow citizens, yet (Western) cultural elements needed to be removed to allow for more contextual appropriation. The influence of the Latin American IFES workers on the future shape of Evangelicalism is further evidenced in the statement adopted at Lausanne 1974, which posed that "a reduction of foreign

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[151] David Bentley-Taylor, 'The Seventh IFES General Committee - An Appraisal', *IFES Journal* 20, no. 3 (1967): 11–12.

[152] See his anecdotal memoir: David Bentley-Taylor, 'Adventures of a Christian Envoy' (Photocopied manuscript, London, 1992), IFES Archive Oxford.

[153] Bentley-Taylor, 'The Seventh IFES General Committee', 11–12.

[154] John Gatu, Speech at the Mission Festival, Milwaukee, USA, 1971, published in the Church Herald. Quoted in Bengt Sundkler and Christopher Steed, *A History of the Church in Africa* (Cambridge: CUP, 2001), 1027. The address prompted a prolonged debate in missionary circles. See 'The Moratorium Debate', *International Review of Mission* 64, no. 254 (1975): 148–64.

[155] 'Evangelical Declaration of Cochabamba: At the Founding Meeting of the Fraternidad Teológica Latinoamericana, December, 1970', *Journal of Latin American Theology* 11, no. 2 (2016): 186.

[156] Robert, *Christian Mission*, 93.

missionaries and money in an evangelized country may sometimes be necessary to facilitate the national church's growth in self-reliance and to release resources for unevangelized areas."[157]

The assessment from several IFES Majority World leaders suggested that IFES had provided them with a framework of relative freedom, which allowed them to develop their own contextual Christian ethos. Escobar was in 1977 already aware of the need to correct narratives when he affirmed that

> our student movements have been exposed in university and through some theological literature to sociological analysis of missions that have created a generally negative attitude. I feel it is necessary to correct it. Of course, many students in our movements have also suffered the effects of a naive fundamentalist approach to missions, relations between missionaries and nationals, etc. I consider it an important task to establish links between the missionary enterprise and our movements, to inform about needs, to challenge with the biblical command to see the world with a missionary vision.[158]

Similarly, Brown would boast in 1997 that in his eyes, IFES had contributed ahead of its time missiologically:

> IFES has helped the development of new models of mission. Fifty years ago, the idea of autonomous movements led by nationals joining together to further the cause of the gospel was unique. It freed global mission from the controls of western churches and organizations, and emphasized values such as respect for local Christians, national ownership and the fair sharing of resources. Today, such things are taken for granted in most missionary agencies and training institutions.[159]

These developments were the consequence of the conviction that all believers have *immediate* access to God and can theologize in the context in which they have to *mediate* their faith to their environment. This represented also challenges to the fellowship in which these believers *participate*: a challenge of mutual listening and respect.

5.3 Staying through the storm of 1968

1968 marked a milestone in the history of student ministry. IFES did not hold any global event. Conversely, the WSCF was meeting in Finland for a student conference immediately followed by its Federation Assembly in Uppsala, Sweden. Both meetings were troubled: some plenary speakers were not allowed to address the students and a revolutionary spirit also characterized the WCC's meeting.[160] In Lehtonen's words, the atmosphere of the time was such that "Students looked for liberation from paternalism and authoritarian and hierarchical structures. Democratization of the university society

[157] 'The Lausanne Covenant', Lausanne Movement, 1 August 1974, para. 9, https://www.lausanne.org/content/covenant/lausanne-covenant.

[158] Samuel Escobar, 'Report of the IFES Associate General Secretary at Large' (Oxon, England, 9-3.10 1977), 2, IFES e-archives, EC 1977 Minutes, Appendix E.

[159] Lindsay Brown, 'IFES Jubilee', *Highlights*, December 1997. It is obviously not the whole story of missions, yet it is exemplary of how IFES leaders saw their organization's positioning.

[160] The centenary historical account of the WSCF is intriguingly quiet on this turbulent time and attributes most challenges to financial difficulties, see Potter and Wieser, *Seeking*., which does not mention IFES one single time. Conversely, the WSCF General Secretary between 1968 and 1973 wrote a detailed account of the events, notably published by an evangelical publisher because the editors of the official history did not want to publish his account, see Lehtonen, *Story of a Storm*, xix. In the most recent WSCF history, Boyd offers a detailed and nuanced account including critical voices, see Boyd, *SCM*, chap. 6.

and some forms of socialism were apparent goals."[161] McLeod also notes a reorientation in students' concerns, highlighting the fact that "as the political temperature reached a boiling point in 1968, student Christian organizations were torn apart, as many members decided that working for the revolution was the top priority and everything else was an irrelevant sideshow."[162]

Space does not permit an extensive and fair account of the WSCF-WCC events. However, whatever perspective the reader takes on the events accounted by several attendees of these meetings, they were significant for IFES, marking the disappearance of the WSCF as an effective institutional competitor. After 1968–1972, the WSCF was considered by IFES and other analysts as only a shadow of its former glory. In the WSCF's General Secretary's own sombre words, "The Federation left the responsibility for evangelism to the churches' more heavily institutionalized ministries and to a number of evangelical Student organizations."[163] Bruce goes as far as calling this period the "collapse of the SCM,"[164] whilst Chua would warn that

> with the semi-demise of the SCM in many countries, there has been a tendency for some of our more established movements to be complacent and to strive at respectability. However, several movements have become aware of this danger and have called members to fresh commitment to Jesus Christ and to the proclamation of His Gospel.[165]

If Westerners deplored significant losses from the Christian Churches, others were encouraging their fellow workers to stand up to the challenge. Illustrative is one of the regular surveys of the world's situation published in the *IFES Journal:*

> We are living among new pagans. Christian students and professors in all universities, in Paris and in Makerere, in Djakarta, Rio de Janeiro and Columbia have to face this fact which unites them: they stand as a minority among non-Christians. But these pagans among whom we live do not resemble the brands classified in religious textbooks. Very often, they are old Christians, old Moslems, old Buddhists, but they are also a new kind of men and women, transformed by the new society which is being born.[166]

Qualifying the world as populated by "new pagans" was a daring rhetorical framing aiming at motivating the IFES troops. How were staff members to motivate Christian students without pushing them? The issue of paternalism, albeit loosely defined, was also treated in a significant issue of the *IFES Journal.* The author – a staff worker in Latin America – stressed the difference between religious paternalism, assumed to be wrong, and the IFES approach to leadership, which he felt much more genuine and effective for witness on campuses. In his starkly expressed contrast,

> Religion in this culture for centuries has meant going to the "padre" to confess your sins, find out what God's will is, and have a Mass said for your beloved dead in purgatory. Is it any wonder that in regard

[161] Lehtonen, *Story of a Storm*, 58.
[162] Hugh McLeod, 'The Crisis of Christianity in the West: Entering a Post-Christian Era?', in *World Christianities c.1914-c.2000*, ed. Hugh McLeod, vol. 9, Cambridge History of Christianity (Cambridge: CUP, 2006), 339.
[163] Lehtonen, *Story of a Storm*, 325.
[164] Preston, 'The Collapse of the SCM'.
[165] Wee Hian Chua, 'Report of the General Secretary' (Schloss Mittersill, Austria, 1974), 1, IFES e-archives, EC 1974 Minutes, Appendix A.
[166] Paul D. Fueter, 'New Christians for New Pagans', *IFES Journal* 21, no. 3 (1968): 1.

> to the things of God, many students feel "unworthy" to attempt leadership and tend to wait for "the professionals" to do it?[167]

Without developing his critique much further, Hanks offered his fellow staff members some strategic points to "slay the dragon of paternalism."[168] They were to

> enrol in university, encourage prayer at the university, encourage Bible study at the university, emphasize biographical leadership studies in the Bible to tackle the model of the caudillo, and last but not least, to encourage pastors in their ministry to students. […] If you can help and encourage pastors to develop a ministry of Biblical expository preaching, of sympathetic prayer for their "rebel students" in the university, you may accomplish more than by your direct ministry on campus.[169]

The IFES leadership tried to walk on the narrow path of tradition and novelty: never did the world seem to set the agenda, but neither was IFES watertight to significant changes in the mood of the day. This difficult exercise in tightrope walking lasted long: the 1971 GC saw numerous doctrinal and missiological tensions discussed. As a result, the attendees resolved to request the Executive to write an introduction to the IFES Doctrinal Basis in line with the previously explored assertive approach.

In a world of revolutions, the idea that students themselves were the key local agents of worldwide mission was strengthening and rendered even more relevant in the wake of decolonisation. From then on, the relationship of indigenous mission to international structures and theological currents was a marked element of the IFES identity.

6 When the South Comes North – The 1970s

The 1970s were a period of intense theological reflection in the Majority World, deemed a "Golden Decade."[170] It is crucial to briefly survey the salient aspects of the time since an essential part of Latin American evangelical theological developments occurred through the work of several IFES senior staff workers, most notably Escobar, Padilla and Arana.[171] Moreover, in 1972, after twenty-five years in office, Woods handed over the baton of GS 1972 to Hong Kong-born Chua, a sign of the growing power of non-Western figures in the senior leadership and also some new teachings.[172]

The surge of major theological figures from the Majority World meant for the wider Evangelical constituency an intense questioning of its theological premises. This new group of influential figures

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[167] Tom Hanks, 'Paternalistic - Me?', *IFES Journal* 21, no. 1 (1968): 2.

[168] Hanks, 3.

[169] Hanks, 5.

[170] Daniel Salinas, *Latin American Evangelical Theology in the 1970's: The Golden Decade*, Religion in the Americas Series (Leiden: Brill, 2009).

[171] All three had been the main movers of the foundation of the *Latin American Theological Fraternity* in Cochabamba in December 1970 where they already had clashed with Peter Wagner of Fuller Seminary over hermeneutical questions. See MacLeod, *Woods*, 220–21. For the works of the FLT, including numerous archive documents, 'FTL – Fraternidad Teológica Latinoamericana', accessed 27 July 2020, https://ftl-al.com/.

[172] Chua showed deep interest in the relationships students entertained to their families, for example, hence bringing the question of family loyalties in the context of communal cultures to the table, a consideration much overdue in IFES's teaching on evangelism. For teachings and anecdotal stories, see Wee Hian Chua, *Getting through Customs: The Global Jottings of Chua Wee Hian.* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity, 1992).

was in part the result of IFES's practice of letting local leadership develop. This is at least the way both Padilla and Chua would present it to North American students at the 1973 Urbana Conference:

> Each movement is independent. Each works its own program. Each is to follow the Lord's leading. We do not have any "canned" methods of evangelism and do not lay down the program for anybody. We try to help the students by giving them training, especially regarding the study of the Scripture.[173]

Conversely, as Hutchison and Wolffe suggest,

> Western Evangelicals had tended to send overseas their worker-missionaries rather than their theologians. Their faith in the sufficiency of the cross also meant that Africans, Asians and others needed to work out for themselves what being a Christian in this place actually meant. In return, Westerners who encountered this new dynamism were challenged to the core as to how to deal with their own Eurocentric, Enlightenment traditions.[174]

This encounter did not happen smoothly everywhere.[175] In what follows, the common history of IFES and the 1974 Lausanne Congress shall be presented, but it is important to set it into the proper context of theological engagement with the complex circumstances of post-war Latin America.

6.1 Coming to terms with Marxism: Latin America Misión Integral

> The evangelical university movement, often overlooked in the historical record of Protestantism, has come to contribute its restless, cutting-edge thinking to efforts to express the evangelical faith in terms applicable to conditions on the continent.[176]

The concept of *integral mission* is possibly the biggest theological and missiological contribution of IFES to the Church, at least at the end of the twentieth century. Its inventor, Padilla, challenged the theological world of the day primarily because of his experiences working with students throughout Latin America.

6.1.1 Universities in Turmoil

IFES was not alone in thinking about the issues of the day. Kirkpatrick notes that "reports from ecumenical SCM staff workers are strikingly similar to those of IFES staff."[177] Essential for understanding the context was the complex situation of Latin American universities in the 1960s and 1970s. The student population had surged to numbers unheard of;[178] Bürki noted well that "while until

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[173] Chua Wee Hian and C. René Padilla, 'God's Work in the World Today', in *Jesus Christ: Lord of the Universe, Hope of the World. Urbana 1973*, ed. David M. Howard (Downers Grove: IVP, 1974), 168.

[174] Hutchinson and Wolffe, *A Short History*, 187.

[175] Alister Chapman, 'Evangelical International Relations in the Post-Colonial World: The Lausanne Movement and the Challenge of Diversity, 1974-89', *Missiology* 37, no. 3 (2009): 355–68; Michael Clawson, 'Misión Integral and Progressive Evangelicalism: The Latin American Influence on the North American Emerging Church', *Religions* 3, no. 3 (2012): 790–807; Brian Stanley, '"Lausanne 1974": The Challenge from the Majority World to Northern-Hemisphere Evangelicalism', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 64, no. 3 (2013): 533–51.

[176] Lic Edgar Alan Perdomo, 'Una descripción histórica de la teología evangélica latinoamericana (Segunda de dos partes)', *Kairos*, no. 32 (2003): 94–95.

[177] David C. Kirkpatrick, 'C. René Padilla and the Origins of Integral Mission in Post-War Latin America', *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 67, no. 2 (2016): 362.

[178] "*The total number of graduates between 1940 and 1950 numbered only 62,584, while in the year 1960 alone, the university had over 70,000 students"* Kirkpatrick, 356.

50 years ago university education was an economical luxury, it has now become an economic and national necessity."[179]

Arana[180] described Marxist groups in Latin America as "the most active and militant groups in the universities and present[ing] a particular attraction by their aim to change life into something worthy of human beings."[181] It represented a significant challenge for Christians, because they were not considered as natural allies of the revolutionary spirit of the day:

> It is an undeniable fact that for millions and millions of Latin Americans today the voice of the church is not the voice of God nor are her interests the interests of their respective countries. They look upon her as a symbol of the past, as the remains of an era which must be left behind with all the fanaticism, injustice, and intolerance which characterized it.[182]

How would Protestant and Evangelical theologians, university-educated and therefore not belonging to the poorest, rise to the challenge, if as Gebara recalls, "The poor called the institutional church into question and brought about a new movement in theology. Many Protestant theologians and communities were also called into question"[183]? Voelkel recalls the following anecdote about Samuel Escobar:

> Knowing that Samuel had once been strongly attracted to Marxism, I asked him, "What persuaded you to follow Christ? Samuel reviewed his student days. The Communists had fired his imagination to serve his country and meet the social needs of his people (a vision that he had never received in his own Protestant church). However, he soon observed that most young men went through a process. Won through altruistic idealism to the Communist cause, the majority slowly became corrupted as they began to taste power. Samuel saw that the basic selfishness of the individual is a problem that Communism does not have the power to solve. This solution he had found only in Jesus Christ."[184]

The scene was set for new approaches.[185] But hard questioning came first.

6.1.2 Traditional Answers Falling Short

> The greatest practical issue facing the Christian student in Latin America today is not whether or not the wearing of lipstick is permissible to a Christian girl, but what course of action he is to take in the presence of the prevailing social problems and of the ideologies which purport to be able to solve them.[186]

As Padilla and Escobar often repeated, their impeccable evangelical pedigree had not prepared them for the challenges they encountered.[187] Upon returning to Latin America from studies at

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[179] Hans Bürki, 'The Confrontation of Evangelism with Ideology', *IFES Journal*, no. 1 (1967): 25.
[180] Peruvian Presbyteria pastor Arana was AGS for Latin America.
[181] Pedro Arana, 'Evangelization in the Latin American University', *International Review of Mission* 63, no. 252 (1974): 508.
[182] C. René Padilla, 'Student Witness in Latin America Today', *IFES Journal*, no. 2 (1966): 14.
[183] Gebara, 'The Movement of May 1968 and Theology in Latin America', 265.
[184] Voelkel, *Student Evangelism in a World of Revolution*, 46.
[185] A noted answer from the Catholic and the mainline Protestant sides was the development of *Liberation Theology*. The name of the movement, notably published in English by SCM, is taken from Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, trans. Caridad Inda and John Eagleson (SCM, 1988). Throughout the later history of IFES, people concerned with the integral mission approach championed by Padilla and Escobar regularly accused them of being (Marxist) liberation theologians, a cardinal sin in most of their adversaries' eyes. See C. René Padilla, 'The Roads to Freedom. Liberation Theology', *In Touch*, no. 2 (1979): 7.
[186] Padilla, 'Student Witness in Latin America Today', 11.
[187] For a first-hand account of the history of the IFES work in Latin America, see Samuel Escobar, *La chispa y la llama: breve historia de la Comunidad Internacional de Estudiantes Evangélicos en América Latina* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Certeza, 1978).

Wheaton College, Padilla found himself "lacking a social ethic. My years of studies in the United States had not prepared me for the sort of theological reflection that was urgently needed in a revolutionary situation!"[188] Escobar similarly argued in 1972, in a ground-breaking booklet that the contemporary questions were taking

> Evangelicals by surprise with questions for which we do not have answers, for we should have thought about them years ago. In the churches, the generation gap is clear proof that this is so, and some of our best young people are leaving in search of the answers elsewhere.[189]

The debate over the adequacy of Western evangelical theology became a constant of the following decades. Indeed, IFES people entertained an ambiguous relationship to the "powerhouse" of global evangelical activism, the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, for in their eyes,

> a battle for the church in Latin America was being fought between the liberal, ecumenical promoters of the social gospel, and conservative Evangelicals like themselves who emphasized personal conversion to Christianity as the solution to both individual and social sin.[190]

Many young IFES staff workers struggled with the theology promoted by many Western missionaries, which was giving no answers to the questions of the students, as it consequently risked dividing lives into sacred and secular spheres:

> Take the case of the Christian student who has grown up surrounded by the care of believing parents. He has managed to divide his life into two neat compartments: "the sacred", including an assortment of church activities, and "the secular" comprising everything related to his studies.[191]

Another inadequacy the IFES workers observed was the missionaries' apparent lack of personal, long-term commitment necessary to ministry to university students:

> A great portion of the present world population (especially among university students and intellectuals) becomes increasingly suspicious of any slightest hint of indoctrinating practices. They will test on purpose the genuineness of the Christian's interest towards them. Much of the so-called follow-up problem reveals a lack of true concern for the total life of other persons.[192]

If the Latin American IFES staff workers challenged theological fundamentals – going as far as calling fundamentalism a "distortion of orthodoxy,"[193] their commitment to scriptural authority remained unabated. They affirmed that "the need of the hour is to turn to the Word of God in submission to the Holy Spirit. It involves returning to the Bible and to the Lord who reigns through it, as well as calling into question our 'evangelical traditions' in light of written revelation."[194] Given

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[188] C. René Padilla, 'My Theological Pilgrimage', in *Shaping a Global Theological Mind*, ed. Darren C. Marks (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 130.

[189] Samuel Escobar, 'The Social Impact of the Gospel', in *Is Revolution Change?*, ed. Brian Griffiths, I.V.P. Pocketbook (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1972), 84.

[190] Clawson, 'Misión Integral', 791. The CLADE 1 Conference held in 1969 was organized by the BGEA, notably promoting Peter Wagner's Latin American Theology: Radical or Evangelical?

[191] Padilla, 'Student Witness in Latin America Today', 16.

[192] Bürki, 'The Confrontation of Evangelism with Ideology', 26.

[193] Samuel Escobar, 'Social Concern and World Evangelism', in *Christ the Liberator*, ed. John R. W. Stott, Urbana 70 (Downers Grove: IVP, 1971), 104.

[194] 'Evangelical Declaration of Cochabamba', 187.

the importance of hermeneutics in the history and theology of IFES, the following story told by Padilla is worth quoting at length:

> Upon returning to Latin America as a staff worker with the IFES, the questions posed by university students and others forced me to see that the historical-grammatical approach to hermeneutics was a good and necessary step, but it was not enough. The fact was that if I was to help Christian university students to witness to Jesus Christ in a context of injustice and poverty, it was not enough to teach them to study the Scriptures with the focus on the message in its original contexts. I had to help them relate biblical teaching to human life in all its dimensions.[195]

The methods of these IFES workers did not remain unchallenged. Students and student leaders were trying to *mediate back* their experiences to church leaders, but it was not always well received: "There was very little understanding on the part of the leadership. Usually, the pastors would not be very open to the idea of … an interdenominational student group."[196] Some also expressed their support, but it was, overall, an arduous and lengthy task to pioneer and strengthen IFES groups. Padilla recalls:

> It would not be unfair to say that to some missionaries, perhaps many [chuckles] missionaries, the student movement was a sort of a threat. We were discussing social issues. You could not [pauses] … you could…you could not do anything else than that. I mean, you … you had to discuss social issues, and try to begin to understand or at least explore the whole question of the relationship between the gospel and social justice. You see, in the midst of a revolutionary situation you cannot spiritualize the gospel.[197]

Interestingly, little of the intense missiological reflection that was starting to be done within IFES, especially in Latin American, got a wider audience through the *IFES Journal*. The publication was discontinued in 1972 because "it was generally felt that the IFES Journal was not meeting the needs of students."[198]

6.1.3 A New Theology for a New Era

The new theologians who were growing within IFES had to face two fronts simultaneously. At times, the ministry of IFES was considered dangerous by Christians because of the novel answers given to issues Evangelicals were not used to addressing. But it was also considered a danger by revolutionaries who considered especially *evangelical* Christianity a foreign import. As Padilla recalls,

> We were probably the only ones that were trying to provide a Christian social ethic to the students and help them think through questions related to our own concrete situation of poverty and injustice. We were often attacked by Marxists who said that we were, well, paid by the CIA or that kind of thing. And yet, on the other hand, we were accused by good brethren and sisters for being Marxist.[199]

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[195] Padilla, 'My Theological Pilgrimage', 130.

[196] *Interview with Carlos René Padilla*, Transcript of audio tape, vol. 2, 361 (Wheaton, Illinois, 1987), 3, https://archives.wheaton.edu/repositories/4/archival_objects/238467.

[197] *Interview Padilla 2*, 2:5.

[198] 'Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee of the IFES' (Sanden Bjerggard, Denmark, September 1972), 17, IFES e-archives. Losses in readership were attributed to the lack of publicity and old-fashioned layout.

[199] *Interview Padilla 2*, 2:5.

The theological response had to try to fend off rebuttals from friends and foes alike, which proved to be a long-lasting exercise in equilibrium. Perhaps the most significant new theological response that IFES workers developed was what soon would be called *Integral mission*. It was a critical reflection of liberation theology, which they knew first-hand, Arana having attended Gutiérez's summer courses which became his *opus magnum*.[200] Contrary to what some critics pretend,[201] the inspiration for this approach to missionary witness was no borrowing from liberation theology. It shared a deep concern for the poor – famously termed *preferential option for the poor* – but also insisted on *Gospel proclamation.*[202] Kirkpatrick offers a very sharp summary of the integral mission developed by the IFES staff workers:

> The proclamation of the gospel (kerygma) and the demonstration of the gospel that gives itself in service (diakonía) form an indivisible (indisoluble) whole. One without the other is an incomplete, mutilated (mutilado) gospel and, consequently, contrary to the will of God. From this perspective, it is foolish to ask about the relative importance of evangelism and social responsibility. This would be equivalent to asking about the relative importance of the right wing and the left wing of a plane.[203]

Some of the most detailed articulations of this new missiology were publicly presented at the Lausanne Congress. On the field, integral mission was promoted during camps organized for students: Bible studies and discussions took place in the mornings and service to poor neighbourhoods in the afternoons. In the universities, traditional evangelistic talks were often supplemented with talks tackling urgent issues of the local students from a scholarly point of view and proposing Christian approaches. Indeed, "Students who may never be persuaded to attend a church or even a Bible study held in a classroom may, however, gladly attend a lecture dealing with a contemporary issue from a Christian perspective."[204] These innovative talks were often published as booklets or mimeographed documents and encountered a relatively large audience.[205]

Hence, a critical missiological insight for reaching the specific public of university students was supported by IFES's commitment to student leadership. In Padilla's vivid depiction of a student worker's job description, contrasting it with that of a foreign missionary, the picture is clear:

> Suffice it to say that his [the IFES staff worker's] main task is the training of disciples among the students that they in turn may become living witnesses within the university. Naturally, he is to teach not only by word, but also by example. Otherwise, he is a functioneer of the Gospel. But he is far from fulfilling his commission unless he fully recognizes that there is no better evangelist among students than those who are students themselves, and that the continuous intervention of "full-time" student evangelists may

[200] David C. Kirkpatrick, *A Gospel for the Poor: Global Social Christianity and the Latin American Evangelical Left*, *A Gospel for the Poor* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019), 35.

[201] Notably Richard Quebedeaux, *The Worldly Evangelicals* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980).

[202] "We also believed that, to reach the conclusion of this *preferential option,* it was not necessary to depend on Marxist sociology with its one-size-fits-all prescription for different contexts." Pedro Arana, 'Towards a Biblical Public Theology', *Journal of Latin American Theology* 11, no. 2 (2016): 35–59.

[203] Kirkpatrick, 'Integral Mission', 368.

[204] Padilla, 'Student Witness in Latin America Today', 21.

[205] Possibly the best known of these published series of talks are Samuel Escobar, *Diálogo entre Cristo y Marx y otros ensayos* (Lima: AGEUP, 1969); Samuel Escobar, C. René Padilla, and Edwin Yamauchi, eds., *Quien es Cristo hoy?* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Certeza, 1971).

> produce immediate statistical results but in the long run will be inimical to the development of responsible leaders.[206]

6.1.4 Student Missiology for the Benefit of the Church

> IFES in Latin America pioneered a new style of being Evangelical which was penetrating in its social criticism and unusually conscious of the dangers of religious imperialism.[207]

At this point, the reader might wonder about the relationship of the development of integral mission to the idea that the *priesthood of all believers* is essential to understanding the ministry of IFES.

Archival evidence – increasingly insisting on the importance of local church involvement – leads the historian to conclude that if leaders need to insist on something, it means that either their constituency needs to be reminded of a certain aspect; or that the other players and potential competitors need to be reassured in the face of growing concerns; or both. IFES was tapping into a reservoir of human resources that church leaders similarly were targeting. Similarly, IFES students and staff might have found their involvement in student mission more fulfilling than that of their local churches.

In any case, the very fact that it is the Lausanne Congress that significantly fostered the global influence of major IFES actors shows that their reflections were considered helpful for a vast array of church and parachurch ministries worldwide. Because of the tentative yet somewhat *avant-garde* nature of student ministry, they could think ahead of many church leaders and hence served the Church through their thinking. As Padilla appreciatively notes,

> Time for theological work as such was limited, but one can hardly exaggerate the importance that the IFES emphasis on the development of autochthonous national student-led movements had for those of us who were privileged to serve as student workers. *We were given freedom to think and to creatively respond to the demands of the time without feeling compelled to conform to a ready-made imported program*. As a result, the *IFES in Latin America became a seedbed of a theology rooted in Scripture yet at the same time deeply aware of the need to spell out the practical social implications of the biblical message for the life and mission* of Christians *as individuals and as communities* in the region.[208]

This could explain the ambiguous nature of the relationship IFES staff workers in Latin America, whose thinking we explored, entertained to mission leaders. They were natives of the continent. Their approach was decisively "missionary" in nature. They considered having a message to proclaim and incarnate and that their task was not only of "joining in" with the revolutionary forces. Yet, because of their insistence on local, incarnational leadership, their relations to missionaries were at times tense and critical. However, they never amounted to downright rejection: much to the contrary, Escobar and Padilla often highlighted the importance of foreign missionary service to developing the Gospel in their region. Similarly, Chua was adamant that "new leadership" and "a massive infusion of new blood" are essential for a break-in. "I am not anti-Western, nor have I any grudge to hold against any

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[206] Padilla, 'Student Witness in Latin America Today', 19–20.
[207] Brian Stanley, *Christianity in the Twentieth Century: A World History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 536.
[208] Padilla, 'My Theological Pilgrimage', 132, emphasis mine. For more on Padilla's ecclesiology, see Part Three, II.

missionary society."[209] In this sense, Robert notes the importance of evangelical organizations rejecting the call for a *moratorium on missions*. It instead seems to have fostered their energies and, consequently,

> Christians organized themselves into an independent network to evangelize the "unreached peoples," the millions of non-Christians who had never heard the name of Jesus Christ. This mission movement of conservative Christians rejected the idea that the end of western colonialism required the end of cross-cultural missions.[210]

It was a reaction to the WCC's perceived failure to keep the Church's mission clearly defined theologically and missiologically[211] which prompted a group of influential evangelical leaders led by Billy Graham to convene an alternative world summit in Lausanne in 1974.[212] The congress marked an important step in IFES's influence on the global evangelical world. In Kirkpatrick's assessment, "The global Evangelical student movement provided avenues for intellectual exchange that crossed the wide boundaries of 'conservative' and 'liberal,' and 'West' versus 'Majority World.'"[213]

6.2 When IFES People Change the Theological World: Lausanne 1974

In 1972, the Executive Committee discussed the potential involvement of the GS Designate, Chua Wee Hian, and of Samuel Escobar, at the time Regional Secretary for Latin America, in the EC of the coming Lausanne Congress on World Evangelism.[214] Others have written the history of this Congress and its lasting influence on the Evangelical world.[215] Given the later influence of IFES people in the Lausanne movement – "90% of World Vision leaders in Africa are said to be IFES graduates and nearly 40% of the 2010 Lausanne Congress had an IFES background"[216] – it is remarkable that participation of senior IFES staff in the first congress was debated at length within the IFES EC. In the eyes of some senior IFES people, the foreseeable participation of Roman Catholics in the Congress meant a risk of public doctrinal compromise.[217] Wary of such possible association, board

[209] Wee Hian Chua, 'Breakthrough in the Seventies', *IFES Journal* 23, no. 2 (1970): 11.
[210] Robert, *Christian Mission*, 72.
[211] Walsh notes that this orientation to social problems at the expense of theology was amongst other factor the result of the influence of the new WCC GS, Eugene Carson Blake. See Walsh, 'Religious Ferment', 314.
[212] Stanley, *Christianity*, 210.
[213] Kirkpatrick, 'Integral Mission', 354.
[214] It was not the first such congress. Graham had convened a similar congress – albeit with much smaller Majority World representation, in Berlin in 1966. Escobar, Padilla and Woods had participated, if not spoken. Their effectiveness of the IFES speakers of the 1974 event could be in part attributable to experiences gathered in Berlin.
[215] Notably Chapman, 'Evangelical International Relations in the Post-Colonial World'; Robert J. Schreiter, 'From the Lausanne Covenant to the Cape Town Commitment: A Theological Assessment', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 35, no. 2 (2011): 88-90,92; Clawson, 'Misión Integral'; Lars Dahle, ed., *The Lausanne Movement: A Range of Perspectives* (Oxford: Wipf & Stock, 2014). In terms of composition, the attendance was essentially composed of "experts": "Less than 10 per cent of attendees were lay, whereas Graham had hoped for one-third: for an Evangelical gathering, the preponderance of professional ministers was staggering. More encouraging was the fact that half of all those attending were under the age of forty-four." Stanley, "'Lausanne 1974'", 540.
[216] Daniel Bourdanné, 'Forword', in *Influence. The Impact of IFES on the Lives of Its Graduates*, by International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (Oxford, 2015), 9.
[217] 'EC 1972 Minutes', 8. The minutes further note that the relationship between the Billy Graham Association (the main organizer of the Lausanne Congress) and Hans Bürki (at the time Associate General Secretary at Large) were tense following the Berlin congress.

chair Oliver Barclay withdrew early from the Congress.[218] In an exercise of balancing arguments rarely recorded in other minutes, the committee notes that

> the pros would include having an IFES "voice" and "presence" in this worldwide body. It would also reaffirm the IFES commitment to worldwide evangelism and missionary enterprise. Besides, the presence of IFES staff would also generate goodwill to evangelical participants at the Congress. It was also noted that many of the aims of the Congress overlapped with those of the IFES. The cons would include the appearance of doctrinal compromise and additional workloads.[219]

An international body theologically very close to IFES convened a meeting. Several senior staff wanted to be part of it, yet encountered strong resistance,[220] possibly also in the light of a recent GC having affirmed that "in the light of past experiences, […] member movements should not engage in any cooperative efforts with any organization, even evangelical, without prior written agreement." [221] In this case, the latent "conflict" was the articulation of evangelism to social involvement. As Chapman notes with a benefice of hindsight not available to the IFES board at the time,

> Though originally conceived as a challenge to the World Council of Churches' emphasis on social concerns rather than personal conversion, the relationship between evangelism and social problems quickly became a recurring and prominent theme at Lausanne, due in large part to provocative and widely discussed plenary addresses given by Samuel Escobar and René Padilla.[222]

As explored above, the ministry context of Latin America was significantly different from that of essentially middle-class British and American universities, and the engagement with social issues was no optional extra to the concerns of most Majority World IFES staff.

In the end, "Over 80% of the speakers were staff, ex-staff and leaders of IFES and our national movements."[223] Given the concerns previously voiced, it is striking how influential IFES became on the evangelical missionary scene. For the GS, this was the crowning of year-long efforts in teaching, publishing, and relating to churches. The crux of the matter was firstly theological but also methodological, as Chua notes:

> It was evident that our stress on teaching students and graduates the whole counsel of God and relating the gospel to every dimension of life had reaped a bountiful harvest. One was humbled to think that

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[218] 'EC 1972 Minutes', 15. For a more detailed account of the internal controversies within IFES about the participation of IFES workers to the congress – notably Woods's attempts at preventing Escobar and Padilla to give plenary speeches, see Kirkpatrick, *A Gospel for the Poor*, chap. 1. When the congress happened, Woods was not GS anymore.

[219] 'EC 1972 Minutes', 16.

[220] The withdrawal of the Board Chair could have put significant pressure on the GS Designate and his staff. Graham's crusades in the Philippines in 1962 had caused significant tensions with the local IFES IVCF; the felt risk was that collaboration might "compromise the evangelical testimony of the IVCF of the Philippines." 'Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee of the IFES' (Lunteren, The Netherlands; Wuppertal-Barmen, Germany, 8-1.9 1962), 21, IFES e-archives.

[221] 'Minutes of the Meeting of the Seventh General Committee of the IFES' (Wuppertal-Barmen, Germany, 1967), 14, IFES e-archives.

[222] Clawson, 'Misión Integral', 795. Merely challenging the WCC would have been difficult, given the membership of about 40% of the Congress's participants to churches themselves involved with the WCC, see Chapman, 'Evangelical International Relations in the Post-Colonial World', 361.

[223] Wee Hian Chua, 'Staff Letter 15', October 1974, 1, BGC Box #5.

> God had used our men to be the avant-garde of evangelical theology and practice. So in an unprecedented way, the IFES has been catapulted into a position of unsought prominence.[224]

Given the common insistence in IFES writing on the importance of training tomorrow's future church and society leaders, whether this prominence was unsought is debatable. This said, the passage quoted above is also rare archival evidence showing that IFES leaders also saw themselves as a theological *avant-garde*.[225] If warnings against the odds of contemporary liberal theology and concerning tendencies in churches abound, it is noticeable that IFES does not seem to have been very deliberate in fostering "pure" theological reflection besides issues related to evangelism broadly conceived. This can be understood as a decisively "practical theology" approach, where theology grows out of the missionary encounter of staff workers with students. Hence, the insistence that contextual approaches and indigenous and student leadership are missiologically relevant approaches. The Lausanne Congress is one of the rare events for which scholars have expressly noted the influence of IFES:

> In the long run, the significance of the Lausanne Movement – and affiliated organizations such as the World Evangelical Alliance and the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students – was not just that it re-engaged North American Evangelicals in cross-cultural missions, but that it gave momentum to the proliferation of non-western missionary movements in the 1980s and 1990s.[226]

In the vein of articulate missiological reflection, the two plenary addresses which caused the most enthusiasm and outrage were indeed presented by two IFES staff workers: René Padilla on *Evangelism and the World* and Samuel Escobar on *Evangelism and Man's Search for Freedom, Justice and Fulfilment*.[227] Stanley also goes as far as saying that "just as Vatican II must be judged to have made an irreversible difference to the worship, theology and cultural stance of the Roman Catholic Church, so it can fairly be concluded that after Lausanne world Evangelicalism would never quite be the same again."[228] For Stott, the main missiological take away was that "now there is a willingness among Evangelicals to accept that if mission (which is God's first and the Church's second) is what God sends his people into the world to do, then it includes social as well as evangelistic activity."[229]

The IFES leadership was aware of the changes happening in the theological world and were correlating them to the world of university students. As Chua noted in 1975,

> From the mid-sixties up to 1970 we witnessed a period of student unrest and revolution. Today we find students on our campuses in a more sober and reflective mood, and subsequently more open to the

[224] Chua, 1.

[225] One of the reasons why IFES people might have felt particularly at ease at the Congress, was its serious character. Chua proudly notes that "Long before the Congress began, we pressed the Committee to insist that all participants should do their homework thoroughly so that intelligent discussion would take place at Lausanne. Over 70% of the participants submitted answers, criticisms and questions on the plenary papers. This was an all-time record for any international Congress!" Chua, 1.

[226] Robert, *Christian Mission*, 72.

[227] Kirkpatrick supposes that one of the reasons Padilla was invited to deliver a speech which was known to have polemical potential, was the fact that he was a Wheaton College graduate. Kirkpatrick, *A Gospel for the Poor*, 20. For a more detailed analysis of the two addresses, see Appendix 2.

[228] Stanley, "'Lausanne 1974'", 550.

[229] John Stott, 'The Significance of Lausanne', *International Review of Mission* 64, no. 255 (July 1975): 289.

> gospel. Surely this is a time for both sowing and reaping. During the past 4 years, several of our movements have developed healthy and wholesome approaches in total or comprehensive evangelism. The gospel is related to the "whole person" and the young disciple is instructed and incorporated into a life fellowship. However we need to pray that God will raise up more students and staff with the gifts of "evangelists" who could be used in partnership with others to lead students from a position of non-faith to faith in Jesus Christ.[230]

This does not mean that full consensus was achieved within the fellowship, and tensions around the idea of holistic mission would surface time and again. One of the contentious issues debated by the Executive was notably the question of "IFES staff and their public views on controversial matters."[231] One reads between the lines the involvement of certain individuals in political discussions and mandates, which was one of the "'explosive' items"[232] of the Executive of the late 1970s.[233]

6.3 Lasting Changes

Debates were raging in the world outside of IFES and within the organization. Institutionally, IFES stayed firm, but its leaders noticed that changes were necessary. Soon after stepping down, Woods penned an anecdotal story of the early years of IFES, of which some comments can be read as the testament of a strangely disappointed man. Looking back on his frantic years of ministry, he warned his readership and, no doubt, his successor:

> I fear that we have grown up like Topsy. So often God was ahead of us, opening doors, establishing student witness, and we have had to scramble to catch up with him. Usually we were so busy with the work in hand that we had little time to plan for expansion into other countries.[234]

Given the rapid expansion of the organization, there is no wonder that the administration, given its partly self-imposed structural limitations and emphasis on local initiative, could not follow up on all developments. As Woods's successor, Chua, was approaching his first decade as GS, he would notice that the way the Gospel was presented needed some serious reflection:

> I do believe that we must provide for more information for our thinking generation. Our contemporaries are besieged with rival views. They will treat Bible texts hurled at them in the same way as they would regard commercial slogans! That is, with suspicion and sometimes opposition.[235]

Some effects of the student unrest of the late 1960s were starting to ripple down to a new campus generation, and the enduring Cold War meant that for IFES leaders, the time was a recovery of a missionary vision, notably also applicable to Western Europe. To quote one final time from Woods, "Today most university students are almost as ignorant of the truth of the gospel as some primitive aborigines. Many are in a worse condition in that, rejecting the little knowledge they have, they have

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[230] Wee Hian Chua, 'Report of the General Secretary' (Schloss Mittersill, Austria, 1975), 2, IFES e-archives, GC 1975 Minutes, Appendix.
[231] Wee Hian Chua, 'Staff Letter 31', November 1978, 2, BGC Box #5.
[232] Chua, 2.
[233] One of them was the growing numbers of RCC members participating in IFES groups in Latin America, which caused a lot of debates in the EC.
[234] Woods, *Some Ways*, 51.
[235] Chua, 'Breakthrough in the Seventies', 9.

renounced the Christian faith outright."[236] Hence, "older" countries would need some serious attention. In the words of the European Regional Secretary (RS), Kristensen: "Europe should be regarded as a mission field. The established churches in Europe were not interested in evangelism whilst the evangelical churches were inward-looking and often engaged in internal debate and controversies."[237] The growing missiological awareness developed within the ranks of IFES would need to be put into practice, significant changes occur in student training and what was learnt on the hard terrain of student ministry, channelled back to the churches. Foreshadowing IFES's new concern for graduate ministry, discussed at length in the 1980s, Escobar foresaw in 1972 that

> the new generation in the churches should be challenged to give themselves to a life of service, to remember that they have been given much and much is demanded of them. This means that an important part of the preparation and training of all young people for Christian living will be to expose them to the need of their own country so that they can help through the backing of their congregations, or by an informed selection of their place of employment.[238]

Chua, having listened to his predecessor's advice, was busy looking ahead,[239] yet not foreseeing that the end of the decade to come would see the fall of Communism and the staggering number of new ministry fields which would soon open:

> The 80s will soon dawn. The door of opportunity is open for bold advances. We require men of faith, dedication and vision to attempt great exploits for God. We have been witnessing unprecedented changes in the Islamic World. The oil wealth and the thirst for Western technology has prised students and the professional class from their conservative Islamic foundations. This means that Christian business men, university lecturers and engineers have unparalleled opportunities to be carriers of the gospel in these "hard" lands. There is another phenomenon. A large proportion of Muslim students are studying in Europe and North America. These are relatively more open to the gospel and we need people to befriend them and point them to Christ.[240]

7 Growing Partnerships: The 1980s

Throughout the 1980s, IFES reflected deeply about its structure, identity, and the priorities of its ministry. The fellowship grew significantly in Eastern Europe. Former colonies of the Majority World were coming of age and asserting their priorities. Historically significant was the shift, at the time not yet fully grasped, of the centre of gravity of Christianity towards the South.[241] As analysts bluntly put it, "On the Day of Atonement 1973, there were only 17 million Africans who described themselves as 'born-again Christians.' Over the next three decades, that number would grow to more than 400 million."[242] IFES was growing fast as in 1983, "tertiary work undertaken by IFES added up to

[236] Woods, *Some Ways*, 102.
[237] 'Minutes of the Meeting of the Tenth General Committee of the IFES - 1979' (Hurdal Verk, Norway, 27.7 1979), 12, IFES e-archives.
[238] Escobar, 'The Social Impact of the Gospel', 97.
[239] Wee Hian Chua, 'Priorities 1', April 1988, 1, BGC Box #5.
[240] Wee Hian Chua, 'The General Secretary's Perspective' (Hurdal Verk, Norway, 27.7 1979), 3, IFES e-archives, GC 1979 minutes, Appendix D.
[241] Dana L. Robert, 'Shifting Southward: Global Christianity since 1945', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 24, no. 2 (2000): 50–54.
[242] Hutchinson and Wolffe, *A Short History*, 244.

3,000 groups and 150,000 students, whereas the high school work had 5,000 groups and 200,000 young people."[243]

IFES seemed well-positioned; its fundamental commitment to national leadership and broad representation ensured shifts in numbers were not threatening its core convictions. Yet, Hutchinson and Wolffe contend that in the 1980s,

> The worldwide collapse in voluntarism – both secular and religious – presented evangelicals with both a challenge (the voluntary society had been their traditional form) and an opportunity to move from interdenominational reaction (particularly reaction to the 1960s moral revolution) to trans-denominational proaction through cooperative action regardless of traditional race, class, gender or religious barriers.[244]

Some of the essential levers of partnership were already in place as the ethos of interdenominational and transnational cooperation had been at the core of the IFES functioning since its inception. Questions of power balance and financial oversight were discussed at great length during leadership meetings. Illustrative of the remaining imbalance was the fact that as of 1983, only five out of seventy-five member movements provided 76% of the money to the IFES budget.[245] Moreover, unlike the United Nation's Security Council, no such thing as "permanent seats" in the EC was foreseen constitutionally, new delegates at the 1983 GC were systematically drawn from the countries whose delegates had stepped back.[246] This is important insofar as the fellowship had increased its geographical scope significantly since its foundation. Yet the list of representatives shows that some countries – notably wealthier – seem to have, either implicitly or explicitly, been deemed too essential to be left out of the deliberations.[247]

In the Majority World, tensions around the articulation of missionary organizations and IFES also existed. For example, "in Gabon, the IFES worked through a denominational student movement in the early eighties. Although its missionaries disliked the IFES inter-denominationalism, students caught the vision."[248] However, debates over the role of foreign missionaries were not confined to the (in)famous *moratorium debate*. As the EC discussed in 1983, the IFES was aware that the history of missions was not one of unabated success:

> Missionaries have often made serious mistakes. Most of our countries first heard the gospel in a way that had shocking overtones of cultural or military imperialism. But nevertheless a church was founded. (…) Equally, national workers have sometimes been blind to the pagan or other anti-Christian elements in their own culture […] We all need to be helped by one another to be more biblical in our thought and

[243] 'Minutes of the Meeting of the Eleventh General Committee of the IFES' (Ashburnham Place, Battle, England, 27.7 1983), 15, IFES e-archives.
[244] Hutchinson and Wolffe, *A Short History*, 257.
[245] 'GC 1983 Minutes', 14.
[246] In this case, Canada, Germany and the UK.
[247] Some legal requirements, notably related to financial flows also could have played a role in choosing delegates.
[248] Peter J. Lineham, 'Students Reaching Students. A History of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students' (unpublished Manuscript, 1997), 126.

> life, and foreign workers are often a great help here, even when their influence is mixed with cultural blind areas and they need to be corrected in these by the national leaders.[249]

Sanneh's distinction between "Global Christianity" and "World Christianity" seems to capture both the potential and the tensions of this new development and is relevant to analyse IFES.[250] "Global Christianity" would refer to an extension of transatlantic, Anglo-Saxon evangelicalism, whereas "World Christianity" rather describes the indigenous appropriation of the Christian faith, wherever it is to be found. IFES official documents and speeches always insist on indigeneity and contextuality; however, the Doctrinal Basis and other constitutional requirements limit the accepted level of local flexibility and hence might be understood as promoting more of a replication of Western forms than genuine indigenization of student ministry. This tension would take some time to be adequately discussed but was a matter of significant thinking at the end of the century. We shall return to this later.

I cannot pretend to provide an extensive historical account of all events and people who shaped IFES in the 1980s, but the following exploration of important theological discussions should help the reader to get a picture of what was at stake at the time.

7.1 1982–1983: What is IFES?

A short document, titled "IFES: Who Are We? Why Do We Exist? How Do We Function?"[251] published in 1982, pictures an organization which is coming of age and trying to reassess itself. One of the first affirmations is that of the evangelical identity of the fellowship, defined as IFES's deep commitment to "defending, maintaining and propagating biblical truths," these truths having been found in the Bible, the entire trustworthiness of which is reaffirmed. In addition to traditional biblicism, the paper also affirms the centrality of the Doctrinal Basis.[252] The presentation goes on detailing the mission field and the strategy deployed, notably insisting on student leadership:

> Students constitute the focal point of the IFES and indeed of all National Evangelical Unions. The universities, colleges and high schools represent vast mission fields where students need to be presented with the claims of Christ as man's only Saviour and Lord. *The most effective bearers of the gospel are committed Christian students.* We know that under God Christian students can be greatly used by Him to bear witness to His love in Christ Jesus, to run their own Christian groups and to help their fellow students grow in Him. *IFES related Christian groups are in effect a mission of students to students,* at the grassroots, the local fellowships manifest strong student responsibility and initiative.[253]

This excerpt can be read as a reaffirmation of previous self-presentations. However, the influence of missiological discussions in the wider Christian world about the role of missionaries, the importance

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[249] Joe Caterson, 'Proposals for Effective Partnership in Worldwide Student Evangelisation', Plenary Discussion Paper (Ashburnham Place, Battle, East Sussex, England, 27.7 1983), 3, IFES e-archives, GC 1983 minutes, Appendix R.

[250] Lamin O. Sanneh, *Whose Religion Is Christianity? The Gospel beyond the West* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003).

[251] 'The International Fellowship of Evangelical Students. Who Are We? Why Do We Exist? How Do We Function?' (Discipleship Training Center, Singapore, 17.8 1982), IFES e-archives, EC 1982 Minutes, Appendix A. The quotes in the next section are all from this short document.

[252] See Part Three, I.

[253] Italics mine.

of local leadership, etc. is probably also in the background. This was no novelty as the presentation hastens to add that the IFES founding fathers "recognized the need for international partnership and cooperation. As well as being a forum for new ideas, the IFES is the agency for mutual strengthening and the unique vehicle for member movements to engage in pioneering student work."[254]

This spirit of cooperation was well in line with the context of the 1980s. The document also insists on the ecclesiological aspects of the work of IFES. If some church leaders had difficulties agreeing on IFES's legitimacy, the fellowship boldly affirms that

> another major reason for our existence is the commitment of all National Evangelical Unions to equip their student members for service in God's Church. Systematic Bible exposition and teaching, participation in group Bible studies, personal and corporate involvement in evangelism and follow-up, leadership responsibilities.[255]

What can be read between the lines here is that the training provided by IFES groups would turn to be positively influential on churches *because of the theology* thought in the groups. The emphasis on "Systematic Bible *exposition*" is also noticeable since it was never part of IFES's standard student training curriculum to "exposit" the Bible, the term being understood as "preaching."

The theological soul-searching within IFES went further, notably because growing numbers of Roman Catholic students were joining IFES groups. The discussions carried on within the senior leadership and in consultation with the national movements resulted in a major paper presented by Escobar at the 1983 GC and titled "Our Evangelical Heritage."[256]

The Peruvian missiologist firstly frames the history of IFES within larger currents in the Church, asserting that IFES's "development into a worldwide fellowship made up of strong indigenous movements is a process that cannot be separated from the life of the Church at large. It is part of one of the most remarkable missionary advances in history." This is insofar remarkable that many accounts of IFES's existence tended hitherto to focus on "resistance" and on "foundations," more than on positivity. Escobar is not blind to these aspects, for he goes on to say that the expansion of the Church in the World "has taken place, come wind come weather, in a century where spiritual and social forces seemed to present insurmountable obstacles," but the framing is decisively positive. Yet, as Escobar perspicuously notes,

> Our heritage is no heavy burden that previous generations have imposed on us to keep us under control. Sometimes the very word "heritage" is disgusting for young people because it communicates that image. But what we see in our own history and in the history of the Church is that these basic tenets of evangelical truth and life have been liberating truths, dynamic elements within movements of renewal that God has used to keep His Church alive in times of crisis or advance. This is how we in IFES understand them.

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[254] 'IFES: Who?, Why?, How?', 2.
[255] 'IFES: Who?, Why?, How?', 2.
[256] Samuel Escobar, 'Our Evangelical Heritage. Major Paper Presented at the 1983 General Committee', *IFES Review*, no. 14 (1983): 2–20. Subsequent quotes from this document.

Escobar highlights three contributions made by IFES in its history, which he attributes to the fellowship's faithfulness to its evangelical heritage:

> In the English-speaking countries, it has brought the recovery of initiative for Evangelicals in theological and biblical scholarship, and university life. In some Third World countries, it has opened the university world to permanent evangelism through indigenous movements. It has produced a generation of able leaders in the worldwide evangelical revival who combine missionary fire with biblical scholarship and devotion to truth.

Escobar's analysis demonstrates deep ecclesiological interests. He envisages that faithfulness to the evangelical heritage might allow for IFES to continue being an "advancing missionary force and a body of people seriously concerned with the integrity of the gospel – with a definite ministry within the Church universal." This concern is intensely missiological and, as another paper from the same conference notes, thereby justifies priority-setting in recruiting students for missionary engagement:

> We affirm that students, staffworkers, graduates and supporters should strive to fulfil national objectives in spreading the gospel in their universities and schools, in building up strong Christians and in equipping them for service in the Church. At the same time they must also be sensitive to God's call to be concerned with student work in other countries, particularly those that need help.[257]

Escobar develops a positive framing of IFES being "not just a reactionary movement, developed to counteract other student movements in the name of orthodoxy. Rather, it results from a theological concern and a practical sense of mission that stems from truth. It expresses a recurring movement of the Spirit of God in His Church." Escobar takes historical narratives to task, countering accusations that IFES is reactionary *ad extra* and asserting theological reflection over against missionary pragmatism *ad intra.* Escobar seizes the opportunity to challenge the idea that a "heritage" necessary could be uniform:

> IFES has become a truly "international fellowship" and is growing into the realization of all that is meant in those two first words of its name. Each movement has a different historical background and has to live in very different social, political and ecclesiastical conditions. We rejoice together in our common heritage, but it is taking time and experience to express it in the differing circumstances in which we live.

Hence the move from a traditionally doctrinal focus to a more socio-missiological one: Escobar insists that "the student element in our name" justifies potential similarities, yet "when we come to other aspects of our life, we have to learn to acknowledge the differences." Escobar goes beyond merely acknowledging regional discrepancies and hammering his point, stresses the ecclesiological implications of his observations:

> A person who considers himself an Evangelical in any one of these countries comes from a very different experience. For instance, different history and consequentially differing ways of living their faith. A British Evangelical could be an Anglican or a Plymouth Brother. The consequences of their evangelical position for their church-life, ministry and even career, can be very different because of the particular history of Christianity in Britain. But take the Peruvian Evangelical, the member of a tiny religious minority in a Roman Catholic culture. For him being an Evangelical means being re-baptized in 95% of the cases. Compare him with the Norwegian Evangelical who almost certainly would be a Lutheran and

[257] Caterson, 'Proposals for Effective Partnership', 1.

> who would never ask a person who has a conversion experience to be re-baptized. Then think of the special challenges that come for the Singaporean or the Senegalese who live inside a society dominated by a non-Christian religious majority. For them being an Evangelical is not so much separation and distinction from a nominally Christian majority as presence and testimony in a pagan environment.

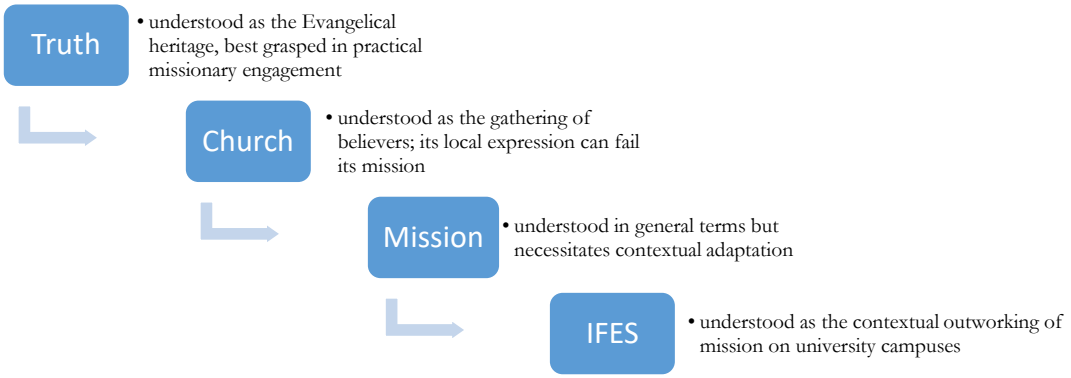
For Escobar, a solid student ministry serves the Church, for "where the Church is dormant or does not have a good ministry, our student movements are having to provide nurture and guidance on the application of truth to daily life." Throughout its history, IFES has been challenged with competing with local Churches. Settling the matter in unequivocal terms, Escobar concludes that

> IFES is a Para-Church Movement. Evangelicals are convinced that the Church is important and central in God's plan revealed in His Word. As an evangelical movement IFES stresses that it is not a church. Sometimes we express our role as being "an arm of the Church" in the university. We have insisted that our evangelistic task is completed when a person who comes to know Christ in a student group becomes an active member of a local church.

Yet Escobar is equally adamant that the Church does not possess the monopoly of the truth. Not only can parachurch organizations arise out of the missionary and theological deficiencies of the Church, but "it is not the Church that produces Christian truth, it is the other way round: Christian truth produces the Church. In the same fashion, it is not IFES that has produced evangelical truth, but the IFES is the result of evangelical truth, God's Spirit through His Word, in action." This independence of *truth* from the institutional church hence legitimates the existence of IFES and especially its worldwide expansion, for "we exist for a given purpose; we have a mission." Balancing his valuing of contextual adaptation and his rebuke of any form of theological imperialism, Escobar contends that

> as IFES advances to the most remote parts of the earth, national movements face the task of taking our evangelical heritage and putting it to work in their own situation. This is not just salesmanship. We have no final packaged product called "Evangelical Heritage" made in Peru, England, USA or Norway, that has to be sold to consumers on the campuses of the world. It is rather that we have a living truth that living people will grasp and then apply in their very varied circumstances. This will only happen if IFES is a real Fellowship. If there is mutual respect from every national movement to all the others, confidence in the work of the Holy Spirit in every national situation. What we must avoid is any form of cultural imperialism that hides itself under the cloak of "concern for our evangelical heritage."

The following figure summarizes Escobar's development:



The major paper and discussion carried out during the 1983 GC show a demonstrable concern for the articulation between IFES ministry and Church ministry. The idea remains that IFES exists because of some shortcomings of local churches. However, IFES is anchored within the bigger picture of "service to the Church." IFES was not thinking in a vacuum, for several of its leaders had been involved in the *Lausanne Commission on Co-Operation* which published a significant paper, the reading of which was recommended by Chua to its leadership.[258] Furthermore, the need to spend time considering IFES's relationship to local churches was noted as one of the priorities of the incoming EC.[259]

The question of the ecclesial integration of students involved in IFES groups was always a burning one. The IFES leadership discussed the issue at greater length in the 1980s as it became evident that a more deliberate graduate work of some sort was required to not "lose" the students in whom so much energy had been invested. This would be a recurring concern for the IFES leadership, rendered even more salient given the need to disciple young professionals who would have to navigate the intricate world of post-communist Eastern Europe. The 1987 GC noted in very self-aware terms that

> an evidence of the effectiveness of our students' work is a growing group of graduates who are serving Christ in the world. *However, it is apparent that there is a high fall-out rate among our graduates in many countries, indicative of the fact that our graduates need continuing help.* At the same time, many movements feel that an effective graduates' work is necessary for the survival and growth of the students' work.[260]

If the organization's strategy, measured against its own criteria, is found wanting, the above is a clarion call for a thorough reassessment. Such observation would cause long discussions in the 1980s and 1990s. It was also observed that IFES had tended to neglect Christian lecturers and professors from its ministry.[261] Whilst the lack of such "investment" was acknowledged, the importance of the world "student" in the whole IFES rhetoric is evidence enough that such ministry was never conceived of as being part of the organization's "core business." The 1980s nevertheless were a time of intense "strategic soul-searching" as IFES leaders tried to make sense of the contextual developments they were observing. As Chairman Skaaheim noted, ministering to students was still very relevant, given the growing urbanization occurring:

> Mission societies all over the world see the challenge that this situation represents and are already in the process of discussing how to strengthen the mission work in cities and particularly among students. Personally, I think that we will see a dramatic shift in mission strategy. More and more priority will be given to student work and general mission work in urban areas. This also means change of methods. Traditional methods will not be adequate in reaching students with the gospel. Mission societies find

[258] The report was published the same year, see Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, 'Cooperating'.
[259] 'Minutes of the Newly-Elected Executive Committee Meeting of the IFES' (Ashburnham Place, Battle, England, 27 July 1983), 3, IFES e-archives.
[260] 'Minutes of the Meeting of the Twelfth General Committee of the IFES' (El Hostel Duruelo, Boyaca, Colombia, 8-8.9 1987), 27, IFES e-archives, italics mine.
[261] 'GC 1983 Minutes', 18.

themselves in a very demanding position as they have to rethink the whole strategy to find the right way to progress and growth.[262]

7.2 Partnerships on a global scale

Continuing the methodological "soul-searching" of the decade, the IFES president noted that "We cannot expect to follow the patterns and methods of the early 1900s, but we do believe that there is an unchanging commission."[263] The first time the GC gathered in Latin America, the question of how "foreign" missionaries were to relate to their field was repeatedly voiced in Bogota, a sequel to the previous GC meeting's discussion of the tension between "national" and "foreign." In the word of the report of a discussion group in 1983,

> Foreign workers may not, from a human point of view, be ideal, but then national workers are not ideal either – no one is! The best man to do God's work will always be the man called of God, with Christ-like character and the ability to communicate the gospel and teach the Word. This messenger may be "foreign" because of his race, colour or culture, but his basic qualities as a student worker should help him overcome cultural difficulties.[264]

A few years later, Adeney underlines the significant geopolitical shifts having occurred in the history of IFES, notably that "In 1934, 99% of the countries of Asia were under colonial rule. Missionaries were almost all Westerners, and the Asian churches had relatively few strong national leaders. Many of my contemporaries were going to similar situations in Africa, India and Latin America."[265] This had changed by 1987, but the former IFES senior staff in Asia still concluded that "perhaps unconsciously we were influenced by an insidious form of national pride related to our British empire background."[266]

This new political constellation would mean for IFES both a challenge and an opportunity. Chua astutely highlighted that "Missiologists tell us that 83 nations no longer allow traditional missionaries to work in their countries. Tent-making is and will be the most effective alternative to missionary work."[267] IFES would need to recourse more deliberately to graduates to support its work. As Adeney furthered,

> Most of these countries open their doors to teachers, scientists and business people from other countries. Christians with professional skills find unlimited opportunities all over the world to serve in a secular capacity. The Bible is full of examples of different types of people becoming witnesses to the living God. Not only the prophets and prophetesses, but generals and statesmen, farmers and shepherds, midwives and queens, apostles and tentmakers, were all used to proclaim the message of the kingdom of God. IFES is in a unique position to play an important role in the call and training of both the traditional missionary and those who are described in Tetsnao Yamamori's recent book as "God's New Envoys."[268]

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[262] Anfin Skaaheim, 'IFES and a Global Strategy for Mission Work Among Students', Discussion paper (Yahara Center, Madison, USA, 21 April 1985), 1, IFES e-archives, EC 1985 Minutes, Appendix.
[263] David H. Adeney, 'Light to the Nations. 1987 IFES Presidential Adress', *IFES Review*, no. 23 (1987): 4.
[264] Caterson, 'Proposals for Effective Partnership', 3.
[265] Adeney, 'Light to the Nations. 1987 IFES Presidential Adress', 6.
[266] Adeney, 6.
[267] Wee Hian Chua, 'Major Trends and Developments in IFES' (IFES Executive Committee, 5 May 1988), 2, IFES e-archives.
[268] Adeney, 'Light to the Nations. 1987 IFES Presidential Adress', 7.

Correlated to the new political landscape was the question of internal representativeness, surging very strongly shortly after the 1987 GC. The issue was the nomination of Chua's successor. A heated discussion occurred at the 1989 EC meeting, during which the question was raised as to why the Majority World candidates were not considered more thoroughly, especially since the 1987 GC had explicitly asked for more non-Westerners to be appointed as IFES staff. Procedures were noted to be designed after the usual procedures of the West and "it was pointed out that most Two-Thirds World candidates would tend to decline initially and needed to be persuaded to be considered."[269] The whole question caused a significant stir within the Committee, since no non-Western representatives were part of the search committee. "Concern was expressed about the international image of the IFES, what member movements would think and also how the Christian public would react, bearing in mind that the international representation of IFES had always been admired."[270] In the end, Welshman Lindsay Brown was appointed and assumed office until 2007.[271]

7.3 The One-Another Ministry of Students to Students

In an exemplary quote worth reading at length, Chua asserts,

> Ever since our foundation, our primary focus has been on students. We believe that, under God, evangelical students can be front-line witnesses for Christ on their campuses. *Students possess spiritual gifts and abilities to run their fellowships and to build one another up in the faith.* It is our express aim that, through this on-the-job training and involvement, these students would be trained as leaders. Of course, they need encouragement and input from staff. But, in the IFES tradition, the staff does not dominate and run the student fellowship. They act as trainers or coaches.[272]

Whilst the *coaching* metaphor is a recurrent one and tries to capture the relationship of staff members to student leaders, the explicit affirmation of students "building one another up" is rare. It indicates a fine-tuning of the IFES leadership's theological reflection and an explicit acknowledgement of students' maturity. Emblematic is the publication, one year later in the *IFES Review*, of an article titled "The One-Another Ministry of Students to Students,"[273] penned by two young women having served as IFES team members in Paris.

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[269] 'Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee of the IFES' (Tao Fong Shan Christian Center, Hong Kong, 25.7 1989), 2, IFES e-archives.

[270] 'EC 1989 Minutes', 3.

[271] It might be interesting to note the criteria used to choose a GS as defined by the IEC: "Character: He must be godly. He must have theological stability, insight, firmness, wisdom, maturity of character, integrity, aptitude for reconciliation. He must have proven cross-cultural abilities. (…) Attitude to Scripture: He must fully accept the Fellowship's position on Scripture. He must be able to teach Scripture and must exemplify the practice of its authority in his life. He must show a biblical (not primarily pragmatic) approach to issues, working from principle and being able to make radical application of Scripture to the questions of the day. Understanding of IFES: He must have a good understanding of IFES ethos and history. He must have a firm commitment to its doctrinal basis and aims, and a passionate commitment to our evangelical heritage, to evangelism and to world mission." Appendix F of 'Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee of the IFES' (London Bible College, Northwood, England, August 1988), 1, IFES e-archives.

[272] Wee Hian Chua, 'IFES: The Big Picture', *In Touch*, no. 3 (1987): 5, italics mine.

[273] Julie Dransfield and Cindy Merritt, 'The "One-Another" Ministry of Students to Students', *IFES Review*, no. 24 (1988): 37–42. Unless otherwise stated, all quotes are from that short article.

The paper aims to "consider ways in which students can exercise pastoral care towards one another within the student group. This commandment of Jesus [to love one another, John 13:34-35] seems to us the foundation of such care." In contrast to more traditional presentations of the importance of individual piety for efficient witnessing in older articles, this paper insists on Christian communion's revelatory dimension and its encouragement potential. Indeed, "God makes his love known to us personally through relationships within the body of Christ by his Holy Spirit. Our faith is worked out in the context of relationships, and the student group can provide a valuable opportunity to work out this relational aspect of our faith." If no deficiency of the Church is directly alluded to in this passage, one is struck by the significant, though implicit, overlap between a local church as "body of Christ" and functions here ascribed to the student group. The local group can provide the support rendered necessary by "the increasing disintegration of family life, [leading to] psychological and emotional obstacles […] preventing [students] from fully entering into the healing and restoration which Christ's salvation brings." The article acknowledges the challenges encountered on campus, but also "The temptation within student groups can be to see Christianity solely as a set of intellectual propositions, rather than as a way of life based on the personal knowledge of God's love for us in Christ." Earlier in the IFES history, readers would have encountered such warnings in Woods's writings, yet the antidote would have been more likely to be personal Bible reading and prayer. The latter is not forgotten: "There can be nothing more encouraging, faith-building and healing than sharing together in seeing how God is active in our lives in response to prayer;" however, the approach presented here stresses that "it is important that the potential of the student group is maximised, not only by providing an intellectual approach to faith, but by allowing understanding of truth to find expression in tangible ways in Christian friendships." Contextualizing for the realities of student life, they go on to highlight the importance of committing time and to listening to each other: "We can all think of someone who has helped in our spiritual growth because he or she was prepared to spend time with us."

The Church is referred to only in a subsidiary manner, particularly relevant when the pastoral potential of a student group reaches its limit, notably when students face particularly acute emotional crises, in which case "help should be sought from an older mature Christian within the church." Intriguingly the authors continue by suggesting a listening attitude which sounds very akin to "confession-like" events: "It can be a great source of healing simply to allow someone to pour out all that is on their hearts and minds, listening attentively and compassionately. This can help them to clarify thoughts and put them in perspective."

No mention of a "priesthood" of students is made. In contrast, some of the attitudes described and encouraged in the article fall into these categories: mutual pastoral care, petitions to God in prayer, etc. In the end, guidelines for further Bible studies are provided, listing different uses of the word *parakalein/paraklesis,* especially in Pauline writings. Fascinating is the definition of *encouragement*: "an

informal mutual ministry among Christians, related to prophecy." The article is evidence of the argument of this study that students are considered mature enough to exercise some form of *mediation* between God and each other, that is, some form of *priestly mediation*. We shall return to this topic below for deeper theological investigations.

Besides discussions about representativeness and the best way to envisage a ministry that is faithful to its heritage yet flexible enough to adapt to the new contextual realities, the 1980s were definitely an era of growth. The GS reported in 1988 that no less than 270,000 high school and university students were involved with IFES.[274] Similarly, the mood of the time inclined towards large events. The same year, the first quadrennial European Evangelism Conference took place in Würzburg, Germany: "The European organisers had expected 700 students, and nearly 1300 showed up. Jürgen Spiess, General Secretary of SMD-West Germany, spoke of the 'festival mentality' that pervades young people today."[275]

The closing decade had been marked by intense debates on the nature and orientation of the ministry of IFES, numerous hours and meetings being devoted to strategic soul-searching. Besides regular reaffirmations of the evangelical character and heritage of the fellowship, its ecclesiology was coming of age and gradually more missiologically assertive. On the ground, many national movements were developing. Others were also fostering the emergence of movements in lands that gradually opened in the 1990s. The importance of student leadership was as unabatedly stressed as in the prior decades, yet its theological underpinnings were fine-tuned.

8 A New World Map to Finish a Century: The 1990s

The last decade of the 20th century was eventful for IFES, with an unexpected number of new countries officially opening to its ministry. New nations brought new theological interests, weighing of priorities and new relationships, the necessity to reconsider ownership on a larger scale, the need to adapt the leadership structure to a student generation changing significantly. How were the theological fundamentals of IFES to be adapted and owned in a new era, especially in the encounter with Eastern Orthodoxy and Pentecostalism? Moreover, the perennial question of how to define IFES's ecclesiological status came to the fore again. IFES also started to ask itself how to apprehend the university as an institution, as the logical consequence of a steadily growing interest in holistic mission. Many discussions took place during and in between the three GC meetings newly integrated into larger, more representative events called "World Assemblies."

[274] Wee Hian, 'With Evangelical Students'.
[275] Chua, 'Major Trends and Developments in IFES', 1.

8.1 New Nations, New Thinking

Nine out of the ten founding countries were Western. With a fellowship having grown to fourteen times the size of its origins, new balances of interest would come to the surface, and the 1990s saw an intense period of soul-searching. What would "ownership" mean in such a larger organization? What would the priorities be, and who would get to decide between them? What strategies would work best with a new generation of students? How would national and denominational loyalties play against theological certitudes?

8.1.1 Eastern Europe

When Eastern Europe officially opened in the early 1990s, IFES had been "pioneering" student work undercover for many years, the hub of this ministry being *Schloss Mittersill* in the Austrian Tyrol. As early as 1973, senior leaders would boast that

> during the last four years we have been able to pioneer about twenty to thirty Bible study groups. These have no labels, but God has used IFES special workers and envoys to visit and encourage these students. Our workers are not spies, involved in international intrigue and political espionage. Instead, they are Barnabases encouraging Eastern European students to love and serve the living Lord.[276]

For a ministry always insisting on its ethos of "indigenous leadership," it might sound bizarre to read so much of "pioneering," as if the Eastern countries had been *terra incognita* necessitating explorations:

> National camps in Eastern Europe were typically held under canvas in fields or in barns on farms, and certainly in much less salubrious surroundings. But as IFES depends on front line troops (unpaid student volunteers), for all the 99% of its work, it always brought rich dividends to gently coax, cajole and treat them cordially at Mittersill.[277]

IFES leaders knew that Christianity already existed in Eastern Europe, but they seemed unsatisfied with its state. Williams provides a description which illustrates well how IFES saw its work:

> There had been IFES related student work in some of these countries before the Second World War, but the communists had closed it down, and many church leaders felt there was no need now for anything more than their own, often anemic, church-related youth work. It was the pastors we had to win over to new ideas about students reaching students; they were much more suspicious than any of the students.[278]

Two main areas of difficulties appear from this vivid account: the challenge of political authorities, averse to ecclesial influence and officially serving a state doctrine of atheism; but also, the challenge of embattled churches, divided over the ways they wanted to relate or not to relate to the State. The question of foreign influence was not only a concern for the State, but also for the local church. The first was worried about political influence, the latter was alarmed at the possibility of a decline in

[276] Wee Hian and Padilla, 'God's Work in the World Today', 173–74.
[277] Williams, *Holy Spy*, 64.
[278] Williams, 13.

morality.[279] Furthermore, what legitimacy did a ministry of students to students, without clerical supervision, possess? As Williams further vividly recalls, the diplomatic fronts were not always neatly separated between "Christian brethren" and "political fools":

> And who were we? Who employed us? Why were we travelling around looking for Christian students? Almost no one knew of IFES and we did not like to explain it in case it sounded like a cover for the proscribed foreign organization which, in fact, it was. However, it was not anti-communist, but trying to establish member movements in the communist countries, and primarily concerned to spawn effective indigenous local networks of students witnessing to their peers about their Christian faith. At that time organizations outside the actual structure of the churches were all forbidden, particularly international organizations.[280]

In uncertain times, it is understandable why church leaders could fear how potentially more enthusiastic and less mature students could imperil carefully crafted relationships between clergy and state. However, this work among students was mostly done *in collaboration* with church leaders. There was no church-planting strategy but the implicit idea that encouraging students to witness to fellow students would strengthen the Church. Hence Williams' candid tone in describing how

> We visited pastors of all sorts of churches in every town in every country which came within our orbit. They did sometimes ask probing questions. They must have often wondered just whose agent we were. But they were unfailingly courteous and often received us with overwhelmingly generous hospitality. The pastors knew the key students in their congregations, the enthusiastic ones, whom we wanted to train and equip to be even more enthusiastic and involved in being Christian witnesses to their peers.[281]

Space does not allow accounting for more of the fascinating stories of people meeting for the first time and being united by a shared vision after a cup of tea and the exchanges of news about a common acquaintance. The importance of collaboration between mission organizations but also between local churches was regularly stressed. It is arguable that at least during Communist times, such a ministry would foster a certain sort of "Evangelical Ecumenism," providing venues for Christians to meet, bypassing traditional divides, either denominational or ethnic.[282] Critics might wonder if this was all genuinely theological or not more sociological and opportunistic. Students with contacts in the West might increase their chances of travelling or access to financial means. Yet stories of Christians living under Eastern European Communist regimes abound in telling how committing oneself to the Christian faith often had very adverse consequences for their employability or their studies, for example.

Ultimately, as the countries opened, formerly clandestine student movements were officially registered and the pioneer Polish ChSa welcomed a 2000-people European Evangelism Conference in 1994.[283]

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[279] Williams, 13.
[280] Williams, 13.
[281] Williams, 132–33.
[282] Williams, 50, 96.
[283] Lineham, 'Students Reaching Students', 57.

8.1.2 Africa and the Majority World

Eastern Europe was not only the area of development for IFES. The 1990s were a sort of *African decade*. Africa saw a significant growth in the 1980s so that "By 1991 there were conservative estimates that 10% of all the tertiary students in Anglophone Africa were members of Christian Unions."[284] The centre of gravity of Christianity had shifted south, which was not to mean that the centres of power would do the same.

Significant debates about nationhood and its correlates on indigeneity and autonomy could not be avoided. In the early 1990s, a long debate started about whether it was wise to affiliate several movements for any given nation-state. Some countries already had several movements (Canada and Switzerland), Belgium was applying for membership and was separated along language lines and in some countries like South Korea, divergences of opinions had led to the founding of "alternative student ministry." In other contexts, the issues were rather ethnic and political, as with the complex situation of Apartheid South Africa or Israel-Palestine.

The question was one of unity and diversity. Whilst space does not allow for in-depth explorations of the debates, the following excerpt from a 1998 discussion summarizes the issues well. Sng, EC member and former FES Singapore GS, made a case for unity on biblical and missiological grounds. Having surveyed biblical passages like Ephesians 4 and John 17, he then stresses that these passages have a clear "missiological dimension. Acknowledging that all believers are bound together in a mystical union in Christ is not enough. This unity has to be seen by others. It must be lived out as a witness to the world. Only then, can the world 'know.'"[285] For Sng, unity must be maintained, for it cannot be taken for granted in a fallen world. The perennial tension between *visible* and *invisible* unity is mentioned again. This unity that needs to be maintained allows for a diversity of functions and approaches, which are contextually relevant, intensely prophetic and culturally shaped. If visible unity was not stressed in (post) Christendom West, the Singaporean leader highlights the need for a different approach in countries where Christians are either a minority (Israel) or where the political dimensions of unity bear upon one's understanding of the fundamental unity of human beings (South Africa). Hence the articulation of a working ethos that takes context and culture seriously:

> IFES seeks to encourage students to take responsibility for reaching out to their own campus. In doing so, students are to exercise their gifts, understand their own student culture, and apply Christian thinking in meeting the challenges. Such an approach may lead to a diversity of operation on campus. But within this diversity, practical expressions of unity among all believers must be sought constantly.[286]

IFES had grown, many more movements were coming of age, the articulation of power, representation, methodologies and strategies could not be discussed fully apart from contextual

[284] Lineham, 126.
[285] Bobby Sng, 'Unity and Diversity in IFES' (Senior Staff Consultation, May 1998), 3, IFES Archive Oxford, SSC 98 papers.
[286] Sng, 3.

sensitivities. For many years, the work in many countries of Africa had been done under the auspices of the PAFES, which was considered as one member of IFES. In the 1990s, autonomous national movements were affiliated separately as part of the newly formed English and Portuguese-speaking Africa (EPSA) region. In 1998, at the height of the discussions, the senior leadership acknowledged that "IFES may be too strongly influenced by Western European and North American founding members in the models it adopts for structures."[287] Voices were heard in the South Pacific region that the word "Evangelical" was concerning and not welcoming enough, whilst similar opinions were voiced in Africa, where EPSA delegates contended that the Doctrinal Basis was not inclusive enough. There are no signs in the archives that the fellowship risked implosion during the 1990s, yet one is struck by the growing robustness of the debates carried and especially by the emergence of strong voices from the Majority World. After all, IFES had boasted about nurturing national leaders and letting them develop a Christian mind adapted to their contextual realities.

Debates about African realities were not based on theological treatises but on-field experience. Thus, in 1994, the board listened to two reports on Pentecostalism and the Charismatic Movement, penned by French-speaking and English-speaking Africa delegates.

Olofin argues on ecclesiological grounds that IFES groups must be able to welcome believers of all stands concerning the charismatic question precisely because they are no church: "The IFES and its member movements *as a handmaiden to the Church* must strive towards providing such a common ground, where charismatic and non-charismatics alike would feel welcome, regardless of the appellation – evangelical."[288] Yet even if IFES groups are no Churches but outposts of the local congregations, "Our fellowship groups ought to be places where Christ is acknowledged as the true head of the Church, away from our preferred teachers, authors, overseers, pastors, among others."[289]

The "handmaiden" metaphor is a real *hapax* in the archival evidence and indicates the strong importance Olofin attaches to the Church and contrasts with the pre-IFES days, especially in Western Europe, characterized by a rather anti-clerical mood. Members of the clergy were castigated for stifling the pious enthusiasm of young students for the sake of ecclesiastical hierarchies.

Early IFES leaders had insisted on a large degree of formal freedom once a shortlist of doctrinal essentials had been agreed upon. Like any group of individuals coming together around a common cause, they had also built their traditions and structures that were in turn challenged, implicitly on the same ground: the right of a believer to have *immediate* access to God. The founding fathers based their belief in the ability of students to know for themselves God's will *because God had revealed himself in*

[287] 'Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee of the IFES' (Bischofsheim, Germany, 6-3.7 1998), 11, IFES e-archives.

[288] Samuel Olofin, 'Pentecostals, Evangelicals and Charismatics' (Centre des métiers de l'électricité, Bingerville, Côte d'Ivoire, May 1994), 4, IFES e-archives, EC 1994 Minutes, Appendix L2, italics mine.

[289] Olofin, 4.

Scripture. This could be understood, *individualistically,* as each believer being their own priest. Yet, a growing number of Pentecostal students were now arguing that the Bible might *hinder immediacy*. Pentecostal piety was making a case for even more direct access to God: through *unmediated* action and speaking of the Holy Spirit *from within* the believer. Andria, RS for Francophone Africa appealed to IFES's self-definition as a reformist movement to remind his colleagues that

> Pentecostal leaders are in agreement with Martin Luther and other reformers who restored the doctrine of justification by faith, and with the Wesleys who restored the doctrine of sanctification. However, they say that now the Lord is using the Pentecostal movement to restore the doctrine of baptism of the Holy Spirit and of fire. We can say that Pentecostalism is concerned about how Christians must believe.[290]

IFES had challenged other organizations and churches on doctrinal grounds, yet it found itself forced to reconsider its own premisses in the light of new contextual developments. These premises were frequently reworked as the next section shows.

8.2 Defining the Ecclesiological Character of IFES

The 1990s saw a deliberate effort to arrive at a common-ground communication on how the ecclesial character of IFES was to be defined.

8.2.1 Appealing to Antioch

In 1991, opening his term, incoming GS Lindsay Brown offers to the fellowship a programmatic speech titled "The Growth of a Work of God: The Antioch Model."[291] He begins with a traditional presentation of the distinctives of IFES, the first being that IFES is a "Fellowship of international friendships [… where] decisions are reached on the basis of Scripture, in the context of friendship, by persuasion, argument, debate and interaction. That's a risky way to live, but we believe it's the right way for strength of fellowship to be maintained." This relational background established, he affirms that IFES is essentially "grassroots," which means that "we are a student movement with students exercising initiative and taking responsibility," and lastly that "national movements remain independent," for "we have a common belief and purpose, but employ varying methodologies in fulfilling that purpose. We don't talk in terms of imposing a centralised plan on the rest of the Fellowship."

Brown's speech represents a significant development of the ecclesiological reflection expressed in IFES. It is rare to read such articulate pleas affirming that "we need to have a strong ecclesiology, a strong doctrine of the church." Whilst the term *parachurch* is loosely used in considerations of ecclesiological character, Brown insists that he is "very unhappy with the term 'parachurch' to describe IFES, because the term 'para' means 'alongside' the church, and theologically I've never seen us as

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[290] Solomon Andria, 'Pentecostal, Charismatic, Evangelical: Differences and Distinctives' (Centre des métiers de l'électricité, Bingerville, Côte d'Ivoire, May 1994), 1, IFES e-archives, EC 1994 Minutes, Appendix L1.

[291] Subsequently published as Lindsay Brown, 'The Growth of a Work of God the Antioch Model. Address to World Assembly 1991', *IFES Review*, no. 31 (1991): 3–10. All following quotes from this article.

such a movement." Instead of seeing IFES as working alongside the Church, Brown sees IFES as "*sent out from within the church*. […] *We are a part of the church*, obeying the Great Commission of Christ, by going out in mission to a part of the world, the campus, and thence feeding people back into the life of the church."[292]

Brown is aware of the tensions encountered on the field: "Some of our movements may have become very critical and disillusioned out of frustration at the weakness of the church. I know that in some parts of the world, the church is in a desperate state. But it's all we've got. Christ said, 'I will build my church.' He didn't say, 'I will build IFES.'" Consequently, what the new GS encourages his constituency to do, is to see itself as an integral element of a more comprehensive picture:

> And we must participate in the strengthening of God's kingdom as it is expressed in the life of the church globally. We might lament its weakness, but there's a difference between destructive and constructive criticism. If a church is weak, we have a responsibility to help strengthen it and to ensure that our students and our staff are committed to vigorous, evangelical church life and to building the church of Christ.

Especially in places where Christians were a small minority, IFES needed to entertain relationships with church leaders and could not think of operating on a purely independent basis. Surveying the situation in the Middle East, the EC observed in 1993 that "Where the Church is weak, generally student work is also weak."[293] In other places, diverging visions and misunderstanding threatened to undermine some of the ministry of IFES. The EC's "IFES and the Church Task Force," remarked in 1996 that

> Churches can be made uncomfortable by para-church groups like IFES national movements which are perceived as being 'in competition.' There is a decreasing commitment by national movements to local church expressions; an increasing separation between Church and national movement. In some countries, groups function increasingly as churches. This shows weak ecclesiology.[294]

It is somewhat ironic to deplore a weak ecclesiology from a movement usually shying away from talking about the Church. As Chua had noted in 1989, remembering his early years as a staff member in Singapore and Malaysia,

> Twenty years ago, most national movements would not tackle the subject of the church. It was so almost like a taboo subject. […] When we came to the Church, we were asked not to touch it. It was too controversial, people had different understanding and affiliations to local churches so you want to avoid controversy, you don't discuss the Church, you leave it alone.[295]

The 1995 GC suggested the publication of a booklet on the IFES position toward the Church. Not only were there questions about the relationship of IFES movements to local churches, but also as to whether IFES was involved in church planting. In countries as different as Côte d'Ivoire and Australia,

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[292] Emphasis mine.

[293] 'Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee of the IFES' (Oak Hill College, London, England, 7-31.7 1993), 6, IFES e-archives.

[294] 'IFES and the Church - Notes Produced by the Task Force Group' (Redcliffe College, Gloucester, England, 30.6 1996), 1, IFES e-archives, EC 1996 Minutes, Appendix F3.

[295] Wee Hian Chua, *The CU and the Church*, Audio tape, Formacion 89, 1989, IFES Archive Oxford.

some IFES leaders started to plant churches more fitting to their aspirations than the local expressions already present. Brown adamantly insisted on a logic of partnership, arguing that "while other groups have moved into church planting, IFES encourages students to move into national evangelical churches beyond graduation. IFES is the arm of extension of the local church into the campus, feeding Christian students back into the churches for a lifetime of service."[296] While some IFES people were engaged in church planting, other churches conversely were involved in campus Church planting, thereby dividing "students into different student groups."[297] This second issue occupied IFES movements in the following years, especially in Africa. Hence, it is somewhat ironic that IFES saw itself confronted more and more with the potential divisions of Christian witness on campus that the earlier WSCF had accused them of promoting.

More internally concerning was an added phenomenon, perceived as a danger that some of the staff of some of the IFES movements see the movement as their church."[298] The combination of so many ecclesiological questions called for a more deliberate settlement, because only a few years later, Brown lamented that some movements still had "weak links with churches. It may be time for us to reflect in a new way on how IFES links with churches."[299]

8.2.2 As a Matter of Settlements

Instead of publishing a booklet on IFES's relationship to the Church, the senior leadership opted for a shorter statement summarizing key positions and made public in 1998. As the sharpest ecclesiological statement to date, it is worth quoting at length. In it, IFES asserts that

1. The Church is God's method for reaching the world.
2. All believers are members of the universal Church.
3. There are many and varied expressions of the local church.
4. IFES has distinct postures toward the Church:
   - We are not, and refrain from ever becoming, a local church.
   - We encourage our staff and students to be involved with a local church along the lines of what we believe to be biblical convictions about doctrine.
   - IFES is a mission movement to university students.
   - Note Distinctive #10 in the IFES Distinctives: "We are not a local church because we say we are not a local church."

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[296] 'Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee of the IFES' (Urbana, Illinois, USA, 6.1 1997), 7, IFES e-archives. Willmer *et al.* offer a word of caution about such "partnership talk", arguing that "Many parachurch leaders use the language of partnership—especially when they need help from the church. But far too often these sentiments are just rhetoric, and the actions of the leaders give a drastically different message."Willmer, Schmidt, and Smith, *The Prospering Parachurch*, 179.

[297] 'EC 1998 Minutes', 26.

[298] 'EC 1998 Minutes', 26.

[299] Lindsay Brown, 'Report of the General Secretary to the General Committee of IFES' (Kenya Commercial Bank Center, Nairobi, Kenya, 26 June 1995), 6, IFES e-archives, GC 1995 Minutes, Appendix D. Intriguingly, in a decade where theological debates and challenges abounded and when academic and strategic reflections shared across the fellowship could have provided perspectives, the same report notes that *IFES Review* was discontinued "because of inadequate resources."

Value of the global church expressed in the dynamics of local churches.[300]

Conceived as a sort of definitive statement on the ecclesiological question, the paper did not settle all issues. IFES affirmed a "desire to have sensitivity to nations that might have student work already out of the 26 that we are looking to pioneer" pointing out that "IFES is looking to build bridges rather than usurp what is going on."[301] If the fundamentally theological conviction that students can be emissaries of the Gospel on campus and witness to their fellow students proves to be a strong mobilizing factor for aspiring leaders, the downside of such empowerment can be relational issues with church leadership and, in some cases, immature behaviours:

> IFES needs to look further into the whole concept of modelling. Students tend to have no room in churches. When students come to movements, they find it to be the place where they can come to have room. They often try to be the pastor and preach to express rather than practice humility needed in bible studies. Model passion. We need more models and more creative effort.[302]

At the end of the decade, the summary statements would be direct and clear:

> We are committed to strengthening local churches in countries all across the world. *We do not see ourselves as a para-church movement existing alongside the church, but as a movement which flows out of the church, and subsequently feeds graduates and students back into local churches for a lifetime of service. We see ourselves as an inter-church movement, which acts as an extension of the ministry of the churches.* We are not a one-church movement, we are an interdenominational movement. We do not elevate any one denomination above others. Our aim is that no one denomination should be dominant within the movement.[303]

8.3 Ministering Holistically to the University?

The last significant discussion of the 1990s was a recurring aspiration, voiced at several GCs, to have IFES adopt a more holistic view of its ministry. As the following explorations show, it was often an uphill battle for the champions of such an approach.

Two main dimensions of "holistic ministry" can be found in the discussions. The first, more "social," was discussed during the GC 1987 in Colombia, where delegates advocated for more social justice involvement with disadvantaged student populations. Especially in Latin America, the necessity for IFES groups to help their struggling classmates was self-evident.

The second dimension – articulating IFES ministry to the academic-intellectual character of the university – proved intricate to tackle. Board Chairman Ford had pointedly noted, commenting on a draft long-range plan in 1992, that "we are called to 'engage the Campus with the Gospel' and should affirm the value of the university."[304] The foundation would take time to be fully articulated. Training secretary Brown, who had complained about the lack of intellectual level of the Formacion 89

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[300] 'EC 1998 Minutes', 26.

[301] 'Minutes of the Meeting of the Out-Going Executive Committee of the IFES' (Hyundai Learning Center, Seoul, South Korea, 14.7 1999), 9, IFES e-archives, EC 1999 Minutes.

[302] 'Minutes of the Meeting of the Incoming Executive Committee of the IFES' (Kwang Lim, South Korea, 26.7 1999), 13, IFES e-archives, New EC 1999 Minutes.

[303] 'Second Draft of Global IFES Plan July 1999-July 2003' (Bischofsheim, Germany, 6-3.7 1998), 5, IFES e-archives, EC 1998 Minutes, Appendix I, emphasis mine.

[304] 'Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee of the IFES' (Hald Training Center, Mandal, Norway, 7-1.8 1992), 4, IFES e-archives.

participants in a letter quoted above, was adamant in her 1993 report that "we need to regain lost ground in the university, produce Christian thinkers and apologists, and radical Christian disciples who think as people of Christian action and act as people of Christian thought."[305] Brown does not elaborate on why she considered the university "lost ground." However, the reader can assume as a working hypothesis that an embryonic critique at the lack of theological foundations of university education was being voiced. The second, more social dimension, was mentioned in the same report, with Brown arguing that "our task is to bear witness to the gospel in the student world. This will mean not simply proclaiming it through personal and public evangelism, but modelling its life-transforming power and its relevance to questions of social justice, poverty etc."[306]

Seeing the university as more than a "reservoir of people to be reached with the Gospel" necessitated an opening to more than the spiritual dimensions of the student body. This is the case made in a 1994 discussion memo penned by Napon, which aimed at establishing the foundations for a full embrace of holistic ministry in IFES.[307] Theologically and historically articulate, despite its brevity, Napon's argument begins in lament:

> The great tragedy is that evangelicals see their priority as saving souls, when in actuality, social action and spiritual ministry are meant to complement, not compete with one another. Now is the time for the Evangelical Church to integrate spiritual ministry with social action in order to move towards a more "holistic ministry."[308]

This theory of a *Great Reversal* – that most Evangelicals would have abandoned social commitment to solely concentrate on piety and mission – made by numerous scholars[309] is in most cases only partially correct.[310] The narrative of a theological shift in emphasis is integral to Napon's argument, and indeed, the whole framing of the holistic mission emphasis in IFES could be boiled down to a contest of historical narratives. Napon begins by offering a complex definition of how he understands holistic ministry. For him, it is

> all we do to respond to the physical, spiritual, emotional and social needs of persons, here and now, so as to facilitate the progress of persons towards freedom and wholeness, which will be consummated when our Lord returns. Therefore, man cannot establish Utopia on earth by his sole efforts. The fullness of man can be complete only in the Kingdom to come. This is why the spiritual dimension needs to be emphasized. The Bible asserts, "what value is there if a man gains the whole world and loses his soul,

[305] Dr Sue Brown, 'The Future of Training in IFES' (Oak Hill College, Southgate, London, England, May 1993), 2, IFES e-archives, EC 1993 Minutes, Appendix B1.

[306] Brown, 2.

[307] The EC made its habit to regularly hold discussions about issues significant to student ministry, without necessarily devising policies on that basis.

[308] Moïse Napon, 'Holistic Ministry' (Centre des métiers de l'électricité, Bingerville, Côte d'Ivoire, May 1994), 1, IFES e-archives, EC 1994 Minutes, Appendix LM.

[309] See the classic David O Moberg, *The Great Reversal: Evangelism versus Social Concern* (London: Scripture Union, 1973). For an informed discussion especially of the American context, see George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 2nd ed (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 85–93.

[310] See for example Treloar, *Disruption*, 252; Kirkpatrick, *A Gospel for the Poor*, 7.

> and what can a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matthew 16:26). Our ministry should therefore address both the physical (body) and the spiritual (soul).[311]

This development brushes off any accusation that his view is informed more by Marxism than theology: no Marxist would appeal to eschatological, Christological disruption to make their point. Napon's orientation is missiological. He further offers the plea that

> the great task of the IFES ministry will be to act as a catalyst for the change towards holistic ministry. If only our intellect could manufacture well-balanced programs which address the mind, the body and the soul appropriately, the ministry of IFES will become relevant to the suffering world in our day.[312]

Speaking from the disadvantaged context of Burkina Faso, Napon's defence of holistic ministry was the result of strategic concern for the relevance of IFES ministry on a continent marked by suffering. Hence his conclusion that

> our ministry will be effective and relevant if we break down the dichotomy between the physical and the spiritual, the temporal and the sacred, and rather see man as God created him … body and soul, flesh and spirit, two inseparable parts of the same reality. IFES has the international experience, energetic young people, and experienced international graduates to be at the forefront of Holistic Ministry. Take what you have been given and respond with compassion to the human needs that are in God's world.[313]

As usual, the minutes do not record the details of the discussion but record that "there was some discussion concerning the historical background to the issue which was not addressed at length in the paper."[314] Given the fact that biblical history, as well as Early Church history, and the Reformation era are treated in the short memo, the reader informed of the stories commonly told in IFES historical writing understands what is here referred to, is the early history of IFES and especially its British forerunners in their confrontation with the "social Gospel" at the beginning of the century.[315] Thereby responding to the challenge,

> Mr Niringiye explained that in the African context "discipleship dos" have at times been restricted to "read your Bible, pray and evangelise" with a lack of emphasis on issues such as family, sexuality, etc. It was noted that holistic ministry is not just an issue for students in the developing world but is also relevant for Western students. The critical issue is how we understand discipleship and stewardship.[316]

Consequently, one reads in the discourse of the African members of the board an attempt to use "holistic ministry" as a bridge to broadening the spectrum of what failed into the sphere of responsibility of student ministry, where older terms like "discipleship" had missed the mark. Yet, closing the discussion, Brown

> gave a definition of discipleship as being all of God's truth to all of God's world. Stewardship is the use of all of God's gifts in all of God's world. The application of holistic theology is the application of the whole Bible to the whole man and the whole of society. *We must take care not to be selective in our reading of*

[311] Napon, 'Holistic Ministry', 1.
[312] Napon, 3.
[313] Napon, 4.
[314] 'Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students' (Centre des métiers de l'électricité, Bingerville, Côte d'Ivoire, 29.7 1994), 22, IFES e-archives, EC 1994 Minutes.
[315] See above, chap. XX.
[316] 'Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students', 22.

> *God's word. He is concerned that when Christians discover a need for social help, they often tend to gradually lose their zeal for evangelism.* A good question to pose is "How can we promote Christian understanding and way of life?[317]

Hence the call to holistic ministry was subsumed into a discussion of discipleship. This would occur again during a tense debate raging during the first GC held on African soil in 1995. Discussing the strategic plan presented by the GS, Columbian and Bolivian delegates expressed their concern "with the lack of emphasis on social issues in the Long-Range Plan."[318] Consistent with his aforementioned conclusion of the board debate of the year before, Brown responded by pointing out that "the phrase 'service in the family, church and society' (as found in the IFES goals) included personal involvement in social change,"[319] thereby relegating social involvement to the individual sphere.

Making a similar point,

> UCCF UK & Ireland responded in writing to this: "To write into the Plan or the goals explicit reference to social action (as integrated with the gospel) is a) a matter of the application of discipleship which may vary from region to region – and should be decided regionally; b) a matter of strong difference as to what the Bible says on the issue – and therefore not a matter of IFES universal agreement; c) adequately covered in the existing goals wording; d) not necessarily in the remit of IFES – IFES has specific goals and does not have to bear the total responsibility of the Church or Christians at large."[320]

Some younger member movements argued on missiological grounds that social involvement was integral to the Gospel. Being relevant in their university context meant that social issues could not be thought of as separated from "evangelism." Other, more established movements decided that such involvement would prove detrimental to the unity of the fellowship.[321] If the written response quoted above sealed the discussion at the Nairobi meeting, it would not remain so for long.

On the front of the more *intellectual* dimension of holistic ministry, and significantly shorter, the idea that the university needed more attention was not lost from sight, even if not much was undertaken. In an article celebrating the IFES 40th Jubilee, Brown quoted Ramachandra as suggesting that "IFES has helped the church to recover its intellectual credibility, stressing the importance of presenting the gospel to confront the ideologies of the contemporary university world."[322]

A decade worth of discussion hence resulted in a clear commitment to a broad view of the university and to considering the intellectual dimensions of the student world as strategic institution:

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[317] 'Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students', 22.

[318] 'Minutes of the Meeting of the Fourteenth General Committee of IFES' (Kenya Commercial Bank Center, Nairobi, Kenya, 6-2.7 1995), 4, IFES e-archives.

[319] 'GC 1995 Minutes', 4.

[320] 'GC 1995 Minutes', 5.

[321] The unease seemed quite widespread, however. The FES Hong-Kong GS had also expressed in a written response to the plan not included in the minutes but in the annexes, that "In order to express the diversity and richesse of this partnership of equals, I propose that different regions should be allowed the freedom to have different emphases or expression of our core values. In fact this trend should be encouraged in order that each region tries to contextualize the goals in a relevant way." 'Proposals Presented to the General Committee' (Kenya Commercial Bank Center, Nairobi, Kenya, 6-2.7 1995), 1, IFES e-archives.

[322] Brown, 'IFES Jubilee'.

> We have full consciousness of the university's strategic importance. We aim to take the university seriously and see it as the primary theatre of service to which God has called us.[323]
> We are committed to the promotion of Christian witness among the world's students, and we will make a serious attempt to relate to the university and the challenges of the contemporary student scene, developing where possible creative new strategies for student witness […] targeting the most influential universities as centres of strategic importance for Christian student witness, and seeking to make a special effort to develop work in those locations.[324]

As the discussions during World Assembly 1999 and in subsequent years show, it would be at least another decade before commitment in word would be followed by real commitments in terms of staff, publications, and events. This story will need to be told subsequently, however.

8.4 Pioneering, Empire and Indigeneity

> Our predecessors have pioneered the work with an emphasis on indigenous leadership so that IFES is not owned or operated exclusively out of one country or culture.[325]

Another topic occupied the senior leadership throughout the 1990s: the articulation of *empire*, *pioneering*, and *indigeneity*. In internal discussion papers and public meetings, the question was regularly asked about how IFES understood the constitutional guarantee of *autonomy* to all its member movements to apply to theological reflection.

The importance of pioneering is essential to the self-understanding of IFES. Its leaders commonly insisted upon the necessity to establish movements in countries where no IFES-connected national movements existed. In a somewhat ironic fashion, the main goal of this pioneering enterprise aimed at "establishing indigenous movements." The very paradox integral to pioneering from outside something meant to be indigenous highlights the tension underlying the whole expansion of the organization. In many contexts, the idea of pioneering "from scratch" could not even be entertained as some Christian student movements already existed. The EC expressed the "desire to have sensitivity to nations that might have student work already [… pointing] out that IFES is looking to build bridges rather than usurp what is going on."[326] What IFES aims at is the existence of movements understanding their mission in ways congenial to other member movements, yet contextually adapted. As Andria affirms, one of the IFES distinctives is "respect for cultural, historical and even theological differences between national movements. Our theology remains essentially evangelical, but it may well be contextualised."[327] The underlying idea is that of an agreed-upon core of distinctively "evangelical" convictions and practices in need of frequent reassertion:

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[323] '2nd Draft IFES Global Plan 98', 4.
[324] '2nd Draft IFES Global Plan 98', 7.
[325] Barney Ford, 'A Shift of Strategy - from Expansion towards Greater Maturity' (Bischofsheim, Germany, May 1998), 2, IFES e-archives, EC 1998 Minutes, Appendix E.
[326] 'Old EC 99 Minutes', 9.
[327] Solomon Andria, 'Autonomy and Indigeneity' (Hyundai Learning Center, Seoul, South Korea, June 1999), 1, IFES e-archives, Old EC 1999 Minutes, Appendix K.

> We have sought in our movements and in our pioneering areas to stress the authority of God's Word and to apply its unchanging truth to our service, witness and relationships. […] our founding fathers fought to maintain their evangelical faith; the new generation of students simply inherit this faith.[328]

Besides the difficulty of keeping agreement on an increasingly global scale, an international organization like IFES, by insisting on the "common ground," always risked fostering a high degree of theological and practical conformity. Cultural diversity and local appropriation of the faith and not only faithful adherence to theological formulas are an essential dimension of apostolicity. Theology is not developed in a vacuum: as a movement reacting to circumstances and developments in the wider ecclesial and theological worlds, the idea of "story" as a constituting element of the IFES identity is not absent from the leaders' thoughts. As Woods affirmed in 1971,

> Each of the national evangelical unions pioneered and established since 1947 has its own particular story of God's work. Each is different. There is no stereotype, but all have a common loyalty to Christ and to His Word. God has helped us from becoming a centralised movement, a rigid organization; we are still an open, free fellowship.[329]

Woods's description resembles Bebbington's quadrilateral's core tenets for Evangelicalism.[330] Yet, IFES's history evolves with the addition of new national movements, which all have their own stories, to the organization. Niringye argues that IFES must reflect beyond its 1947 foundation date and "reflect on the separate histories that each brought to that moment. It is this convergence of separate narratives forming the one IFES narrative that is at the heart of the ethos of IFES because since 1947, many more narratives have converged, transforming IFES to become what it is today."[331]

Some parts of the early IFES ministry – or that of its member movements – developed in the world of colonization. Escobar noted in 1999 that "empires have always been the socio-historical frame for the development of Christian mission as the Pax Romana was in the first century or the Pax Britannica in the nineteenth century."[332] Self-critically connecting the IFES history with the story of "empire" does not mean, however, writing off all the advantages of such association – and paradoxically, that the empire helps in proclaiming the news that individuals can have an *immediate* relationship to God by *participating* in a universal community. On the contrary, Escobar highlights the beneficial aspects of these developments insisting that

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[328] Wee Hian Chua, 'General Secretary's Report' (El Hostel Duruelo, Boyaca, Colombia, 8-8.9 1987), 2, IFES e-archives, GC 1987 minutes, Appendix B.

[329] C. Stacey Woods, 'Report of the General Secretary' (Schloss Mittersill, Austria, 1971), 4, IFES e-archives, GC 1971 Minutes, Appendix A.

[330] "Activism" is implicit in the identity of IFES as missionary organization and crucicentrism in traditional evangelical hermeneutics.

[331] David Zac Niringiye, 'Towards an Understanding of Our Ethos - Some Reflections' (Senior Staff Consultation, 2000), 1, IFES Archive Oxford.

[332] Samuel Escobar, 'A New Time for Mission: Plenary Address to IFES WA 1999' (Hyundai Learning Center, Yong-In, South Korea, 23.7 1999), 4, IFES e-archives. See also World Council of Churches. Commission on World Mission and Evangelism., 'Mission in the Context of Empire: Putting Justice at the Heart of Faith', *International Review of Mission* 101, no. 1 (April 2012): 195–211.

> Protestant missions had a modernizing component in their insistence on Bible translation, literacy, leadership training for the laity, and also in their use of modern medicine and the communication of basic technology. Aspects of globalization such as efficient communication at a global level or facilities for exchange […] could be neutral factors that Christian mission may benefit from.[333]

As Paul used the Roman imperial road system to spread his message, IFES uses the university system. Ramachandra notes that

> one of the many paradoxes we wrestle with in student ministry is that the university itself is not an indigenous institution in many of our countries. It often creates graduates who are alienated from the ways of life of most of their fellow-citizens. The subjects studied, and the way these subjects are taught, often bear little relation to the questions that people ask, the needs of the nation and the ways in which they have learned traditionally. […] University education has tended to create a brain drain from the rural areas to the urban, and from the global South to the North.[334]

Students often must conform to the expectations of the university – determined mainly by Western canons – to succeed academically, and this in turn can undermine their ability to live the Gospel incarnationally in their context. Ramachandra then observes that "Unable to resolve these dissonances, some students rebel against the whole system that produces such institutions, most divide their lives into self-enclosed compartments, the better off plan to escape."[335]

Highlighting some of the inherent tensions of the association of IFES with the context of *empire* is no downright rebuttal of its practices and discourses, however. IFES's theologically motivated and regularly reaffirmed commitment to the necessary indigenous appropriation of the Christian faith – congruent with the idea of *immediacy* – undermines the idea that Christian mission was solely a colonization process that left no agency to local actors.[336] The very nature of the IFES public – students – implies agency from their part. This "local appropriation of the gospel" – notably not of Christian structures – is at the core of the IFES discourse insisting that "workers serving in pioneer areas or with younger movements should do all they can to hand over full responsibility and leadership to national leaders."[337] Niringye's summary of the mission of IFES as it relates to indigeneity is worth quoting at length:

> The mission of IFES, and therefore of any movement in IFES, is reaching students with the gospel of Christ. A national movement is founded when this mission becomes indigenous and national in ownership, scope, transmission and expression. There should be in place indigenous and national structures and an infrastructure that embodies this mission and ensures continuity of expression. Since being a student is transitory, it is not enough to speak about the presence of Christian students at a time as evidence of student witness on a campus. There should be a way in which this Christian presence can be continued even after the particular Christian student graduates. And it is not a passive presence, but

[333] Escobar, 'GC 1999 Papers', 5.
[334] Vinoth Ramachandra, 'Some Reflections on "Indigeneity" and "Autonomy" in IFES' (Hyundai Learning Center, Seoul, South Korea, June 1999), 4–5, IFES e-archives, Old EC 1999 Minutes, Appendix.
[335] Ramachandra, 5.
[336] Flett refutes such frequent accounts as too narrow, see John G. Flett, *Apostolicity: The Ecumenical Question in World Christian Perspective*, Missiological Engagements (Downers Grove: IVP, 2016), 182–83.
[337] Wee Hian Chua, 'Staff Letter 9', September 1973, 1, BGC Box #5.

> an active, growing, penetrating, transforming and missionary presence. In Jesus' words, it is being "salt" and "light."[338]

Even as IFES encourages local leadership and ownership, it is likely that in "pioneering situations," IFES could support leaders who will best conform to what they see is expected from them – either in terms of theological formulae or in practices which characterize a "good IFES group," not to speak of more pragmatic aspects like their mastery of English or another *lingua franca*. Furthermore, the requirements for affiliations, notably the existence of a constitution and several specific elements of governance, belie the full acceptance that local movements might wish to organize themselves differently. Hence, if the *priesthood of all believers* is meant to allow each individual to immediately relate to God, some areas of ministry seem implicitly better served by replicating a "core package" of structures. This observation also highlights a critical blind spot in the IFES rhetoric: the "Gospel" is implicitly believed to consist in a "core package" which can freely be adopted in all cultures.[339]

Despite IFES's strong insistence that what it encouraged was "mere Evangelicalism," this was not the way its theology was always perceived, as Olofin remarks for the African context:

> To a large extent therefore the word "evangelical" was seen (and it is still seen) by some, as describing Bible believing Christians, who neither sanction the inhibiting conservatism of the traditions of the mainline churches, on the one hand, nor the liberalism of ecumenism, on the other hand. Also to be truly evangelical was to have very little or nothing to do with the indigenous independent churches that are rooted in indigenous cultures, and sometimes suspected of having links with indigenous pagan worship and practices.[340]

The cultural difficulties Olofin alludes to are not superficial but represent a conflict of loyalty between a foreign label and a local reality. Even so strong a defender of African contextual theology as Andria would write that IFES was to "give strong recommendations to national movements regarding the essence of IFES. Do this in the context of dialogue and reflection, with fraternal love."[341] Andria's conclusions aiming at articulating contextuality and commonality, highly appreciated by the EC[342] proposed a distinction between the *essence* of IFES and its many *faces*. In Andria's words, "IFES is a unique movement with several faces, which just like a family, is united by its essence (its blood), but where each member has his or her own face. There is, therefore, a likeness on the basis of the essence, but the various faces also bring differences."[343] There is no further evidence of this approach taking traction in the IFES leadership, but this could have been an interesting way of considering the ecclesiological status of IFES: IFES being one of the "faces" of the Church universal.

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[338] David Zac Niringiye, 'Beyond Pioneering', Discussion paper, May 1996, 1, IFES Archive Oxford.

[339] See the remarkable treatment of the question by a missiologist close to IFES, Benno Van den Toren, 'Can We See the Naked Theological Truth?', in *Local Theology for the Global Church: Principles for an Evangelical Approach to Contextualization*, ed. Matthew Cook et al. (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2010), 91–108.

[340] Olofin, 'Pentecostals...', 2.

[341] Andria, 'Autonomy and Indigeneity', 2.

[342] 'Old EC 99 Minutes', 12.

[343] Andria, 'Autonomy and Indigeneity', 2.

The most thorough examination of indigeneity within IFES is found in a discussion paper presented to the Executive in 1999 and debating the IFES quadrennial plan about to be launched.[344] Ramachandra disputes what he takes to be the naïve underlying idea that *indigenous* be equivalent to *national*. Indigeneity "embraces those cultural practices, norms and values that are deemed to be 'home-grown' rather than borrowed from elsewhere." By their very nature, such practices and norms are tough to assess by outsiders. Furthermore, "Claims to be 'indigenous' are often the sites of vicious political disputes" where factions compete for the moral superiority they pretend to achieve by defending "a mythical background that predates the advent of foreign oppression." One has to bear in mind, as does Ramachandra, that the question of "culture" is much more complex than simply that of local customs and folklore, but the intricate and constantly evolving result of flows of influences on a global scale, most made possible by technology and the media. Essentializing cultures runs the risk of preserving the outdated myth of "cultural purity." This would, in turn, oversee that "there is a danger that the emphasis on 'indigeneity' (in some missiological and political circles) invariably privileges the voice of conservative elements within the community." These "conservative elements," the views of whom are potentially easier to grasp by academics trained in Western analytical methods (like most IFES leaders) "do not represent the full scope of experiences in any given context and treating the community as a homogenous unit […] neglects important differences within the community and almost entirely ignores the voices of dissent within."

Ramachandra challenges the idea that the "indigenous" dimension of the work of IFES is limited to questions of governance and methodologies. He argues that "as the Gospel enters into new cultures and subcultures, new questions arise to which those within that particular situation have to respond." This means that

> respect for Christian equality, as enshrined in the IFES Constitution, requires that we create a space in which we all have the freedom to explore the word of God in our own historically particular contexts. We may invite questions, advice, rebuke or correction from the global fellowship. This is a mutual exercise, not one part of the fellowship setting itself up as the doctrinal arbiter for the rest.[345]

Such "advising and rebuking" has regularly happened in IFES, yet it has rarely been fostered, for it runs against the grain of the "deposit of the faith" discourse.[346] Nevertheless, at the end of the century, new challenges arose.

8.5 A New Time for Mission: GC 1999

Thinking and pondering essentials was much at the forefront of the plenary addresses given in South Korea.[347] *Evangelical Essentials,* a sort of "theological testament" of John Stott, set the scene,

[344] Ramachandra, 'Indigeneity', 1. All quotes in this part from the same short discussion paper.
[345] Ramachandra, 6.
[346] See below, Part Three, I, 2.1.
[347] As of 1998, the newly revised long-range plan was stressing the long-held essentials of the IFES's DB, insisting that "we teach loyalty to doctrinal essentials, which are clearly revealed in Scripture, and agree to remain in harmony and to allow

whilst Samuel Escobar speaking on *A New Time for Mission* offered a sweeping survey of past and present challenging issues facing IFES together with a vibrant call to renewed missional commitment.[348]

Concerned with preparing his audience for the broad scope of his remarks and challenging it from the onset, Escobar started by posing that his "evangelical outlook starts with commitment to the authority of God's Word, and my understanding of God's Word requires cultural awareness."[349] In Escobar's eyes, IFES could embrace new challenges because it had already advanced in turbulent waters, at the forefront of missionary engagement, serving every mounting generation. In Escobar's view of the IFES history, "The student movements that came together to form the IFES 52 years ago had a strong tradition of passionate concern for evangelical truth and a deep commitment to world mission. Those origins help us to understand why IFES has been at the cutting edge of Christian mission in this century." This was theologically fertile ground and a missiologically relevant springboard as Escobar went on to argue that "faithful testimony for Christ in the hostile atmosphere of secularized campuses prepared these students to be more sensitive missionaries abroad. They had better training than those who had lived within the narrow intellectual confines and protected atmosphere of Christian schools and Bible colleges." These experiences gathered on the field of student ministry had not been concealed, but in turn, offered back to the wider Church. As Escobar further noted,

> It is not then surprising to observe how missionaries and theological scholars who published their first writings in periodicals of student movements by the middle of this century, later on, became influential missiologists, breaking new ground for a more biblical understanding of what mission should be. This kind of evangelical ability to deal with secularity is indispensable for a true missionary stance in a post-Christendom era.

In Escobar's eyes, globalization was the main challenge for a missionary organization with a global reach, notably because of capitalism's use of communication channels to take "the latest aspects of Western culture as merchandise to the most remote corners of the world." Escobar was nevertheless no defender of technical backwardness, as he further remarked the benefits of new technologies and easier communication. IFES was simply following suit of "Protestant missions [which] had a modernizing component in their insistence on Bible translation, literacy, *leadership training for the laity,* and also in their use of modern medicine and the communication of basic technology."

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differences on secondary matters. Those doctrines considered to be essential to saving faith are included in our Doctrinal Basis." 'Minutes of the Meeting of the Fifteenth General Committee of IFES' (Hyundai Learning Center, Yong-In, South Korea, 23.7 1999), 8, IFES e-archives.

[348] Both speeches were subsequently expanded and published: John Stott, *Evangelical Truth a Personal Plea for Unity, Integrity & Faithfulness* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2003); Samuel Escobar, *A Time for Mission: The Challenge for Global Christianity* (Leicester: IVP, 2003).

[349] Escobar, 'GC 1999 Papers', 2. Following quotes from the same document.

The speaker was aware of the potential for atomizing forces to fragment an organization as diverse as IFES. Hence his caution that "Missionaries will be caught in the tension between globalization and contextualization, and they also have to avoid a provincialist attitude that exaggerates contextualization to the detriment of a biblical global awareness." Changing political landscape and nationalist claims meant that missionaries needed "to go back to the fundamentals of the Gospel and to disengage themselves from the Western cultural trappings that consciously or unconsciously characterized missions during the imperial era in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries."

Escobar did not divert from his missiologically informed commitment to involvement in social justice issues:

> Mission projects of this kind are not just the result of a new awareness among Christians about a biblically-based social responsibility. They are also the inevitable response to worsening social conditions that have created many victims, becoming a new challenge to Christian compassion. IFES movements have contributed to the discipling and formation of leadership in many of these projects in which an interdisciplinary approach is required.

Showing a striking ability to foresee recent developments soon to take over the world, Escobar offered a strident appeal for the reconsideration of ecclesial and para-ecclesial structures considering the trends he observed in the student world:

> In the new century that will soon begin, new generations of students need to see a Christian presence and hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ on their campuses around the world. They will be less interested in concepts and more open to stories, poems and songs. They will have access to Internet and web pages. Virtual religious experiences will be available to them at the touch of a keyboard. Still, they will be hungry for fellowship and for a personal authentic touch of reality. Christian witnesses will need to be filled by the Spirit who is the one that drives people to mission. They will also have to learn the art of storytelling, to master the complexities of creating web pages, to start and nurture fellowships of committed believers, to engage in service in the name of Christ, to celebrate their faith and to figure out how to serve the Lord in their professions wherever he calls them.

Challenging the fellowship to embrace new challenges was coherent with Escobar's enthusiasm for a ministry to which he had consecrated so many years. He concluded his passionate plea by stressing that IFES was well-positioned to embrace the challenges ahead because of the solidity of its foundations and the versatility of its approaches and could take confidence that "thus far IFES has been a useful instrument for mission."

8.6 Deep Debates for the End of the Millennium

> The long-standing debate among Christians about the relation between evangelism and social action seems now to be over. It is widely recognized among us that, as in the ministry of Jesus so in ours, words and works, the proclamation and the demonstration of the Kingdom, good news and good deeds belong together. The gospel needs to be spread visually as well as verbally. These two things are "like the two blades of a pair of scissors or the two wings of a bird."[350]

[350] John Stott, 'Evangelical Essentials: Plenary Adress to IFES WA 1999' (Hyundai Learning Center, Yong-In, South Korea, 23.7 1999), 1, IFES e-archives, GC 1999 Papers. Following quotes from the same document.

Kindled by Stott and Escobar's addresses, the General Committee debated issues of social justice at great length, in terms more strident than those heard in 1995. Things were happening on the ground: an Israeli delegate noted that "there are groups who have provided meals for students and residence for students. It's important that we recognize these examples of student mission in our work. This is not just for the sake of this report but for the sake of missions in the world."[351] A Swiss delegate had "been very surprised and happy at the same time to see at this conference the beginning of the social questions" yet also wondered why no more space was allocated to the question in the Draft Global plan. To this, Brown responded that it had been "a concern not to put too many of the social concerns in the document as this can be a very nationalist concern. We are cautious to highlight a focus on any particular issues. We can add to this if you wish." The Columbian delegate went further, "respectfully confess[ing] distress regarding the remark that social issues concern just national movements. It may be one way to help the Fellowship understand that national/local concerns do affect us as a Fellowship." To this further remark, Brown said he took the rebuke and suggested a task force to tackle the issue.

The next day, VBG Switzerland moved a motion to "set up a task force to investigate the biblical basis of mission and social justice and its implications on the global student witness of the IFES family." Some delegates responded by endorsing the motion, yet cautioning that a lot of doctrinal elements were in place already, since the 'biblical basis of mission [was already] well articulated within the official documents of IFES' (Kenya), or that "we all agree with the theology that all is mission" (Portugal). Others more or less adamantly opposed it, wondering how to relate "the motion at hand and our objectives" (Spain), whilst others were concerned that "we will sound like the UN or a liberal student movement" (Finland).

In the end, the impression, articulated by the FES Hong Kong delegate that "IFES cannot sweep it under the carpet and I welcome the gentleness of this motion to set up a task force to investigate. I do not see anything to reject in this motion. There is nothing wrong with investigating an issue of biblical mission" won the day and the motion was passed.[352] The debate was rekindled in another motion devoted to graduate ministry, moved by the Brazilian delegation, suggesting that

> we will encourage a commitment to wholistic mission among graduates within the Fellowship. We desire to continue contribution to the discipling and formation of leadership in missionary projects. As long as possible we will provide training in the areas of Christian service and encourage our graduates to consider positions *where they can serve others so that they make a prophetic contribution to the life of their nations.*[353]

[351] 'GC 1999 Minutes', 11. Following quotes from the same document.
[352] With one opposition and seven abstentions on a total of 105 votes.
[353] 'GC 1999 Minutes', 18, italics mine.

Especially the last sentence caused significant discussion, the main point of contention being whether such ministry fell into the realm of IFES or into that of local churches. In one of the tightest votes of any GC in IFES history, the motion was passed.[354]

9 IFES in a New Millennium

For obvious methodological reasons, the formal historical section of this work ends in 2000. Examining the work of people who, for the most part, are still very much alive and well would take the historian into uncharted territories and possibly preclude the advisable distancing necessary to thoughtful and tentatively objective research. Hence, this part is only a cursory sketch of some of the most salient events and people of the most recent years.

The 2000s were a time of new territories: geographically, the fellowship continued to welcome new national movements. Technically, emails and websites entered the world of communication. In 2001, the IFES office moved to the old university town of Oxford. In 2007, the first African GS, Chad-born Daniel Bourdanné was elected. The following year, a new global strategy plan resulting from a consultative exercise with the national movements, *Living Stones* was launched. Featuring prominently the 1 Peter text to which we will come back below, it describes IFES thus:

> We are a global community of indigenous student movements, called to engage the University with the good news of Jesus Christ.
> Our vision: Students built into communities of disciples, transformed by the gospel and impacting the University, the Church and society for the glory of Christ.[355]

Note that *indigenous* had now made its way into the official IFES identity; so had the notion that the University was to be engaged.[356] Similarly, the Church was explicitly acknowledged on the horizon of the fellowship's ministry, marking a significant shift demonstrating a growing sense of self-assurance on the ecclesiological terrain.

As to student involvement, two important moves marked the 2011 WA meeting in Poland. The first was a *student gathering* allowing for the deliberately growing number of students attending World Assemblies to meet among themselves and build international connections. The second, following years of lengthy debate, was the inclusion of two student delegates into the IFES Executive.[357] The same year, a global *Scripture Engagement* team was formed to encourage students and staff worldwide to renewed commitment to sustained engagement with Scriptures.

In 2011, the IFES international service centre, as the Oxford office was now called, moved into a jointly-owned building with UCCF. In 2013, the Governance Development program launched, aiming to support national movements in developing strong and ethical governance structures. In the same

[354] 57 voted in favour, 45 against and 3 abstained.
[355] International Fellowship of Evangelical Students, ed., 'Living Stones. IFES Vision to 2020', 2008, 2.
[356] The importance of the University as institution for the horizon of IFES began to be more important with the "Engaging the University symposium" organized immediately prior to WA 2007 in Toronto.
[357] For the sake of transparency, I should add that I was one of them.

vein, a *Ministry Impact* team formed, helping member movements assess their areas of growth and potential development and an *Indigenous Support Development* ministry began, supporting national movements in raising funds locally, thereby reducing their reliance upon international support.

In 2015, another significant institutional move was adding a *scholars' track* to the World Assembly gathering in Mexico, marking a continuing interest in nurturing scholars closely linked with IFES movements. Building upon such encounters, the *Big Issues in the University Project,* founded by the Templeton Foundation, formally gave new impetus to engaging universities. The same year, a new international office hub opened in Kuala Lumpur, servicing the whole fellowship with IT support.

2016 the *Global Leadership Initiative,* convened a select group of fifteen promising young leaders from across the globe for the first cohort of a mentoring scheme lasting three years.

2019 was the last WA to date. The year was eventful, marked by the nomination and then retraction of Chris Clarke from New Zealand, who had been nominated to succeed Daniel Bourdanné as GS. More unanimous was the welcoming into IFES of the national movements in Cambodia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Solomon Islands, Cayman Islands, Vanuatu, Myanmar, Faroe Islands, Montenegro, Guinea-Bissau, Grenada and two other countries in Eurasia and Europe not named for reasons of political sensitivity.

Most recently, the *Logos and Cosmos Initiative,* aiming at fostering a deeper engagement with theology and the sciences within IFES, was launched in 2020, with the Latin America and Francophone Africa regions as pilot fields. The same year, Englishman Tim Adams was appointed GS, and soon announced that the new strategic priorities about which the fellowship's leadership had been consulting the whole organization for more than a year, would launch later in 2021.[358]

10 Provisional conclusion: History in writing

What precedes is a brief survey of some of the most salient facts, development and ideas which have shaped the history of IFES. Out of a modest and somewhat adventurous gathering of some senior Christians interested in missionary work in the universities became an international organization with extensive geographical reach. This historical section was meant to provide the reader with a good sense of the theological and missiological trends which have shaped the identity of IFES. In the next part, I turn to a closer look at the main IFES activities, and then to more substantive theological and missiological resources to show how this ministry to lay students can be best understood by framing it under the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers.

[358] At the time of writing, this new strategy paper is called "Thriving Together. IFES Ministry to 2030."

Part Two: IFES Activities

1 Practical Functioning of Student-Led Ministry

So far, the historical part of this work has assumed the reader's relative acquaintance with the activities of an IFES group. However, it is necessary to present them in more details to map out the theological, ecclesiological and missiological questions that these activities can pose – and the answers which IFES has arrived at.

The core IFES activities of Evangelism, witness, prayer, Bible reading and fellowship presuppose theological convictions about *immediacy, mediation* and *membership*. In 1959, Adeney – later IFES president – outlines the basic tenets of the IFES vision: "To be effective a Christian fellowship on campus must have a three-fold objective: (1) To strengthen the faith of those who are already Christians (2) To introduce non-Christians to Christ (3) To prepare men and women for the service of the Kingdom of God."[359] Thus, IFES students gather based on their personal *immediate* faith, *participate* in fellowship that sustains and deepens it for the purpose of *mediating* it to their environment through front-line missionary work. All these activities are supported by staff members who *mediate* the authority of the fellowship – albeit to varying degrees – and encourage local groups to remain in fellowship not only with IFES but with the greater Christian tradition through theological engagement and membership in a local Church.

1.1 Witness

An essential marker of the Evangelical identity is its insistence on sharing the faith. The IFES vision is firmly anchored in this tradition and this explains the fellowship's insistence on the necessity and urgency to *evangelize* or *witness*. As Zald observes, religious organizations have an inherent missionary mindset: they hold "theological and ideological beliefs about the relation of individuals and groups to each other, to society, and to the good and just life."[360] Scheitle concludes that

> unless those beliefs call for a complete retreat from the world, the believer is usually inspired and compelled to try and shape the world into the vision described by their beliefs. This is the role of outreach, which consists of four themes or goals: conversion, community, communication, and charity.[361]

More than the term "outreach," the idea of "witness" is fundamental to the self-understanding of IFES groups. The word is used to describe the *mediation* of one's faith to another person. As Jochemsen insists, "Witness is a word we use frequently in the IFES and rightly so. It is one of the New Testament words describing an important element of the mission of the church and of the

[359] David H. Adeney, 'Student Work in Southeast Asia', *IFES Journal* 12, no. 1 (1959): 4.
[360] Mayer N. Zald, 'Theological Crucibles: Social Movements in and of Religion', *Review of Religious Research* 23, no. 4 (1982): 317.
[361] Christopher P. Scheitle, *Beyond the Congregation: The World of Christian Nonprofits* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 40.

Christian in the world."[362] The "training and equipping" aspects of the activities of an IFES group are essential. As Escobar forcefully puts it,

> Groups are formed not as a shelter where the faith of students can be protected, or as cells where the atmosphere of the church is projected into the campus. They are rather points where disciples can grow because they are engaged in mission and in that process their faith is strengthened and understood in a deeper sense.[363]

Witnessing activities take two main shapes: personal evangelism and mission. As the name implies, *personal evangelism* describes all encounters where students deliberately share activities and discussions with fellow students to encourage them to consider the Gospel for themselves. This can also occur in the context of weekly group meetings, to which IFES students invite their friends. As to university *missions,* though somewhat lengthy, Barclay's explanation of *university missions* as understood from the early CICCU days has mostly prevailed to this day within IFES and is hence worth quoting in full:

> Missions gave a unique opportunity of presenting the whole Christian message on the authority of God. In Universities the tendency is to regard religious views as just human opinion open to debate and discussion and having no authority other than the transient authority of the current academic fashion. The sermons, and especially the Missions, gave the opportunity to say clearly that God has spoken and to outline what He has said. There was a place for discussion to lead up to a Mission or to persuade people to come to hear preaching. There was a place for it to follow up a Mission afterwards. But the CICCU believed that, unless there is an authoritative declaration of the message as a word from God, we fail our listeners. The Missions focused this concern and made it plain that the CICCU had a message to declare.[364]

Here, the student group is presented as mediating between the university and God. Yet this mediation is not *immediate*, in that a speaker is coming. Students do not "preach" at mission weeks. They are expected to "witness" personally. Yet, if the whole point of the "mission" approach is to "convey a message," the student group structurally provides the platform for an invited speaker to "declare the message." At least from an organizational level, there is here no *priesthood of all students.* Students setting the stage are at most *priests* of a secondary degree, as they might discuss the talk and thereby the message with their attending friends.

1.2 Prayer

As Christian students witness to a fundamentally transcendent reality, prayer is of utmost importance and is closer to the idea of priestly activities. Presenting a portrait of the "ideal IFES student," Woods emphasizes the combination of prayer and the – notably personal – study of Scriptures:

> In our universities, what is our ideal of a Christian student? Surely it is the inner-directed Christian man or woman, *who has learned to find his resources in God rather than in the collective activity of the group. This student is spiritually weaned and finds his nourishment himself in prayer and Bible study aided by the Holy Spirit.* […] He has

[362] Henk Jochemsen, 'Authentic Christian Witness Demands Authentic Christian Service. Lecture given at the International Student Conference Held at Schloss Mittersill in August 1989', *IFES Review*, no. 29 (1990): 35.
[363] Escobar, 'Our Evangelical Heritage. Major Paper Presented at the 1983 General Committee', 9.
[364] Barclay, *Whatever*, 128.

> accepted God's law as his rule of life to be fulfilled in the power of the Holy Spirit and on this basis can engage in the task of evangelism with assurance and in dependence upon God alone.[365]

The individualistic undertones are more evident here than in most of Woods's writings. What counts for the "ideal student" is to rely on his or her *immediate* relationship with God. Still, prayer is not understood solely instrumentally to prepare students to witness. It is also understood as an act of witness *per se*. Chua affirms this potential, noting that

> non-Christian students are quick to spot qualities like love among Christians and the intimate relationship between the Christians and their Lord, especially through spontaneous prayer. The second element supports the first and the union of propositional and incarnational witness certainly makes an effective thrust in evangelism.[366]

Similarly writing from the Asian context, Adeney articulates personal piety and questions of leadership, stressing the importance of personal responsibility for one's faith and witness over against the temptation to outsource it to seasoned ecclesial leaders:

> Teaching from more experienced Christians is welcomed, but such help should never cause Christian students to become dependent upon outside teachers and advisors. Through fellowship in prayer together and the student-led Bible study groups young Christians experience the leadership of the Holy Spirit. Non-Christian students may be suspicious of the activities of outside workers and organizations, yet they are bound to be impressed when they see their fellow students enjoying the study of the Word of God and sincerely and earnestly introducing Christ to their friends.[367]

Significantly, Adeney does not link the appeal of the Christian faith to its traditional anchoring or its truthful character but its existential, personal relevance to outsiders. His argument presumes the desirability of relating to God, but such desirability is in turn assumed from *membership* in the loving character of a supportive community. This could be interpreted as *indirect priesthood*, for students here mediate God and the communion they enjoy with Him not necessarily in propositional terms but in lived experience into which their fellow students are invited. The early IFES leaders also interpreted it as a direct consequence of the *priesthood of all believers*. Exemplary of this is Wisløff:

> In one sense all believers are priests. Peter calls the believers "a holy priesthood" (1 Peter 2:5). We who believe in Jesus have in his name the right to go directly before the throne of God with our prayers; we need no priest's substitute and intercessor. All believers stand equal before God. Therefore, we speak of the "universal priesthood of believers."[368]

This sense of *immediacy* with God, here assumed for prayer, is implicit in much of the hermeneutics supporting the work of IFES. Though the importance of prayer was not debated within IFES, diverging views of its exact characteristics existed. For example, Bentley-Taylor noted from one of his

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[365] C. Stacey Woods, 'The Inner-Directed Christian', *IFES Journal*, no. 1 (1966): 19, italics mine.
[366] Wee Hian Chua, 'Staff Letter 8', July 1973, 8, BGC Box #5.
[367] Adeney, 'Student Work in Southeast Asia', 8.
[368] Carl Wisløff, *I Know in Whom I Believe: Studies in Bible Doctrine*, Norwegian original 1946 (Minneapolis: AFLC Seminary Press, 1983), 126. Lutheran Wisløff was part of the spearhead of the Pietist movement in Norway. Furthermore, "Wisløff has also strongly emphasized the priesthood of all believers and urged freedom for Christian organizations and societies within the Church of Norway." N. Yri, 'Wisløff Carl Fredrik', in *New Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Sinclair B Ferguson, David F Wright, and J. I Packer (Downers Grove: IVP, 1988), 726.

African tours that "It had been suggested to them that a real Christian spends five hours a day in prayer, speaks only of Christ and is wholly free from temptation. I was glad of the chance to reconsider these matters with some of the leaders."[369] Similarly, in Latin America, personal prayer was not seen as the panacea: "Evangelicals have discovered the privilege of personal prayer and Bible reading. But in terms of strategic initiative in evangelism, the 'pastor' has often simply replaced the 'padre.'"[370] This shows that regional differences abound in a very diverse fellowship despite a common commitment to core spiritual practices.

1.3 Bible Reading

> There is a great deal of evidence within the member movements of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students that more university students have been truly converted through Bible study than through any other means.[371]

Bible reading has always had an important role in the history of IFES people. Their view of the Bible has shaped practices, vision statements, teachings, advertising and even controversies. It is important to see the connection between how IFES understands the *priesthood of all believers* in IFES and its handling of the Bible. The approach of the Moravian Pietists, Spener and Franke has shaped the way early IFES leaders have seen the strategic importance of Bible study in the university context.[372] IFES groups are encouraged to read the Bible on the premise that all students can have *immediate* access to Scripture.

Paramount to articulating the idea of a *priesthood of all students* within IFES is the notion that the Bible can be read and understood in an *immediate* fashion. On Adeney's account, the main difference that IFES brings to the constellation of student ministry is that of the direct encounter with the Bible:

> In some Christian youth organizations, the students have little opportunity of studying the Bible for themselves. They listen to large numbers of sermons, attend Bible Classes where they may receive excellent teaching, and yet never come to the place where they can discover for themselves the privilege of searching out spiritual truths in their own personal Bible study, or leading a group of their friends into the joys of a group study of the Word of God.[373]

Albeit criticizing such an approach as potentially too individualistic, Greggs astutely notes that the doctrine of the *priesthood of all believers* cannot be appropriately understood outside of the doctrine of Scripture. Indeed, as *biblicism* is a core feature of Evangelicalism,[374] it is essential to note that what is said and believed about the Bible is also the result of reading the Bible and not solely of a superimposed hermeneutical principle:

> To say that it is a condition of the principle of sola scriptura is to say that it is a doctrine which suggests that all readers of the Scriptures can read the text unmediated by another and hear it as the direct Word

[369] David Bentley-Taylor, 'African Diary, Part II', *IFES Journal* 20, no. 3 (1967): 31.
[370] Hanks, 'Paternalistic - Me?', 2–3.
[371] Woods, *Some Ways*, 102.
[372] Johnson, *Brief History*, 29.
[373] Adeney, 'Student Work in Southeast Asia', 5.
[374] Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 2–18.

> of God; and – furthermore – that the text can be read as the direct Word of God unencumbered by the interpretation of a particular mediator or body of mediators.[375]

Kraemer also links empowerment of the laity to a thorough rediscovery of the Bible:

> In order to regain an "adult Christianity" an immersion in the Bible and its direct, unambiguous way of speaking about God and His centrality is indispensable for the Church as a whole. Especially indispensable for the laity, if they are to be enabled to become what they are often called nowadays: the spearhead of the Church, and not its hesitant rearguard. The first and great commandment: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul and with all thy mind" (Matthew 22:37) is imperative for the whole membership of the Church, not for a tiny part, and the whole membership should accordingly be approached on that basis.[376]

In IFES, the Bible is assumed to be *immediately accessible*. Yet, the growing output of literature about the Bible coming out of the presses of national movements or directly sponsored by IFES belies the autonomy of individuals or small groups of laypeople reading the Bible on their own and reaching a sufficient understanding.[377] A whole infrastructure supports the backstage of the "direct" encounter with the Bible. The "backstage encounter" is helped by devotional practices, the help of commentaries, dictionaries and (daily devotional) study guides published by many IFES movements. Moreover, the *immediacy* of Scripture did not go unchallenged,[378] and even if this is not the place to provide a full discussion of the epistemological issues at stake, some of the most salient aspects of the criticism should be outlined, especially as they pertain to the context of student ministry.

Taking one tradition under the magnifying glass, it is interesting to mention the commonalities between the *inductive Bible study* approach most often advocated within IFES circles and Torrey's own method of study.[379] He writes in the preface of one of his major works,

> This work is simply an attempt at a careful, unbiased, systematic, thorough-going, inductive study and statement of Bible truth. The method of the book is rigidly inductive. The material contained in the Bible is brought together, carefully scrutinized, and then what is seen to be contained in it stated in the most exact terms possible. Exactness of statement is first aimed at in every instance, then clearness of statement.[380]

Torrey goes on to specify that although he makes no direct use of the original languages, his study is "based upon a careful study of the original text as decided by the best textual critics."[381] The premise following which an *inductive* reading of the Bible makes access to its plain sense more probable, over

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[375] Tom Greggs, 'The Priesthood of No Believer: On the Priesthood of Christ and His Church', *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 17, no. 4 (1 October 2015): 378.

[376] Hendrik Kraemer, *A Theology of the Laity* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1958), 118.

[377] Lowman insists that "It is what scripture actually says – not what we misunderstand it to say – that God says." Pete Lowman, 'What Scripture Says, God Says', *In Touch*, no. 3 (1982): 5.

[378] Space does not permit to explore all the epistemological issues at stake. For a critical account, see Brian Malley, *How the Bible Works : An Anthropological Study of Evangelical Biblicism* (Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 2004).

[379] See Timothy Gloege, 'A Gilded Age Modernist: Reuben A. Torrey and the Roots of Contemporary Conservative Evangelicalism', in *American Evangelicalism: George Marsden and the State of American Religious History*, ed. Darren Dochuk and Thomas S. Kidd (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2014), 199–229.

[380] Reuben Archer Torrey, *What the Bible Teaches : A Thorough and Comprehensive Study of What the Bible Has to Say Concerning the Great Doctrines of Which It Treats* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1898), 1, emphasis in the original.

[381] Torrey, 1.

against denominational shaped readings, is paramount to understanding how Bible reading is conceived within IFES circles.

The corollary of the attribution of a *plain sense* to the Bible supposes the absence of any *mediator* between the text and the reader. This undermines any clerical mediation between students and the texts they are encouraged to read. There are evident connections between Torrey's approach and the necessities of interdenominational cooperation. The missiological consequences are also evident: if Scripture has a plain meaning accessible to any reader of goodwill, it means that it should be even more evident that students, whose daily occupation is to work towards understanding, should be confronted with the Bible.

Yet, the whole approach is also challenged from within IFES. Two somewhat diverging personalities argue against *inductive study* from two different angles. Chronologically first, Woods launches a downright attack on its populistic dimension. Mentioning in his opinion a low-ebb phase in the life of IV-USA, Woods deplores that,

> In spite of efforts to the contrary, straight Bible exposition largely went out the window, and weak inductive Bible study without personal application reigned. This drastic imbalance had a pronounced negative effect. Some seemed to think that any student could lead an effective Bible study. At least the Holy Spirit's special gift of the Bible teacher seemingly was ignored.[382]

From the above quote, the reader can only infer the shift that occurred throughout the history of IFES, which has repeatedly been occurring: the back-and-forth movement between exposition and student-led study. *Immediate* Bible study is not seen as the panacea, and groups at times appeal to external expertise. In the late 1970s, Chua observed that there were "few regular Bible study groups on these campuses, and the African students need to be taught and trained to handle the Word of God for themselves."[383] The GS hence welcomed exchanges of staff occurring between movements to benefit from each other's expertise. Whereas this could be negatively understood as a foreign imposition of methods – note the irony of people needing to be "taught to do by themselves" – African movements in this example were not deprived of agency. On the contrary, IFES had a clear mandate to its emissaries, which was "to work themselves out of their jobs."[384]

From a fully different angle, Escobar complained as early as 1970 that "observation of Bible study habits and programmes has moved me to the conviction that an unbalanced emphasis on inductive study, plus the Scofield Bible influence in most of our Bible schools and seminaries, have given people a fragmented view of God's Word."[385] He explained the need to develop teaching materials helping students recover a more global view of the Bible. Such a more global view considers the Bible as a

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[382] Woods, *The Growth*, 151.
[383] Wee Hian and Padilla, 'God's Work in the World Today', 170–71.
[384] Wee Hian and Padilla, 170–71.
[385] Samuel Escobar, 'Report of the Associate General Secretary at Large' (Raglan, New Zealand, 18.8 1978), 1, IFES e-archives, EC 1978 Minutes, Appendix E.

formative lens through which the university can be seen and mission contextualized. "Christian thinking" was always on the agenda of IFES. Johnston was convinced that

> as students learn to bring every concept captive to Christ and to apply scriptural principles to the moral and social situations which they encounter at university, so in later life they can provide their fellow Christians with an adequate philosophy of life by thinking through, biblically, issues within their own academic discipline or within the political, social or industrial sphere in which they find themselves.[386]

The striking notion in this argument is that this Christian contribution is likely to come *after the time at university* and will distinctively serve *their fellow Christians*. Although implicit, the underlying understanding is that the IFES students will *mediate* their biblically shaped view of the world to the rest of the academic community.[387] The idea of a "*priesthood of all Bible readers*," never so stated in the IFES documents, rests on a close connection between acknowledging that students' intellectual status should not be forgotten when discussing Bible study. Something happens when a group of young students, whose main job is to understand ideas and processes and develop new skills, gathers around an ancient text to understand it. The group is often interdisciplinary, featuring multiple levels of hermeneutical expertise, theological acumen, or religious socialization. If non-Christians attend the study, another level of complexity is added: Christian students share their faith and form a community that witnesses to the individual attending as a "visitor" or a "seeker" however they are called. Additional layers of identity can be postulated, like, for example, a community between a non-Christian engineer and a Christian engineer, which might in some cases prove hermeneutically more fruitful than between two Christians, one studying literature and the other chemistry. The *mediation* of Scriptures is thus intertwined with the simultaneous negotiation of multiple identities at the intersection of academia and the Church. Respect for the authority of the Bible and consensus on the necessity of its study are decisive markers of the IFES identity. Any individual has the right to read the text by and for him or herself.[388] Yet, as the above has shown, there is a tension between the individual's approach to the text, his or her experience and interpretation of what is read, and what others make of the same text. The community is the place where such multiple-way exchanges take place in dialogue with the Christian tradition.

1.4 Fellowship

> God makes his love known to us personally through relationships within the body of Christ by his Holy Spirit. Our faith is worked out in the context of relationships, and the student group can provide a valuable opportunity to work out this relational aspect of our faith.[389]

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[386] James Johnston, 'A Biblical Philosophy of Student Witness', *IFES Journal*, no. 2 (1966): 10.

[387] This mediation is supported by a robust infrastructure of books published by IFES movements.

[388] Intriguingly, IFES documents seldom allude to the fact that private Bible reading is, historically, a recent phenomenon. This blind spot could be explained sociologically: as the IFES constituency consists in academics, they implicitly locate themselves in the literate elite – thereby forgetting that many people in Church history were pious, yet without any access to a privately owned Bible.

[389] Dransfield and Merritt, "One-Another", 37.

The pietistic roots of the organization indeed presuppose the individual's relationship to God through prayer and scriptural engagement. Yet, the meetings of student groups create the framework for mutual upbuilding and communal witness. Insofar as students meet regularly to read the Bible, pray, and witness, either formally or informally, the community plays the role of a mechanism of checks and balances *vis-à-vis* the individual and his or her potential to be led astray by his or her own interests.

More importantly, the community is a *mediating community*. The fact that meeting in groups is considered necessary implies that the spiritual life of students would lack perspective without the encouragements and exhortations of others. Thus, this fellowship has *a mediating* character on two levels: mediation into Christian thinking broadly speaking – in the case of outsiders – and mediation into IFES thinking, the "shared social and theological history"[390] which this work explores. The practice of Bible study in the academic environment hence strengthens beliefs and community. But besides the edification and missionary aspects of Bible study, it also serves as preparation *for the rest of life*.

Bielo highlights the value of regular and sustained dialogical engagement: "There is something to be said for devoting an extended amount of time every week explicitly to the act of dialogue. And there is something to be said for sustaining communities that prioritize open, reflexive, and critical conversation."[391] Such dialogical tradition broadens individuals' horizons, helping them develop skills necessary for successful life at university. For this dimension to be deliberately fostered, Bible study needs to explicitly include engagement with academic matters in all instances to introduce the dialogic habit of scriptural reasoning on issues pertaining to the university. Still, studying the Bible in a group is no panacea. Woods, constantly worried about populism, cautions that "the great danger of group study is that it will be allowed to degenerate into fruitless speculation where personal reaction– 'It seems to me' or 'I think' – becomes the authority rather than Scripture itself."[392]

The community is not only synchronically important but also diachronically and geographically. Such openness harnesses the potential of a worldwide fellowship to edify all of the members of the "hermeneutical community" in which "we are enriched together, because we integrate into our own understanding the readings of those among us with a different story. And since their story becomes part of our heritage, their 'evangelical' perspective with 'ours' blends into a 'richer' evangelical."[393]

This brief exploration of the mediating character of the student community should have highlighted that considering the *priesthood of all believers* as an essential theological and missiological key

[390] James S. Bielo, *Words Upon the Word : An Ethnography of Evangelical Group Bible Study*, Qualitative Studies in Religion (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 51–52.
[391] Bielo, 167.
[392] Woods, *Some Ways*, 104.
[393] Niringiye, 'Towards an Understanding of Our Ethos - Some Reflections', 2.

does not in any way compel an individualistic approach to the Christian faith. Much to the contrary, as IFES leaders have always insisted that encountering other Christians and non-Christians was fundamental to one's identity and growth as a follower of Christ.

Despite the strong insistence on students as leaders proclaimed in the IFES parlance, the common experience of its national movements is that some support is necessary for student groups to be sustained over time. It is to the function of staff members that I now turn.

2 The Complex Role of Staff Members

Staff members are situated at the intersection of Church and parachurch ministry.[394] They are professionals yet often not professionally trained, with some theological training but mostly not ordained. They support students, provide teaching, and mentor them as they develop their Christian faith and life during their university years. Summarizing decades of ministry philosophy towards the end of his tenure, Chua notes that

> Ever since our foundation, our primary focus has been on students. We believe that, under God, evangelical students can be front-line witnesses for Christ on their campuses. Students possess spiritual gifts and abilities to run their fellowships and to build one another up in the faith. It is our express aim that, through this on-the-job training and involvement, these students would be trained as leaders. Of course, they need encouragement and input from staff. But, in the IFES tradition, the staff do not dominate and run the student fellowship. They act as trainers or coaches.[395]

Chua's outline of the different functions assigned to staff workers illustrates the implicit "*priesthood of all believers'* logic" at work in IFES: because IFES students have a direct relationship to God (*immediacy*), they can be front-line witnesses (*mediators*) of Christ on their campus. This takes place in the context of their *membership* in the IFES fellowship as well as in the Church. For notably theological reasons, the role of staff workers is subsidiary. Furthermore, despite its universalist undertones, Chua's approach is flexible enough to accommodate regional variations.[396] What is observed here is a missiological concern for the development of students *qua students*, which took the form of advising staff to remain in the background of student meetings:

> Some groups had felt that over-participation by staff members had led to the students tending to sit back and leave the discussion to the older and wiser person. The students were stirred to think much more if discussing among themselves, though they did appreciate the presence of staff members and the knowledge that if they got into difficulties, they could always refer to them for help.[397]

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[394] Most of this section is written with staff members of national movements in mind. Most of the following observations apply to regional and international IFES staff as well. See below part 4, II.1 for detailed reflections about the notion of "parachurch."

[395] Chua, 'IFES: The Big Picture'.

[396] Space does not permit to explore the debates around leadership and culture which were carried within IFES but they overall relate to the day-to-day enactment of the student leadership approach and do not question the validity of the approach.

[397] 'Minutes of the North Atlantic Zone Committee of the IFES' (Grundtvigs Höjskole, Frederiksborg, Hilleröd, Denmark: EC 58 Minutes, August 1958), 4.

Whilst theologically motivated, this insistence on student leadership has also proven viable in many contexts where no staff was available to coordinate the work yet. This discussion about the functions of IFES staff members bears a striking resemblance to the questions about the roles of officeholders in churches. Greggs's analysis of Ephesians 4 leads him to affirm that "The ministry of the specific offices and roles of the church are expressions of ministering to the ministry, of serving the servants. It is for the service of the gospel in the world that the church exists, and to equip it for that service and ministry."[398] Such argument is reminiscent of Kraemer's own lines of thinking, articulated many decades earlier:

> It is just on the point of enabling the laity to account for the hope and the faith which is in them that the theologians have to meet and strengthen the laity. Provided they let themselves also be taught by the laity. For the laity should in this matter not be seen primarily as the needy, ignorant and helpless, but as that part of the Church that has to carry the brunt of the burden of encounter with the world in and around themselves, and to voice and incarnate the Church's or better, Christ's relevance, to the whole range of human life.[399]

It could therefore be argued that staff workers also play the role of a priest to the local group.[400] Interesting links can be drawn between contemporary staff workers' tasks and Old Testament priests, as summarized by Anizor and Voss. These priestly functions are judging, teaching, reading and blessing:

> Priests have the honor of continual access to the presence of the Lord in the sanctuary, but they also bear the responsibilities of offering sacrifices for the people, helping them discern holy from profane and clean from unclean, teaching the law, applying its commands to the varying circumstances of Israel's life and blessing the people in the Lord's name.[401]

The discerning part is crucial at the university, as students are confronted with numerous new ideas and concepts that may or may not contradict the faith they have been holding to so far. IFES leaders have often encouraged critical examination of what the university teaches to "test everything; hold fast what is good."[402] Besides organizational sustainability, two main concerns preoccupied the IFES leadership: theological faithfulness and leadership. In the late 1930s, Clowney had "argued that staff leadership would be necessary to guard student chapters from falling into theological error."[403] However, he later said in an interview in 1986 that "I was wrong. Students do need instruction and counsel, but leadership develops where students have a real responsibility for witness."[404]

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[398] Tom Greggs, *Dogmatic Ecclesiology : Volume 1: The Priestly Catholicity of the Church*, Kindle (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic, 2019), 142.

[399] Kraemer, *A Theology of the Laity*, 113–14.

[400] Of course, only in derivative fashion. Similar connections could be drawn with other ministries described in the NT, notably in Ephesians 4.

[401] Uche Anizor and Hank Voss, *Representing Christ: A Vision for the Priesthood of All Believers* (Downer Grove, Illinois: IVP, 2016), 32.

[402] 1 Thess. 5 :21, ESV.

[403] Keith Hunt and Gladys Hunt, *For Christ and the University: The Story of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship of the U.S.A. 1940-1990* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1991), 71.

[404] Hunt and Hunt, 71.

The teaching function occurs through the large number of training events of all sorts organized in the IFES network, being it at local, regional, national, and international levels and through the regular one-to-one meetings of staff members with group leaders. As to the contextual application, we have seen before how strongly IFES leaders insist on the need to reflect upon biblical teaching and apply it to the lives of students and ministry on campuses. Equipping the laity for faithful witness and presence is thus a deeply ecclesial act, which also involves the laity serving ministers by confronting them with realities henceforth not properly experienced. In the context of IFES, the learning Kraemer envisaged can happen on two fronts simultaneously. Firstly, students encounter new challenges in their universities, which staff were unaware of and did not consider themselves. Secondly, through the worldwide encounter of IFES people across boundaries, mostly crossed by laypeople as we have seen, new questions are raised to the Christian faith as understood by the fellowship. In Flett's summarizing words, "World Christianity opens the theological field because it detaches that discourse from a singular concentration on a constricted history and its attendant range of questions."[405]

Yet, IFES had been traditionally sceptical about formal theological training for historical reasons explored earlier in this work. These reservations also apply to IFES staff. The idea often prevailing and summarized by Lowman is that "IFES full-time staff are usually people who have already 'learnt their trade' as active and effective members of a student group and then as staff workers with their national movement."[406] Despite this apparent satisfactory situation, however, national movements and the IFES leadership were voicing their interest in the theological training of their staff members early on. GS Chua was aware that theological needs – notably not precisely defined – were increasing throughout IFES. Framing these needs in broad contextual lines, he was suggesting that

> In view of the confused philosophical, ecclesiastical and theological climate of our age, it is almost a 'must' for all our movements to have their own theologians. These are men who could advise students, graduates and staff of the current trends of thinking and help them to view these from a biblical perspective.[407]

The debate was framed in the somewhat elusive notion of "raising the calibre of staff,"[408] an issue tackled by devising a humble scheme for scholarships for IFES staff aspiring to theological studies or at least continuing education. Said program was – at first begrudgingly, then more enthusiastically – greenlighted by the EC. Consistent with its low-church origins, IFES never considered formal theological training indispensable, even for its highest representative.

Lastly, the blessing part of a priest's ministry occurs in two ways. Firstly, as the staff prays for the local group and its leaders and secondly, when students meet for fellowship and comfort each other

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[405] Flett, *Apostolicity*, 245.

[406] Lowman, *The Day*, 366.

[407] Wee Hian Chua, 'The Next Four Years', *IFES Journal* 25, no. 3 (1971): 9.

[408] 'Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee of the IFES' (Charney Manor, Oxon, England, 9-3.10 1977), 17, IFES e-archives.

with their faith experience, this can happen when a staff member is present. However, it also happens between students as they are priests to each other: "We shall consider ways in which students can exercise pastoral care towards one another within the student group. This commandment of Jesus seems to us the foundation of such care."[409]

3 Partial Synthesis

With this brief survey of the main activities of IFES groups, admittedly synthetic and without full consideration of regional variations, I have shown that the *priesthood of all believers* can function as a helpful theoretical framework to understand the work of IFES. As a missionary organization, it focuses firstly on witness, understood as *mediating* the Gospel to other people who are not yet acquainted with it. Sharing the Gospel is an intensely spiritual activity resting on the individual's *immediate* relationship to God, sustained in regular individual and communal prayer. Another focus of IFES group is Bible reading. These groups are student-led; the underlying conviction is that *immediate* access to Scripture is possible for any lay student wishing to read it. This reading is presumed to occur individually and in the context of the fellowship in which the IFES student *participates*, besides a local Church. Local groups are also supported by IFES staff members who also, albeit in a subsidiary manner, play some sort of mediating role between the organization and the local group and Church tradition. Helping students develop Christian discernment, providing teaching, and blessing them are actions closely linked to *priestly* functions.

This survey leaves some important questions open. If an IFES fellowship functions as a Christian community on campus, we need to question the *ecclesial character* of an IFES group: what should be made of the *dual membership* of students in the local group, in the local Church and more broadly, in the Church universal? Furthermore, despite a voiced commitment to the *immediacy* of one's reading of the Bible, a local fellowship frames how the individual grows in understanding the biblical text. However, this framing can also function as a *mediation* of the received hermeneutical tradition. Are these *priestly functions?* None of these questions is quickly settled, but over the years, IFES has developed a growing corpus of approaches to which I now turn.

[409] Dransfield and Merritt, "One-Another", 37.

Part Three: Ecclesiological and Missiological Reflection in IFES

> We believe that God has entrusted us with the historic evangelical faith based on the teaching of the apostles, and we dare not compromise in any way when it comes to matters of doctrine.[410]

Having surveyed the history of IFES in the first part and explored the main activities of the local groups in the second part, I now turn to ecclesiological and missiological reflections within IFES. As I have argued above, theology in IFES has developed chiefly "on the go" as students and staff have ministered in various contexts. Nevertheless, as IFES often defined itself by conformity to doctrinal standards, it developed substantial theological and missiological reflection. The first example is a doctrinal basis as key governing text. This basis presupposes that believers have an *immediate* capacity to read for themselves that Scripture essentially says what the basis affirms it says. Yet, the doctrinal basis also poses questions about context and indigeneity: how is such a centrally defined document to serve a fellowship spread worldwide and take pride in respecting local leadership? Furthermore, the basis supposes *membership* in a believers' Church or a personal attitude akin to such ecclesiology.

A close analysis of the developing reflections within the fellowship shows a growing consensus that missiological experiences gathered on the ground have paved the way to a *missional ecclesiology* consonant with the premises of IFES work. I show that such *missional ecclesiology* developed within the fellowship throughout the decades, as a sample of a few prominent and representative voices of IFES staff who wrote extensively illustrate. The theology of the *priesthood of all believers* which I propose in this work is not explicitly articulated in the IFES documents. Yet, the ecclesiological and missiological reflections which I examine here are the building blocks for such a constructive theological proposal.

I. A Firm Basis

1 Genesis

> When we trace the origin of our member movements, we discover that they owe their existence to the fact that Christian believers, both students and student leaders, took their doctrinal position seriously.[411]

The IFES archives do not document all the details of the DB's genesis. The early 1946 minutes note that some amendments were made to an original proposal, but the "original proposal" does not exist in the archives. Neither is the correspondence alluded to in the oldest minutes. The most likely hypothesis is that Johnson essentially suggested that the British IVF Doctrinal Basis be taken over and asked for amendments and suggestions from the delegates.

Johnson remembers that the IVF DB was a joint work of members of the London Christian Unions and graduates from the London College of Divinity.[412] This group, notably not only made of

[410] Adeney, 'Student Work in Southeast Asia', 8.
[411] Carl F. Wisløff, 'The Doctrinal Position of the IFES', *IFES Journal*, no. 3 (1963): 2.
[412] See his detailed account in Johnson, *Contending*, 109-114,127.

laypeople, drew upon existing doctrinal statements like the Anglican Thirty-Nine Articles, the Westminster Confession and especially the doctrinal basis of the Evangelical Alliance.

After lengthy discussions, the document was fine-tuned and became the DB of the 1928 newly founded IVF Britain. The IVF basis was taken over verbatim by the 1936 Beatenberg Conference.[413] It is also likely the original to which the 1946 minutes refer. Eventually, during the conferences leading to the official founding in 1947, a final revision combining elements of the 1935 International Conference of Evangelical Students Constitution and the IVF DB was agreed upon as part of the Draft IFES Constitution. The early IFES minutes record many more debates on the fellowship structure than on the shape of the doctrinal basis, which indicates a high degree of agreement. In what follows, I focus on analysing IFES's self-understanding of the DB.

2 Yet Another Creed? Justifying the Doctrinal Basis

> The existence of the DB expresses the conviction that the divine truth of biblical revelation can be conveyed in frail human words by teaching in the power of the Holy Spirit and that it can be known and received for salvation and sanctification through the illumination of the same Holy Spirit.[414]

Much has been written on the functions and roles of creeds and statements of faith of different organizations throughout the Church's history.[415] Woods stresses the basis's most crucial role: "The IFES does not regard its basis of faith as a flag to be hoisted to the top of a pole, but rather as an anchor, which though unseen keeps a ship from drifting onto the rocks."[416]

As we shall see, the IFES narrative abounds with references to the DB as having safeguarded the fellowship against all odds. Woods's successor emphasizes, as the organization was close to celebrating thirty years of existence:

> This basis of faith is meant to serve as an anchor, especially when contemporary theological currents are seeking to sweep evangelical Christians from their confidence and firm stand on God's authoritative revelation through Jesus Christ and through the Scriptures.[417]

The ecclesiological status of the doctrinal basis and its relationship to creeds was early on a matter of contention for critics of the organization, especially church dignitaries: "For a body to issue a doctrinal basis means that it sets itself up as a new church. If it really holds the historic faith, the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed should be sufficient."[418] Conversely, IFES pioneers repeatedly

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[413] Pierre de Benoît et al., eds., 'Invitation to the 1936 International Conference in Beatenberg, Switzerland', 1936, BGC #193.

[414] Hans Bürki, *Essentials: A Brief Introduction for Bible Study Based on the Doctrinal Basis of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students* (London: IFES, 1975), 11.

[415] For a comprehensive analysis, Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine.*, 4 vols (Chicago, Ill: University of Chicago Press, 1987_to_1994).

[416] Woods, 'IFES History Draft', chap. 2, p. 14. Woods, 'IFES History Draft', chap. 2, p. 14. Johnson also tells the story of the Scottish Professor of Anatomy and former Navy volunteer Duncan Blair who used to say about signing the DB: "I regard it as running up my ensign to the masthead in order to show where my allegiance belongs." Johnson, *Contending*, 156.

[417] Wee Hian Chua, 'Foreword', in *Essentials: A Brief Introduction for Bible Study Based on the Doctrinal Basis of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students*, by Hans Bürki (London: International Fellowship of Evangelical Students, 1975), 7.

[418] Ronald Owen Hall, 'A Circular Letter from the Bishop to All Clergy to Be Discussed with Anyone Concerned with the FES', 1963, IFES e-archives, EC 1963 papers. Hall had worked with the British SCM prior to his appointment to Hong

stressed that they "*never thought that such a statement in any way displaced the historic creeds of the Church*."[419] Woods fends off the charge of schism by appealing to the necessities of the IFES mission and its contextual challenges, notably those of the university context and its reluctance to take evangelical theology at face value. Yet, whilst IFES writers regularly assert that their DB is no creed but "merely a set of agreed-upon doctrines for common witness," they nevertheless appeal to the function of historic creeds to explain the aims and function of the DB. This is especially the case with the *ex animo* adhesion, which is hoped for from IFES members: "Like the great creeds and confessions of the Church, the Doctrinal Basis becomes meaningful and dynamic only when its statements are enthusiastically studied, interpreted and applied."[420]

The IFES line of argumentation can be summarized thus: historically, churches have always reacted to the challenges of their time by issuing summaries of the faith. It is no novelty to issue a doctrinal basis to respond to identified challenges to the faith. The IFES DB is no exception: it responds to the day's challenges but, most importantly, does not propose any new doctrine or anything that would be at odds with the ancient creeds in the line of which it is written. Furthermore, the preamble to the DB submits that "The Doctrinal Basis of the Fellowship shall be the fundamental truths of Christianity, *including…*"[421] which implies that the DB pretends neither to replace any creed, nor to be exhaustive. Finally, since IFES does not consider itself a church but a specific-purpose group, the fact that a core of doctrinal convictions forms the basis of common actions does not suffice to make the fellowship susceptible to the charge of schism.

2.1 Excursus: Guarding the Deposit of the Faith

> One of Paul's favourite metaphors to describe this responsibility to hand on the essentials of the tradition is that of keeping the "deposit" (ἡ παραθήκη). The reference in I Timothy vi. 20 might accurately be translated "Timothy, guard the deposit."[422]

Despite being historically newer on the scene of student movements than SCM movements for example, the idea of being somehow uniquely placed to *mediate* classical Christianity has been fundamental throughout the history of the fellowship. In the same way Israel was the depository of God's promises and blessings for the nations, IFES has entertained the idea that it had the same role for the university campuses of the world. Making his own the argument of an address given by Lloyd-Jones in 1961, Johnson wants the IFES readership warned that

> there is no inherent guarantee that the I.V.F. will never go wrong or be side-tracked. Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty, and eternal vigilance is the only guarantee of the safety of the I.V.F. as, indeed, it is

Kong. The letter was written in the context of Hall's refusal to let John Stott lead a university mission in his diocese. They later reconciled.

[419] Woods, 'IFES History Draft', chap. 2, p. 13.

[420] Chua, 'Foreword', 7.

[421] 'IFES Constitution 1947', clause 4.

[422] T. C. Hammond, *Evangelical Belief: A Short Introduction to Christian Doctrine in Explanation of the Doctrinal Basis of the Inter-Varsity Fellowship* (London: IVF, 1935), 48.

> of the whole Christian Church. You cannot live on the past. You may thank God for it, and you must also learn lessons from it. The most important of these is the vital necessity of continued and continuing vigilance, lest we become something which is a denial of what we were at the beginning and of what, by the grace of God, we have been throughout the years.[423]

The first aspect of the IFES discourse is decisively theological. Following his mentor's steps and commenting on 1 Timothy 6:20 and 2 Timothy 1:14, Johnson underlines IFES's understanding of the importance of a "deposit of faith" which has to be preserved:

> The majority of exegetes are agreed that this is "the deposit of faith," which may also be equated with "the form of sound words" or "outline of the sound teaching" of the Second Epistle. […] Clearly, the religion of the earliest followers of our Lord resisted any influence or form of development which was not in harmony with such basic doctrines.[424]

The exegetical accuracy of this position notwithstanding, there was a strong anxiety amongst the early leaders to keep something that might otherwise get lost.[425] Even if Johnson and his colleagues emphasize student leadership, students are not envisaged to greatly influence how the "deposit of doctrine" is understood. Theirs is the role of witnessing from that message to non-Christians, and to pass on the role of guardians of the faith to the next student generation.

One of the logical conclusions of such a theological understanding is that IFES will look for leaders who will guard the deposit *in line* with its received understanding.[426] This understanding of leadership formation as "passing on" has shaped how IFES designed its programs, set its priorities and invested in events. It is, however, intriguing to note the co-optation of a clearly ecclesial logic – ordination – to the context of laypeople in a parachurch organization. This unapologetic move shows how the early IFES leaders inadvertently blurred the lines between Church and parachurch when it supported their logic and especially their theological convictions. As he was stepping down, the IFES theological secretary left an unheard plea for more investment in what could be called *theological vigilance* or at least in-depth theological training:

> In my opinion, the theological dimension of the I.F.E.S. work will continue to grow in importance as it becomes less and less possible for any church or fellowship, even the young, vigorous, and unspoiled ones, to ignore the constant output of degenerate and apostate thought presented as Christian theology by the surrounding world. *We must never fall into the pattern of merely reacting, of merely being slightly more conservative or less radical than our surroundings, as this will drag us inevitably into the same decline, only a few paces behind the leaders*. For this reason, I think that for the I.F.E.S, to be without the services of a full-time secretary for theological students would be a luxury which it can ill afford. To fail to face the theological dimensions of our common challenge as evangelical students and student leaders is either to slip into

[423] Johnson, *Brief History*, 98.
[424] Johnson, 101.
[425] The combined forces of secularization and decolonization, which marked several periods of the IFES history might, in part, explain this anxiety.
[426] Johnson comments on 2 Timothy 2:2 that "the student leadership of the Christian Unions has, however, been influenced by the conviction that the same principle, the same fidelity and the same character-traits are essential in all who undertake Christian leadership of any kind." Johnson, *Brief History*, 102.

> anti-intellectualism in this area, or, because we are unwilling to take that turn, to be drawn into the paths of theological and moral relativism and to lose the distinctives of our biblical faith.[427]

Here, Brown argues that some theological oversight is necessary because of the risk of doctrinal degeneration, especially in the theological world. Yet, the doctrinal deposit to preserve needs constant local re-appropriation and re-exploration, hence the importance of supporting the orthodox evangelical theological students throughout their studies. The unease is evident in Brown's words and exemplary of an important tension between the local and the central and between individual and communal access to truth.

3 IFES, Theology and the DB

IFES and theology have had a complex relationship marked by difficult experiences with university theology. At times, the fellowship's leaders were very sceptical of academic theology, the alleged liberalizing tendencies of which they often castigated. At the same time, challenges encountered on the mission field, together with the necessity of defining the organization's identity over against other actors in the field or in discussion with church leaders, necessitated in-depth theological thinking, even if it was primarily aimed at legitimizing the IFES story and existence. In the words of Hammond, "Every human society and joint activity must necessarily be controlled by some degree of common conviction. Prolonged united effort directed to one main end would be impossible without it."[428]

The doctrine of the *priesthood of all believers* does not feature explicitly in any of the DB formulations. However, I argue that the claims of the DB have been developed in implicit relationship to this doctrine, which in turn helps make sense of the DB's affirmations. Moreover, the idea that any given believer would be able to deduce from the study of the Bible illuminated by the Holy Spirit a similar core of essential doctrines presupposes each believer's direct access to God:

> It is from one source – Holy Scripture – that all subsequent statements of the Basis have been derived. Only by divine revelation do we know such truths as those concerning the Being of God, the all-comprehending scope of His providence and rule and, also, the nature of His redeeming love to man.[429]

The IFES leaders affirm that these beliefs are not "invented" by *individuals* but rather "received" and in line with the apostolic teaching:

> It is of greater importance that every Christian should seek by his own study to gain an improved understanding of what he believes and why he believes it. It is expected that office-bearers, in addition to the doctrines set out in these ten clauses, will accept and teach all else that can plainly be proved from Holy Scripture to have been part of the apostolic teaching.[430]

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[427] Harold O. J. Brown, 'Report of the Theological Secretary', 1971, 3, IFES e-archives, GC 1971 Minutes, Appendix H, italics mine.
[428] Hammond, *Evangelical Belief*, 5.
[429] Hammond, 12.
[430] Hammond, 10.

Believers have *immediate* access to the Bible. This implies that Scripture is the privileged channel of relationship to God.[431] This allows for common ground for Evangelicals who "comprised not only the unschooled, but also the highly educated whose rationality was yoked to their prior and primary allegiance to the unassailable authority of the Bible."[432] This view of the importance of the Bible is all present in the IFES writings. It is here that perhaps the clearest, though very implicit underlying influence of an individualistic understanding of the *priesthood of all believers* is found. If the Bible speaks, any believer can understand it, provided a correct attitude of mind and spirit is manifested. Yet, despite the proclaimed allegiance to the Bible's perspicuity, the fellowship deemed it essential to produce a basis, understood as *norma normata*, nevertheless held in high importance, as the following statement from 1982 exemplifies:

> We are also evangelical. Theologically this means that we are deeply committed to defending, maintaining and propagating biblical truths. *We affirm the entire trustworthiness of the Bible for all matters relating to doctrine and conduct. We place great emphasis on our Doctrinal Basis.* Student leaders, staffworkers and other officers subscribe to its tenets in writing. As evangelical Christians *we also stress our fidelity to the gospel.* This is worked out as we share and proclaim it enthusiastically and boldly to others.[433]

The underlying assumption is that Scripture has a plain sense *immediately* accessible to committed readers. In this case, the DB plays the role of a "controlling summary" allowing group leaders and staff to assess how solid – possibly hear "compliant" – the Bible knowledge of a given student is. From the firm belief that the Bible is *entirely trustworthy,* and that the DB is a "mere summary" of its core teachings, IFES leaders assume the universal validity of the DB.

Even if it is presented as a summary of core scriptural doctrines, the DB is nevertheless also the product of core essential doctrinal concerns of the early IFES leaders who shaped by their own cultural context tended to emphasize some doctrines over some others – and the most evident example is the affirmation of the "entire trustworthiness" of Scripture which is not part of any of the old creeds. Neither is the substitutionary explanation of the atonement. Woods was well aware that "this doctrinal basis represented *those truths which were relevant to the university situation* and where *in some places* being called into question by secular scholarship and humanistic thinking.[434] This statement is important, because it highlights the profoundly *reactionary* nature of the IFES DB – similar comment applies to most

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[431] We could even go further as to postulate *membership* in some sort of "Enlightenment community." At least this represents the cultural *milieu* of the early IFES.

[432] Such *direct* engagement with Scripture and the unfolding appropriation of doctrine does not occur in an epistemological vacuum. Summarizing recent scholarship on the topic, Warner articulately suggests that "both classical liberalism and Evangelicalism depended upon Enlightenment foundationalism to build a rational reconstruction of Protestant orthodoxy. For liberals, the Enlightenment's liberation of human reason was the prerequisite for a new theology. For Evangelicals, the foundational presupposition within their Enlightenment-shaped theology was biblical infallibility." Warner, 'Evangelical Bases of Faith and Fundamentalizing Tendencies', 341.

[433] 'IFES: Who?, Why?, How?', 2, emphasis mine.

[434] Woods, 'IFES History Draft', chap. 2, p. 13., emphasis mine.

creedal statements in Church history.[435] This interpretation seems underscored by the somewhat strange addition that IFES *also* stresses the importance of the Gospel, so yet another sub-canon inside the restricted list of points.

We have here a soteriologically-based hermeneutic: the Bible cannot properly be apprehended *outside* of a personal relationship with God, hence the emphasis on trustworthiness – a more pietistic category – rather than on "infallibility," a more scientific-rationalist category.[436] On the one hand, this theology stresses that any individual can hear God's word for themselves, *mediated* by the Bible read in the context of their own, *unmediated* relationship to God – that is without others standing between God and themselves. On the other hand, IFES insists on the need for a DB specifying the understanding to which faithful reading will lead believers. Yet what remains unstated is that the DB itself responds to the specific theological context. Drafted in England in the mid-19th century and adopted by a group of ten, male-led, essentially Western student movements in 1947,[437] changes are made close to impossible by a constitutional provision stipulating that no change in the doctrinal basis can be made "without unanimous agreement."[438]

Yet, new questions have emerged, especially in the wake of decolonization and the rise in influence of Churches independent of international denominations in the Majority World. This observation does not presume the theological wrongness of the DB's affirmations, but questions the adequacy of their formulation for *all times and places*. For example, what is the DB to make of theologically important notions not so always relevant to the West like poverty, racism, colonialism, ancestor worship, polygamy or creation care to name but the most salient? The question remains as to whether it is missiologically responsible to impose a similar statement of faith on national movements created potentially more than seventy years after the IFES inception, in contexts incommensurably different from the 19th-century British Empire, with vastly larger numbers of universities throughout the world, representing a growing variety of academic traditions and cultures. Hence, other "essentials" could emerge in other contexts, no doubt in close relationship to the existing ones but maybe stressing other

[435] In defense of potential relativizing charges, IFES leaders like Horn have often averted that the reactive nature of a doctrinal basis does not automatically disqualify it from long-lasting relevance: "All summaries of Christian belief on a balance between the unchanging truth of God on one hand and the pressing circumstances at the time of their compilation on the other. Most of the great creeds (like many of the New Testament letters) were drawn up to combat particular errors. […] We do not ditch these letters because they come out of a particular historical geographical sociological or religious context." Robert M. Horn, *Ultimate Realities: Finding the Heart of Evangelical Belief* (Leicester: IVP, 1999), 86–87.

[436] Holmes's somewhat pointed summary is that "North American Evangelicalism, with a broad commitment to inerrancy, views the Bible primarily as a collection of facts to be believed; British Evangelicalism, stressing instead authority, views the Bible primarily as a collection of rules to be obeyed." Stephen R. Holmes, 'Evangelical Doctrines of Scripture in Transatlantic Perspective', *Evangelical Quarterly* 81, no. 1 (January 2009): 53.

[437] And given the influence of Western missionaries in China prior to the communist takeover, it is thinkable to assume that the Chinese IVF was still rather Western in theology in 1947. The situation would of course soon change after 1949. For the early history of IVF China, see Adeney, *China: Christian Students Face the Revolution*.

[438] 'IFES Constitution 1947', Clause 14.

important theological elements.[439] Yet not only does IFES pledge itself to keep its doctrinal basis stable, it did not originally envisage either for national movements to alter their own basis, foreseeing that movements which would alter their DB "so as no longer to comply with the terms of Clause 4 hereof shall cease to be a member of the Fellowship."[440] As the more recent history shows, this clause has not been activated: several member movements have indeed changed their doctrinal basis – albeit not to contradict the IFES DB – fairly significantly without being excluded.[441] The clause was revised in 2015, adding to doctrinal nonconformity, bringing "IFES into disrepute" [442] as another cause for disaffiliation.

4 Theological Analysis

A complete theological analysis of the IFES DB would justify a work of its own.[443] In what follows, I will try to interpret a sample of the DB's statements in the light of the contexts in which they originated and how they were debated in IFES.

The first official commentary of the DB at the time of the IVF Britain movement was penned in 1935 by Hammond, and subsequently revised.[444] The main reason for looking in-depth at the IVF DB and not primarily at other national movements' bases is the influence that the British movement had on the insistence on the doctrinal basis: not only were the early pioneers Lloyd-Jones and Johnson British but so were later influential leaders in the Executive Committee like Barclay, Catherwood, Wells, Horn and Lowman who have all written on the importance of the doctrinal basis for the life and integrity of IFES, as has Welshman Brown, long-term General Secretary.[445]

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[439] A tentative list could be the doctrine of Reconciliation, the Christus Victor approach to the atonement, the doctrine of Imago Dei, the doctrine of the Kingdom, issues of political theology and social justice, gender equality, etc.

[440] 'IFES Constitution 1947', Clause12 c.

[441] To name but a few: InterVarsity USA has a very different formulation and significant additions, see 'What We Believe', InterVarsity USA, 17 April 2017, https://intervarsity.org/about-us/what-we-believe.; UCCF Great Britain has expanded several clauses, see 'UCCF Doctrinal Basis', accessed 9 May 2020, https://www.uccf.org.uk/about/doctrinal-basis.htm. SCO South Africa has also expanded several clauses, see 'Statement of Faith', *Students' Christian Organisation | SCO South Africa* (blog), accessed 21 May 2020, https://www.sco.org.za/statement-of-faith/. AFES Australia and ABUB Brazil have added some precisions, see 'Doctrinal Basis | Australian Fellowship of Evangelical Students (AFES)', accessed 21 May 2020, https://afes.org.au/about/doctrinal-basis; 'No Que Cremos | ABUB - Aliança Bíblica Universitária Do Brasil', accessed 21 May 2020, http://abub.org.br/no-que-cremos. VBG Switzerland has explicitly abandoned its doctrinal basis: "A few years ago, the VBGs broke away from their old faith base. Over time, it had become too narrow for the staff. Now the VBG no longer formulate their most central beliefs in their own confession, but agree with all other Christians on the old creed." 'Geistliche Leitlinien - Leitlinien der VBG', *VBG* (blog), 25 March 2017, https://wp.vbg.net/spirituelle-traditionen/. Interestingly, the "Leitlinien" which cover six "spiritual traditions" take very much the form of a doctrinal basis.

[442] 'Constitution of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students', July 2015, IFES e-Archives, Clause III,C1, Emphasis mine.

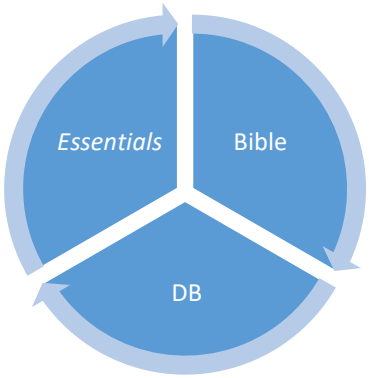
[443] Readers interested in a detailed analysis can read Appendix 3.

[444] Hammond, *Evangelical Belief*. The document was revised several times, the last being Horn, *Ultimate*.

[445] Most of these publications are in forms of articles in IFES publications, memos to committees or papers given at meetings. Johnson, Barclay, Catherwood, Horn and Brown all have devoted some pages to the DB in their respective books. See Johnson, *Brief History*; Robert M. Horn, *Student Witness and Christian Truth* (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1971); Barclay, *Whatever*; Johnson, *Contending*; Lowman, *The Day*; Horn, *Student Witness and Christian Truth*; Barclay and Horn, *Cambridge to the World*; Lindsay Brown, *Shining like Stars: The Power of the Gospel in the World's Universities* (Nottingham, England: IVP, 2006).

The second document, Essentials: A Brief Introduction for Bible Study Based on the Doctrinal Basis of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students[446], results from intense discussions held during the 1971 General Committee, which unanimously passed a motion reaffirming its "unqualified adherence to the Doctrinal Basis of the IFES. The IFES is a movement which seeks to obey the authority of the crucified and risen Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, the IFES acknowledges the authority of Holy Scripture as the Word of God, completely trustworthy in its totality and in all its parts."[447]

A subcommittee suggested "that a short study guide on the meaning of the Doctrinal Basis should be prepared for the member movements."[448] The Executive "agreed that it should not be classified as an official document having the same authority as the IFES Constitution or Doctrinal Basis."[449]Associate GS Bürki penned a brochure not meant "for theological debate, but for individual and group Bible study,"[450] which remains the DB's last published IFES official commentary to date.[451] This approach is interesting as it shows an implicit tension in the organization's relationship to the biblical text: every believer is supposedly able to understand it by himself or herself, no clerical mediation is needed.[452] Yet the fact that the General Committee – constituted essentially by senior staff members of national movements and only marginally by students – expressed the need for more explanations is striking. Some sort of "hermeneutical circle" can summarize the process:



[446] Bürki, *Essentials*.

[447] 'Minutes of the Meeting of the Eighth General Committee of the IFES - 1971' (Schloss Mittersill, Austria, 28.8 1971), 19, IFES e-archives. The motion does not give much hint as to "those present trends." But before the motion was passed, Stacey Woods, in his quality of outgoing General Secretary, stated in unequivocal terms that "we must be aware that in evangelical biblical circles in many parts of the world there is a shift from the traditional historical doctrine of Scripture which should cause us concern; he did not imply there was any shift in the IFES or its member movements, but that we would probably be confronted with a certain ferment on the part of some students. We welcome students in our movements who are liberals and who, by God's grace, will be brought to a biblical position. But if in the leadership of IFES there were to be a shift, it could mean the beginning of the end of the IFES. This General Committee represents such leadership." 'GC 1971 Minutes', 18.

[448] 'GC 1971 Minutes', 20. Excerpts from the report of the sub-committee were published in Bürki, *Essentials*, 49–50.

[449] 'Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee of the IFES' (Schloss Mittersill, Austria, 8-3.9 1973), 22, IFES e-archives.

[450] Chua, 'Foreword', 8.

[451] As the time of writing, it has been out of print for many years and the writer is not aware of plans for republication.

[452] Interestingly, Padilla was Baptist and Bürki originally from a Brethren (Darbyist) background.

4.1 Focussing on Essentials

> The Doctrinal Basis of the Fellowship shall be the fundamental truths of Christianity including…[453]

Fundamental to how IFES understands its DB is the idea of *concentrating on essentials*. Since the fellowship connects members of different church traditions with diverging specificities, its actors must agree on a common corpus of affirmations.

Hence, the DB can be conceived missiologically: it states what is deemed essential to preaching the Gospel effectively and adequately, reaching a specific public in a specific context – the university. Local strategies will be variations on the theme of these eleven affirmations, which are considered sufficient ground for people to become Christians since they will assure the inscription of the new believers into the essentials of the Christian tradition.

As often in the study of the theology of IFES, the rationale lies behind hermeneutical considerations. IFES pioneers always insisted that the content of the DB is the result of a deductive process. In Hammond's words, "A sufficient, practical grasp of the basic doctrines does not call for great intelligence, nor will it take long for a determined seeker (with the Holy Spirit as his guide) to discover what the apostles regarded as fundamental in a man's relationship with his Maker and also with his fellow men."[454] A proper methodology applied to Scriptural "materials" bears proper fruit, much like the synthesis obtained by sifting through scientific literature on any given topic. As the writer of the hitherto official IFES history and former member of the Executive Committee poses,

> Precisely because the groups' objectives do not necessitate taking up positions on issues that divide equally biblically minded Evangelicals, students from different denominations can labour in partnership and enrich one another. There can be few members of IFES-linked groups who have not gained by this exposure to the different perspectives of other biblically minded believers. In turn, the links created in the student scene serve to build essential bridges within the evangelical community in the following years.[455]

For Hammond, the DB is a solid starting ground and why Christian students should be respectful of each other's view on secondary matters for the sake of common witness. Consequently,

> all officers and members are, therefore, urged to discourage any attempts within the Unions to proselytize, and to refrain from criticism or disparagement of the denominational views of other members. United opposition to fundamental error will be all the stronger if they are free to differ about secondary matters.[456]

The DB is hence a powerful ecclesiological statement. Being a member of the Church "to which all true believers belong"[457] implies creedal agreement to the statements of the basis. Consequently,

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[453] The text of the DB has remained unchanged since 1947 (except for clause D, see below). In what follows, we quote from Bürki, *Essentials*, 21. See also 'What We Believe', IFES, accessed 19 May 2020, https://ifesworld.org/en/beliefs/.
[454] Hammond, *Evangelical Belief*, 5.
[455] Lowman, *The Day*, 337.
[456] Hammond, *Evangelical Belief*, 45.
[457] Clause J.

one could read the DB as summarizing the essentials of a *missionary organization* and the essentials of the faith on which all Christians should agree.

4.2 Ecclesiology

"J: The one Holy Universal Church which is the Body of Christ and to which all true believers belong."

The IFES DB acknowledges the existence of the Church as a given. However, whilst the existence of a visible church is implied by the clause, the precision is given that *all true believers* form it goes beyond common creedal affirmations to imply that "ultimately, only God knows who belongs to Him and therefore to His Church."[458]

Here as in many other clauses, the key to interpreting the DB's view is that of marking a boundary between a believer's Church ecclesiology, in this case quite distinctly evangelical, and a Multitudinist Church. Again, personal faith is the critical key: "All who come to Christ in personal saving faith and acknowledge Him as Lord are made, by their new relationship with Him, members of the one, sanctified, worldwide company of His redeemed people."[459] So whilst no criteria for church membership are explicitly formulated in the DB, the underlying *believers'* Church ecclesiology clearly emerges from the commentary.[460]

Moreover, confessing the Church as being essentially *invisible* cannot be understood apart from pneumatology:

> The Bible teaches us that the Holy Spirit dwells both in the local Church and in the universal Church. The one Spirit *animates* the whole Church and is the source of fellowship which unites Christians in the "one body" of Christ.[461]

Is this "animation" the articulation between the spiritual reality of the universal Church and missionary engagement? The idea is not yet fully articulated, but the seed of a *missional ecclesiology* is here evident. The believer's *(immediate) animation* to be involved in mission presumes *membership* in the invisible Church, even without a satisfying local ecclesiological context.

In a development worth quoting at length, Hammond resorts to the notion of a *spiritual priesthood*, of which all Christians are members:

> This community constitutes a body of which Christ is the Head. They form a building or temple which is indwelt by God's Spirit. *They constitute a priesthood* which is to offer the sacrifice of worship. This "people of God" has *the duty to spread the wonderful knowledge of God's saving work*. In this community they are inter-dependent, or "members one of another." […] Such fellowship is clearly meant to be realized, wherever

[458] Bürki, *Essentials*, 44–45.

[459] Hammond, *Evangelical Belief*, 44. Reference given to John 10:16.

[460] On the personal nature of the faith and its implication for basis of faith, Collange comments that "the Church is not always mentioned in our confessions (Salvation Army, Assemblies of God) or is only mentioned incidentally (AEF, GBU...). This is due first of all to the "personal" perspective of a salvation understood in a rather individualistic way and to the congregationalist perspective of the community linked to it, the Church being then – where it is mentioned – the whole of 'all believers united in the Spirit' (GBU, AEF)." Collange, 'Les confessions de foi «évangéliques»', 77. The connection with congregationalism points towards the strong Brethren influence observable in the early IFES pioneer's own background.

[461] Hammond, *Evangelical Belief*, 43, emphasis mine. References are given to 1 Co 3:16, Ep 2:20-22, 4:3-4.

> possible, by every Christian by active membership in a local congregation. The Evangelical Unions affiliated to the Inter-Varsity Fellowship are not to be regarded as such local congregations or "churches." They have a limited purpose in a limited sphere and for a limited period in the experience of their members.[462]

This concise and balanced treatment is one of the most cogent to be found in IFES archives. Hammond's concern for respectful relationships between local student groups and church is remarkable. Note that the "duty to spread" the gospel is explicitly ascribed to the people of God and no prerogative of professional ministers only. Students are hence already full members of the Church universal and its legitimate emissaries in the world. This insistence on the invisible Church is not, however, to the detriment of local church membership. Speaking of student groups, Hammond is adamant that

> it is important that their members should not neglect regular participation in the worship and fellowship of a proper local expression of the Body of Christ. They ought normally to be baptized members, and to partake regularly of the Lord's Supper, in such a congregation. This means that the Inter-Varsity Fellowship would wish earnestly to disclaim any notion that it is, or desires to become, a Church or Sect. Its functions are purely those of an auxiliary to the mainstream of Church life.[463]

Assuming that a student group is "purely that of an auxiliary" implies the corresponding belief that students can rely on a supportive local ecclesial environment. However, as the recurring articles and debates on how to best support students transitioning "back" to local Churches show, this has never been universally the case. IFES students are encouraged to be members of a local church based on doctrinal agreement: "It is the duty and privilege of its members to encourage one another to work in true communion with any Christian congregation which is scriptural in preaching and practice, and whose members acknowledge the one Lord and confess the one faith."[464] Shortly after the heyday of ecumenism, Bürki is clear in his warning that "it is necessary also to observe that no encouragement is given in the New Testament to those who would exalt fellowship at the expense of sound doctrine."[465] As a result, many students have struggled, either for leadership or for theological reasons, not to mention the absence of a local Church in countries where Christians are a small and sometimes persecuted minority.

5 Partial Conclusion: Anchoring Truths for a Changing World

It is not easy to do justice to the role of the DB in the history of IFES. I have shown that despite an *a priori* difficult relationship to theology, IFES has developed its own theology, of which the DB is the earliest, most articulate, evidence. The DB presupposes *immediacy* of a believer's relationship with God, which is a set of eternally, practically a-contextual set of essential truths. This *immediacy* is

[462] Hammond, 44, emphasis mine. References are given to Ep 1:22-23, 2:20-22; 1 Pe 2:5, 2:9; Ro 12:5; Ep 4:3, 13-16; He 10:24-25.
[463] Hammond, 45.
[464] Hammond, 45.
[465] Hammond, 46.

supported by a firm affirmation in the trustworthiness and perspicacity of the Bible. It postulates that any student anywhere in the world would recognize the same essential truths to be essentials. Besides, allegiance to the affirmations of the DB creates and shapes a community of which students become *members*. This community is no alternative local church, but the manifestation of the *invisible Church* on campus. This believers' Church ecclesiology coexists with the underlying assumption, very implicit at this stage, that *mission* is primary in the Church's existence – and concomitantly in Christian existence. It is now to the slow development of a *missional ecclesiology* in the thinking of IFES authors that I turn.

II. IFES Authors Discussing Ecclesiology

How should the Church be theologically defined? A summary statement like the 1998 "Statement on the Church"[466] affirming the importance of the Church whilst at the same time posing that "We are not, and refrain from ever becoming, a local church"[467] was long in the making. It rested, among other things, on the ecclesiological work of several figures close to IFES: T. C. Hammond and John Stott, two Anglican clergymen who had a long-lasting influence on IFES students. Jim Stamoolis was theological student secretary for IFES in the 1980s and as such a sort of "in-house theologian." Zac Niringiye was himself Regional Secretary for EPSA.

1 T.C. Hammond: "In Understanding Be Men"

Hammond's *In Understanding Be Men,*[468] published in 1936 provided IFES circles with a first common work of doctrine, destined explicitly for "non-theological students." The book's overall tone is consensual, "somewhat Anglican in ethos and mildly Calvinistic in emphasis."[469] Written at the request of the IVF – he was himself part of its theological advisory committee[470] – this work is interesting from a theological point of view because it shows the interest of IFES circles for doctrine and theology.[471] Practically speaking, "Something not too technical was wanted to help students who

[466] See above Part I, 8.2.2

[467] 'EC 1998 Minutes', 26.

[468] T. C. Hammond, *In Understanding Be Men. A Handbook on Christian Doctrine for Non-Theological Students*, 5th edition. 1st in 1936 (London: InterVarsity Fellowship, 1960). The aim of the book was to "make accessible to the ordinary reader, if only in an elementary form, the great treasures of knowledge reposing in the volumes of theological thought." (p. v).

[469] Warren Nelson, *T.C. Hammond: Irish Christian: His Life and Legacy in Ireland and Australia* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1994), 133.

[470] Geoffrey Treloar, 'Hammond, Thomas Chatterton', in *Biographical Dictionary of Evangelicals*, ed. Timothy Larsen (Leicester: IVP, 2003), 286–87.

[471] Given his tight schedule, Hammond expressed the need of an assistant who happened to be no other than Douglas Johnson, the future IVF general secretary and very influential figure in IFES's early years. He was described in the preface of the first edition of "In Understanding Be Men" as "a graduate interested in the same project, and who wishes to remain anonymous." T. C. Hammond, *In Understanding Be Men. A Handbook on Christian Doctrine for Non-Theological Students* (London: InterVarsity Fellowship, 1936), vi. See Nelson, *T.C. Hammond*, 89. However, Johnson seems to have been much more than an assistant, being rather the originator of the volume of which he "hammered together a full outline and then approached Canon T. C. Hammond to polish it up and put his name to it." Geraint Fielder, *Lord of the Years: Sixty Years of Student Witness - Story of the Inter-Varsity Fellowship/Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship, 1928-88* (Leicester: IVP, 1988), 61.

had recently come to faith in Christ."[472] How could "non-theological" students be provided with enough yet not too much theology to navigate university life and teaching? A detailed study of the book would surely provide more insights, but for our purposes, it is to the treatment of the Church that we shall turn.[473]

For Hammond, "the points on which emphasis is needed are those which concern our common Evangelical Protestant position in contradistinction to extreme forms of Sacerdotalism and other perversions of the Apostolic tradition."[474] Apostolicity refers here to the apostles' teaching and not to a succession of bishops. His definition stresses more the Church *triumphant* than the Church *militant*, for in Hammond's view, "in its fullest sense, the Church must be described as the 'company of all true believers,' and this includes those who have passed to their rest, as well as true believers who are still living."[475] There is here a very close connection to the IFES doctrinal basis.[476] Yet, the Church militant is not forgotten, for Hammond concedes that "the Visible Church is the Body of Christ in action in the world, though never in its ideal character, but beset with the limitations of time, space and human infirmity."[477]

Hammond shows his interest in being attuned to students and knows how prompt they might be to use their newly acquired knowledge to question Church authorities, for he cautions that it "is a wise general rule for them not to attempt experiments."[478] Hammond advocates respect for the authorities, as long as no conflict of conscience is involved. The "self-determination" of the message of Scripture for an individual's course of action is a characteristic outworking of the doctrine of the *priesthood of all believers*, which is here implicitly used to empower people to make their own decisions, yet not in "hasty judgment."[479]

Despite encouraging respect for church authorities, Hammond's consistent reaffirmation that Scripture can be understood *immediately* by students leads him to take to task a view of ministry which he finds biblically unwarranted. For him, Scripture does not support "the two false elements which crept into the medieval doctrine of the ministry and have been revived in recent years,"[480] which he takes to be the hierarchical order of Church government and "the assigning to ministers of a mediatorial work as priests."[481] Hammond goes on to say that "Scripture asserts that Christians as a

[472] Nelson, *T.C. Hammond*, 88.
[473] For the broader question of ecclesiology, see Chase Kuhn, 'The Ecclesiological Influence of T.C. Hammond', *Churchman* 127, no. 4 (2013): 323–35.
[474] Hammond, *In Understanding*, 1960, 160.
[475] Hammond, 161.
[476] It seems that Hammond was heavily involved in writing it, following Treloar, *Disruption*, 199.
[477] Hammond, *In Understanding*, 1960, 162.
[478] Hammond, 160.
[479] Hammond, 160.
[480] Hammond, 168.
[481] Hammond, 168.

whole constitute a priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5). Scholars agree that sacerdotal terms are not discoverable in Christian writers until the close of the second century. 'Sacrifice is not part of the Christian ministry' (Hooker)."[482]

Furthermore, "any view of the Christian Ministry which makes ordination the occasion for the supposed bestowal of powers of mediation, sacrifice and special judicial powers over sinners is false to Holy Scripture. There is no occasion in the New Testament where the Christian minister is termed 'priest.'"[483] Hammond was also adamant to say that the concept of "clergy" as a "clerical caste" was "unknown to Scripture,"[484] but also went further in his goal to strengthen his audience's resistance to "sacerdotalism":

> The idea that the Christian minister is in any sense a mediator between God and man is "repugnant to holy Scripture." He may be a channel (or medium) through whom God speaks to His people. But there is no hint in Scripture that he is an indispensable link between an individual Christian and his God.[485]

One can easily see the polemicist[486] at work here when the tension is considered between Hammond's stringent refusal of any mediatorial function, whilst conceding of the possibility for a member of clergy to be a "medium." He furthers that

> the same perversion may be present in subtler forms. The Christian must beware of any obtrusion on the part of a ministry which in any way weakens the glory of our Lord's High Priestly work (see the Epistles) or arrogates to itself any power which Scripture claims belongs solely to Him or the Holy Spirit. While he ought to magnify the office of those commissioned to "feed the flock of God," he must also hold firmly to his own privileges as a member of the "royal priesthood" of redeemed sinners.[487]

Hammond's appeal to the reader to resist Church ministers who are potentially controlling is voiced precisely on the ground of his understanding of the *priesthood of all believers*. Since the book became "the basic diet for decades"[488] of IFES leaders, especially given the apparent lack of conservative Evangelical literature at the time of publishing *In Understanding Be Men*,[489] Hammond's underlying rationales have played a significant role.

Hammond did not define a "parachurch," but this ecclesiology carefully articulates the relationship between the local church and Christian students. Refusing a "sacerdotal" definition of the Church, he

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[482] Hammond, 168. Hammond does not explicitly reference Hooker's *Laws of Ecclesiastical Policy* 5.58.2. It is interesting to note that the first edition of the work read "Scripture asserts that *Christianity* as a whole constitutes a priesthood" Hammond, *In Understanding*, 1936, 207 emphasis mine. One can therefore posit either an evolution towards individualization of the understanding of priesthood in Hammond's thinking, or at least the desire to be more precise in his expression.

[483] Hammond, *In Understanding*, 1960, 171.

[484] Hammond, *In Understanding*, 1936, 207.

[485] Hammond, *In Understanding*, 1960, 172.

[486] On this aspect of Hammond's work, see Geoffrey Treloar, 'T. C. Hammond the Controversalist', *Anglican Historical Society Diocese of Sydney Journal* 51, no. 1 (2006): 20–35.

[487] Hammond, *In Understanding*, 1960, 173.

[488] Fielder, *Lord of the Years*, 61.

[489] The book was subsequently translated in several languages. The title of the Spanish edition is specially explicit as to the audience of the book: T. C. Hammond, *Cómo comprender la doctrina cristiana: manual de teologia para laicos* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Certeza, 1978). See Treloar, *Disruption*, 200. for the importance of the work.

strongly insists that every student believer is a member of the royal priesthood and therefore of the Church. Yet this *membership* is framed within the limits of an individual conscience shaped by the student's own diligent reading of Scripture and warranted insofar as the local church is essentially a context in which the student is fed by the Scriptures and responding to them. Implicitly for Hammond, the missionary calling of the individual emerges out of his or her relationship to God and precedes membership in the local church, the latter being evaluated based on its faithfulness to the former.

2 John Stott: "One People"

The next work relevant to our exploration is the published version of the "Pastoral Theology lectures" delivered in Durham University in 1968 by the Anglican priest Stott.[490] Addressed initially to theological students and focusing on attitudes of the clergy to the laity, the lectures were originally titled "The Theology of the Laity."[491] This book is interesting because of Stott's long association with IFES circles. It was deemed relevant enough for the student world to be published by Inter-Varsity Press, the publishing house of Inter-Varsity in the United States.

The work surveys the doctrine of the Church and focuses on different kinds of relationships which have existed between clergy and laity. Stott comments how tense these relations have often been and pointedly remarks that lay initiatives having contributed to the missionary movements in the 19th century "were spontaneous, the upsurge of lay energy from below, sometimes tolerated by church leaders only because they had no alternative."[492] Stott concludes that the correct relationship between clergy and laity is neither one of dominion (clericalism) or denigration (anticlericalism), nor of separation (dualism), but service, for "the laity are the Church and that they, the clergy, are appointed to serve them, to seek to equip them to be what God intends them to be."[493]

According to Stott, "the chief way in which the clergy are to serve the laity is in helping to teach and train them for their life, work and especially witness (marturia) in the world. The diakonia, service, of the clergy is subservient to the marturia of the laity."[494] The argument rests on functional differentiation and not on apostolic succession.

Stott hence argues for a *missiological* understanding of the Church based on the very text from which the *priesthood of all believers* is most often argued:

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[490] As Stott explains in the preface, the book was "a revision and extension" of the lectures. John Stott, *One People* (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1971), 7.

[491] Stott refers several times to an important book published a few years earlier, Kraemer, *A Theology of the Laity*.

[492] Stott, *One People*, 10.

[493] Stott, 42.

[494] Stott, 13.

> The New Testament authors declare, the God who has called us out of the world sends us back into the world: you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.[495]

Stott does not advocate abolishing clergy but goes on noticing that "God's people […] are both a priestly people, to offer to Him the acceptable, spiritual sacrifices of praise and prayer, and a missionary people, to declare to others the excellences of their God, the God who has called them into His marvellous light and has had mercy upon them."[496] As an aside, Stott counters Cyprian's identification of the priest with the Old Testament priestly function, arguing that "the Old Testament priesthood has been superseded in the New by the priesthood of all believers, that is, the priesthood of the whole Church."[497]

Stott's concern for teaching the laity and encouraging students to be missionaries where they are, seems to have strongly appealed to the masses of students he was in contact with, especially in later years.[498]

Christians are called and equipped for witness in their respective spheres for two main reasons. Firstly, because "in many respects, the laity are in a position to engage in this work far more effectively than the clergy, because 'the laity is the dispersion of the church,'[499] 'immersed in the world,'[500] penetrating more deeply into secular society than the average clergyman will ever get."[501] Secondly, witness can only be practised by people by virtue of their Christian calling and not through any delegation to a specific group (clergy), for "there is no possibility of worship or witness by proxy."[502] This has vast consequences for the practice of ministry in ecclesial contexts and in the wider world. It is arguably the concern to see Christians taking care of each other in the process of discovering God's word for themselves that brought Stott also to endorse the practice – at the time relatively new – of small (home)groups operating similarly to student groups on campus. In Stott's own words,

> If it [the growth of home-groups] needs to be explained in terms of human experience, it is probably to be understood as a protest against the dehumanizing processes of secular society and the superficial formalism of much church life. There is a widespread hunger for a life which is genuinely human and absolutely real.[503]

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[495] Stott, 17.

[496] Stott, 24–25.

[497] Stott, 29.

[498] For further biographical context, see Timothy Dudley-Smith, *John Stott. A Global Ministry.* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2001), chaps 10–12; Alister Chapman, *Godly Ambition. John Stott and the Evangelical Movement* (New York: OUP, 2012), chap. 6.

[499] Stott quotes Kraemer, *A Theology of the Laity*, 181.

[500] Stott quotes John A. T. Robinson, *Layman's Church* (London: Lutterworth, 1963), 18.

[501] Stott, *One People*, 44.

[502] Stott, 25.

[503] Stott, 73. A good illustration might be given from a student remembering her pioneering years in GBEU Switzerland (she was later with her husband to pioneer IFES groups in francophone Africa): "I had brought my whole family there, little by little, and then my brother went to a camp, several camps, skiing, with us. And he saw young people reading their Bibles every day, he said 'but that's not true, it's not possible for young people to read their Bibles every day,' he couldn't believe his eyes. He found that sensational. And it's true that it's interesting when you're from the Reformed church to approach

So, for Stott, the laity essentially *is the Church* which witnesses in different contexts: in short, *a priesthood of all believers*. If this holds true, then witnessing students *are* the Church, they are not *alongside* the Church as the word *parachurch* could indicate. Because one of the tasks of the gathered assembly is to equip the laity to be the scattered Church and to *mediate* the Gospel to their entourage, the laity cannot be autonomous from the Church.

3 Jim Stamoolis: Ecclesiology and Mission

Stamoolis, IFES Theological Student Secretary in the 1980s, penned a brief article relevant to our work.[504] He proposes that "the central defining aspect of evangelical ecclesiology is that the gospel must be personally applied to the individual. It is important to note that saying it must be personally applied does not necessarily mean it must be individually applied."[505] Yet, Stamoolis also notes that it is one thing to believe that every student has the *potential* to witness on campus. It is another to think they are *equipped* to do so: *training* usually helps bridge the gap. The question is at core missiological and depends on one's comprehension of the mission field. Stamoolis optimistically notes that at the time of writing, a shift in perceptions was occurring:

> The good news is that the concept of lay witness is finding new life. Part of the reason for the demise of lay witness seemed to be in the presumed need for a heavy apologetic to convince secular man of the existence of God. The enemy of secularism was not one that an ordinary Christian could combat. Therefore, it took a trained professional to be able to present the gospel. In the postmodern age, personal opinion is more acceptable, albeit personal opinion cannot be accompanied by a dogmatic claim to have universal truth.[506]

The allusion to the *priesthood of all believers* is implicit but shows a remarkable degree of flexibility in this context. It is also rendered necessary by the fact that "church" and "witness" do not always fully overlap:

> The Church and, by extension, the local manifestations of the universal Church are the visible expressions of God's activity in redeeming humankind. It is always a mistake to place the boundaries of the kingdom of God as co-terminus to the Church. We do not fully know where God is working or even how he is working in his creation.[507]

On the one hand, if Gospel work can occur outside of the boundaries of the local church, it can therefore occur in the context of a parachurch group. On the other hand, it means that God might be at work even outside of (para-)ecclesial frameworks. Christians might be invited to discern where God is already at work in the world before they join in. Though rarely articulated in IFES documents prior to the late 2000s, this last argument is nevertheless somewhat implicit from the organization's early

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the Bible in a different way from an old pastor who teaches us ex cathedra, and it's true that this is something that works well with young people." Interview with Denyse and Louis Perret, 12.02.12.

[504] James Stamoolis, 'An Evangelical Position on Ecclesiology and Mission', *International Review of Mission* 90, no. 358 (1 July 2001): 309–16.

[505] Stamoolis, 310.

[506] Stamoolis, 313.

[507] Stamoolis, 313.

history. Non-Christian students showing an interest in the Gospel, being open to exploring its truth and relevance during their university years and engaging in conversations and activities with Christian students, are witnesses to the work of the Holy Spirit *prior* to the witness of IFES students –or other Christian students.

4 René Padilla: "An Ecclesiology for Integral Mission"

In a thoughtful volume published in 2003, Padilla and several of his colleagues offer theological rationales for local practices of integral mission.[508] Most of the foundations of Padilla's reflection, which I present here, had been laid during his years as IFES staff.[509]

The theologian starts by contending that the confession of Christ as *Kyrios*, Lord of the whole universe, represented a contextualization of the Pauline writing for the New Testament readers.[510] Next, he argues that "the integral church is one which recognizes that all spheres of life are 'mission fields' and looks for ways of asserting the sovereignty of Jesus Christ in all of them."[511] This implies an incarnational presence of the believer in all spheres of life, as an agent of the inaugurated kingdom:

> Christian discipleship understood as a missionary lifestyle – the active participation in the realization of God's plan for human existence and the creation, revealed in Jesus Christ – to which the whole church and each of its members have been called, expresses, in a word, the essence of the church's mission.[512]

Padilla further contends that the main impediment to this integral presence of Christians in all their spheres of life lies in the failure of church leadership to empower lay believers to witness without clerical support. In his own, rather direct words, bearing close reminiscences of IFES's insistence on lay student leadership,

> Integral mission demands the "declericalization" of ministries and a "laicization" of the clergy. In other words, it requires a recognition of the apostolic nature of the whole church. This implies, on one hand, that all members, by the simple fact of being disciples of Christ, share in the commission to go into the world in the name of Jesus Christ, as his witnesses. It also implies, on the other hand, that the leaders are a part of the laos, the people of God, just as are all the rest of Christ's followers, no more and no less.[513]

Such development shows a close connection to Stott's thinking on articulating the role of lay people – witnessing, and clergy – equipping. Padilla closes the circle with the *priesthood of all believers*:

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[508] C. René Padilla and Tetsunao Yamamori, eds., *La iglesia local como agente de transformación: una eclesiología para la misión integral* (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Ediciones Kairós, 2003). In what follows, I use the English translation: C. René Padilla, 'Introduction: An Ecclesiology for Integral Mission', in *The Local Church, Agent of Transformation: An Ecclesiology for Integral Mission*, ed. C. René Padilla and Tetsunao Yamamori (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Ediciones Kairós, 2004), 19–49.

[509] Padilla's talk at Lausanne seems to have precipitated his departure from the senior IFES team, pressured by the US and UK GSs. This is also hinted at by David C. Kirkpatrick, 'Died: C. René Padilla, Father of Integral Mission', News & Reporting, accessed 22 July 2021, https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2021/april/rene-padilla-died-integral-mission-latin-american-theology.html.

[510] Padilla, 'Ecclesiology', 24.

[511] Padilla, 27.

[512] Padilla, 28.

[513] Padilla, 45.

> All this is in accordance with the biblical doctrine which formed one of the pillars of the Reformation of the sixteenth century, the priesthood of all believers. The classical reformers like Luther and Calvin, however, emphasized the soteriological consequences of that doctrine, namely that a person could have a direct relationship with God without the need for intermediaries.[514]

Lest his readers may incline to limit the doctrine to individual consequences, Padilla hastens to add that the magisterial Reformers

> did not pay much attention to the ecclesiological consequences: that all believers are called to Christian ministry, whatever their vocation. In consequence, it was a common idea in the Protestant world that the benefits of salvation could be separated from the responsibility for mission. Integral mission demands the recovery of the priesthood of all believers to the extent that the church becomes a community in which all members, equally, encourage each other to discover and develop their gifts and ministries in those countless areas of human existence which need transformation by the power of the gospel.[515]

Such argumentation underlines the necessity of all Christian students to take the missionary tasks seriously by virtue of the nature of their Christian faith. The same applied to Church leadership.[516] In short, Padilla's theology of the lordship of Christ over the whole earth births his concern for *integral mission*. This leads him to the conclusion that the *whole* Church is called to mission wherever its members are found. Consequently, these lay members need to be equipped and encouraged for their service, which is the Church leadership's task. The connections with the logic of student ministry are clear.

5 David Zac Niringiye: "The Church: God's Pilgrim People"

Published in 2015, *The Church: God's Pilgrim People* is one of the latest works in ecclesiology penned by a former senior IFES staff member.[517] Niringiye acknowledges numerous IFES figures in his foreword, representing an important treatment of ecclesiology from a Majority World Perspective.

Niringiye's work is more narrative than analytical. Beginning from the Old Testament and painting a grand panorama of biblical history, Niringiye summarizes his thoughts by suggesting three marks for a church: "faith, love and hope – as the key features that mark out the new community in Christ as the people of God."[518] The Church has its roots in the people of Israel, whose election had the blessing of others in mind: "Moses made it clear that the people of Israel were now God's people in God's mission to restore creation harmony and community for his pleasure and glory."[519]

Consequently, most of the setbacks experienced by Israel can be attributed to their failure to realize their vocation as God's ambassadors. Niringiye intertwines the situation of Israel and the contemporary Christian Church. In rather direct words, he suggests that "a lot of the malaise and

514 Padilla, 45.
515 Padilla, 45–46.
516 Padilla, 47.
517 Niringye was RS for EPSA until 2000.
518 David Zac Niringiye, *The Church: God's Pilgrim People*, 2015, 26.
519 Niringiye, 56.

slumber in the churches today can be traced to the loss of consciousness of the pilgrim nature of our lives, individually and corporately."[520] This "pilgrim nature" is the central metaphor of Niringiye's work and is consistent with the fact that he writes from a Majority World perspective where Evangelical churches are often accustomed to being the minority or at least not as privileged as many Western churches.

Niringiye develops a *missional ecclesiology* more interested in the spiritual character of the community than in its programs. Ethical coherence is presented as an essential marker of the true nature of a given assembly. Commenting on "strong" Churches around the world, he comments that

> such churches often lose their cutting edge and get conformed to the society around them, worshipping its idols and participating in its greed. They coexist with, and in some cases enhance, the levels of social injustice in their societies. These churches are said to be strong, thriving and powerful, and yet the levels of social injustice are growing. Doesn't that say something about whom they serve and worship? Just as in Israel there was a lot of religion, so these churches are packed with programmes and activities. Yet God's verdict on such churches stands: they are idolatrous.[521]

Niringiye's work features robust social criticism. Despite having worked for many years in IFES, he does not shy away from rebuking fellow Evangelicals. For example, having noted that Jesus was rejected by the religious establishment of his day, he goes on to assert that "they are today's ecclesiastical bureaucrats: archbishops, bishops, clergy and pastors are the chief priest and priests; Bible-believing Evangelicals are the Pharisees of the time; and theologians of all shades are the teachers of the law."[522]

The key to a rediscovery of the power of the "Church project" is for the author to rediscover the role of everyone in God's mission. Niringiye distinguishes between "calling" and "assignment":

> Calling is assumed in assignment: it is about being and belonging to Jesus, in God's mission and his kingdom. Assignment is about the location and role within God's mission and kingdom, the particular journey of disciple that is marked out, the particular cross that the disciple must take up in following Jesus.[523]

This is a *theology of the laity:* "To everyone Jesus calls, he assigns a task; everyone who follows has a particular journey with Jesus, growing to know him more on that journey as they live out their discipleship."[524]

What is particularly striking for this research is that there is almost no difference between the vocation of a local church and that of a student group. Making more explicit what was latent in Hammond and implicit in Stott, Niringye blurs the lines between Church and parachurch by not assigning a strong significance to clerical roles in his definition of the Church. Ultimately, this means

[520] Niringiye, 59.
[521] Niringiye, 72.
[522] Niringiye, 102.
[523] Niringiye, 103.
[524] Niringiye, 103.

that there is no sharp line between the vocation of today's Church and that of the people of Israel. Niringye supports his case by quoting extensively from Wright's exposition of Exodus 19:

> The function of priesthood in Israel itself was to stand between God and the rest of the people – representing God to the people (by their teaching function) and representing and bringing the people to God (by their sacrificial function). Through the priesthood, God was made known to the people, and the people could come into acceptable relationship to God. So God assigns to his people as a whole community the role of priesthood for the nations. As their priests stood in relation to God and the rest of *Israel*, so they as a whole community were to stand in relation to God and the rest of the *nations*.[525]

Christians need to realize the transitory character of their situation as *pilgrims* and their vocation to engage their environment: "The Gospels are emphatic that as we follow Jesus, we declare the good news of the reign of God in all we are and do. Sharing the good news about Jesus is integral to being a disciple."[526] Commenting on the early disciples' commitment, Niringiye notes that

> the impact of their witness to the world would not be achieved in withdrawal, but like salt in food and light expelling darkness, it was through their presence, a savouring presence, and by the proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom that they would prevent moral decay and expel the darkness of evil in the world.[527]

This represents a shift in the argument from the earlier IFES rhetoric, which had an embattlement character. IFES was on campus more to *preserve* and *defend theology* than to *engage the world*. This is coherent with a strong sense of the pneumatological character of the community:

> With the advent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost God's redemptive activity shifted from working through the particular people and nation of Israel to working among all peoples and nations, "all whom the Lord our God will call," as Peter proclaimed (2:39). The universalization of the gospel of the kingdom of God was immediate upon the coming of the Holy Spirit. At Pentecost the new community, the community of the kingdom of God, was inaugurated – ushered into the world, embodying the presence of Christ in the world, living by His word and his Spirit.[528]

Niringye displays a strong bent towards *voluntarism*. He observes that diverse communities existed already in New Testament times, suggesting that "the Greek term koinonia, which is translated as 'fellowship,' signified voluntary partnership or sharing around a particular interest, vocation or commitment and was in common use. What was novel was the nature and basis of their koinonia. Their koinonia was the work of the Holy Spirit."[529]

This insistence on the Holy Spirit, not found in earlier IFES discussions of ecclesiology, is noticeable. It indicates the more "tentative" nature of ecclesiological existence in a more fragile environment than in the privileged contexts out of which earlier IFES writings arose. However, scepticism towards methodological certainties does not mean a complete overturning of theological tables, as the following excerpt shows:

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[525] Christopher J. H. Wright, *Knowing Jesus through the Old Testament* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2014), 92.
[526] Niringiye, *The Church*, 111.
[527] Niringiye, 109.
[528] Niringiye, 122.
[529] Niringiye, 122–23.

> Understanding, discerning and obeying: that is what Christian mission is primarily about. One of the biggest problems today is the over-dependence on methods, strategies, institutions and technologies in Christian mission. The challenge before us is to discern the voice of the Holy Spirit amid the noises of our histories, cultures and lifestyles. Priority must be given to Bible teaching and prayer.[530]

The theological foundations Niringiye outlines here go beyond earlier IFES thinking but remain coherent with the foundations: attentiveness to context, growing cultural awareness and the centrality of a Scripture-shaped piety. In the same way Hammond had stressed the importance of scriptural reasoning, Niringye calls for an engagement with the world logically intertwined with evangelism:

> The first mark, then, of the presence of the Holy Spirit in a community is that the gospel will be continually proclaimed. This is evangelism. It should be noted that the gospel was proclaimed not just to the outsiders; the believers needed to continue to hear the good news expounded, constantly hearing the call to turn their entire being towards God and his purposes and continue to follow Jesus.[531]

Fundamentally then, because the *mission of God* precedes the *Mission of the Church*, IFES cannot be "sent by the Church":

> Where did we get the idea of a "sending church"? It is not the Church that sends; the Church is sent. It is not the Church that sends; Jesus sends by his Spirit. We, the disciples of Christ, the new community, are the sent people of God. Now as then, it is God who sends, and he sends those he has called first as his disciples.[532]

The argument comes full circle: if the people of God carry out the mission of God sent by the Spirit of God, the legitimacy of parachurch missionary involvement is achieved and the distinctions between Church and parachurch blurred to a large extent. Whatever ecclesiastical reservations may arise, students *qua* Christians can prayerfully discern what God calls them to do. It is even arguable that the campus could in many cases play in the life of Christian students the same role as exile played in the history of Israel: "Israel, as a people of God, were formed in the exodus; when they lost track of their identity after they settled in the promised land they were taken into exile, from where the remnant rediscovered their identity and mission."[533] No few testimonies of IFES students follow roughly the same lines: they had a rather fundamental Christian commitment amounting to nominalism, for their faith was inherited from their parents. The confrontation with new ideas, the campus culture and other perspectives forced them to revisit their own assurances. In the same way as Stott and Stamoolis called for students to be equipped, Niringye insists that "insiders" need to be taught as well and are not "ready to go and teach" their classmates – *mediate* the Gospel, contrary to what the earliest IFES books and brochures had assumed. Pneumatological discernment and contextual changes force the actors to realign their own convictions attentively and constantly to God's prompting. The *immediacy* of the believer's relationship to God is not questioned, but the

[530] Niringiye, 144.
[531] Niringiye, 150.
[532] Niringiye, 154.
[533] Niringiye, 175.

insistence of these authors on equipment shows that such piety does not automatically generate wise *mediation*.

Hammering this missiological point, Niringiye insists that the discourse cannot, therefore, continue to be one of "insider vs outsiders":

> We have already understood that it is not the work of the Christian community to "bring others" into the fold of Christ; Jesus will bring them. The longing to attain the "whole measure of the fullness of Christ" should compel us to go to the ends of the earth, to other cultures and nationalities, to search for those who belong to him, so that with them our understanding and appreciation of our redemption is enhanced and our experience of Christ deepened. […] We need all the cultures, all the nations and all the peoples in order to appreciate the multi-dimensional, multi-faceted fullness of Christ. It is the translation of the life of Jesus into the way of life of all the world's cultures and subcultures throughout history that will enable us all to correct, enlarge and focus our own understanding and experience in Christ.[534]

Here, Niringye goes further than all the preceding authors I have surveyed. He does not suppose that the Church "has it all" and "merely needs communicating it," but understands mission as enriching the Church by broadening its horizons and its understanding of God. This does not mean that the Church has nothing to say to the world but that the Church can still learn. By extension, such an approach is promising for a ministry to the university, a place of discoveries.

III. Partial Synthesis: IFES as Theological Enterprise

The IFES story is riddled with debates about the theological legitimacy of its enterprise alongside the Church. As I will show in the next part, calling the organization *parachurch* does not solve many conceptual problems. It can be helpful as a commonly understood umbrella term, but it also betrays a fundamentally *ecclesiocentric* approach, which is growingly questioned by the current shape of World Christianity and the secularizing tendencies of the West.

History might be an explanatory factor: because the relevance of the Christian faith was questioned earlier on many university campuses than in the rest of society, IFES had to develop a theology compatible with its ministry environment. From the core missiological conviction that any student can witness to his or her faith on campus and that the university is a mission field in dire need to be reached with the Gospel, the fellowship concluded that God's mission is primary over ecclesial structures.

True to their evangelical identity, the fellowship's leaders argued that the Bible was perspicuous and readable by all students who would, through faithful study, apply its teachings to their lives and studies.

Yet, the Bible was not the only supporting structure to IFES's mission. A missionary organization cannot dispense with theological legitimizing devices. The IFES precursors had developed their

[534] Niringiye, 183.

doctrinal basis, which, once carefully merged into a common document, provided the newly founded fellowship with a core assemblage of beliefs considered unchangeably essential to the Evangelical faith's orthodoxy. Even if the doctrinal basis was never seen as akin to a new creed, IFES indeed was *theologizing,* deciding over which belief was central to live out and *mediate* the Gospel on university campuses faithfully. Furthermore, as the years went by, IFES leaders developed into theologians themselves or called upon recognized theologians to flesh out their theological thinking, either through doctrinal books, Bible study guides, or pamphlets.

The missional understanding of the student's vocation on campus and the dispensability of any clerical oversight to students' activities are the most evident supporting elements showing that the *priesthood of all believers* is the implicit rationale to the ministry of IFES. Yet, as the growing literature output shows, this understanding was not – contrary to what many polemicists have argued throughout the last centuries of Church history and during the shorter IFES history – individualistic. It starts from the *immediate* access to God, but it is discovered, lived out and refined through one's *participation* in a fellowship with a clear *missional* vision.

Having begun as a "mere" missionary organization networking people with common aspirations to proclaim the gospel on university campuses, IFES matured into a theological enterprise in its own right, offering some of its leaders the venue to systematically explore the theological underpinnings of what was at the beginning a more pragmatic venture: to refine their thinking in light of international encounters as theological iron sharpens theological iron.

This exploration of how ecclesiological and missiological reflections have developed throughout the history of IFES has shown how the ideas of *immediacy, mediation* and *participation* which I argue to be constitutive of a missional understanding of the *priesthood of all believers,* keep surfacing, even if only implicitly. In the remainder of this work, I will show how further theological resources, notably in biblical theology and *missional ecclesiology* contribute to a fuller understanding of the work of IFES.

Part Four: Theological Resources

> There is never a time, however, when the priesthood of all believers is not crucial in the life of the church – it belongs to the esse, not the bene esse, of the church.[535]

Having surveyed the historical development of IFES and how its "in-house" theologians have framed its work, I turn to biblical and theological materials. I argue in this research that the *priesthood of all believers* is the underlying theological doctrine that best helps make sense of the work of IFES. In this part, I briefly examine the biblical foundations of the doctrine of the *priesthood of all believers*. I then draw on a range of theological voices exploring the role of the laity in the mission of the Church to show how the *priesthood of all believers* allows for a *missional ecclesiology.*[536] From there, I suggest an in-depth examination of the "*parachurch,"* which is the "ecclesiological label" which has mostly been attributed to organizations like IFES. Though widely used, I show that this label does not reflect how IFES leaders have understood their work: for them, their work was the natural, contextual outworking on campus of a *missional* understanding of the Church. Following Roland Allen's missiological reflections, student ministry can then be seen as a *ministry of expansion* of the Church. I consequently argue that students *participate* in the *missio Dei* as *priests* and pilgrims in a complex environment. Finally, the argument comes full circle with a reflection on *apostolicity* as an essential character of the Church.

I. The Priesthood of All Believers

I will cover the most salient aspects of the OT priesthood, notably the articulation of the priestly order and the rest of the people and what happens to that function in NT times and the patristic era, always focusing on elements that can helpfully shed light on the work of IFES. I then explore the fundamental text of 1 Peter 2:4 - 10, which often serves as the NT background for a doctrine of the *priesthood of all believers*. I then discuss the thorny question of articulating the collective and individual dimensions of this calling to *serve others*.

1 Biblical Considerations: From the Old to the New Priesthood

1.1 Old Testament

1.1.1 Priests for the Nation

In the Old Testament, priests are part of the overarching hierarchical structure of Israel, reflecting what Jenson calls a "graded holiness"[537] – a stratification of the people according to purity and statutory proximity to God. They were generally understood as serving "as intermediaries between the

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[535] Robert A. Muthiah, *The Priesthood of All Believers in the Twenty-First Century: Living Faithfully as the Whole People of God in a Postmodern Context*, Kindle (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2009), secs 43–46.

[536] A whole range of other ecclesiological implications – especially for church policies – could be drawn from the texts I examine here, but it would exceed the scope of this work. See Greggs, 'The Priesthood of No Believer', 376.

[537] Philip Jenson, *Graded Holiness: A Key to the Priestly Conception of the World*, JSOT (Sheffield: Bloomsbury, 1992).

people and God, and as advisors and leaders of the nation."[538] Priests were also responsible for presenting the people's sacrifices.[539] Yet, there is a shift from a more sacrificial understanding of the priesthood towards a more educational one in the post-exilic period.[540] One crucial dimension of this teaching was the distinction between sacred and profane,[541] helping the people distinguish what is right before the Lord and instructions on proper conduct.[542]

Another dimension of the priestly office, divination, offers divine answers to precise questions asked by the people and delivers oracles, often using the mysterious *Urim* and *Thummim*.[543] Anizor and Voss deduce that the common feature of the non-sacrificial elements of priestly ministry

> is their clear public and word-centered orientation. Priests bring the word of the Lord to bear on the entirety of Israel's existence, in the everyday and sacred dimensions as well as the legal and cultic. Priests were the heralds of the will of Yahweh, especially as they interpreted the word for the people and applied it to the difficult and various circumstances of Israel's community life. These priestly practices contributed in different ways to forming a covenantally faithful people by constantly directing the gaze of the community to the very covenantal word that formed it.[544]

Priests, then,

> have the honor of continual access to the presence of the Lord in the sanctuary, but they also bear the responsibilities of offering sacrifices for the people, helping them discern holy from profane and clean from unclean, teaching the law, applying its commands to the varying circumstances of Israel's life and blessing the people in the Lord's name.[545]

1.1.2 A Priestly Nation

The Old Testament also speaks of a priestly vocation for the people of Israel as a community. Just before the Law is formally given, God calls his people to a special relationship:

> Now therefore, if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession out of all the peoples. Indeed, the whole earth is mine, but you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the Israelites.[546]

Durham interprets these words in this way:

> Israel as the "special treasure" is Israel become uniquely Yahweh's prized possession by their commitment to him in covenant. Israel as a "kingdom of priests" is Israel committed to the extension throughout the world of the ministry of Yahweh's Presence, […] a kingdom run not by politicians depending upon strength and connivance but by priests depending on faith in Yahweh, a servant nation instead of a ruling nation. Israel as a "holy people" then represents a third dimension […]: they are to be

[538] John T. Swann, 'Priests', in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, ed. John D. Barry (Bellingham: Lexham, 2016).
[539] Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions* (London: Darton, 1961), 356; John H. Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament: Introducing the Conceptual World of the Hebrew Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 156.
[540] Swann, 'Priests'.
[541] Lev. 10.10, Ez, 22.26, Hag. 2.10-14, etc.
[542] Jeremiah 2 :8, Os. 4 :6, etc.
[543] Numerous hypotheses have been made about these unknown objects: were they dice? Sticks? etc. No scholarly consensus has emerged yet. Cf. Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 352.
[544] Anizor and Voss, *Representing Christ*, 36.
[545] Anizor and Voss, 32.
[546] Ex 19:5 – 6.

> a people set apart, different from all other people by what they are and are becoming – a display-people, a showcase to the world of how being in covenant with Yahweh changes a people.[547]

Israel is elected explicitly from amongst the nations, to "assume a special function"[548] – that of blessing. In Exodus 19:6, Israel is called a holy nation (גּוֹי קָדֹושׁ – *goy kadosh*). The use of the word גּוֹי is unusual for Israel,[549] yet, the same word is used in the calling of Abraham to be a blessing to the nations in Genesis 12:2. This suggests that this election is a missionary calling.[550] In Wright's view, this "key missiological text"[551] has far-reaching implications for the understanding of God's relation to his people, and Israel's relation to the world:

> The universal perspective […] is explicit in the double phrases *all nations* and *the whole earth*. Although the action is taking place between YHWH and Israel alone at Mount Sinai, God has not forgotten his wider mission of blessing the rest of the nations of the earth through these particular people who he has redeemed.[552]

Electing Israel, God aims to accomplish his purposes for the other nations as well. Snyder concludes that "God's plan was that his people would represent him to the world. They would be the channel of his revelation and his salvation purposes. This was God's commission to Israel. Although Israel often was unfaithful and the commission was only partially fulfilled, God's purpose was clear."[553]

1.2 New Testament

1.2.1 Christ as the High Priest

The NT presents Christ as the ultimate High Priest, surpassing the Levitical priesthood. Our interest here is to see how Christ's disciples are depicted as a priesthood. Leithart poses baptism as the channel of this attribution:

> As first-century Jewish converts, once divided into priests and laymen (cf. Acts 6:7), were baptized, a homogeneously priestly people emerged. Baptism formed a new Israel out of the old, molding her into the eschatological race of the Last Adam, the kingdom of priests. It is the efficacious sign of the clothing change of heaven and earth, destroying antique Israelite order and remapping the terrain. It is the "washing of palingenesia."[554]

Leithart makes a critical case in closely linking OT motives and rites to Christ's work, but this connection can also be made more straightforwardly, for what Leithart leaves open in his exercise in correspondences are the goals of the inclusion of Christians into Christ's priestly ministry. It is not

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[547] John I. Durham, *Exodus*, Word Biblical Commentary 3 (Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1986), 263.

[548] W. J Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation: A Theology of the Old Testament Covenants.*, 1st edition in 1984, Biblical and Theological Classics (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1997), 86.

[549] W. Ross Blackburn, *The God Who Makes Himself Known: The Missionary Heart of the Book of Exodus* (Downers Grove: Apollos, 2012), 93.

[550] Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, 89.

[551] Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2006), 224. At the time of writing, Wright is IFES vice-president and chairs the Theological Advisory Group.

[552] Wright, 224–25.

[553] Howard A. Snyder, *Liberating the Church: The Ecology of Church & Kingdom* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1983), 171.

[554] Peter Leithart, *The Priesthood of the Plebs: A Theology of Baptism* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2003), 197.

the purpose of the present work to examine the priesthood of Christ in detail but to see its potential link to the *priesthood of all believers*. As we shall notice soon, priestly dimensions to the life and ministry of the Christians will only be *derivative* and ensue from their being *in Christ*.

1.2.1 1 Peter – An Essential Text for a Controversial Doctrine

When the notion of a *priesthood of all believers* is discussed, the standard go-to passage is in 1 Peter. Scholars debate whether the doctrine can appropriately be based on this passage. In what follows, I argue that the priesthood described in 1 Peter 2 is an attribute of the whole multi-ethnic Church, Jew and Gentile. This is a *communal* reality but also shows itself in individual Christian action in the world. This priestly activity is centred on witness – *mediation* – and involves Christians instructing one another and building one another up.

The text offers several ways the letter's addressees will live the holy living to which they are called.

> 4 Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and 5 like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 6 For it stands in scripture:
>
> "See, I am laying in Zion a stone,
> a cornerstone chosen and precious;
> and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame."
>
> 7 To you then who believe, he is precious; but for those who do not believe,
> "The stone that the builders rejected
> has become the very head of the corner,"
>
> 8 and
> "A stone that makes them stumble,
> and a rock that makes them fall."
>
> They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.
>
> 9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.[555]

This text "is notable as representing one of the largest collections of OT images in the NT,"[556] with numerous allusions to Exodus 19. 1 Peter addresses as an "elect" people very similarly to how the people of Israel were constituted as a "treasured possession" in the Sinai Desert, having been called "out of darkness."[557] In the same way as Israel's election rested on God's goodwill alone, "The status of Christians depends upon the status of Christ, for they are joined to him."[558]

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[555] Paul J. Achtemeier, *1 Peter: A Commentary on First Peter*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 149.
[556] Achtemeier, 150.
[557] 1 Pe 2:9.
[558] Edmund P. Clowney, *The Message of 1 Peter*, The Bible Speaks Today (Leicester: IVP, 1988), 83.

However, a very significant difference between the calling to life of the first and the second "holy priesthoods" is the inclusion of Gentiles into the latter. In the same way as God elected Israel to be a blessing for the nations, the new multi-ethnic Christian community is elected in Christ for a particular goal.

1.2.2 Collective or Individual Priesthood?

Does this widening of the priestly calling to a larger group entail a *priesthood of all believers*? Snyder answers positively and insists that

> in the Old Testament, *some* of God's people were priests: now *all* are priests, fulfilling the original design. In the Old Testament, *some* people were special servants of God: now *all* believers are servants of Christ. In the Old Testament, *some* people were occasionally gifted by the Spirit for special tasks: now *all* God's people receive gifts of the Spirit.[559]

Other commentators question whether the functions of the OT priests can be transferred to *individual* Christians. Greggs, for instance, notes a tendency to individualize the doctrine at the expense of its communal aspects. In relatively strong words, he assesses that

> the priesthood of all believers has an easy habit of becoming a discussion of the priesthood of each believer, individually and independently, in which each of us is considered our own priest. In that way, the doctrine falls victim to the very thing it seeks to avoid: individuals appropriate the very thing which in the work of Christ ends, and which is only continued as the believer participates in the body of Christ, in the whole life of the church.[560]

Greggs also affirms that "the idea of priesthood is never applied to an individual in the NT (beyond those who are temple priests) except Jesus Christ."[561] Similarly, Achtemeier[562] insists that

> the point of this verse [1 Peter 2:5] is not the priestly status of each individual Christian, nor the idea that each is to function as a priest for his or her fellow Christian. The priesthood in this context can be understood only as corporate with a function that, as the parallel with 2:9b suggests, includes a witness to all humanity.[563]

However, even if we accept that 1 Peter is not referring to individuals, the unanswered question remains: how could Christians exercise priestly prerogatives *as a community only* and not as individuals? The rest of the epistle underlines in several ways the importance for Christians to conduct themselves "honorably among the Gentiles, so that, […] they may see your honorable deeds and glorify God when he comes to judge."[564] Clowney hence argues that "Peter is concerned about the holiness of God's temple not only when Christians are assembled for worship, but in their daily lives as well."[565]

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[559] Snyder, *Liberating the Church*, 179.

[560] Greggs, 'The Priesthood of No Believer', 377.

[561] Greggs, 381.

[562] Achtemeier interacts with a variety of scholars, yet always insisting that "such priestly functions as the Christian had, therefore, were as a member of the Christian community, not as a separate individual, as though each were somehow a priest." Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 165.

[563] Achtemeier, 156.

[564] 1 Pe 2:12.

[565] Clowney, *1 Peter*, 88.

The most obvious of these priestly activities seems to be the *mediation* of God towards others. Even Green, who finds in these verses no "basis for the Reformation doctrine of 'the priesthood of all believers,'"[566] because of the communal character of the priestly house, nevertheless somewhat confusedly asserts that "emphasis falls therefore not on the priestly role of believers within the community of believers, but on the priestly identity and role of the community of believers in the world-at-large."[567] After all, what are Christians doing when they "proclaim the mighty acts of him who called [them] out of darkness into his marvelous light"[568] if not *mediating* God's works and person to the people they are engaging with?[569] This engagement presupposes that *any Christian* can discern how their faith can be articulated in context. This *sensus fidei* is not only grounded in pneumatology[570] but also ecclesiology: "The church lives through the participation of its members, the laity and the ordained, and is constituted through them by the Holy Spirit. This is the ecumenical consensus. What is disputed is how this occurs."[571] A significant cause of dispute is the articulation between communality and individuality in the expression of the priesthood. Hiebert warns in pointed words that

> *the priesthood of believers is not a license for theological lone-rangerism*. We need each other to see our sins, for we more readily see the sins of others than our own. Similarly, we see the ways others misinterpret Scriptures before we see our own misinterpretations. Along the same line, we need Christians from other cultures, for they often see how our cultural biases have distorted our interpretations of the Scriptures.[572]

Hiebert's thinking looks like a thoughtful contextualization of Luther's thinking, adding to prayer and teaching scriptural reading. "Mutual correction" is an essential part of IFES groups' freedom in studying the Bible without clerical oversight; it is furthermore an essential element of the life of the fellowship as movements correct each other in their hermeneutical practices as well. Greggs also contends at great length that one of the essential dimensions of Church life is to move individual Christians from focussing on themselves to caring for others in the community:

> The form which the church takes as it is created as an event of the act of the Holy Spirit of God is the form of Christ. As the Spirit frees the individual to live simultaneously for God and for the other (freeing her from her *cor incurvatum in se*), the individual is freed to participate in the body of Christ, and more specifically in the particular form of Christ's priesthood in which orientation towards the Father (vertically) and towards the world (horizontally) exist simultaneously.[573]

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[566] Joel B. Green, *1 Peter*, The Two Horizons New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 61.

[567] Green, 61.

[568] 1 Pe 2:9.

[569] About the debated qumranic influence on the notion of *community* in 1 Peter, see J. Ramsey Michaels, *1 Peter*, Word Biblical Commentary 49 (Waco: Word Books, 2004), 96.

[570] See World Council of Churches, 'Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry', Faith and Order Papers (Geneva, 1982), 16, https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/baptism-eucharist-and-ministry-faith-and-order-paper-no-111-the-lima-text.

[571] Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, 'The Calling of the Whole People of God into Ministry: The Spirit, Church and Laity', *Studia Theologica* 54, no. 2 (2000): 150.

[572] Paul G. Hiebert, 'Critical Contextualization', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 11, no. 3 (1987): 110, italics mine.

[573] Greggs, *Priestly Catholicity*, 48.

Hence personal relationship to God, personal witness and communal missionary existence are closely intertwined and provide a series of internal checks and balances. Suppose a student ministry organization is essentially a branch or an arm of the Church on campus. In that case, these doctrinal provisions apply and should not be any more concerning to church leaders than other activities of their congregants. Hence, the student organization's calling is essentially the same as that of the Church: to love God and the neighbour and serve both. Engagement lies at the heart of the Christian calling, which follows what the people of Israel were meant to be a "display-people":[574]

> The royal priesthood of believers exists to declare God's aretas (Greek: excellencies, virtues, mighty acts, praises). […] As both worship and evangelism, the Lord's saved ones proclaim and celebrate the aretas of God, particularly his promised and fulfilled redemptive acts. Therefore, as those brought by new birth into a priestly community, believers are to walk in holiness and obedience while abounding in good deeds and announcing the Lord's mighty works. These are the sacrifices – the acceptable sacrifices – of the royal priesthood.[575]

This proclamation understood as a logical consequence of Christ's election and salvific work for the believers, consists obviously in witness and worship as a constituent of the "spiritual sacrifices" to which Christians are called. Here seems to lay an expansion of Israel's original calling as God's people. As Green tells us, "In Peter (…) 'praise' is expanded to include not only vertical language (worship) but also horizontal (proclamation) and has been given a particular content."[576] There is thus a whole range of applications for understanding the implications of the *priesthood of all believers*. Holy living – consequence of the election, worship – bringing sacrifices, and witness – declaring the praises of God are the most evident, arguably all in a missional light. This, if we agree that "all four titles originally given to Israel ('chosen race,' 'royal priesthood,' 'holy nation,' 'his own possession') are now applied to the multi-ethnic church, bringing to mind the gracious initiative of Yahweh to call and rescue his people."[577]

1.2.3 Ministry to the Gentiles

Paul also links his ministry of proclamation and teaching to a priestly activity, notably saying that he has written boldly to the Romans "because of the grace given me by God to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles

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[574] Durham, *Exodus*, 263.

[575] Anizor and Voss, *Representing Christ*, 48.

[576] Green, *1 Peter*, 62. I have not found scholarly commentaries on the contrast between proclaiming God's *aretas* and the importance of the reputation of God in the Old Testament, a reputation which was not held high by the people, as Malone notes, taking "Ezekiel 36:20–23 [where the prophet] lambasts the Israelites for the influence their behaviour has had on Yahweh's reputation. Four times in four verses he is concerned that 'my holy name' has been 'profaned among the nations'. We must recognize that this is the cultic language of the tabernacle and its priests; 'to make/pronounce profane' (ḥll) is the opposite of 'to make/pronounce holy' (qdš)." Andrew S. Malone, *God's Mediators: A Biblical Theology of Priesthood*, 43 (Downers Grove: IVP, 2017), 139; see for more references Malone, 137–40.

[577] Anizor and Voss, *Representing Christ*, 48.

may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.[578] Paul hence extends priestly activity from the sole context of the people of God to witnessing to Gentiles. For Dunn,

> there can be no question, therefore, that Paul here described his ministry in priestly terms. That, however, should not be taken to indicate that he thought of himself as a priest in a special way distinct from the ministries of other believers. […] The whole imagery of priesthood has clearly been transposed entirely out of the cult and applied in its transformed sense to Paul's ministry of preaching the gospel to Gentiles.[579]

Paul seems to imply here a priestly mediation between himself, the Gentiles, and God. Notably, Paul ventures in this ministry "because of the grace given me by God," which is possibly an allusion to the election language observed in Exodus 19, underscoring the 1 Peter passage.[580] The "acceptable sacrifice"[581] of which he writes here also strongly resonates with the "spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" that *individual,* as well as *corporate* Christians, are to bring to God. As to the nature of the relationship between the Gentiles and the sacrifice, Wright is not sure whether Paul is thinking

> of "the offering made by the nations," the eschatological tribute of the nations in the form of the worship and praise that these Gentile believers now give to the living God instead of to their previous idols? Or does he mean "the offering *that consists of* the nations," seeing the nations themselves as the offering, that Paul is making to God as the fruit of his evangelistic/priestly ministry? Whichever is the exact meaning, it is clear that Paul sees the whole Gentile mission as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies regarding the ingathering of the nations and the worship that will ascend to the God of Israel from the nations in the process.[582]

Finally, another observation is relevant to a *priesthood of all believers*: the idea that Paul's message is not addressed solely to the leaders of the Roman congregations, but to all *participating* in these churches, for as the apostle puts it, the Romans "are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and *able to instruct one another.*"[583] Paul displays a high value on the abilities of the congregants to build each other up and exhort each other to ministry, not limiting it to ordination, training or gender, for instance. Dunn interprets this as implying that

> *all ministry and service on behalf of the gospel can be considered as priestly ministry*, the new covenant equivalent of the ministries of grace (charisms) reserved in the old covenant for those specially anointed. By applying such cultic language to such non-cultic ministry on behalf of the gospel, Paul confirms that the cultic barrier between sacred and secular has been broken down and left behind.[584]

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[578] Romans 15:15 – 16.

[579] James D. G. Dunn, *The Parting of the Ways: Between Christianity and Judaism and Their Significance for the Character of Christianity*, 2nd edition (1st in 1991) (London: SCM, 2006), 107.

[580] Conversely, Malone refuses an individualistic interpretation, alleging that Paul "would hardly identify himself with an exclusive (and potentially defunct) priestly caste." Malone, *God's Mediators*, 174.

[581] Rom. 15:16

[582] Wright, *Mission of God*, 526.

[583] Rom. 15:14.

[584] Dunn, *The Parting of the Ways*, 107 emphasis in the original.

1.3 Patristic Era

Early Christians were not recruited from the priestly class of Israel and in fact, it took some time for the very concept of "lay man" to be developed in Christian literature.[585] Clement of Rome underlines that "the priest is given his particular duties: the priests are assigned their special place, while on the Levites particular tasks are imposed. The *layman* is bound by the *layman*'s code."[586] This first mention of lay people in the Church is linked with a new interpretation of the very structure of the Church. As Grossi argues, Clement first interpreted the ministry of Church leaders "along the Jewish-sacerdotal lines of the OT (the priesthood of Aaron) (*1 Clem.* 43–44), even introducing for the first time the distinction between clergy and laity."[587]

Whereas he agrees with Clement being the first to introduce the formal distinction between clergy and laity, Lightfoot does not find a sacerdotal stance in Clement's writings.[588] Overall, Lightfoot suggests that until Cyprian, "a Sacerdotal view of the Christian ministry has not been held apart from a distinct recognition of the sacerdotal functions of the whole Christian body."[589] Before Cyprian, neither Clement, nor Tertullian, nor even Origen developed a special sacerdotalism of their own. They rather insisted on the priest acting *as a representative* of the general priesthood, not in a personal capacity, thereby underlining that the priesthood of the clergy differs, "from the priesthood of the laity only in degree, in so far as the former devote their time and their thoughts more entirely to God than the latter."[590]

If Cyprian "represents the beginning of the decline of the emphasis on all believers as a royal priesthood and the concurrent rise of the ministerial priesthood's prominence,"[591] he was soon to be followed by other Church Fathers, in no unqualified manner, however:

> Vain shall we be if we think that what is not lawful for priests is lawful for laics. Are not even we laics priests? It is written: A kingdom also, and priests to His God and Father, has He made us. It is the authority of the Church, and the honour which has acquired sanctity through the joint session of the Order, which has established the difference between the Order and the laity. […] Therefore, if you have the *right* of a priest in your own person, in cases of necessity, it behooves you to have likewise the *discipline* of a priest whenever it may be necessary to have the right of a priest.[592]

What stands out from Tertullian's expositions is that the attribution of priestly prerogatives to laypeople should remain exceptional and could not be understood as constitutive of their Christian

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[585] George Huntston, 'The Ancient Church, AD 30-313', in *The Layman in Christian History*, by Stephen Neill and Hans Ruedi Weber (London: SCM, 1963), 28–56.

[586] Cyril Charles Richardson, ed., *Early Christian Fathers* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953), 62, 1st Clement 40.5. Italics mine.

[587] Vittorino Grossi, 'Priesthood of Believers', in *Encyclopedia of Ancient Christianity*, ed. Angelo Di Berardino (Downers Grove: IVP, 2014), 3:304.

[588] Joseph Barber Lightfoot, *Saint Paul's Epistle to the Philippians; a Revised Text* (London : Macmillan and co., 1888), 254.

[589] Lightfoot, 257.

[590] Lightfoot, 258.

[591] Anizor and Voss, *Representing Christ*, 62.

[592] Tertullian, *On Exhortation to Chastity, VII.*

estate. Yet, even if many Early Church writers were reluctant to let the laity exercise priestly roles, examples show that laypeople actually took the challenge.[593] Firstly, in worship as can be seen from biblical examples[594] as well as from early Christian manuals and the aforementioned letter of Clement.[595] What is more, it is possible to track down a role for the laity in the constitution and discipline of the churches: people elected their presbyters and deacons and could also revoke them and speak absolution of sin to their fellow church members. Linked with this was also the possibility for laypeople to teach for mutual edification and give reasons for their hopes in a surrounding culture that was averse to their faith.[596] Lastly, early Christians in the diaspora are reported to have made a lasting impression on the pagans with their attitude to fellow citizens during the plague epidemics, taking care of many people and showing ethical conduct in line with their beliefs, an attitude displayed both by clergy and laity.[597]

These examples show the importance of the shift completed from the OT understanding of the priesthood characterized by a high degree of stratification towards an apprehension of the priestly dignity of *all* Christians. This shift occurred for theological as well as for missiological reasons, as Grossi summarizes,

> The application of the concept of sacerdotal dignity to all Christians, in the light of Christ (the anointed one), was also an apologetic response to the pagan mediations with the divinity proposed at the beginning of the mystery religions (although only in Christ is such a mediation possible) and Greek philosophy, which considered God completely inaccessible (in Christ, however, every person is offered the opportunity to draw near to God). In the context of the priesthood, understood as the possibility of relating to God through the mediation of Jesus Christ, Christian antiquity knew a diversity of ministries that, on the concrete level, reflected the hierarchical structure of the church, esp. the triadic structure of deacon-presbyter-bishop.[598]

1.4 Partial Synthesis

The Bible presents us with a generous, creator God electing people to be a blessing for others: individuals like Abraham, but then the whole people of Israel. The institution of the priesthood is an institutional tool to structure how the elect people relate to God, and this clergy exists to *mediate* between God and his people, instruct and teach Israel, and sacrifice on his behalf. Yet, the whole people of Israel are also called "a priestly nation" and are supposed to channel God's blessing to their surroundings. The logic continues with the institution of a new covenant in Jesus Christ who inhabits all the priestly functions outlined in the OT and calls out a people, the Church, who participates in his

[593] The following section draws heavily on Huntston, 'Ancient Church', especially pp. 30-52.

[594] "When you come together, *each one* has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation." 1 Corinthians 14:26. Emphasis mine.

[595] Williams mentions the greek *prospherontes* as the descriptor of laypeople in early churches. Huntston, 'Ancient Church', 33.

[596] It is very interesting that the famous "call to apologetics" is found in the same letter. See 1 Peter 3.15, which calls upon all addressees of the letter and not only church leaders.

[597] Stark provides convincing evidence of such conduct, Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity: A Sociologist Reconsiders History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), especially pp. 73-94.

[598] Grossi, 'Priesthood of Believers', 3:304.

continuing work. *Participation* in this new people implies *mediating* God's blessing to the world, as individuals and communities. The New Testament and especially 1 Peter witness a widening of the priestly prerogatives to the *whole* people of God.

2 Dogmatic Reflections: Lay People in the Church

Having surveyed biblical-theological materials, I now turn to selected theological sources that will build a theology of the laity necessary to understand student ministry. I have deliberately chosen to look outside of traditional evangelical sources to show that what I want to argue in the last part of this work does not rely exclusively on evangelical thinking but on a growing ecumenical consensus in the 20th century.

2.1 Roman Catholic Teachings

Vatican II marked the theological developments of the twentieth century and was contemporary to the early years of IFES, showing that the question of the role of laypeople in the Church was a topic transcending denominational boundaries. In subsequent years, further Catholic documents discussing mission increasingly went in the direction of a *missional ecclesiology*. I now turn to a brief survey of some of these texts.

2.1.1 All Are Called

Vatican II insists that all members of the Church "are impelled to carry on such missionary activity because of the love with which they love God and by which they desire to share with all men the spiritual goods of both its life and the life to come."[599] The insistence is on personal calling and collaboration with ecclesial hierarchy. John Paul II similarly furthers that "because of the one dignity flowing from Baptism, each member of the lay faithful, together with ordained ministers and men and women religious, shares a responsibility for the Church's mission."[600] The "lay faithful" are defined to "mean all the faithful except those in Holy Orders and those who belong to a religious state sanctioned by the Church."[601]

Tension runs throughout most encyclicals relevant to our study: the calling of all members of the Church by virtue of their baptism is underlined, whilst at the same time, their separation from ordained ministers is stressed. The work of laypeople is in no way dispensable, however: "Each member of the lay faithful should always be fully aware of being a 'member of the Church' yet entrusted with a unique

[599] Pope Paul VI, 'Ad Gentes', Decree on The Mission Activity of The Church (Rome: Vatican II, 1965), para. 7.
[600] Pope John Paul II, 'Christifideles Laici', Post-Synodal Exhortation on the Vocation and the Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World. (Rome, 1988), sec. 15.
[601] Pope John Paul II, sec. 9.

task which cannot be done by another and which is to be fulfilled for the good of all."[602] The main difference between ordained ministers and laypeople is that

> the lay state of life has its distinctive feature in its secular character. It fulfils an ecclesial service in bearing witness and, in its own way recalling for priests, women and men religious, the significance of the earthly and temporal realities in the salvific plan of God. In turn, the ministerial priesthood represents in different times and places, the permanent guarantee of the sacramental presence of Christ, the Redeemer.[603]

There is an urgency to minister in society because "if lack of commitment is always unacceptable, the present time renders it even more so. It is not permissible for anyone to remain idle;" but this urgency cannot dispense with the importance of the sacraments for the Catholic Church. This sacramental aspect of the ministry is hard to find in any Protestant discussion of "parachurch" organizations.

2.1.2 The Nature of the Church

Closely related to the above is the discussion on the Church's nature, especially its missionary purpose. This purpose goes hand in hand with the status of the Church in the world. *Ad Gentes* hence affirms that "The pilgrim Church is missionary by her very nature, since it is from the mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit that she draws her origin, in accordance with the decree of God the Father."[604] In missiological terms, the *missio ecclesia* derives from the *missio Dei* and is eminently trinitarian. This carrying on of God's mission is *apostolic*. As *Apostolicam Actuositatem* states,

> The Church was founded for the purpose of spreading the kingdom of Christ throughout the earth for the glory of God the Father, to enable all men to share in His saving redemption, and that through them the whole world might enter into a relationship with Christ. All activity of the Mystical Body directed to the attainment of this goal is called the apostolate, which the Church carries on in various ways through all her members.[605]

This eminently *missional* understanding of the apostolate is made even more explicit when framed in the notion of sharing in Christ's office.

2.1.3 Sharing in Christ's Office

Tightly linked to the definition of the apostolate, we have the insistence on the fact that

> in the Church there is a diversity of ministry but a oneness of mission. Christ conferred on the Apostles and their successors the duty of teaching, sanctifying, and ruling in His name and power. But the laity likewise share in the priestly, prophetic, and royal office of Christ and therefore have their own share in the mission of the whole people of God in the Church and in the world. […] They are consecrated for the royal priesthood and the holy people (cf. 1 Peter 2:4-10) not only that they may offer spiritual sacrifices in everything they do but also that they may witness to Christ throughout the world.[606]

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[602] Pope John Paul II, sec. 28.

[603] Pope John Paul II, sec. 55.

[604] Pope Paul VI, 'Ad Gentes', para. 2.

[605] Pope Paul VI, 'Apostolicam Actuositatem. Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity', Vatican II decree (Rome: Vatican II, 1965), sec. 2.

[606] Pope Paul VI, secs 2 & 3, emphasis mine.

This quote underlines the missionary aspect of the *priesthood of all believers* in the context of the Catholic Church. This is illuminating, because it runs against much of the polemics we read in Protestant and Evangelical writings on questions of priesthood and witness. The main difference between the confessions might then be much more a question of ecclesiological government – the relationship of the laity to the hierarchy to which we shall come back later – than of dogmatical theology of even of missiology.[607]

Christifideles Laici further insists that "the lay faithful participate, for their part, in the threefold mission of Christ as Priest, Prophet and King. This aspect has never been forgotten in the living tradition of the Church."[608] We might read this insistence on history as a slight polemical affirmation targeting non-Roman Catholic traditions. Yet, this also shows a robust contextual awareness, which can also be seen in the diverse vocabulary used:

> In recent days the phenomenon of lay people associating among themselves has taken on a character of particular variety and vitality. In some ways lay *associations* have always been present throughout the Church's history as various *confraternities*, *third orders* and *sodalities* testify even today. However, in modern times such lay *groups* have received a special stimulus, resulting in the birth and spread of a multiplicity of group forms: associations, groups, communities, movements. We can speak of a new era of group endeavours of the lay faithful.[609]

The pope does not define any of these groupings[610] but underlines the *differentia specifica* of the Roman Church in the same section. He connects the priestly mission of Christ to the Eucharistic sacrifice, a move which other traditions would not necessarily accept: "The lay faithful are sharers in the priestly mission, for which Jesus offered himself on the cross and continues to be offered in the celebration of the Eucharist for the glory of God and the salvation of humanity."[611] What other confessions might agree with, however, is the missional dimension to this otherwise liturgical argument. There is broader common ground in the idea that Christians *participate* in Christ's mission. As *Ad Gentes* affirms, missionaries are

> God's coworkers, […] who raise up congregations of the faithful such that, walking worthy of the vocation to which they have been called […], they may exercise the priestly, prophetic, and royal office which God has entrusted to them. In this way, the Christian community will be a sign of God's presence in the world.[612]

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[607] If this is pragmatically true, dogmatically speaking, the RCC sacrament of Holy Orders, whereby the priesthood is introduced into acting *in persona Christi* implies an ontological change which sets the RCC priesthood apart from any other confession: "the character imprinted by ordination is for ever. The vocation and mission received on the day of his ordination mark him permanently." *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, § 1523.

[608] Pope John Paul II, 'Christifideles Laici', sec. 14.

[609] Pope John Paul II, sec. 29, emphasis mine.

[610] See the short description in Pope Paul VI, 'Ad Gentes', para. 6.

[611] Pope John Paul II, 'Christifideles Laici', sec. 14.

[612] Pope Paul VI, 'Ad Gentes', para. 15.

So, on the one hand, the Catholic Church encourages laypeople to engage in society but wants, on the other hand, to make sure nothing goes against the hierarchy.[613] Several indirect exhortations to compliance are needed, leading the historian to suppose underlying issues concerning precisely these points. *Apostolicam Actuositatem* insists that the laity should do this "in communion with their brothers in Christ, especially with their pastors who must make a judgment about the true nature and proper use of these gifts not to extinguish the Spirit but to test all things and hold for what is good (cf. 1 Thess. 5:12,19,21)."[614] Oversight is deemed needed to ensure the proper orientation of lay activism.[615]

More closely linked to the concern of this research is the Magisterium's insistence on the necessity to contextualize missionary work to the different social milieus of a given society. From a wealth of very articulate materials, the following section shall present only a sample.

2.1.4 Contextualizing for the Spheres of Society

Vatican II begins by noticing that the "apostolate becomes more imperative in view of the fact that many areas of human life have become increasingly autonomous."[616] From there unfolds the need for an "apostolate in the social milieu, that is, the effort to infuse a Christian spirit into the mentality, customs, laws, and structures of the community in which one lives, which is so much the duty and responsibility of the laity that it can never be performed properly by others."[617] This concern for the limitations for ordained ministers to reach out to people can be read in all the documents studied here and interestingly, provision is made for specific groups to meet as an incarnation of the Church on a given place:

> The laity who engage in the apostolate only as individuals, whether for the reasons already mentioned or for special reasons including those also deriving from their own professional activity, usefully gather into smaller groups for serious conversation without any more formal kind of establishment or organization, so that an indication of the community of the Church is always apparent to others as a true witness of love.[618]

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[613] Pope Paul VI, 'Apostolicam', sec. 19; Pope Paul VI, 'Ad Gentes', para. 23.

[614] Pope Paul VI, 'Apostolicam', sec. 3.

[615] Christifideles Laici offers an insightful list of criteria to assess lay organizations: "*Primacy given to the call of every Christian to holiness*, as it is manifested "in the fruits of grace which the spirit produces in the faithful (…); *The responsibility of professing the Catholic faith,* embracing and proclaiming the truth about Christ, the Church and humanity, in obedience to the Church's Magisterium, as the Church interprets it; (…) *The witness to a strong and authentic communion* in filial relationship to the Pope, in total adherence to the belief that he is the perpetual and visible center of unity of the universal Church, and with the local Bishop (…) in the particular Church; (…) *Conformity to and participation in the Church's apostolic goals,* that is, "the evangelization and sanctification of humanity and the Christian formation of people's conscience; (…) *A commitment to a presence in human society,* which in light of the Church's social doctrine places it at the service of the total dignity of the person" Pope John Paul II, 'Christifideles Laici', sec. 30.

[616] Pope Paul VI, 'Apostolicam', sec. 1.

[617] Pope Paul VI, pt. 12.

[618] Pope Paul VI, sec. 17. Later, John Paul II was also to note that "groups, associations and movements also have their place in the formation of the lay faithful. In fact they have the possibility, each with its own method, of offering a formation through a deeply shared experience in the apostolic life, as well as having the opportunity to integrate, to make concrete and specific the formation that their members receive from other persons and communities." Pope John Paul II, 'Christifideles Laici', sec. 62.

In this context, young people "must not simply be considered as an object of pastoral concern for the Church: in fact, young people are and ought to be encouraged to be active on behalf of the Church as leading characters in evangelization and participants in the renewal of society."[619] This is not only a question of recruiting fresh blood for Church mission, but a sign of in-depth missiological thinking. John Paul II also insightfully notes that "in the life of each member of the lay faithful, there are particularly significant and decisive moments for discerning God's call and embracing the mission entrusted by Him. Among these are the periods of adolescence and young adulthood."[620] Sociological analysis drives the harnessing of young people for mission:

> Their [young persons'] heightened influence in society demands of them a proportionate apostolic activity, but their natural qualities also fit them for this activity. As they become more conscious of their own personalities, they are impelled by a zest for life and a ready eagerness to assume their own responsibility, and they yearn to play their part in social and cultural life. If this zeal is imbued with the spirit of Christ and is inspired by obedience and love for the Church, it can be expected to be very fruitful.[621]

From this ensues a call to engage all spheres of society and more specifically culture, for "the lay faithful are never to relinquish their participation in 'public life,' that is, in the many different economic, social, legislative, administrative and cultural areas, which are intended to promote organically and institutionally the common good."[622] The line of argumentation can thus be summarized as follows: the Church has been called into existence by God and its purpose is to witness from God in every sphere of society. Because the calling is extended to all Church members by virtue of their baptism, all lay people are called to engage their respective societal spheres. Strategic thinking necessitates considering young people in particular, because of their future influence. Incidentally, *Ad Gentes* also notes that there are laymen "worthy of special praise […] who in universities or in scientific institutes, promote by their historical and scientific religious research the knowledge of peoples and of religions; thus helping the heralds of the Gospel, and preparing for the dialogue with non – Christians."[623]

Lastly, *Ad Gentes* calls for missiological reflection on culture. Even if this call to valuing culture is addressed primarily to aspiring priests, it is nevertheless remarkable: "Let the minds of the students be kept open and attuned to an acquaintance and an appreciation of their own nation's culture; […] let them consider the points of contact which mediate between the traditions and religion of their homeland on the one hand and the Christian religion on the other."[624]

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[619] Pope John Paul II, 'Christifideles Laici', sec. 46.
[620] Pope John Paul II, sec. 58, emphasis mine.
[621] Pope Paul VI, 'Apostolicam', sec. 12.
[622] Pope John Paul II, 'Christifideles Laici', sec. 42.
[623] Pope Paul VI, 'Ad Gentes', para. 41.
[624] Pope Paul VI, para. 16.

2.2 Christians as a Royal Priesthood: Hans Küng and Others

> Nowhere in the New Testament does it say that the primary responsibility for accomplishing the purpose of God in the world rests in the hands of the "official ministry." The primary responsibility is always upon the shoulders of those "called to be saints," the laos theou, "the people of God." Thus, in religion it is the layman who must do most of the work in the world.[625]

I have briefly surveyed some major official Catholic teachings that shed light on a "priestly and missionary" understanding of student ministry. In what follows, I turn to the work of a few other theological voices, amongst others, Hans Küng, who have pushed further towards a *theology of the laity*.

In what follows, the major articulations of a priestly understanding of the whole people of God shall be outlined, as well as some preliminary consequences for practical theology, missiology and missionary practice. Such consequences have not automatically been drawn, as Snyder argued in 1983:

> Protestants have always held, at least theoretically, to the doctrine of the priesthood of believers. For the most part, however, this doctrine has been understood soteriologically rather than ecclesiologically. That is, it has been understood to mean that all Christians have direct access to God without the mediation of a human priest. But the implications of this doctrine for Christian ministry have seldom been drawn out. Perhaps the reason is that these implications radically call into question the clergy-laity split by asserting that all believers are priests and therefore ministers.[626]

2.2.1 Christ as only High Priest and Mediator

> All human priesthood has been fulfilled and finished by the unique, final, unrepeatable and hence unlimited sacrifice of the one continuing and eternal high priest.[627]

Küng complains about the fact that too often, ecclesiologies have tended to overemphasize offices and therefore, to assume the implicit equation: Ecclesia = hierarchia. Hence,

> They failed to realize that all who hold office are primarily (both temporarily and factually speaking) not dignitaries but believers, members of the fellowship of believers; and that compared with this fundamental Christian fact any office they may hold is of secondary if not tertiary importance.[628]

To Küng, an individual is foremost either a Christian or not, and the ontological status of the priest is determined by his or her stand as a Christian and not as a member of the clergy. Thus, the Church is not founded upon the offices, but upon Christ Himself. Following this, Küng offers a rapid synthesis of the main biblical teachings about the priesthood,[629] concluding that "there is only one single mediator, and that is Jesus Christ."[630] If Christ is the sole mediator and if His work is not to be imitated or replicated, it follows that it applies to all Christians: "Since Christ is the unique high priest and mediator between God and all men, all men who believe in him have immediate access to God through him."[631]

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[625] Findley B. Edge, 'Priesthood of Believers', *Review & Expositor* 60, no. 1 (1963): 16.
[626] Snyder, *Liberating the Church*, 169.
[627] Hans Küng, *The Church* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1967), 363.
[628] Küng, 363.
[629] Küng, 431–32.
[630] Küng, 368.
[631] Küng, 369.

What are Christians to do with this privileged access? Küng ascribes to the general priesthood the function of *mediation*. For Küng, the implications of the *priesthood of all believers* are never only private, but always to be understood as a service from and to God.[632] Christ is the sole mediator between people and God, but through the Christian's communion with Christ,

> all believers are absorbed into the mediating work of the one and only mediator. Their function is to mediate between God and the world, by revealing the hidden works of God and making effective his acts of power. Hence every Christian is a priest of God, by being a witness to God before the world.[633]

This statement has powerful implications for mission because it anchors the Christian's work in the world in the divine commissioning, and even if Küng acknowledges that the New Testament does not use the mediatory language, Christians are messengers of God's eschatological act of salvation.[634] To speak of Christians as being drawn into Christ's mediatory function, however, also prevents them from identifying only with Christ and to feel totally estranged from their fellow people. If priesthood means service, one has to be concerned for the well-being of all humans. This also unfolds in another eminently priestly activity: prayer, for "every Christian is a priest for the world, by having free access to God in faith and by being able to appear before God on behalf of others and intercede for them."[635]

Summarizing his whole development on the general priesthood, Küng states that it consists "in the calling of the faithful to witness to God and his will before the world, and to offer up their lives in the service of the world."[636] This reads very similar to Luther arguing in his well-known treatise that "a man does not live for himself alone in this mortal body to work for it alone, but he lives also for all men on earth; rather, he lives only for others and not for himself."[637]

This, so Küng argues, is how God creates fellowship amongst Christians, as they witness from His works and are encouraged by the knowledge that they can count on each other's support in all matters, including the fight against sin and the bearing of each other's suffering.[638] To put it in even shorter terms: "Each one knows that he appears before God on behalf of others, and knows that others appear before God on his behalf."[639] Such an attitude requires doctrinal conviction to bear fruit in the daily life of individuals. There is a *missional,* outward move from the Church into the world "from being worship within the community to being worship within the everyday secular world."[640]

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[632] Küng, 381.
[633] Küng, 381.
[634] Küng, 369.
[635] Küng, 381. Küng refers to Philippians 2:15; 1 Thessalonians 5:5; 1 Timothy 2:1 notably.
[636] Küng, 381.
[637] Martin Luther, *Selections from His Writings*, ed. John Dillenberger (Garden City: Doubleday, 1961), 73, excerpt from 'On the Freedom of a Christian', 1520.
[638] Küng, *The Church*, 381, building on Gal. 6:20.
[639] Küng, 381.
[640] Küng, 381.

2.2.2 Participation in Christ's Work

However, the priesthood of all believers cannot be understood as a sort of "endowment" that would be given upon baptism and that would remain the believer's own possession to use individually. Much to the contrary: the priestly vocation of the Christian is exercised as the consequence of their *participation* in Christ's work, and never independently of it. This aspect seems not to be "ecumenically controversial,"[641] because of the broad agreement on this consequence of salvation for Christians, across confessional lines. This means, in Root's words, that "the Christian is priest and king only as fellow-priest and fellow-king with Christ. In the context of the emphasis on the union of Christ and the Christian in this text, this 'fellow' status is an expression of the Christian's participation in Christ."[642]

As we shall see later, there are numerous missiological consequences to the affirmation that "this participation in Christ is not just participation in the results of his work. Rather, the Christian is taken into Christ's work."[643] This participation in the body of Christ is not solely individual but intensely communal as Congar also argues: "To the extent that the life that is in Christ is communicated to us, we become the very body of Christ. We become the members and, all together, the body of Christ the King, Priest and Prophet."[644]

3 Partial Synthesis

The theological writings explored above are admittedly only a sample of what exists on the topic of the place and role of laypeople in the Church. Yet despite differences in background, a remarkable consensus emerges from these different voices.

God chooses *all believers*. An important dimension of this dignifying calling is to *witness* to their environment and to call others to have a relationship to God, that is, like the OT priests, to *mediate* God to others. This is the basis of a doctrine of the *priesthood of all believers*. Church traditions tend to stress either the individual aspect of this calling or insist that it is primarily exercised in the community. Yet, this relationship of *individuals* to God is made possible because of Christ's *mediation* and expressed notably *participating* in the Church. The texts surveyed here are agreed that fundamentally, the Church exists to further God's mission. Consequently, the church's personnel – clergy – is supposed to facilitate that mission. Church traditions diverge on the exact articulation between clergy and laypeople, mostly on the question of structures of authority and, implicitly, on the exact "borders" of where the Church is. Yet they agree on the fact that becoming a *member* of a church – either by

[641] Michael Root, 'Freedom, Authority, and the Priesthood of All Believers', in *Critical Issues in Ecclesiology: Essays in Honor of Carl E. Braaten*, ed. Alberto L. García and Susan K. Wood (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 93.

[642] Root, 94.

[643] Root, 93.

[644] Yves Congar and François Varillon, *Sacerdoce et laïcat dans l'église* (Paris: Vitrail, 1947), 13.

voluntary choice or by being born into it – means participating, albeit only derivatively, in Christ's own and unique *priestly* work. True to the logic of the Incarnation, this work is always *contextualized,* as Christ reaches to people wherever they are and so is the Church called to reach them, notably through the witness of laypeople in all spheres of society which members of the clergy do not necessarily reach.

Based on these considerations, Christian students, as lay people called by God, can legitimately engage in contextual witnessing activities. For this purpose, they have often gathered in specific organizations outside of the walls and hierarchical order of traditional ecclesial structures. It is now to the ecclesiological status of "parachurch" organizations like IFES that I turn.

II. Missional Ecclesiology

The above explorations on the life of the Church raise questions about how IFES as an organization relates to the Church. How can an ecclesiology consonant with the notions of *immediacy, mediation, and participation* which I argue frame a robust understanding of student ministry, be developed? In what follows, I first explore the notion of "parachurch," which usually describes structures operating outside of the hierarchical oversight of habitual Church structures yet engaging in activities recognized as somehow falling into the orbit of the "Church." I then question the missiological legitimacy of such a notion on several grounds: missionary experience (Roland Allen), missiology proper (*missio Dei*) and contemporary reflections on the ecclesial situation of Christian minorities (Pilgrimage and Priesthood in the Post-Christian World), and on a renewed understanding of what constitutes *apostolicity*. This whole questioning about the legitimacy of the parachurch turns out to be answered in a promising manner by a *missional* understanding of the Church which undermines the separation of church and *Parachurch*. As this chapter explains, I think the word misguidingly reflects a certain structural ecclesiocentrism. Yet because it is so widely recognized as an "umbrella term," I will use it for the sake of simplicity.

1 The Nature of Parachurch Organizations

Part II of this work has surveyed how IFES leaders themselves have understood the ecclesiological status of their "parachurch" organization.[645] Yet, this relationship has often been contentious in missiological and ecclesial writings. So far in our explorations, we have assumed what a parachurch organization is, more than we have defined it. In what follows, I survey a sample of analytical definitions of the parachurch phenomenon, highlighting the difficulty of defining it to articulate its specificities and the tensions with Church structures that often arise.

1.1 Defining "Parachurch"

> Everyone seems to have a vague sense of what is being talked about and might be able to throw out a name or two as illustrations. But are we talking about a single type of organization? If not, what exactly does this umbrella term contain?[646]

Surveying the literature on parachurch, which notably does not feature any widely recognized standard work, means encountering various definitions covering a spectrum from the most essentialist to the most functionalist. Parachurch organizations are defined primarily considering their relationship to the church. Protestants not having the structure of the Catholic Church, no account of the nature of parachurch has secured widespread agreement in Protestant circles.[647] Yet, the development of

[645] In what follows, *parachurch* refers to "a parachurch organization" for the sake of brevity.
[646] Scheitle, *Beyond the Congregation*, 10.
[647] Notably famous, the BEM document from the WCC does not mention para-ecclesial groups in its discussion of Ministry and Ordination for example. See World Council of Churches, 'BEM'.

Protestant and Evangelical parachurch organizations did not occur in a vacuum, especially in the West. The Catholic Church had been developing an elaborate reflection on the topic, because of the emergence of numerous lay organizations, generally known under the umbrella name of "Catholic Action." These associations were founded mainly by laypeople seeking to work in specific areas of society and at times presented an ecclesiological challenge to the Magisterium.[648]

In his major work, Scheitle outlines numerous definitional issues with the notion of *parachurch*:

> The prefix "para-" could be defined as something existing "beside" or "alongside" of a related entity. However, it could also be defined as something "beyond" or "aside from" a related entity. The difference is subtle, but it represents the crux of the problem. Is the parachurch sector a partner working cooperatively alongside churches and denominations or is it a rogue agent working beyond the reach of them?[649]

Essentially, what is at stake is the legitimacy of existing structures despite some arguing that they better should not. As Stackhouse observes,

> This term *parachurch* is seen by some as implicitly derogatory, and with good reason. It suggests that the "true" Church is represented only in local congregations and whatever political structures link those local congregations together into denominations. Every other Christian organization is somehow just "alongside" this true Church: It is merely "parachurch."[650]

Even if "merely" *parachurch*, the existence of the term implies that the activities of these organizations nevertheless somewhat fall into the domain of ecclesial activities – and I want to argue that this "somewhat" is best understood in the framework of a *missional ecclesiology* which can be home to a large array of activities. This is how White adds precision to the definition of parachurch:

> The local Church is broad, concerned with the total person, ministers in a geographical locale to a wide spectrum of ages and needs, and is narrow in doctrinal interpretation. The para-local church society is usually *narrow in purpose*, *specialized in tasks*, *narrow in the age of those involved*, *broad in doctrinal tolerations*, *crosses denominational lines* (except for denominational para-local church structures), and often is *geographically scattered*.[651]

This is one of the most articulate definitions which does not play Church and parachurch against each other. Much to the contrary: for White, "a key question for local church and para-local church agencies is, are they performing a biblical function that builds up the body of Christ?"[652] Yet, this seemingly easy way of assessing the parachurch is more intricate than it appears for two reasons. Firstly, can methods fully be seen in separation from aims? And secondly, how far can parachurch

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[648] For more on the Catholic Action, see Gerd-Rainer Horn, 'Catholic Action: A Twentieth-Century Social Movement (1920s–1930s)', in *Western European Liberation Theology*, ed. Gerd-Rainer Horn (Oxford: OUP, 2008), 5–43. An important part of the Catholic Action was its student branch. See notably David Colon, 'Face aux églises: un siècle d'organisations d'étudiants chrétiens', in *Cent ans de mouvements étudiants*, by Jean-Philippe Legois and Alain Monchalbon, ed. Groupe d'études et de recherches sur les mouvements étudiants (Paris: Syllepse, 2007), 217–26.

[649] Scheitle, *Beyond the Congregation*, 33.

[650] John G. Stackhouse, *Evangelical Landscapes: Facing Critical Issues of the Day* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic, 2002), 27.

[651] White, *The Church and the Parachurch*, 84. Emphasis mine.

[652] White, 81. Note that White uses "para-local" to underline the "alongside the Church" aspect of parachurch organizations in order to avoid the feeling of being "beyond."

achievements be assessed as to be "building up the body of Christ," if we consider not only the number of people committed to one or another structure, but also the tensions that often arise between local churches and parachurch? As Willmer underlines, "What makes the parachurch such a lightning rod of controversy is that *its subordinate role is often questionable.*"[653]

More missiologically positive, Niringiye observes the purpose of parachurch organization "fits into the overall mandate of the Church. Consequently, these organizations often state that they exist to serve the local Church. *They are Church-related in Mission, but not structurally or Church based.*"[654]

Nirigiye hence suggests a relationship of *mission* and not of structure. In the same vein, Willmer et all, in one of the few in-depth treatments of parachurch organizations, affirm that the usefulness of the word lies precisely in the common purpose of churches and parachurch, despite structural differences: "The word *parachurch* has come into existence and has caught on so well precisely because it is a useful word to describe these Christian organizations that *work beyond the church yet often work for the same goal – the advancement of the Gospel.*"[655] The tone is eminently positive, valuing the contribution of parachurch structures, but what does "beyond" mean here? The debate runs the risk of being reduced to mere structural questions of leadership and power. Would a renewed insistence on *the priesthood of all believers* sign the death warrant of ordained ministry?[656] If one thinks of the Church as defined in terms of that hierarchy, this creates a problem: how do these independent organizations relate to the church? If, however, the church itself is considered in terms of voluntary association – that is, if "Church" names the gathering together of believers for worship and service – then the question becomes one about the relationship between different parts or forms of Church, as parts of one Body of which Christians are *members*. At the intersection of theology and sociology is *voluntary participation*.

1.2 Church Members Taking on Mission

Many authors trace back parachurch initiatives to "The Spirit [who] chooses to work through some members of the body of Christ in a different way than through others. The charisms are not uniform but multiform, and therefore there is a diversity in ministry even though there is a oneness in mission."[657] The Lausanne movement, recognising this tension, notes, "The tendency of the 'establishment' to control individual initiatives runs the risk of quenching the Spirit. On the other

[653] Willmer, Schmidt, and Smith, *The Prospering Parachurch*, 13, italics mine.

[654] David Zac Niringiye, 'Parachurch Organizations and Student Movements' (Christianity in Africa in the 1990s, Edinburgh University, May 1990), 4–5, emphasis mine.

[655] Willmer, Schmidt, and Smith, *The Prospering Parachurch*, 25, emphasis mine.

[656] Space does not permit to explore a whole theology of ordination. Since the great majority of IFES leaders have not been ordained, it has not been a major point of debate in the organization's history.

[657] Donald G. Bloesch, *Life, Ministry, and Hope*, vol. 2, Essentials of Evangelical Theology (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979), 108.

hand, the tendency of voluntary organisations to insist on their independence runs the risk of ignoring the Body. It is the age-old tension between authority and freedom."[658]

Ecclesiologically speaking, the *voluntary principle* is closely related to a *Believers' Church* ecclesiology following which "the church is first and foremost the gathered community of believers who, based on their personal confession of faith in baptism, have announced their voluntary entrance into the community."[659] Lay people have the right to approach God *directly*. Since they are called to witness wherever they are, they can also organize themselves adequately. Correspondingly, White affirms, hinting at the core argument of the present research that

> under the new covenant, the believer has *direct access and individual responsibility* to God *without the intercession of an earthly priest*. This *priesthood* brings a new freedom for the believer both in worship and in service. It is the cornerstone of the ministry of every believer. Thus, the believer *as an individual and the believer in fellowship with other believers has personal responsibility to obey God's commands* about evangelism, discipleship, serving others, helping the poor and so on.[660]

There is then significant common ground between international volunteer networks and the Church universal. In this logic, if participation in the local church is based on a legitimately personal, voluntary choice, then the parachurch makes no difference. IFES leaders have indeed presupposed students had the right to gather and witness in and out of an *ad hoc* structure organized in a way closely related to Christians gathering in churches and chosen according to criteria other than the parish principle. Indeed, "if the church has its *radical basis* in *personal faith* in God, then it must be a voluntary association. As a *free*, *autonomous community* it cannot be controlled by the state, or by princes or kings or civil government."[661]

Hence, Brackney sees parachurch organizations as "a particular group of voluntary associations of Christians whose purpose is directed at a stated task, relying heavily upon laypersons and *independent of any accountability to an institutional church structure*, but that may assume functions historically associated with the church."[662] Because some "parachurch" organizations structure themselves to a high degree, Brackney wants to call them "Quasi-Voluntary Associations" – under which he counts Inter-Varsity (USA).[663] Yet, this category again takes the "hierarchical element" as decisive. As a group of humans gathered for a common purpose, IFES has also generated its hierarchical structure, however decentralized its leaders say it is. Structures like IFES not only facilitate mission but also shape it by

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[658] Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, 'Cooperating', chap. 1.

[659] Fernando Enns, 'Believers Church Ecclesiology: A Vital Alternative within the Ecumenical Family', in *New Perspectives in Believers Church Ecclesiology*, ed. Abe J. Dueck, Helmut Harder, and Karl Koop (CMU Press, 2010), 113. Exploring all the ins and outs of this ecclesiological tradition would explode the boundaries of this work. For a classical, detailed historical survey, see Donald F. Durnbaugh, *The Believers' Church: The History and Character of Radical Protestantism* (New York: Macmillan, 1968).

[660] White, *The Church and the Parachurch*, 80, emphasis mine.

[661] Roger Haight, *Comparative Ecclesiology*, vol. 2, Christian Community in History (Bloomsbury, 2014), 278–79, emphasis mine.

[662] William H. Brackney, *Christian Voluntarism: Theology and Praxis*, Faith's Horizons (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 136.

[663] Brackney, 137.

equipping people for mission and providing accountability structures. There is accountability within a parachurch structure and to the extent to which its members are members of the scattered Church, they are anchored in the reality of the Church universal even if not always evidently deferring to traditional ecclesial structures. The Lausanne Movement notes that "all are agreed that specialist functions require specialist organizations (e.g. for Bible translation, student evangelism and cross-cultural missions)."[664] The same logic applies to student organizations, which can recruit "specialists" for their tasks. Yet since students are also members of local Churches, tensions surrounding their involvement in IFES groups – or similar associations – often amount to a question of loyalty between the Church and the parachurch. This becomes even more complex when the issue of spiritual and emotional support is raised, which even makes some parachurch a

> major thorn in the side of churches. Their local component provides them the opportunity to form the same intimate social ties on which churches thrive. They begin to provide the same social and psychological benefits that make churches more appealing when it comes to activities like worship and fellowship.[665]

University ministries work with people transitioning from home, from one city to the other, between ages of faith. Parachurch support structures might simply have a broader appeal to them at a certain stage of life. Brackney suggests an interesting combination of interwoven factors, adding leadership to the picture we have drawn so far:

> Individual involvement in parachurch organizations has been so rewarding for some and so expansive for many of its leaders that it becomes a primary outlet for religious interests and participation. […] It *is easy to see how the parachurch can become the definitive form of Christian identity for dedicated members*. Time sacrificially given, funds regularly contributed, opportunities for spiritual service, ceremonial recognition of leadership, public perceptions of high levels of "Christian commitment," and careful nurture of voluntary commitment with attendant theological rationale all define a new category called "para church Christianity."[666]

This way of settling an intricate tension does not satisfy Hammet, who adamantly wants the relationship between church and parachurch to be a "servant-partnership" model. For him,

> If ministry performed by a believer-priest is done in the context of a parachurch group that operates as an arm or extension of the church, then the authority conflict is sharply reduced, if not eliminated. The exercise of one's priesthood is placed in the proper context, as a part of the church's ministry.[667]

Whereas this line of argumentation is congruent with his overall case that parachurch are "possessing a status subordinate to that of the church, [… should] defer to the church, honor the church [… and] accept its ministry under the authority of the church,"[668] it does not seem to solve anything, for as we shall see shortly, one of the reasons for the emergence of the parachurch is

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[664] Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, 'Cooperating', chap. 1.
[665] Scheitle, *Beyond the Congregation*, 55.
[666] Brackney, *Christian Voluntarism*, 143–44, italics mine.
[667] John S. Hammett, 'How Church and Parachurch Should Relate: Arguments for a Servant-Partnership Model', *Missiology* 28, no. 2 (1 April 2000): 205.
[668] Hammett, 200.

precisely a failure – either real or perceived – of the church to exercise a given ministry. Following Hammet, current parachurch leaders would better wait for the local Church leadership to greenlight, support, and oversee their actions before they could "go to work." The crucial question here is also what is understood by "Church," for if a local church fails in its *missional* vocation, the loyalty of believers is ultimately higher and goes to the Church universal. Stott concludes that "since Evangelicals desire in all things to be guided by the Bible, we should be able to grade specialist activities thus: independence of the church is bad, co-operation with the church is better, service as an arm of the church is best."[669]

It is obvious that local church leaders might deplore for the student part of their constituency to see in the parachurch "the definitive form of Christian identity," because this poses vast ecclesiological debates and questions the way parachurch leaders may have presented Christianity if their members do not feel the need to be part of a local church community. Notably, it is to the *priesthood of all believers* that White appeals to solve the leadership tension between Church and parachurch:

> Finally, we note that participation in a para-local church society causes one to function in at least two authority structures. These will occasionally be in conflict. But to have conflicting authorities – work, family, government – is not unusual. In conflict, the believer-priest is individually responsible for deciding which authority takes precedence.[670]

1.3 Partial Synthesis

What precedes has shown that many of the difficulties arising from the definition of parachurch organization exist because most descriptions focus on structural questions. From the prefix *para,* many commentators assume that the parachurch is subordinate to the Church. The question of the legitimacy of parachurch structures over against ecclesial structures is often posed. Yet, this is unsatisfactory mainly because, as we have seen, many of these organizations have arisen out of missionary concerns which, at core, are ecclesial, for they reflect a missional understanding of the Church's mission. Christians have assembled voluntarily to carry out the missionary task – out of these voluntary structures, full-fledged organizations have emerged. Consequently, what is required is a more constructive *ecclesiological* approach to the parachurch phenomenon, to which I now turn.

2 Towards an Ecclesiology of the "Parachurch"

Speaking of parachurch organizations as voluntary associations and exploring leadership and loyalties issues is helpful but explains their existence on more sociological than theological grounds. I now turn to two important ideas proposed to legitimate the emergence of these structures: The *deficiency approach* and the *innovative approach*, before I suggest a *rejoinder* to both approaches.

[669] Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, 'Cooperating', chap. 1 Stott wrote the theological preamble.
[670] White, *The Church and the Parachurch*, 85.

2.1 The Deficiency Approach

The first important hypothesis for the emergence of "parachurch" structures explains their existence by the supposed failures of the local church to fulfil its missionary vocation. The underlying assumption of this understanding is the *immediacy* of the relationship of individual Christians to God:

> *We know from Scripture* that it is God's will that people and nations everywhere should be reached with the gospel. So committed Christians across the centuries have felt free, *under the Spirit's guidance*, to use their God-given reason and creativity in organizing and using whatever structures are necessary to carry out God's purposes in fulfilment of the Great Commission.[671]

This argument draws a line between "Christians" and "committed Christians" who have seen a lack and engaged in filling the gaps by calling to existence new structures, as if the church was not sufficient to accommodate the "Great Commission outreach." Note the emphasis on *Scripture* and on guidance *from the Holy Spirit,* which are both potentially opposed to (failed) church leadership. Hence, at the intersection of "voluntarism" and the identification of "deficiencies" in the church, we find the historically fertile ground of "Free Church." Bloesch notes that Spener's thinking,[672] very influential on the development of later Free Church ecclesiology – the famous notion of *ecclesiola in Ecclesia*[673] was congruent with Luther's ideas.[674] In this view, "every Christian is given the privilege of teaching others, of chastising, exhorting, and converting. Every believer should be concerned about the personal salvation of his fellow human beings and should devote himself to prayer on their behalf."[675] This development took place against the backdrop of the perceived failure of the clergy of Spener's time to live up to the standards of piety Luther had envisaged. A later heir of Spener's views, who had a strong influence – even if indirectly – on early IFES leaders[676] was Brethren-founder Darby. Thinking the clergy of his time corrupt, he inscribed himself in a reformist vein. Lay preaching would supplement the clerical failure to be faithful and "Christians should preach to those ready to perish and [so Darby] was critical of those who restricted their evangelism in order not to offend their superiors."[677] In the same way, Brackney argues that the parachurch answers a potentially new need: "One of the primary functions assumed by parachurch organizations is to provide for new outlets of mission work. In this regard, the parachurch takes to itself a function historically assumed by the church."[678]

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671 Warren W. Webster, 'The Messenger and Mission Societies', in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, ed. Ralph D. Winter (Pasadena, California: William Carey Library, 1981), 764.

672 Exposed at length in his landmark pamphlet *Pia Desideria* (1675).

673 Martin Lloyd-Jones, 'Ecclesiola in Ecclesia', in *Approaches to Reformation for the Church*, vol. 4, Puritan Papers (Hartshill: Tentmaker, 1965).

674 Notably presented in Philipp Jacob Spener, *Pia desideria oder herzliches Verlangen nach gottgefälliger Besserung der wahren evangelischen Kirche, nebst einigen dahin abzweckenden christlichen Vorschlägen*, Original in 1675 (Leipzig: Köhler, 1841).

675 Bloesch, *Life, Ministry, and Hope*, 2:115.

676 Most notably Douglas Johnson and Hans Bürki.

677 Neil Dickson, '"The Church Itself Is God's Clergy". The Principles and Practices of the Brethren', in *The Rise of the Laity in Evangelical Protestantism*, ed. Deryck Lovegrove (London: Routledge Chapman & Hall, 2002), 218.

678 Brackney, *Christian Voluntarism*, 138.

Such a view has far-reaching ecclesiological consequences, notably for the responsibility of a local church towards its constituency, in short, *a theology of the laity*. White does more than alluding to this aspect when he boldly affirms that

> it seems that one of the goals of world evangelization should be to get more people doing more ministry more of the time. The "more people" must involve the equipping and sending of the laity. Yes, sending, not just building them up. But systems for sending by a local church are largely restricted by a formal schooling requirement. Para-local church groups have consistently broken through this barrier by equipping and sending the "unlearned and uneducated" to minister full-time. We still need full-time people. But our current formal educational systems are only a part of the preparation. The New Testament pattern is more "learning by doing."[679]

As I will argue in the last part of this work, such "faithful improvisation" is what is called for in the constantly changing environment of the University, with its demands and challenges.

Circling back from theology to sociology, Scheitle assumes a "market" of religious goods available, in which "the rise, fall, and rise again of the parachurch sector represent a continuous narrative in the changing structure of the religious market."[680] In this case, a parachurch organization would just be filling a gap of offer for potential clients of religious *goods and services*[681] that local churches might not be able to provide. Hence the proliferation of organizations trying to tackle the same needs.

The idea that "parachurch" structures arise because of the deficiencies of ecclesial structures, only briefly exposed here, rests on the assumption that *mission* is fundamental to the Church's mission: this is essentially a *missional ecclesiology*. Framing the debate in such terms, however, explains some of the tensions which arise between church leaders and parachurch leaders: sociologically speaking, a "competitor" arises, questioning long-held theological fundamentals – for example a certain *mediatory* role for the church – and ecclesial traditions – for example the subordination of the laity to the clergy. The logic behind this *deficiency approach* would be that had the Church taken its missionary vocation seriously enough, structures like IFES would not have emerged. Implicitly then, they represent a regrettable development wasting the church's precious human and financial resources. In this approach, church leaders can condescend to tolerate "parachurch" organizations for some time, but they would rather dismantle themselves and "get back" to the clergy's authority. This summary, admittedly pointed, nevertheless highlights the most negative approach to the parachurch. Yet another, more positively missiological view is possible, which rests on the needs for new approaches in a changing world.

2.2 The Innovative Approach: New Wineskins and Dual Structures

The idea that the parachurch represents a necessary innovation is paradigmatically expressed in Snyder's *wineskins argument* presented at the Lausanne 1974 Congress. Snyder distinguishes between

[679] White, *The Church and the Parachurch*, 163.
[680] Scheitle, *Beyond the Congregation*, 21.
[681] Scheitle, 6.

the Church as biblically understood and auxiliary ecclesiastical structures "which did not exist in New Testament days, but which have grown up through church history."[682] Instead of playing missionary structures and Church against each other, he affirms that

> the Church is itself a missionary structure, and any group of missionaries may be a legitimate embodiment of the Church. This means there can be no question of the Church versus 'missionary structures.' Where missionaries are, there is the Church, and their missionaries are responsible to demonstrate the reality of Christian community.[683]

Snyder thus undermines the idea that the parachurch could be conceived to be "beyond" or "outside" of the church, but boldly anchors parachurch structures within a broadly conceived Church: "Whereas the Church itself is part of the new wine of the Gospel, all para-church structures are wineskins – useful, at times indispensable, but also subject to wear and decay."[684] This strengthens the legitimacy of the parachurch and relativizes its contingent status.[685]

Two major ideas underscore this understanding of parachurch structures. The first is theological and relates to a profoundly Protestant understanding of the articulation between truth and organization as Willaime has astutely observed in the context of the Reformation:

> By making religious truth a matter of interpretation, this model leads to a permanent debate within the religious organisation about the religious truth it seeks to convey and thus to *a constant criticism of the formulations adopted*. Ideological authority is, in principle, exercised only by the power of its conviction and rational argument in value. Theological research is formally free, and the theologian is given an important role in the management of religious truth, since it is he who, on the basis of a certain knowledge, will say what is the right line. *The religious organisation has only a functional role here: as a second instance in the service of truth, its mode of operation and its distribution of roles have only a relative value and are sociohistorical.*[686]

As Protestantism submits the formulations of the faith to a biblically-informed criticism – often carried out by laypeople – ecclesial structures can be evaluated against the backdrop of their faithfulness to what has been identified as the Church's mission. Here, *participation* in the Church implies that Christians, by virtue of their *immediate* relationship to God through Scripture, can criticize the way in which the Gospel is *mediated* to the world, in and outside of the gathered assembly. Loyalty to the Church is shown by biblically assessing its functioning and, if necessary, by reforming it.

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[682] Howard A. Snyder, 'The Church as God's Agent in Evangelism - Conference Presentation', in *Let the Earth Hear His Voice: Official Reference Volume, Papers and Responses*, ed. International Congress on World Evangelization and J. D Douglas (Minneapolis: World Wide Publications, 1975), 356.

[683] Howard A. Snyder, 'The Church as God's Agent in Evangelism - Working Paper', in *Let the Earth Hear His Voice: Official Reference Volume, Papers and Responses*, ed. International Congress on World Evangelization and J. D Douglas (Minneapolis: World Wide Publications, 1975), 341–42.

[684] Snyder, 337.

[685] Like others, Haight notes in his *summa* that all forms of Church are actually contingent, see Roger Haight, *Ecclesial Existence*, vol. 3, Christian Community in History (Bloomsbury, 2014), 33. If this is correct, then diminishing the value of the parachurch because of its contingent flexibility is misguided.

[686] Jean-Paul Willaime, *La précarité protestante: sociologie du protestantisme contemporain*, Histoire et Société, no 25 (Genève: Labor et Fides, 1992), 24–24, italics mine.

The second line of argumentation builds on the so-called *Two Structures of God's Redemptive Mission*.[687] Winter's primary argument is that the New Testament describes and prescribes the function of the Church but not its form. The Church, essentially modelled after the Jewish synagogue and including "old and young, male and female"[688] is the first structure ressembling to the later parish Church. The second is derived from Paul's own "missionary band," for the apostle was,

> true enough, sent out by the church in Antioch. But once away from Antioch he seemed very much on his own. The little team he formed was economically self-sufficient when occasion demanded. It was also dependent, from time to time, not alone upon the Antioch Church, but upon other churches that had risen as a result of evangelistic labors. Paul's team may certainly be considered a structure.[689]

This formal flexibility of the Early Church questions practical theology: to what extent can forms be adapted to function and task? Camp summarizes Winter's position as implying that if only *functions* are prescribed in the NT, "it is theologically legitimate to change the form of the assembly from synagogue to church to diocese. Similarly, it is scripturally acceptable to change the form of a missionary band to a monastic structure or to a mission agency, in as much as the function remains the same."[690] Winter argues that the two structures have operated more or less successfully throughout Church history in the form of *modality* (local Church) and *sodality* (missionary band), defined as follows:

> A modality *is* a structured fellowship in which there is no distinction of sex or age, while a sodality is a structured fellowship in which membership involves an adult second decision beyond modality membership and is limited by either age or sex or marital status.[691]

Yet Winter is taken to task by Willmer et all for making too close a connection between medieval orders and parachurch ministries because the latter "make no claims to offer a spiritual life that is deeper than the spiritual life of a Christian who attends church faithfully. These groups simply offer avenues of service."[692]

Such critique risks reducing the success of parachurch structures to their practical value and presupposes only functional interest in their members. Yet, ministry cannot be separated from "spiritual" life. It is logical to conclude from various training events, spiritual literature, and overall teaching that IFES students are indeed called to "a deeper spiritual life" including witnessing, what

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[687] Ralph D. Winter, 'The Two Structures of God's Redemptive Mission', *Missiology: An International Review* 2, no. 1 (1 January 1974): 121–39.

[688] Winter, 122.

[689] Winter, 122.

[690] Bruce K Camp, 'A Theological Examination of the Two-Structure Theory', *Missiology* 23, no. 2 (1995): 201.

[691] Winter, 'The Two Structures of God's Redemptive Mission', 127. Brackney explains the relative success of Winter's thesis by its closeness to common narratives in Protestant circles: "Winter's typologies have received wide attention in the Protestant missiological community, particularly among the independent and evangelical organizations, because he asserted that the sodality principle was recovered in Protestantism and is best exemplified in the modern voluntary associations of the missionary movement." Brackney, *Christian Voluntarism*, 131. One could push the cultural analysis further and explore the relationship of "voluntary agencies" with the modern notion of "individual agency" almost consubstantial with "modernity" (as the 19th-century context of most voluntary organizations might imply).

[692] Willmer, Schmidt, and Smith, *The Prospering Parachurch*, 27.

others call "religious goods." In student ministry, these "goods" are targeted toward their audience, taking special care in being contextually relevant to university life. It is precisely this contextual relevance, together with a reduction of theological tensions, that considering the parachurch as a transient structure allows. Snyder summarizes the benefits of such an approach:

> (i) That which is always cross-culturally relevant (the biblically-understood Church) is separated from that which is culturally bound and determined (para-church structures). Thus, one is free to see the Church as culturally relevant and involved and yet not as culturally bound. (ii) One is free also to modify parachurch structures as culture changes, for these are not themselves the Church and therefore are largely culturally rather than biblically determined. (iii) Finally, this distinction makes it possible to see a wide range of legitimacy in denominational confessions and structures. If such structures are not themselves the Church and are culturally determined, then whole volumes of controversy and polemics lose their urgency and become merely secondary. Widely varying confessions are freed (at least potentially) to concentrate on that which unites them: being the people of God and carrying out the evangelistic task – while relegating structural differences to the plane of cultural and historical relativity.[693]

If then an organization like IFES has mission as its *raison d'être*, then from the point of view of *missional ecclesiology* for which "where missionaries are, there is the Church," the main way of distinguishing parachurch from "Church" will be by arguing that the form of mission it pursues is inherently limited relative to the broader *missional calling* of the Church, because it focuses on students only. If as Snyder says, "missionaries are responsible to demonstrate the reality of Christian community," one of the ways in which an organization might be inherently limited relative to the missional calling of the Church will be if it somehow cannot "demonstrate the reality of Christian community." The argument runs the risk of circularity: parachurch leaders accuse the local Church of being missionally deficient whilst the latter rebuke the first of being narrow-minded in their ecclesiology.

This argument of *double structures* is eminently more positive towards parachurch structures, underlying their importance in the *contextualization* of mission in the world. Yet the perennial question of authority remains if these structures are still considered to be *para*ecclesial and not fully ecclesial in nature. A promising way out of this riddle might be to consider the relationship of the parachurch to the local church in the same way denominations relate to the Church universal.

2.3 A Rejoinder: From the Double Nature of the Church

A more recent proposal explores the articulation of the participation of Christian students in parachurch organizations and local churches. Debanné[694] draws a parallel between ecclesiology and Christology. Having acknowledged the "legitimacy issue" that parachurch often suffer in the eyes of

[693] Snyder, 'The Church as God's Agent in Evangelism - Working Paper', 338. Opposing the "biblically-understood" Church, deemed "always relevant" and parachurch structures seems a shortcut, for even "biblical understanding" is culturally conditioned.

[694] Debanné was GS of the French-speaking GBUC working in Québec from 1999 to 2014.

church leaders, he contends that this issue is the result of an ecclesiological blind spot: forgetfulness of the primacy of the Universal Church over the local church. This would presuppose

> a Christology that would emphasize the human nature of Jesus without fully appreciating his divine nature: a doctrine of the Church that does not take into account the two natures of the Church, local and universal, inevitably leads to concrete situations that do not correspond to God's plan.[695]

Debanné contends that such an approach is

> liberating and energizing for the believer. It is the bearer of a seed of creativity and new initiatives: it allows each member of the faithful, man or woman, to be prepared in his or her local Church to take his or her place in the worldwide work of Christ inside and outside that Church. It makes him/her capable of becoming an autonomous actor (because he/she is dependent on Christ) in initiatives for the Kingdom of God.[696]

This autonomy is relative. Debanné notes that any Christian will be a member of a local church and should do everything in his or her power to remain in good standing with the church's leadership. However, the key to his argument is that the church leadership has responsibilities to the whole Christian community. This argument rests on the fact that "we see Peter, for example, ascribing to the Church being built around Christ the same prerogatives and responsibilities as those ascribed to the community of Israel (royal priests, a holy nation, a people redeemed [by God]), 1 Pet. 2:4-10; see Ex. 19:5-6)."[697] The connection with the idea of the *priesthood of all believers* is evident. Debanné argues in strong terms that "the new convert becomes a member of the universal Church before becoming a member of a local church, in the way that baptism in the Holy Spirit (conversion, regeneration: the invisible reality) precedes water baptism (the visible manifestation)."[698] This argument is consistent with the primacy for truth already noted in most IFES writers. The same logic is at work for ecclesiology:

> The primary reality of biblical ecclesiology is the universal Church. It must therefore also be the primary principle of the believer's theological understanding of the Church. Even if local Church life will fill most of his time and energies (this will be the case for most Christians), he will only be able to live this local Church life correctly if he understands it in the context of the universal Church, of which it is a local manifestation.[699]

Debanné also goes to great lengths to debunk the concerns of certain church leaders that parachurch organizations might show a lesser concern for doctrine because of the contingencies of missionary work. For him, the fact that many organizations have a doctrinal statement demonstrates the contrary and is a sign of maturity and faithfulness because "mission outside" is eminently riskier

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[695] Marc Debanné, 'L'étudiant chrétien, l'Église locale et les mouvements chrétiens étudiants : comment démystifier la place du « para-Église » ?', *Théologie évangélique* 14, no. 1 (2015): 25.

[696] Debanné, 26. Enns also alludes to the doctrine of the two natures: "Universality and particularity are two sides of the same coin, just as the believed and experienced church are two sides of that one coin, as is the incarnated Christ." Enns, 'Believers Church Ecclesiology', 124.

[697] Debanné, 'Démystifier', 26–27.

[698] Debanné, 28. This counters Haight's contention that "If the church is a free association, then the primary reference for the term "church" insofar as it is an organized community is the local church." Haight, *Comparative Ecclesiology*, 2:279.

[699] Debanné, 'Démystifier', 28.

doctrinally than "church life." For him, "it is necessary to understand the specific role of inter-church works in the body of Christ: to join to the proclamation of the truth in a given missionary context a work of unity that goes beyond the local churches and denominations, according to the Lord's twofold demand."[700]

This line of argument is rare in IFES-related publications, but it fleshes out more clearly than many other documents the way many IFES leaders have understood a way of legitimizing their work. Whilst parachurch organizations can indeed become sectarian, denominations run the same schismatic risk by putting too strong a focus on their own denominational distinctives. Debanné hence calls upon the primacy of the missionary calling of the Christian to highlight that "The Lord's call to faithful evangelisation gives us no choice, whatever the type of structure in which we work: we must stand in a gap where the two risks are always present."[701] The conclusion Debanné draws from this missiological observation is that the term *parachurch* should be abandoned to the benefit of "inter-church" in order to dispense once and for all with the derogatory and implicitly sectarian soundings of the word, for "members of the Body are not defined by the risk they face."[702]

Overall, Debanné reads like a peaceful rejoinder of the "deficiency approach" and the "necessary innovation" approach yet grounding his ecclesiological argument for abandoning the notion of "parachurch" on Christology and the primacy of the individual's relationship to God. For Debanné, this relationship *precedes* involvement in the local Church. Hence, what used to be called *para-church* is plainly, *Church*. Theologically speaking then, the *immediate* relationship to God of individual *members* of the Church universal shapes their *missional* orientation, for which they gather in what could be a called a *branch* of the Church – in our case a "campus branch" or to use a missiologically sounder term, an *incarnation* of the Church.

If all the above explorations are true, there is not much left to prevent a parachurch like IFES to be called "ecclesial." This depends on a distinctively *missional ecclesiology* on which not all Church traditions are agreed.[703]

2.4 Partial Synthesis

> The church took shape around the originating impulse of God in Jesus toward the kingdom of God in history and finds its raison d'être in continuing to mediate God's empowerment and supply the social basis for this mission.[704]

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[700] Debanné, 42.
[701] Debanné, 42.
[702] Debanné, 43.
[703] Another vexing point which cannot be explored in detail is the question of Sacraments, considered, in many traditions, as one of the "marks of the true Church," yet never considered as central in IFES – which is a strong indicator of its essentially low-Church tradition. Historically, IFES movements have refrained from celebrating Baptisms and Communion out of respect for the diverging sacramental understandings of their constituency. In more recent years and especially during large events, Communion has been celebrated, mostly by leaders recognized by their own denomination. For more, see Appendix 4.
[704] Haight, *Ecclesial Existence*, 3:106.

Our brief survey of the notion of *parachurch* has explored the building blocks of the definition of this phenomenon. We have seen that the *voluntary principle* underscoring it presumes the primacy of the individual's *immediate* relationship to God, based on which the local church is assessed. True to Evangelicalism's insistence on *mission*, many Christians have found the church lacking in her commitment to take her missionary calling seriously. Such is the *deficiency* explanation for organizations like IFES, which exist "beside" traditional ecclesial structures. Whilst helpful to understand *parachurch* historically, this approach risks diminishing the value of what so-called parachurch organizations have achieved throughout Church history.

Others have argued that because of the necessity to contextualize the *mediation* of the Gospel message in the world, parachurch structures were simply a structural innovation akin to "new wineskins" and coherent with development already present in NT writings, notably the existence of the stable *modalities* and the more flexible *sodalities*, two structures collaborating in mission. A rejoinder position was offered, proposing that in the same way Christology articulates the two natures of Jesus Christ as both divine and human, ecclesiology can articulate two natures for the Church, the first being the Church universal and the other the local church. In this last view, because all Christians are *members* of the universal Church, the "parachurch" is only an "incarnation" or a "branch" of the Church universal outside the walls of the traditional local church. The parachurch then plays a vital role in the overall calling of the Church.

Despite their disagreements, all these perspectives assume the centrality of mission to the definition of the Church. This, in turn, underscores a *missional ecclesiology* legitimating so-called "parachurch" structures because their activities fit the brief of a "mission" which is broadened to become the heir of Israel's calling to be a display-people of God's redemptive calling. Despite being widely used as linguistic shortcut, the term "parachurch" is then misleading. It reflects an outdated hierarchical, ecclesiocentric vision of the Church which is not congruent with the primacy of mission over structures.

3 A Ministry of Expansion? Roland Allen's Missiology and IFES Ministry

To articulate the connection between biblical theology, ecclesiology and missiology in student ministry, the work of pioneer missionary and missiologist Roland Allen is promising and illuminating.[705] Allen explores the priesthood of laypeople in missionary context in a short book presumably penned in the late 1930s but published only in 2017: *The Ministry of Expansion: The Priesthood*

[705] For more on Allen, see Hubert Allen, *Roland Allen: Pioneer, Priest and Prophet* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995); Steven Rutt, *Roland Allen: A Missionary Life* (Cambridge: Lutterworth, 2018); Steven Rutt, *Roland Allen II: A Theology of Mission* (Cambridge: Lutterworth, 2018).

of the Laity.[706] In what follows, I present some of the most salient aspects of Allen's reflections insofar as they shed light on how IFES ministry can be missiologically understood.

I have found no explicit references to Allen in the IFES archives or published documents related to IFES. Yet, parallel lines of thinking run between Allen's reflections and how IFES leaders have conceived of their work. High Anglican missionary-priest Allen insists on the importance of the sacraments and episcopal ordination, and discusses his status as a geographically distant envoy. Conversely, IFES leaders insist on the importance of the Word, reflect on authority issues more generally (either doctrinal or in relationship with ecclesial leaders) and discuss the ideological "remoteness" of many aspects of campus life. Whilst Allen's public and arguments differ from those of IFES, many of his ideas highlight the difficulty to draw sharp lines between what is "in" the Church and what is "outside of it" or "beside it."

Allen articulates his missiology around "apostolic principles," which Rutt summarizes thus:

> Planting the indigenous Church through short-term itinerant evangelists; establishing the Church in apostolic order – the Scriptures, a basic creed, the ministry, the sacraments; self-governing churches which ordain locally trained leadership to administer the sacraments frequently; self-supporting churches which manage their own affairs; and, self-propagating churches which empower the laity to influence the culture as a missionary body, are reiterated today for ongoing missiological discussion.[707]

These principles run through most of the theology of IFES. Somewhat blurring the lines between Church and parachurch, with one important caveat, the description applies to the practices of IFES: care for the apostolic tradition – understood as teaching and not as succession, a basic creed – the Doctrinal basis, self-governing student groups and national movements which appoint locally trained leadership and manage their own affairs, self-propagating national movements (sometimes helped in the pioneering phase by other IFES movements) and overall, the empowerment of the (student) laity throughout the process. Only the sacramental dimension is less prominent in IFES.

3.1 Confidence in the Laity

Based on a biblical theology approach, Allen's central missiological idea is that of *expansion*, a process he assumes to be *spontaneous*:

> I mean the expansion which follows the unexhorted and unorganized activity of individual members of the Church explaining to others the Gospel which they have found for themselves; I mean the expansion which follows the irresistible attraction of the Christian Church for men who see its ordered life, and are drawn to it by desire to discover the secret of a life which they instinctively desire to share; I mean also the expansion of the Church by the addition of new churches.[708]

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[706] Roland Allen, *The Ministry of Expansion: The Priesthood of the Laity*, ed. J. D. Payne, Kindle (William Carey Library, 2017). For all quotations from this book, numbers refer to Kindle location instead of page.

[707] Steven Rutt, 'Roland Allen's Apostolic Principles: An Analysis of His "The Ministry of Expansion"', *Transformation* 29, no. 3 (2012): 237.

[708] Roland Allen, 'Spontaneous Expansion: The Terror of Missionaries', *World Dominion*, no. 4 (1926): 218–24; quoted in J. D. Payne, 'Roland Allen, Missiology and The Ministry of Expansion', in *The Ministry of Expansion: The Priesthood of the Laity*, by Roland Allen, ed. J. D. Payne, Kindle (William Carey Library, 2017), 220.

Allen displays impressive confidence in the laity, warranted by a firm trust that the Holy Spirit leads any Christian, irrespective of their training, seniority, or even level of training.[709] Thus, many years prior to developments in missional ecclesiology, Allen proposes a "simple concept in theory, but a complicated reality to achieve due to Western church expectations."[710] Such expectations, especially "related to ordination and the Eucharist," caused Allen to write his short book.

As for many of his writings, *The Ministry of Expansion* has frequently polemical undertones. Based on his experience as a missionary, Allen took exception to the theological arguments of many of his contemporaries, arguing they were not taking full consideration of the situation on the mission field. The theologians of the day, said Allen, were embroiled in a Christendom mentality which could not do justice to the needs and specificities of foreign lands where churches were developing at a pace no church hierarchy could fathom. Allen observes about the Early Church that "Christians who were scattered about the world could not possibly have been all ordained and commissioned by the apostles and they did not wait for any apostolic ordination to observe the rite which Christ ordained for them."[711]

Yet, Allen was no ecclesial maverick. He

> maintained that bishops were consecrated to oversee the planting of churches. And yet, it became evident to him that within many frontier regions where no ordained ministers existed (especially, within African and Asian contexts) that the Holy Spirit sovereignly created new churches through the ministry of the laity.[712]

Furthermore, Allen's high view of the sacraments led him to advocate for more lay involvement:

> If it is admitted that Christ directed His servants, generally, to observe His sacraments, if that teaching which we commonly hear at home, that partaking of the Holy Communion as an act of obedience to Christ is true teaching, then anything whatsoever which prevents men from observing it is something which overthrows and annuls the command of Christ for them. I say that no custom or tradition can annul a command of Christ for Christians.[713]

These "customs or traditions" refer to episcopal ordination. In Allen's view, its absence was no reason to deprive of the Sacraments Christians living in large dioceses infrequently visited by ordained personnel. Allen is adamant that "the grace of Christ is wider than the episcopate. The promise of Christ that He will be with two or three gathered together in His Name is prior to the ordained ministry."[714] Allen adds that "any theory of the ministry, then, which forgets that ministry of

[709] The research literature on Allen is vast. For his pneumatological missiology, see Mark Oxbrow, 'Pentecost and the World: Roland Allen, the Spirit, and Remodeling Twenty-First-Century Mission', *International Bulletin of Mission Research* 44, no. 3 (July 2020): 215–32.

[710] Payne, 'Roland Allen, Missiology and The Ministry of Expansion', 326.

[711] Allen, *Priesthood of the Laity*, 1488.

[712] Steven Rutt, 'Background and Overview of the Ministry of Expansion', in *The Ministry of Expansion: The Priesthood of the Laity*, by Roland Allen, ed. J. D. Payne, Kindle (William Carey Library, 2017), 745.

[713] Allen, *Priesthood of the Laity*, 1134.

[714] Allen, 1589.

expansion, and attempts to compel the words of the New Testament to fit a hierarchy with defined functions, must necessarily find the task difficult, and its conclusions doubtful."[715]

Biblical theology shapes Allen's missiology, and especially his strong commitment to Pauline teachings.[716] For the argument of this work, Allen's reference to 1 Peter is of particular interest:

> We all agree that in the New Testament Christians are called to be a "royal priesthood" (1 Pet 2 :9) and "priests" (Rev 1:6; 5:10; 20:6); and that as a priestly race and priests they offer to God sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving; and that their observance of the Lord's Supper is so markedly an offering of praise and thanksgiving that it very early received the title of Eucharist. We all agree that ministers of the Church in that Eucharistic service act, not vicariously for the congregation, but representatively, and that it is the whole body which offers using an ordained minister as its mouthpiece.[717]

Allen highlights the idea of representation – he notably does not use *mediation* – which he opposes to a vicarious act. There is also a somewhat loose yet real connection with IFES: if clergy members represent believers before God for Allen, he presumes *real* faith in the congregants. Similarly, IFES leaders argue that students cannot rely on representatives – pastors, parents, etc. – but need to take charge of their faith – a view that assumes *immediacy* between students and God. Congruent with low sacramental theology, the only way IFES leaders or student leaders would *represent* others before God is through prayer. Furthermore, Allen explicitly attributes the priesthood privileges to every Christian, arguing against restraining sacramental practice to a specific group. Allen takes great pain to explain that this argument applies to "mission fields," but the form of the theological argument can be applied to other contexts as well. This was a far-sighted view that might prove fruitful in contexts marked by an increased dechristianization and shortage of clergy.

3.2 Relating to Clerical Traditions

Laypeople ministering had not been on the earlier radar of Allen, yet he found himself arguing against his former mentor, Bishop Gore[718] and another Oxford luminary, Moberly. Allen contends that supporting lay ministry in lands afar was no act of ecclesial insubordination but an act of obedience to the Lord's Commands and of service to fellow Christians. Allen submits that,

> We are simply men, who being deprived of the assistance of the regular order, do the best that we can. We do not set up a theory of the superiority of the untrained, unqualified to the trained and qualified medical practitioner, because we help a man in distress to the best of our ability; neither do we set up a theory of the superiority of a charismatic ministry to the regularly ordained ministry because we do the best in our power in the absence of the regularly ordained ministry.[719]

These words read like the defence of a foreign envoy reporting to the "sending centre" of his church. Whilst not challenging the doctrine of apostolic succession head on, Allen nevertheless

[715] Allen, 1914.
[716] See his missiology classic: Roland Allen, *Missionary Methods: St Paul's or Ours?* (London: Scott, 1912).
[717] Allen, *Priesthood of the Laity*, 1718.
[718] Whose opposition to the early OICCU we have noted in the history section of this work.
[719] Allen, *Priesthood of the Laity*, pt. 1617.

regularly challenged what he considered a legalistic and thus stifling interpretation of the doctrine, depriving members of the people of God of their rightful dues.

Allen's view is that if ordained clergy members were available in a foreign diocese, no question be asked about the opportunity of them celebrating the sacraments or performing whatever clerical duties necessary. In IFES circles, however, no such direct connection is granted, primarily for historical reasons. Moreover, given the difficult relationship between early IFES leaders and church leaders – even though some of the early IFES founders were clergy members, ordained or not – there is in the IFES rhetoric an underlining suspicion that clergy members might be detrimental to the faith of students, for theological and sociological reasons.

The way Allen argued for the need for Christians to receive the sacraments, whatever their circumstances, is very close to the way IFES people argue that students need to hear the Word. IFES leaders never explicitly adopted a sacramental view of Scripture. Nevertheless, functionally, the Bible assumed the same role: Scripture is instrumental in uniting people to Christ and his mission. The importance Bible expositors like Stott have assumed in the organization's history supports this view. Like Calvin's view on "the Scripture rightly preached" being a mark of the true Church, IFES leaders assume that a high view of Scripture and its diligent study are the marks of the "true IFES group/movement."[720] Incidentally, Allen supports his view of laypeople celebrating the sacraments by connecting the need for sacraments with the need for people to hear the Word: "what if we were depriving the world of the Word? Are churches possibly depriving the world of the Word of God out of a sheer lack of missionality?"[721] "Depriving the people of the Word" was precisely what early IFES leaders would have accused WSCF circles of doing and hence justified their existence.

This idea of "deprivation" supposes that some people possess or understand something others do not: at the core, a missiological argument. In this logic, someone needs to bring something to somebody else.

3.3 Distant Lands? Allen's Reflections Applied to Student Ministry

Allen's concern was for Christians in foreign and vast lands where no episcopal ordination practices could provide enough clerical staffing. Remoteness was not sufficient an argument for restricting sacramental practice to ordained clergy. I want to argue along the same lines for university campuses which, albeit not necessarily geographically, are often remote from ecclesial and theological centres.[722] Worldview perspectives, ideologies and scientific questioning are often far away from the horizons of church leaders or "ordinary" congregants.

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[720] It could also be suggested that IFES leaders have exercised a sort of "episcopate by the book," ensuring a form of theological conformity throughout the fellowship by promoting many titles throughout the world.

[721] Allen, *Priesthood of the Laity*, 1241.

[722] We take here a global view, which does not apply to some of the oldest universities, especially in the West, where theology departments still enjoy some prestige even in elite universities.

As Allen argued for contextual flexibility, IFES leaders argue for approaching university campuses on their own terms and understanding what preoccupies students. As Allen's contemporaries did not always understand the theological differences between their homeland and the mission field, student ministry requires a good understanding of the academic world. For IFES, "remoteness" is sometimes geographical – as the insistence on "pioneering" in strategic plans shows – but more often, "distance" is more conceptual. Indeed, remoteness needs not to be geographical. Bourdanné notes that

> The vast majority of non-Christian students cannot understand why someone without any previous knowledge of the university would address them. Having no respect for such a person, they will not even take the time to listen seriously to his message. Poorly prepared facilitators and pastors have been humiliated by students because of insufficient academic level and knowledge of university culture.[723]

Politely questioning nonacademic – that is primarily church-based – student ministry, he further observes that

> Student ministers need to have a good knowledge of the university culture. It is not enough to simply be a goodwill Christian to be successful in evangelising students. Some student evangelistic organisations and evangelical denominations rightly require that student leaders (university chaplains, facilitators, etc.) have a university background. This is not only because of their knowledge of the field, but also because it gives them a certain credibility with non-Christian students and the academic world in general (researchers, professors, etc.).[724]

If then campuses are in many ways "distant lands," they cannot be reached by a professional caste but need to be reached *from the inside*. This missiological conviction squares with the IFES fundamental that students are the primary ambassadors – akin to a *priestly* role – of the Gospel wherever they are. This reflects a *missional ecclesiology:*

> Christian students are still being used by God to carry out his evangelistic mission in almost every country in the world. They take the Gospel with them to campuses, lecture halls, dormitories, laboratories, restaurants, social networks and the Internet beyond their national borders. Because of their great mobility in search of places to study, they travel all over the world, including to countries closed to the Gospel. They go where traditional missionaries cannot openly operate.[725]

Such a view challenges the idea that locations could be "closed to the Gospel" and revisits student work missiology from the perspective of *missio Dei* to which I turn below. From a missiological perspective, a campus cannot be "closed." There might then be an advantage to campus authorities "forcing" students to organize themselves if they aspire to assemble formally.

The historical section of this work has shown that the "internal impulse of the Spirit" has often been encouraged or fostered by IFES staff workers. The fact remains, however, that many accounts, especially from regions where the influence of Christianity has been the weakest, tell the stories of

[723] Daniel Bourdanné, 'Évangélisation des étudiants', in *Dictionnaire de théologie pratique*, ed. Christophe Paya (Cléon-d'Andran: Éditions Excelsis, 2011), 265.
[724] Bourdanné, 364.
[725] Bourdanné, 360.

students who indeed felt an "inner commissioning" with the practical consequences envisaged by Allen:

> They do their work spontaneously. No one sends them out to do it, no one appoints their place or time; they work outside all ecclesiastical organization, independent of all ecclesiastical organization, independent of all ecclesiastical authority and supervision – most of them unknown to any ecclesiastical authority.[726]

Note the similarities with a very early account of student movements in Germany, the author of which was adamant that the Holy Spirit was

> not bound to any association organizations or church forms; under certain circumstances, both can act as inhibiting barriers. Therefore, we should not be surprised if new spiritual orientations often arise outside the official churches and organizations, and sometimes have to temporarily enter into direct opposition to them, because new life cannot be held in old forms (Mark 2:22). What happens in true obedience of faith, God can bless wonderfully.[727]

Whilst not making a formal case for independence from episcopal oversight, Allen's arguments are a solidly biblical case for student leadership, especially in contexts where ecclesial authorities are remote, whatever form this remoteness may take. Moreover, Allen's connection between *priesthood* and *remoteness* illuminates the church-parachurch questions from an angle that could make the overall debate somewhat more straightforward:

> When the Christian is with the organized body, he is with the organized body and must recognize the fact. He is not the whole body but a part and can only exercise his priestly function as a part, with the other members and through the recognized mouthpiece of the whole. But when he is separated from the organized body, he, and any others who may be with him, are still priests because the Spirit is in them; and as Irenaeus said, "Where the Spirit of God is there is the Church and all grace"; and they must recognize that fact.[728]

3.4 Partial Synthesis: An Empowered Laity for Mission in Distant Lands

Although neither developed within the Evangelical tradition nor originally applied to student ministry, Allen's missiological reflections shed a supporting light on the argument of this work. Essentially, Allen shows that theological logic and traditions need to be flexible when facing new missionary realities. Support structures are important to sustain the Christian faith: in the same way Allen thought the sacraments to be indispensable, in IFES, reading the Bible *individually* and *together* are held to be essential to a robust faith susceptible to be shared – *mediated* – on campus. Traditional ecclesial authority notwithstanding, *laypeople* can trust the Holy Spirit to guide them in life and ministry and clerical oversight is neither indispensable for Allen, nor IFES. Consequently, even in distant lands – either geographical or ideological, Christian life can validly take place.

Underlying Allen's thinking and IFES's is the notion that the mission of God is primary.

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[726] Allen, *Priesthood of the Laity*, 1348.
[727] Gruner, *Menschenwege und Gotteswege im Studentenleben*, 379.
[728] Allen, *Priesthood of the Laity*, 1833.

4 *Participation* in the *Missio Dei*

Though sometimes deemed controversial in Evangelicalism, the notion of *missio Dei* has gained significant momentum in missiological circles since the 1960s.[729] IFES leaders have often argued that their organization was necessary because of the primacy of mission over ecclesial structures. To speak of *missio Dei* means that God is on a mission and calls his followers to *join in* this mission by virtue of their *participation* in his work.[730] Missiologist David Bosch defines *missio Dei* in the following words which I supplement slightly: "the *missio Dei* is God's activity, which embraces both the church and the world [including the university], and in which the church [also through the parachurch] may be privileged to participate."[731] This applies to students, whose witness and community on campuses form a kind of "outpost" of the Church's engagement in the world. There is a close connection with the *priesthood of all believers*: As *participants* in God's mission, Christians *mediate* God to their environment, and this takes the form of witness and service. However, this also means that the distinction between "world" and "Church" is much blurrier than often assumed because God is at work in his whole creation and notably through Christ's priesthood, into which Christians are called. Hence, the *priestly* role of human beings instituted at the beginning of Genesis comes full circle. In Bevans's articulate summary,

> The church community, participating in God's life, is God's special people, a people living God's life of communion in a covenant of relation and love, a people convinced of its fundamental equality through its common baptism in the name of the triune God. But as communion-in-mission, this image takes on a dynamic meaning as God's people on pilgrimage, God's people chosen not for themselves but for God's purposes, God's people respectful of the Spirit's workings outside their own boundaries but committed to sharing the full implications of God's covenant with all humanity.[732]

So if the *priesthood of all Christian students* is *participation in* and *modelled after* Christ's priesthood, then some promising implications can be drawn. The *priesthood of Christ* is efficacious because of his two natures. Christian students can be understood as having – of course only derivatively – two natures: student and Christian. What Tomlin affirms about Christ could be adapted to any Christian: "He not only identifies and understands, he shares the very nature of both of the parties between which he *mediates*: God and humanity."[733]

The IFES group member indeed shares the very nature of both parties, thus *mediating* between God and the University.[734] This presupposes a broader understanding of the Church as being "at work" not only within the walls of the gathered congregation but amongst its sent members. As Tomlin

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[729] For a short overview of the history of the concept, see Robert McIntosh, 'Missio Dei', in *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, ed. A. Scott Moreau (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000).

[730] For a historical-analytical overview, see Stephen B. Bevans and Roger Schroeder, *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today*, AMS 30 (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2004), chap. 9.

[731] David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991), 391.

[732] Bevans and Schroeder, *Constants in Context*, 299.

[733] Graham Tomlin, *The Widening Circle: Priesthood as God's Way of Blessing the World* (London: SPCK, 2014), 23, emphasis mine.

[734] This works focusses on IFES but it is evident that these observations could apply to other Christian groups on campus.

affirms, "The priestly role of the Church, therefore, exists not just at its centre, in worship, prayer and sacramental activity, but also at its edges. Perhaps even primarily at its edges."[735] These "edges" are similar to the "distant lands" of which Allen wrote. Similarly, even if he speaks about the Church and not about a "parachurch" group, Greggs's point that the fringes of the community are the place where the priesthood of the church is best expressed remains fully valid:

> We might suggest, therefore, that the most intensive form of the priesthood of the church exists not at its centre or within its own communitarian structures, but at its fringes – in those areas in which its socio-poesis reaches out and attracts those around it in the world, drawing in and incorporating (in the strictest sense of the word) those outside the priestly community who are possessed by the *cor incurvatus in se* into the community of priesthood in which the heart is opened by the Spirit to be simultaneously attracted (abducted) to both God and others.[736]

This context of encountering others "before they enter the ecclesial community" is precisely what happens when non-Christian students attend a meeting of an IFES group. Especially if the group meets on campus, the threshold is much lower than that of a church.

Seeing the priestly calling of Church members as displayed *primarily outside* a context easily recognizable as *ecclesial* (like a church building, for example) has vast ecclesiological consequences. It implies recognizing the strategic aspect of *mediation* where Christians spend most of their time: at work, at home, at university.[737] In the University, this *mediation* can also be a prophetic foreshadowing of a restored humanity. In Tomlin's words, "The priesthood of Christ concerns the perfecting of humanity, rescuing it from its damaged, broken and filthy state, bringing it to its proper, cleansed and complete fulfilment, enabling it to become what it was intended to be."[738] Albeit in limited and still sinful ways, many of the core activities of universities consist precisely in devising solutions to humanity's problems and furthering the common good.

So from within the university, Christian students seized by the "news" of Christ's work have a message to pass on to fellow students: *ad extra*, informing, and convincing non-Christians to explore the relevance of the Christian message to the concerns of their personal life and academic disciplines. Setting witness in opposition to regular preaching, which addresses believers who are supposed to obey their Lord already, Congar underlines the importance of this lay witness:

> Witness is addressed to people outside the Church before they enter the Church community and participate in the mysteries it celebrates. It is the personal communication of a conviction possessed, a shock received, an experience made. The word of the laity finds its place more especially at the missionary

[735] Tomlin, *The Widening Circle*, 109.

[736] Greggs, 'The Priesthood of No Believer', 394.

[737] Christians often feel most "priestly", in other words, standing in a mediating position between God and the rest of humanity, when they are at work, rather than when they are in church. Being known as a Christian in the workplace, at the school gate, [in the university auditorium], in local clubs or sports fields, is to represent God in a very tangible and conscious way." Tomlin, *The Widening Circle*, 109–10.

[738] Tomlin, 33.

> stage of the Church, where it must take root and where, not yet having its institutional activities, it exists only in the living faith of the faithful and through the communication of that faith.[739]

What Congar calls the "missionary stage" is exactly how a Christian campus group can be understood. Nevertheless, the missiological relevance of a student group is not limited to non-Christians. *Ad intra,* discoveries made at university should prompt Christian students to study their faith's cultural and eschatological relevance to their studies and their future life in the workplace. Ultimately, this is all about human vocation: human beings were assigned, from the beginning, a priestly vocation that draws upon the whole of God's history with Creation. In Tomlin's words,

> If the human race is called to play a priestly role between God and Creation, mediating God's love to the rest of Creation, enabling it to be what it was meant to be, offering it back to God in worship, then the Church plays a priestly role specifically towards the whole of humanity, mediating God's love to the rest of the human race and enabling it to play precisely the priestly role assigned to it.[740]

Missiologically speaking, such a view leads to a high view of contextualization. This puts high demands on student ministry, for it requires intense engagement with the university context, for "priesthood requires not only relationality with God but also relationality with other humans; in a nation of priests, priesthood is the very form of sociality that creates the community as a community which ministers God to each other and each other to God."[741] As Shaw stresses, contextualization forces interactive reflection, and it is from the interplay between people's understanding of God's intention for all human beings as well as for their particular environment that transformation takes place, that is, a transformation that is both true to God's intent and also relevant within the context.[742]

Deep-reaching questions arise as to how contextualization and theological orthodoxy interplay, for mission *at the edges* easily implies a certain degree of confrontation with what people think and how they behave. This can challenge deeply held doctrinal convictions and cause much soul-searching. Yet precisely the idea that God is already at work in the world can sustain a robust engagement with its intricacies. Hardy argues, from the historical study of Christian missionary encounters, that

> it is possible, for example, to combine strong assertions about the universality of Christ with a dialogical engagement with other forms of life and thought, where a strong standard and content for theological orthodoxy is held together with open searching for the implications for, and in, history. In such a case, the one is not merely the background to the other but functions as the reason for searching for the meaning in the other. Or the conviction that God deals with human beings in history serves as the framework for searching with others to find where and how God does so.[743]

In the same vein, Andrew Walls lists three conditions necessary to establish a commitment to missionary ministry outside of the realm of a "crusade framework." He first notes that Christians need

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[739] Yves Congar, *Jalons pour une théologie du laïcat*, 2nd ed., Unam sanctam 23 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1954), 422.
[740] Tomlin, *The Widening Circle*, 95–96.
[741] Greggs, 'The Priesthood of No Believer', 392.
[742] R. Daniel Shaw, 'Beyond Contextualization: Toward a Twenty-First-Century Model for Enabling Mission', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 34, no. 4 (October 2010): 212.
[743] Hardy, 'Upholding Orthodoxy', 219.

to be ready to commit to "live on someone else's terms, together with the mental equipment for coping with the implications."[744] This "someone else" can be the University, with its methodological requirements or cultural context. Moreover, as Christians cannot dispense with a supportive community, Walls defends the need "for a form of organization which could mobilize committed people, maintain and supply them, and forge a link between them and their work and the wider church."[745] This can be the role of an IFES group and, at best, how a "parachurch" can work. It is fascinating to expand this "connection to the wider Church" by considering the Church spread across the world. The last element highlighted by Walls is "sustained access to overseas locations, with the capacity to maintain communication over long periods."[746] The IFES history bears witness to the fact that many of its members, upon encountering the wider fellowship – notably through international events – got a much wider sense and appreciation of the universality of the Gospel and were encouraged by such cultural diversity.

Walls's remarks are congruent with what we saw of God's project with the people of Israel as a holy nation for the specific purpose of blessing the surrounding nations. Summarizing Wright's appreciation that Jesus' message means the end of Israel's exile, Leithhart notes that "this 'return' has an ironic twist, for the last word of the gospels is not 'gather' or 'wait' but 'go.' By eliminating the 'center,' baptism to priesthood reverses the direction of cultural force, which now leads centrifugally to the four corners of the earth."[747] However, even if "to be a royal priesthood involves working for peace, for the full shalom and blessing of God,"[748] it should be borne in mind that the priestly mission of the church is only secondary to the *missio Dei* and does not originate with itself. In Tomlin's words, "The Church is the agent through which Christ, through the Holy Spirit, recalls humanity to its proper place, and restores it into his own image, so that it is capable of playing its divinely ordained role within the world."[749] Such broad vision frames a ministry like IFES in much broader terms than if it was considered a mere ecclesiological *aside:* the vocation of Christian students on campus is part of God's mission, not only the result of a group of like-minded individuals surviving university life.

[744] Andrew Walls, 'The Missionary Movement a Lay Fiefdom?', in *The Rise of the Laity in Evangelical Protestantism*, ed. Deryck W. Lovegrove (London: Routledge Chapman & Hall, 2002), 172.
[745] Walls, 172.
[746] Walls, 172.
[747] Leithart, *Priesthood of the Plebs*, 211–12.
[748] Greggs, 'The Priesthood of No Believer', 395.
[749] Tomlin, *The Widening Circle*, 96.

5 Pilgrimage and Priesthood in Mission

Participating in the *missio Dei* is a powerful incentive for mission. Yet, many Christians live in challenging contexts. In many countries, they are marginalized and cannot dream of anything like a "revival" as they engage in mission. If "being sent" is an essential vocation of Christians, their *priestly calling* is often to *mediate* something not yet accepted or known in a given environment. This environment is God's creation in which he continually acts and communicates himself. This also means that God sustains his people in whatever context they live, including exile. Far away from home, the community played a crucial role in sustaining the faith of the people of Israel. The Church has the same calling and so do Christian students in their universities. As we have seen, the campus can sometimes be a "distant land" or feel somewhat *foreign*.

In his *Pilgrims and Priests*, missiologist and former IFES staff Paas explores the ins and outs of missionary presence in the post-Christendom context.[750] Writing from the secularized context of the Netherlands, he develops a *missional ecclesiology* focusing on the role, essence and vocation of the Church. This ecclesiology applies well to our study, as it describes the *exilic* situation of Christians, the necessity to reflect about how they relate to their environment and try to *mediate* their environment, notably by *living out* a calling and *inviting* others. Moreover, since the university is a major channel of Western influence worldwide, missiological considerations brewed in the West can have promising potential for ministry in universities throughout the world, even if they all need to be reflected upon locally.

5.1 Priests in Exile

In the West, the steady disappearance of Christendom structures – often summarized under the vocable "secularization" – represents a seismic shift which, as Paas argues, most models of "revival" or "Church growth" fail to appreciate.[751] In this context, Paas criticizes one of the IFES mottos which invites to "change the world, one student at the time," as being an example of an outdated "historical matrix of revivalism and moral restoration"[752] linked to the gradual loss of Christian influence on culture in the twentieth century.

For Paas, the metaphor that more accurately describes Christians' situation in the post-Christendom context is that of *exile*, defined as "a time of confusion; […] characterized by a loss of

[750] As Paas has a background in IFES and has published his work recently, I chose to focus on his approach. Yet, he is by far not the only author to draw upon this notion of *pilgrimage* – notably *Ad Gentes*, and more broadly, of *resident aliens*. See for example William Stringfellow, *An Ethic for Christians and Other Aliens in a Strange Land* (Waco, Tex, 1973); Stanley Hauerwas and William Willimon, *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989).

[751] It is obviously not the place to provide even a cursory sketch of this extraordinary change. Deep analyses can be read in Owen Chadwick, *The Secularization of the European Mind in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975); Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007); Mary Eberstadt, *How the West Really Lost God: A New Theory of Secularization* (West Conshohocken: Templeton Press, 2013); Peter Harrison, 'Narratives of Secularization', *Intellectual History Review* 27, no. 1 (2 January 2017): 1–6.

[752] Stefan Paas, *Pilgrims and Priests: Christian Mission in a Post-Christian Society* (London: SCM, 2019), 67.

power; [which] requires looking after one's own identity; and […] asks for a renewed spirituality."[753] Many Christians have experienced this exilic situation. Paas's biblical-theological analysis embraces the whole scriptural narrative to focus essentially on 1 Peter. Like the exiled Israelites and the early Church, Christians in the West are in a diaspora situation "where Christian beliefs or lifestyles have no plausibility whatsoever."[754] This loss of plausibility does not necessarily imply that "you are ostracized, it does mean that the boundaries of your social space are usually prescribed by others."[755] This is disorienting and difficult, hence "the metaphor of pilgrimhood [which] highlights the rediscovery of the essential alien and marginalized nature of the Christian community in the world, [and] the priesthood image [which] helps us understand its missional calling."[756] An important dimension of this potential is that exile does not preclude *immediate access* to God. A sustained faith and a lively missionary engagement are possible because they do not rely solely on external supporting structures.

The core of the priestly dimension of the argument in 1 Peter refers to specific moments in Israel's history, the desert and the Babylonian exile, times "characterized by mobility and mission."[757] Yet, exile does not hinder witness. Paas sees this marginal position as congenial to the priestly logic: "Priests are a minority community by definition, who find their calling in seeking the peace of the city. There is nothing odd or imperfect about a minority church; on the contrary, it is its 'natural' position."[758] How then are such minority groups to relate to their environment? Paas's affirmation of the *priestly calling* of the people of God – the Church – rests on the work of biblical scholars exploring the "priestly dimension" of biblical anthropology,[759] that is, "our mediating role between God and the rest of his creation [… which] is presented as a temple that is built for the glory of God, where humans are appointed as priests to lead creation into worship and extend God's blessing to creation."[760] Such positive vision calls for a deliberate move for Christians to see a context where they are marginalized as a springboard for missional engagement.

5.2 Engaging With the Environment

If the Church builds upon the priestly vocation of the people of Israel to be a channel of blessing for the nations, it can be seen "as the priest of humanity, who offers praise to God on behalf of the world out of which she is chosen. Reversely, it is also true that she stands before the world as a priest, as God's servant."[761] Paas further contends that "the Church is a 'showcase,' a sign of God's purposes

[753] Paas, 217.
[754] Paas, 247.
[755] Paas, 243.
[756] Paas, 250.
[757] Paas, 250.
[758] Paas, 297.
[759] Notably John Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2009).
[760] Paas, *Pilgrims*, 249.
[761] Paas, 255–56.

with his creation. As a kingdom of priests, Israel was to be a model of dedication to God; it was to be transparent towards God for all peoples."[762]

If the Church's vocation is to prolong Israel's calling, the traditional understanding of the doctrine of *the priesthood of all believers* can be widened towards missiological thinking. Voss credits Barth whose "emphasis on the missionary nature of the priesthood of all believers represents a paradigmatic shift"[763] for the move. The basic idea behind Barth's argument is that "the ontological union of believers with Christ has already made each member a sharer in Christ's priesthood."[764] Consequently, the sending of the disciples into their respective environments derives from Christ's sending into the world and applies to all Christians, without the need of another ordination than baptism.[765] This ministry, so Voss summarizing Barth, "is first and foremost a ministry of proclamation, and the vocation of the royal priesthood is thus a vocation of witness."[766]

Following on Barth, missional Church theologians like Newbigin and Guder to name only a few, have either implicitly or explicitly argued for a recovery of the priestly dimension of the Christian vocation to foster missional engagement with the world.[767] Similarly, the Lausanne Covenant emphatically affirms that "Christ sends his redeemed people into the world as the Father sent him, and that this calls for a similar deep and costly penetration of the world. We need to break out of our ecclesiastical ghettos and permeate non-Christian society."[768]

Being a "showcase" in the world implies thoughtfully engaging with the context in which Christians find themselves and not only focusing on what is sinful in the world. Commenting on Paul and Barnabas's speech in Lystra in Acts 14, Paas pointedly notes that it is

> quite contrary to the traditional revivalistic evangelism that many modern Christians are familiar with. Apparently, the Apostles do not find it necessary to point out to these Gentiles what they are lacking (and then present Jesus as the solution); rather they describe the abundance of blessing in their lives, and they invite them to give a proper liturgical response to such abundance.[769]

Such a positive vision has strong potential for how Christians consider the world they inhabit, study, work or retire in. This also could mean to "overcome the pietist heritage that always wants to point the world towards its deficits, offering Jesus as the solution to fill the gaps."[770] Moreover, appreciation for what is done in the world is doxological if "Doxology is all about the recognition of

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[762] Paas, 258.
[763] Henry J. Voss, 'The priesthood of all believers and the missio Dei: A canonical, catholic, and contextual perspective' (Ph.D., Wheaton, Illinois, 2013), 254.
[764] Voss, 240.
[765] Voss, 235.
[766] Voss, 235.
[767] Bevans argues that Newbigin had an indirect influence on the RCC, because his missiological thinking found its way into AD GENTES, see Bevans and Schroeder, *Constants in Context*, 290–91.
[768] Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, 'The Lausanne Covenant' (Lausanne, 1974), para. 6, http://www.lausanne.org/content/covenant/lausanne-covenant.
[769] Paas, *Pilgrims*, 257.
[770] Paas, 308.

God as God; it is to acknowledge him as the creator and sustainer of all that is alive, the one who has saved us from sin and judgement."[771] This has vast missiological consequences:

> This "model" of the priestly church thus meets the requirements about doing mission in a culture that we no longer dominate morally or in any other way. What might have been a source of embarrassment and frustration (the goodness of so many non-Christians) now becomes a source of gratitude to a God of so much mercy.[772]

In a missionary context, and especially in the university, not only can a "source of potential embarrassment" refer to the character of non-Christians, but also and maybe even more pressingly, to academic achievements. In the engagement with the university context and especially with students, staff and professors, it is crucial to keep in mind the importance of the personal encounter, especially given the growing diversity of university campuses. Paas stresses that "it is impossible to objectify or 'reify' someone's personality; you cannot study it from a distance. Precisely then the other's being-a-person will elude you. That what is necessary for scientific analysis, namely, disengagement and objectification, precludes a personal encounter."[773] This is why missionary training needs to be fuelled by embeddedness in the life of and love for the environment in which *mediation* occurs, an aspect to which we shall return in the last chapter.[774] The crucial question to ask is

> what is God doing in our neighbourhood? How does he want to involve us? How can we as a priesthood present the questions, the joy and the needs of this neighbourhood to God in worship, and how can we bless the lives of people on behalf of God and his story?[775]

Note the emphasis on the *communal* dimension. The Church or the student group "is not primarily a loose collection of individual 'priests,' but a priestly community, then spiritually there is an 'us' that precedes 'me.' God is in a relation with 'us' and through this with 'me' – not the other way around."[776] Neither the personal life of a Christian, nor his or her witness, can be sustained in *exile* without the community, and the end of the Christendom era might be a providential moment fostering this reckoning.

5.3 A Missional Community

Crucial to Paas's understanding of priesthood as *a showcase* is its tangible character. Indeed, "there must be a community where salvation is real, even if provisionally and partially. This community is the Church."[777] Correspondingly, the Church is not "an 'extra' or a useful addition to the real thing. She belongs essentially to what God does with humans."[778] The community's existence is evidence

[771] Paas, 316.
[772] Paas, 308.
[773] Paas, 279.
[774] Greggs argues along similar lines, emphasizing that priestly mission is fundamentally an act of *love* towards others. Greggs, *Priestly Catholicity*, 418–20.
[775] Paas, *Pilgrims*, 301–2.
[776] Paas, 277.
[777] Paas, 283.
[778] Paas, 283.

that the Gospel has the redemptive power Christians pretend it has. To argue then that the *priesthood of all believers* means Christians have *personal* and *immediate* access to God in no way diminishes the need for community involvement. As Paas adamantly affirms,

> Insofar as believers participate in the Church they are members of the "priestly community" (hierateuma), and consequent on this they are also priests individually. But the order is crucial. God does not appoint individuals as priests in order to bring them subsequently together in a congregation. Precisely the opposite is true: by virtue of their baptism Christians are joined with Christ, embedded in the Church, and only thus they receive priestly status.[779]

Paas mostly comments on "fresh expression" of the Church and similar structures, which he sees, however, with a certain degree of scepticism. Yet, he also concedes that

> under certain conditions such an extra-ecclesial group may surely develop into a community that is rooted within the Christian tradition, offers a safe and inspiring home for the soul, engages missionally with its neighbourhood, and maintains fruitful relations with other Christian communities. But if that happens, then in my view this group is no longer outside the Church.[780]

Applying Paas's argument to IFES then means questioning the ecclesial character of IFES groups. The logical consequence of such argument is that ultimately, an IFES group has indeed ecclesial character. It is neither *outside the Church,* nor *beyond* or *beside* it. Yet, essential to being part of the Church are the relationships entertained with the rest of the Body, which means that an IFES group is part of the Church but cannot presume for itself to be "the Church." Here, the argument about the *priesthood of all believers* comes full circle: Christians can be fully *priests* if they are *members* of a community and not on their own. The same applies to an IFES group, which, though it has the same calling as a church, cannot be Church "on its own." Community membership is inherent to missional existence.

Complete embeddedness in the Christian tradition is of utmost importance for the sustainability and breadth of the faith. As Newbigin emphasizes,

> If we are to be in truth a holy priesthood, we need a secret altar, a place in our innermost life where, day by day, we offer to God through Jesus Christ every bit of our lives, our most secret thoughts and our most public actions, and where we receive afresh through Christ God's ever-new gift of grace and mercy.[781]

Such insistence on personal commitment certainly fits the early (pietistic) IFES discourse and is coherent with Paas's insistence on the importance of personal missionary spirituality. Furthermore, for Christians to withdraw from "formally" ecclesial membership would negate one of the essential aspects of their Christian identity: fruitful engagement with and mutual upbuilding within the broader body of Christians. Paas issues strong warnings against any aspiration to limit Christian existence to an individual "quiet time" which he deems akin to Gnosticism: "the individual bonds with an invisible,

[779] Paas, 272–73.
[780] Paas, 271.
[781] Lesslie Newbigin, 'An X-Ray to Make God Visible in the World', *Reform*, 1990, 7.

spiritual church or with an idealistic kingdom of God, without engaging with a concrete, human community of Christ in a local congregation that is connected with other congregations.[782]

Muthiah similarly notes that

> within the priesthood of all believers, an individual's identity and spiritual formation are rooted in a communal structure grounded in God's narrative. A person's identity is connected to a tradition. A person's identity is formed in relation to others. Christian identity formation in fact assumes a communal context.[783]

Consequently, arguing from the doctrine of the *priesthood of believers* does not reinforce individualistic tendencies altogether easily caught and developed in a competitive university context. Instead, it means helping students to see how they are part of a broader body, the Church, for "Salvation is ecclesiological; it means being incorporated into the people of God, the body of Christ. To belong to Christ is to belong to his Church; there is no other way."[784] Such missiological considerations should provide a helpful corrective to what Paas calls "hyper-Protestant views [in which] more often than not the Church is seen as the sum of (saved, sanctified) individuals who join together based on their own preferences."[785] Lutz argues along similar lines for a missional understanding of student ministry. In his view, missionally-minded groups "come together in community *to preach the gospel to themselves and to help each other share it with others*. They come together for prayer, encouragement, and equipping. They come together to model the kind of community into which they're inviting others."[786]

A student group is then, pneumatologically speaking, much more than an "affinity group." It is a context in which students might encounter Christian faith, for "God saves people by bringing them into a community with Christ and thus with others."[787] Qualifying such community as having "priestly character" aptly describes what happens when individuals encounter the lived Gospel in a vibrant student group that is simultaneously the *mediator* and the place where the encounter takes place. Paas firmly insists that gathered Christian communities "proclaiming the mighty acts of God" are "the most visible, structured and public expression of the priesthood of the Church."[788] Even if he does not underline the role of Bible reading in his argument, the communal aspect of such groups can decisively be fostered by scriptural engagement. Lastly, if Paul in Romans 15:16 understands witness to be a service to God, there is eminently prophetic anticipation of the eschatological gathering of the nations under the lordship of Christ:

> The future role of the faith community as priests has become reality in the present. The Christian Church praises God, also on behalf of those who do not (yet) praise him it welcomes converts as first signs of

[782] Paas, *Pilgrims*, 272. It is safe to assume that the challenge of bodily Christian community will only be more pressing as the long-time effects of the COVID-pandemic remain to be seen.
[783] Muthiah, *Priesthood of All Believers*, 2820.
[784] Paas, *Pilgrims*, 274.
[785] Paas, 273.
[786] Stephen Lutz, *College Ministry in a Post-Christian Culture* (The House Studio, 2011), 609 italics mine.
[787] Paas, *Pilgrims*, 287.
[788] Paas, 256.

> the harvest that is to come, and it goes out to invite the nations to the great wedding feast. And all this stands under the sign of God who works at the perfect restoration of his creation.[789]

Note the emphasis on the universality and essentially missional character of the Church's vocation. If this holds true for the Church, it can easily be transferred to a missionary student community. This missionary nature of the Church co-occurs in two directions:

> The priest metaphor defines the missionary nature of the Church as a dual movement: the Church represents the world before God and she represents God before the world. She comes into the presence of God as a worshipping, praising, liturgical community and she engages with the world in a witnessing, inviting, friendly way.[790]

5.4 Partial Synthesis

The post-Christendom situation of the West echoes many other contexts in the world where Christians are a small minority in society. This is what the Bible calls *exile*. Yet as the biblical story and the history of the Church testify, God is faithful in exile and calls his people to be His witnesses wherever they are. This chapter has shown that the metaphors of *pilgrimage* and *priesthood* aptly describe the limitations and promises of challenging situations. Loving, listening and caring for the context in which believers find themselves is what is called for, in line with their allegiance to their missionary God. Yet this witness is not the consequence of an individualistic notion of priesthood, but the outworking of a missionary faith sustained in the context of a supportive community.

Priesthood is a dual movement of *mediation*: an invitation to *participation* in God's community and the gathering to God of the first fruits of the nations. Most of what Paas argues for the Church applies to student groups: students, members of the Church *qua* Christians and supported by the Church, are the scattered *pilgrim priests* of the Church in the university, ministering in distinctive ways shaped by the missiological acumen necessary to faithful contextualization. Such faithful missionary presence means inviting others to experience God's presence. This represents a *mediation* of the Gospel, as loving and serving one's neighbour are intrinsically priestly dimensions of a service. Missionary engagement in the university is ultimately doxological, as priestly service to God and the nations, as the local student groups can be the *display-people* on campus of God's renewed humanity, a *missional community* inviting others to join into this eschatological foretaste.

In the next part, I explore how contextual engagement and mission are articulated in the notion of *apostolicity*.

6 Apostolicity, Theology and Missionary Expansion

Having seen how Allen's thinking helps articulate leadership and Church organization issues, and how a "ministry to the edges" is elevated by considering its role in the *missio Dei,* how even in challenging contexts, Christian "exiles" can be courageous witness, another pressing missiological

[789] Paas, 322–23.
[790] Paas, 260.

question is how theological and missional reflections are shaped by geographical expansion and contextualization.

The doctrine of the *priesthood of all believers* presumes locality and maturity. The logic of *immediacy,* which I have argued is integral to the doctrine, presupposes the possibility of relating to God wherever one finds him or herself, geographical foreignness to supposed "theological centres" notwithstanding. It also presupposes maturity in spiritual and hermeneutical discernment: if God speaks to individuals, then these individuals' encounters with God and their world are an integral part of the experience of the Body of Christ. As Christianity has spread across the world, the question of *mediation* has become more and more acute: not only is the Gospel *mediated* by Christians, but they, in turn, *mediate* back their encounters with their environment – for students, cultural and academic – to their local churches and in turn, enrich theologically the wider fellowship of which they are *members*.

In many quarters of Evangelicalism, and certainly in IFES, *apostolicity* was understood as relating to the "deposit of the teaching of the apostles." It can also be understood as the *missional character of the Church*: to be *apostolic* means *to be sent*. Such a view, which I examine in dialogue with Flett's recent *Apostolicity,*[791] renders better justice to the priestly dimension of witness, which I argue throughout this work and congruent to the notions of *missio Dei* and priestly pilgrimage examined above.

6.1 Theology in World Christianity

The history of missions often underlines the connection between *empire* and *mission*.[792] In the context of World Christianity, the notion of a "deposit of the faith," albeit unquestionably biblical in origin, often runs against the flow of the development of a genuinely indigenous faith underscored by the *priesthood of all believers*. Power dynamics often mark relationships between theological "powerhouses" like the United States and the United Kingdom and the rest of the world, either directly or via the education of non-Westerners. As Walls astutely observes,

> Like the old Jerusalem Christians, Western Christians (have) long grown used to the idea that they were the guardians of a "standard" Christianity; also like them, they find themselves in the presence of new expressions of Christianity, and new Christian lifestyles that have developed or are developing under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to display Christ under the conditions of African, Indian, Chinese, Korean, and Latin American life.[793]

If this is true, the sheer diversity of the Church should forbid any aspiration of one part of the body to dominate the narratives and the theologizing, or to decide for the rest, which are the "essentials" of the faith. Flett observes that the idea of a *deposit of the faith* often

> assumes the normativity of the "European experience" and attempts to "exercise control" over non-Western appropriations of the gospel through the insistence on the binding character of [the Western

[791] Flett, *Apostolicity*.
[792] World Council of Churches. Commission on World Mission and Evangelism., 'Mission in the Context of Empire'.
[793] Andrew F. Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission and Appropriation of Faith* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2002), 78.

> church's] formulation of the meaning of the Christian fact and Euro-American patterns of fellowship and worship.[794]

Stanley also observes the difficulty for certain quarters of Evangelicalism – and this certainly applies to IFES – in acknowledging a certain degree of relativity to their own formulae:

> Evangelical Christians, because of their proper concern to preserve the good deposit of the faith, have tended to be particularly hesitant about admitting the dynamically interactive and two-way nature of all true missionary encounters. They have sometimes been slow to realize that a primary focus on the substitutionary death of Christ for the penalty of human sin may not be a wholly intelligible or even theologically adequate interpretation of the gospel for some peoples from a primal religious background.[795]

Walls also astutely observes that

> the representation of Christ by any one group can at best be only partial. At best it reflects the conversion of one small segment of reality, and it needs to be complemented and perhaps corrected by others. The fullness of humanity lies in Christ; the aggregate of converted lifestyles points toward his full stature.[796]

As theological leaders emerge from the former "edges" of the Church, the question of the local appropriation of the faith is increasingly important. This geographical extension entails cross-cultural encounters that impact the way theology is conceived. As Flett insists, "We must acknowledge that no single theological tradition already possesses an 'international' culture, one justifiably so concerned with its purity to fear the integration of other appropriations of the gospel."[797] These appropriations are not marginal, but they have "sufficient theological merit to inform and challenge settled elements within the received Western tradition."[798]

This runs against the idea that the "apostolic deposit" would be a sufficiently solid bound protecting the Church against schismatic tendencies. Flett adamantly argues that a sole concentration on "cultivating" the deposit logically would predispose the Church towards self-maintenance over against *missional engagement*. In Flett's words,

> apostolicity, the historical continuity of the church, rests in the event of cross-cultural encounter and the processes of conversion through the local appropriation of the gospel. This history is not the settled and measured development of a cultural entity but is marked by multiple instances of cross-cultural encounter and sometimes radical shifts in thinking. At base, world Christianity refuses the controlling duality of the cultivation of the faith over its proclamation. This liberates apostolicity to be construed in new ways.[799]

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[794] Flett, *Apostolicity*, 27.

[795] Brian Stanley, 'Conversion to Christianity: The Colonization of the Mind?', *International Review of Mission* 92, no. 366 (1 July 2003): 322.

[796] Andrew F. Walls, 'Globalization and the Study of Christian History', in *Globalizing Theology: Belief and Practice in an Era of World Christianity*, ed. Craig Ott and Harold A. Netland (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 74. Conversely, suspicion of "syncretism" in the theological formulation of "others" betrays a lack of awareness of the cultural embeddedness of one's tradition, cf. Flett, *Apostolicity*, 247.

[797] Flett, *Apostolicity*, 185.

[798] Flett, 158–59.

[799] Flett, 288.

Hence, "'Safeguarding the deposit' refers not to the repetition of established forms but to their communication so that they are received by and shape the hearers."[800]

6.2 Mission and Apostolicity

The growing importance of World Christianity also evidences the universal dimension of a Gospel responding to human beings' aspirations, dreams, and needs. This witnesses to the "translatability" of the Gospel message than the vindication of the idea of "spreading a fully defined message."[801] In pointed terms resonating with Allen's arguments, Flett notes the positive potential of new openings:

> World Christianity is no emergency situation for which a range of accommodations might be made, a unique event detached from the continuum of Christian theology. Quite the opposite is true. World Christianity opens the theological field because it detaches that discourse from a singular concentration on a constricted history and its attendant range of questions.[802]

Similarly, student ministry is no emergency situation despite its constant fluctuations but rather represents future trends of thought and action that will characterize the Church of tomorrow. Thus, it can function as a model for how the Church can relate to its environment. Another way of conceptualizing this *detachment* is to speak, although always in a derivative way, of the central Christian doctrine of the *incarnation*, implying that the Christian message commands "embodiment in the cultural specifics of a particular time and place. Generations may be utterly diverse, therefore, in their understanding and experience of the grace of God and yet belong together in the ultimate purpose of God."[803]

Richer than copy-pasting is the organic metaphor. A seed needs interaction with its environment, and plants will grow differently from one soil to another.[804] In his influential booklet, Idowu paints a vivid picture: the *deposit of the faith* can be understood as a flowing river,

> bringing from and depositing in each place something of the chemical wealth of the soils which it encounters on its way, at the same time adapting itself to the shape and features of each locality, taking its colouring from the native soil, while in spite of all these structural adaptations and diversifications its *esse* and its differentia are not *imperiled* but maintained in consequence of the living, ever-replenishing, ever-revitalizing spring which is its source.[805]

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[800] Flett, 285.

[801] See Lamin O. Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1989).

[802] Flett, *Apostolicity*, 245.

[803] Walls, 'Globalization, Nationalism...', 76. For Blocher, the widely used notion of *incarnation* in missiological circles runs the risk of diminishing the unique character of Christ's incarnation, as human beings cannot but be incarnate, see Henri Blocher, 'Permanent Validity and Contextual Relativity of Doctrinal Statements', in *The Task of Dogmatics*, ed. Fred Sanders (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 117.

[804] For a contemporary exploration of the topic by someone close to IFES circles, see Pauline Hoggarth, *The Seed and the Soil: Engaging with the Word of God* (Langham Global Library, 2011). See also Pope Paul VI, 'Ad Gentes', para. 22.

[805] Emanuel Bolaji Idowu, *Towards an Indigenous Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), 19; quoted in Flett, *Apostolicity*, 177. Idowu's early approach is considered "broadly evangelical" by Demarest, former IFES Theological Secretary, see Bulus Galadima, 'Evaluation of the Theology of Bolaji Idowu', *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology* 20, no. 2 (2001): 112.

The image adequately reflects what happened throughout the history of the Church. Almost inadvertently, the "encounter" of the deposit of the faith has been fertilized as it flew throughout the world.

Flett makes the argument that the observation of the development of Christianity across the world necessitates some serious rethinking of what apostolicity means. Flett contends that apostolicity consists firstly in the believer's grounding in Christ; secondly, and consequently, in his or her being "sent" as an apostle (understood in the broadest sense). Indeed, "Christian theology is expanding as it comes into contact with new areas of human experience, new accumulations of knowledge, relationship, and activity. Themes are being recognized in the scriptures that the West had never noticed."[806]

Flett argues that if *apostolicity* essentially consists in keeping a supracultural content which should prevent the Church from schism, it unfolds that "cultivation of the faith" will be privileged over "communication," thereby belying the otherwise alleged missionary nature of the Church.

Therefore, Flett argues that as the Church fulfils its missionary calling, it realizes, *in communicating the Gospel*—I could say *mediating the Gospel*—to the world, that integral to its *apostolicity,* is its own "sendtness." In other words, the Church becomes more aware of itself in witnessing "others" appropriating the Gospel's claims in their lives and becoming members of the Church.

Such encounter occurs on the (exilic) frontline, but rather than threatening the "little flock" of witnessing Christians, dialogical engagement is constitutive of the community. Making his own Hoekendijk's argument, Flett even contends that the missionary encounter is integral to the formation of the witnessing community:

> The people of the new covenant are constituted in the fulfilment of the messianic promises, becoming a sociological reality only in the missionary encounter with the world. Because the people of God is a novum of the new creation, its structure depends on the "missionary situation." And, since mission is basic to the Christian gospel, no occasion or location exists that might be characterized as non-missionary.[807]

Such logic capitalizes on the relative opening to improvisation and flexibility which has historically been granted to missionary situations and harnesses it for the whole mission of the Church. Ultimately, "what is admissible *extra muros*, for the sake of the salvation of the nations, will have to be legitimately possible *intra muros*."[808] Here lies a theologically much stronger rationale for the existence of parachurch organizations than merely pragmatic reasoning arguing for the importance of considering the independent character of young people enjoying new experiences. Instead of a (clerical)

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[806] Andrew F. Walls, 'Christianity in the Non-Western World', in *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission and Appropriation of Faith* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2002), 46.

[807] Flett, *Apostolicity*, 215.

[808] Johannes Christian Hoekendijk, *The Church Inside Out* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1966), 159; quoted in Flett, *Apostolicity*, 217.

condescending attitude "granting" some degree of provisional freedom to students à la "students will be students," a renewed understanding of the Church's mission leads to acknowledge that the adaptability some Church leaders have begrudgingly granted to student organizations is what all Church members need, even if their contextual realities are very different from that of intellectuals in training. This, in turn, highlights the necessity to have all the "frontlines" enrich the Church through their experiences and help to expand its understanding of God's work in the world. Muthiah also forcefully argues that offices do not suffice to assess the ecclesial character of Christian communities: "When office is extracted from the *esse* of the church, and when relationships are tied to the ecclesiality of the church, the priesthood of all believers becomes central because the gathering of any two or three Christians, even if none of them are office holders, constitutes the church."[809] This has not only ecclesial implication but also more fundamentally theological ones emerging from listening to "other" voices.

The challenge for the Church universal is the same as that for IFES: "the *obligation* to listen to and learn from one another,"[810] as a missional community first and foremost formed and called by God. None of this precludes common ground, especially as biblical and theological anthropology presume a certain degree of commonality between human beings. Contrary to what common parlance often assumes,

> We do live in the same world as Abraham did! When traveling in the Middle-East, we cross the same valleys as he did, we drink from the same sources, we gaze upon the same stars, we breathe the same air as he did. The same physical laws ruled the world millennia ago – and they must have some effect on ways of thinking themselves.[811]

This commonality offers a ground for mutual understanding: "To claim apostolicity is to claim legitimacy and recognition for a lived experience of the gospel."[812] None of this imperils Christian heritage. Yet, Stanley notes that "the process of translating the message into a new cultural medium will result in a message that carries accents and tones which it did not carry before, even though there must be sufficient continuity with previous formulations of the message for it to be recognizably the same message."[813] Muthiah suggests that the *membership* of all Christians in a *priesthood of all believers* makes exactly this act of spiritual discernment possible, as it welcomes and affirms in the World the unity in diversity that constitutes the Trinity:

> The type of unity that marks the priesthood of all believers and that marks good discernment allows for differences and distinctions – in fact, this type of unity assumes that differences will exist. As within the Trinity, unity amongst the people of God requires difference. If there is no difference, there is nothing to unite. This type of unity transcends differences without ignoring them. The Spirit indwells and unites

[809] Muthiah, *Priesthood of All Believers*, secs 1460–63.
[810] Craig Ott, 'Conclusion', in *Globalizing Theology: Belief and Practice in an Era of World Christianity*, ed. Craig Ott and Harold A. Netland (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 310.
[811] Blocher, 'Permanent Validity', 119.
[812] Flett, *Apostolicity*, 241.
[813] Stanley, 'Conversion to Christianity', 321.

> believers who engage well in the practice of discernment even when they hold different views on a given issue.[814]

From the encounter with others, Christians or not, fruitful reframing or reaffirming of core convictions can ensue. As Skreslet summarizes, "Truly missionary encounters in history are intense moments, full of unpredictability but also of promise. Old certainties about what is essential to Christianity may be tested and found wanting in these engagements."[815] The navigation of the uncharted waters of post-Christendom might be powerful incentives for rethinking how the Church can be a missional presence and contribute to the world's life. And because many Christians have already "been there" for a long time, fruitful mutual learning and enriching can take place within World Christianity.

6.3 Partial Synthesis

> Christian identity is not secured within the borders of a single historical narrative that follows the contours of a supposed center of Christian power and the controls of form and interpretation managed by such. The church finds its identity beyond itself, in the history of Jesus Christ. In this resides the possibility of conversion, the possibility of multiple Christian histories.[816]

Co-opting Flett's ecclesial logic for the sake of this work, it is reasonable to affirm in the same way that ecclesial existence does not exhaust all of what Christian existence means. Consequently, the "narrative of the student parachurch" is a valid domain of Christian experience that cannot be dispensed of by appealing to its supposedly defective ecclesial character. If so understood, student ministry is a powerful tool of the *missio Dei,* a tool which the Lord uses to reach not only students on campus, but to shape young people who will be thoughtful and bold Church members, ready to serve in their congregations, ready to support the mission of their local churches, equipped to think missiologically about the challenges their fellow parishioners encounter where they are called to serve. Student ministry then works as a training ground for future missionaries understood in the broadest of senses – serving interculturally in foreign lands or the context of their professions or their neighbourhoods. This said, not all services and partnerships need to be postponed to the times after graduation. Much to the contrary, "mission societies link up with the local church in new concrete ways, and local churches see themselves as 'missional' in their own context. The missionary band remains an integral part of being Church, but must always find new expressions in new contexts."[817] The encounter with the other, characteristic of university life, has a missiological potential that can be unleashed and celebrated. Ultimately, what is at stake is a vision of God and his mission in the world. Either God has done all he had to do in history – or there is room for current and future action. A

[814] Muthiah, *Priesthood of All Believers*, 3799.
[815] Stanley Skreslet, 'Thinking Missiologically about the History of Mission', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 31, no. 2 (1 April 2007): 62.
[816] Flett, *Apostolicity*, 320.
[817] Daryl M. Balia and Kirsteen Kim, eds., *Witnessing to Christ Today*, Edinburgh 2010, II (Oxford: Regnum Books, 2010), 121.

creed-conforming insistence on the incarnation, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ does not preclude the necessary discernment of what God is doing in a world that constantly changes, in the lives of new people with new interests, dreams, concerns, sufferings.

Highlighting the importance of individuals and communities brings us back full circle to the notion that laypeople cannot be dispensed of, for they are at the centre of God's mission in the world. It furthermore provides a theological rationale for the "rediscovery of the laity" to which WCC-Circles came in the 1960s, thereby to some degree catching up on evangelical missionary practice. This said, Kraemer, Newbigin and their colleagues theorized this rediscovery in a much more thorough fashion than Evangelicalism explained itself.[818]

The *priesthood of all believers* is an adequate descriptor of what a student ministry like IFES is: it involves lay students examining Scripture together, exploring the joys and challenges of fellowship. It involves manifold expressions of mission. These expressions are constantly reshaped in the encounter with the diversity of cultures and theologies characteristic of World Christianity.

[818] See Newbigin's thinking about the role in the laity, astutely summarized in Michael W. Goheen, 'The Missional Calling of Believers in the World: Lesslie Newbigin's Contribution', in *A Scandalous Prophet: The Way of Mission After Newbigin*, ed. Thomas F. Foust et al. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 37–56.

Part Five: Student Ministry in the Light of the Priesthood of All Believers

1 Introduction

So far, I have shown how the history of IFES and its ecclesiology have worked on the premise that students have *immediate* access to God and can therefore legitimately *mediate* him to their environment by being *participants* in a community. Such vision presumes a *missional ecclesiology:* the church's community manifested on campus, notably in the IFES group. I have surveyed biblical and theological resources which outline the contours of how the *priesthood of all believers* frames my understanding of the ministry of IFES and how this premise is congruent with archival evidence.

In this final part, I bring together all the preceding lines and offer a constructive missiological proposal for the way forward, still taking IFES as starting point. Ministering to students requires careful consideration of the *contextual specificities of the university* as well as to the distinctives of *students as agents of mission*, notably their *intellectual* character. Moreover, IFES has occupied a historical front seat in the spread of Christianity across the globe. This geographical diversity can serve as a unique springboard for a more thorough theological reflection on *indigeneity* and *contextualization* as cultures, life experiences, and challenges come together.

2 Immediacy in Relationship to God

Mostly implicit in the way IFES has understood its ministry is the doctrine of the *priesthood of all believers,* which presupposes that Christians can relate to God *directly*, most notably through the individual and communal reading of Scripture. This understanding applies to students. Students do not need clerical supervision to organise themselves and *mediate* God on campus. The existence of a support structure like IFES implies that encouragement and mentoring are necessary yet rest on a functional understanding of the role of staff workers and not on ontological distinction. Woods does not mince his words as he charges that

> to suggest that only a person with a seminary training and ecclesiastical ordination, which too often is merely the placing of empty hands upon an empty head and heart, is the only person qualified to take Christian initiative and assume responsibility under God for heralding the gospel is to deny the doctrine of the priesthood of all true believers.[819]

This is possibly the most explicit reference to the doctrine of the *priesthood of all believers* found in the IFES written documents, but it significantly emanates from its first and influential GS. This notion of immediacy is missiologically essential, for it implies that God can work in any context through his people who are already in place. Students do not primarily attend university out of missionary purposes, but because they are on campus and entertain their relationship to God individually and in

[819] Woods, *The Growth*, 62.

group, they factually serve as God's ambassadors in the university. Nevertheless, as Greggs astutely notes, *immediacy* is a shortcut to speak about a relationship that does not presuppose the necessity of human interference. For "unmediated" relationship to God is impossible for pneumatological reasons with far-reaching ecclesiological consequences:

> When we are possessed by and of the Spirit, we are so in our mediated creaturely way in its fallenness: there is no unmediated, direct experience of God; that has to wait until God is all in all in the eschaton (1 Cor. 15:28). But in space and time, we do experience God's Spirit mediating to us God's eternal work of salvation in the creaturely media of our present, contingent, and fallen (but being redeemed) spatiotemporality.[820]

Considering the university as a "fallen but being redeemed spatiotemporality" has far-reaching missiological consequences, on which I comment below. But it is important to remind the reader that in IFES, the privileged channel of the *immediate* encounter with God is the reading of Scripture. The idea of reading Scriptures with non-Christians was not taken as self-evident in many contexts and could well be counted as one of the distinctives of the IFES approach, one which allows for the empowerment of many lay students worldwide. The fundamental theological conviction that the Bible can be read in whichever context was, in any case, historically farsighted and an essential reason for the sustenance of the ministry of IFES.

3 Students as Participants in God's Mission

The second essential aspect in IFES understanding – which can easily apply to other university ministries or, for that matter, to other missionary organizations, is that all Christians, by virtue of their calling, are made *participants* in God's mission. Congruent with the idea of *immediacy* outlined above, laypeople and not only ordained personnel are called. Bosch outlines how this understanding connects the role of the laity and missional engagement:

> Laypersons are no longer just the scouts who, returning from the "outside world" with eyewitness accounts and perhaps some bunches of grapes, report to the "operational basis"; they *are* the operational basis from which the *missio Dei* proceeds. It is, in fact, not *they* who have to "accompany" those who hold "special offices" *in the* latter's *mission in the world.* Rather, it is the *office bearers* who have to accompany the laity, the people of God.[821]

To be a Christian means to *participate* in the *mission of God*. The previous parts of this work have shown that this logic has shaped IFES's self-understanding as a community on mission, despite not being expressed in such condensed words. This mission unfolds through witness, Bible reading, prayer, and community. Wright summarises the Church's mission as "our committed participation as God's people, at God's invitation and command, in God's own mission within the history of God's world for the redemption of God's creation."[822] This equally applies to the mission of a student group.

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[820] Greggs, *Priestly Catholicity*, 30.

[821] Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 472. Bosch summarizes Johannes Christiaan Hoekendijk, *Kirche und Volk in der deutschen Missionswissenschaft*, trans. Erich-Walter Pollmann (München: Chr. Kaiser, 1967), 350.

[822] Wright, *Mission of God*, 22–23.

The campus is where these activities occur, but they are not intrinsically different from what takes place in a regular church meeting. Presumed here is a *missional ecclesiology* that presupposes that church leaders will essentially *empower* the laity to carry out its mission faithfully. As Escobar highlights,

> Laymen then penetrate society by a way of life that is new in family relations, business, citizenship, and every area of daily life. Consequently, to mobilize the laymen is not only to teach them short summaries of the Gospel, mini-sermons, and to send them to repeat these to their neighbors. It is also to teach them how to apply the teaching and example of Christ in their family life, in their business activities, in their social relationships, in their studies, etc.[823]

Students are called as any other Christian is called. "Gentiles do not need to become Jews. Gentiles remain Gentiles and are valued as such in Christ, meaning that they are to turn their own way of life to him."[824] In the same way, students remain students and are addressed by God as such, with all it entails. Woods gives a clarion calling wherever God calls Christians to be involved:

> Quiet, steady, continuous evangelism involving intercessory prayer and the study and preaching of the Scriptures is not a task for a selected, gifted few. It is not limited to the minister of the church and his ordained assistants. Rather, it is the privilege and responsibility of every Christian. Regardless of special gifts, all are called and commissioned to this task. Every Christian is a missionary sent by God, a witness to Jesus Christ, in his or her way a herald of the gospel. God's supreme method is men – men and women indwelt and filled with the Holy Spirit.[825]

IFES operates on the premise that students can be God's witnesses of God by virtue of their Christian calling. This is important for sociological and missiological reasons.

3.1 Students as Specific Constituency

The unique time young people study is characterized by a certain opening of mind and greater freedom to explore options and opinions. This creates a twofold opportunity: for Christian students to broaden their horizons and for non-Christians to consider the Christian faith. This "freedom" has multiple variations globally: Chua notes that "Each student is a 'man-in-community.' In terms of evangelism and discipleship we cannot ignore his family setting, cultural background and value system and religious world-view."[826] Hence, the articulation of freedom and tradition can be complex. Having observed Latin American students in revolutionary times, Voelkel notes the specificities of the student constituency:

> The student's idealism carries him to a wholehearted enthusiasm for any cause deemed just, but his physical energy and impatience demand instant participation. He longs to see something get moving, and thus responds to protests, parades, rock throwing, and even violence. He wants to be involved, mind and body, in the activity of the moment. He wants to see it, talk it, write it, feel it, and cry it.[827]

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[823] Samuel Escobar, 'Evangelism and Man's Search for Freedom, Justice and Fulfillment', in *Let the Earth Hear His Voice*, ed. J. D. Douglas (Minneapolis: World Wide Publications, 1975), 324.
[824] Flett, *Apostolicity*, 327.
[825] Woods, *Some Ways*, 106.
[826] Wee Hian Chua, 'Staff Letter 6', May 1973, 6, BGC Box #5.
[827] Voelkel, *Student Evangelism in a World of Revolution*, 47.

If Voelkel is right, a ministry that leaves enough freedom to students to take their responsibilities and to have a say in how things are done, has more potential for growth and persistence than a ministry that would be too directive. Moreover, Voelkel hints at one of the main reasons for some of the tensions between student life and Church life: the possibility of being involved at every level of activism, which characterizes student-led groups in contradistinction to Church structures. Finally, the fact that most students involved in IFES groups are relatively young is important to wider mission training: "Because students are young and open to take risks, evangelical student movements have created models of sensitive multicultural mission teams. Participants in them have been able to look at their own culture from a critical distance."[828]

This situation appears time and again in testimonies found in IFES archival documents or published stories. Contemporary sociologists tell a similar story: "In my interviews with them, these students often relished the chance for leadership, as one person affirmed, 'It's not so much like you're going to church, and you're listening to someone speak. It's like you're involved and you're making the whole thing happen.'"[829] Hence the necessity to carefully assess the context of missionary engagement with students, both for those who are already Christians and for those who are invited to become members of the Christian community.

3.2 Contextualization for the University

On university campuses, Christian students are often minorities. Yet, in biblical theology terms, their situation is similar to the exilic situation I have explored above. This has been the case since the foundation of IFES movements in many countries for ethnic and cultural reasons and increasingly also in the West because of secularization. Still, even if students are *exiles* because they are Christians, they are nevertheless integral members of the campus culture. This is certainly an observable phenomenon for many Christian groups on campuses in the world. As the readers of 1 Peter, Christian students often "are part of their [university] culture all the way down, yet simultaneously they have become alienated from the [academic] world through their encounter with Christ."[830]

Volf contends that a view of culture – here easily transferred to the context of the campus – should be determined by the fact that students are already *insiders* to the campus on the one hand, but also that eschatology should shape the imagination:

> The question of how to live in a non-Christian environment, then, does not translate simply into the question of whether one adopts or rejects the social practices of the environment. This is the question outsiders ask, who have the luxury of observing a culture from a vantage point that is external to that culture. Christians do not have such a vantage point since they have experienced a new birth as inhabitants of a particular culture. Hence they are in an important sense insiders. As those who are a part

[828] Escobar, 'GC 1999 Papers', 8.
[829] Alyssa Bryant, 'Evangelicals on Campus: An Exploration of Culture, Faith, and College Life', *Religion & Education* 32, no. 2 (2005): 10.
[830] Paas, *Pilgrims*, 246.

> of the environment from which they have diverted by having been born again and whose difference is therefore internal to that environment, Christians ask, "Which beliefs and practices of the culture that is ours must we reject now that our self has been reconstituted by new birth? Which can we retain? What must we reshape to reflect better the values of God's new creation?[831]

As an Evangelical movement stressing the importance of Scriptural engagement for its mission, IFES always insists that Volf's complex exercise in cultural discernment is only possible if personal piety is primary. It usually focuses on devotional Bible reading, communally and individually.

Essential to IFES's understanding of missionary engagement is the student's *personal relationship* to God – presented above as *immediate*. But God's calling, in line with the priestly logic examined before, is always to be a blessing to others. This unfolds in a process I have called *mediation*.

4 Priestly Mediation

The biblical theology part of this work has argued that this aspect of the Christian life can adequately be understood as "priestly," for it assumes the importance of mediating between God and their context. Bishop Neill's missiological observation applies very well to our discussion about student leadership: "The Christian layman should be fired by imaginative sympathy with his world, wholly identified with it in its needs, though wholly independent of it in its mistaken desires. He must listen before he speaks, and make no hasty or over-confident judgments."[832] This last sentence stresses a core missiological assumption: being a missionary means listening to the people one wants to reach. The world is growing more complex and more diverse despite the unifying forces of globalization. Any ministry must be concerned about being truly respectful to its context to avoid exporting cultural forms of belief. Since Christianity is the religion of translation,[833] its universality and relevance for everyone on earth needs not be doubted. Consequently, no "one fits all" strategy will do justice to the diversity of God's creatures.[834]

Consequently, it is missiologically crucial to consider students as a specific public. University studies have traditionally implied broadening horizons by examining different perspectives, solutions, and approaches for the future.[835] Divergent relationships to received knowledge characterize different university cultures, but most higher education institutions pay lip service to the importance of

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[831] Miroslav Volf, 'Soft Difference. Theological Reflections on the Relation Between Church and Culture in 1 Peter', *Ex Auditu*, no. 10 (1994): 19, http://www.pas.rochester.edu/~tim/study/Miroslav%20Volf%201%20Peter.pdf.

[832] Stephen Neill, 'Introduction', in *The Layman in Christian History: A Project of the Department of the Laity of the World Council of Churches*, by Hans Ruedi Weber and Stephen Neill (London: SCM Press, 1963), 26.

[833] On this, see amongst others Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1996); Sanneh, *Whose Religion Is Christianity?*

[834] On this, see amongst others Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History*; Sanneh, *Whose Religion Is Christianity?*

[835] As the literature on universities from a Christian perspective is very vast, the reader might refer to John Henry Newman, *Idea of a University* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1852); Charles Habib Malik, *A Christian Critique of the University* (Waterloo, Ont.: North Waterloo Academic Press, 1987); Douglas V Henry and Michael D Beaty, *Christianity and the Soul of the University: Faith as a Foundation for Intellectual Community* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006); Stanley Hauerwas, *The State of the University: Academic Knowledges and the Knowledge of God*, Illuminations--Theory and Religion (Malden: Blackwell, 2007); Gavin D'Costa, 'The State of the University: Academic Knowledges and the Knowledge of God', *Pro Ecclesia* 20, no. 3 (2011): 312–16; Higton, *A Theology of Higher Education*.

personal, critical thinking in engaging with tradition. This socialization includes teaching and mentoring in the academic sense – notably the induction in the social practices that academic disciplines are – and social relationships in a more general sense, either through common life on the university campus or through daily interaction with peers.

Christian student communities can showcase the relevance of the Christian faith – being a "display-people" on campus by being a community foreshadowing God's design for humanity. Similarly, student groups mediate God to the campus by inviting others to experience a relationship with God as individuals and within the community and in turn gather the first fruits of redemption and engage in doxological appreciation for what the university does: "Mission work is priestly work; it is about the gathering of the 'first fruits' and then offering these as a sacrifice to God."[836]

Hence, in line with the *priestly calling* of Israel and its prolongation in the NT Church, students *mediate* between God and their environment in two main ways: intellectual and international.

4.1 Intellectual Mediation

One of the challenges encountered by IFES students throughout the history of the fellowship is the articulation of their dual membership: they are members of the people of God and members of the academic community. And as Van Aarde observes, this does not go without challenges:

> Every believer is called to practice missional negotiation between the culture of his church and local culture, whereas contextualisation belongs primarily to the field of missions. *The missional vocation is for every member of the church to engage his or her local context through missional negotiation in all areas of society, human life and creation.*[837]

This *missional negotiation* happens at the boundaries of the Church, and the campus is such a boundary. As the university context increasingly secularizes its approaches, the gap can feel even more significant and, in any case, very different from the relative cultural homogeneity of the ten founding movements, which were in their majority, operating in a Christianised context. Nowadays, large numbers of IFES movements operate in contexts with no such background. They have had to *mediate* between many cultural layers for many decades. Conversely, the West is re-learning what it means for Christians to be *resident aliens*.

In both cases, a double mediation occurs. Firstly, as Christian students live, study, serve and witness on campus, they enrich, sanctify, and bless the university. This necessitates thoughtful contextualization. Secondly, as Christian students go about their academic business, they discover more about the ins and outs of the Creation which they know belongs to the God they worship. This

[836] Paas, *Pilgrims*, 257.

[837] Timothy A. Van Aarde, 'The Missional Church Structure and the Priesthood of All Believers (Ephesians 4:7-16) in the Light of the Inward and Outward Function of the Church', *Verbum et Ecclesia* 38, no. 1 (31 January 2017): 3, italics mine.

means that academic life should enrich the lives of Christian students who will, in turn, be a blessing to their Church by bringing into it some of the good fruits of the academic land.

4.1.1 Mediation to the Academic World

If the above considerations are true, a ministry to students needs to take their assumed intellectual character seriously.[838] Attaching the label "intellectual" to such a diverse constituency as students associated with IFES movements serves as a methodological shortcut. Enormous differences in academic levels notwithstanding, students worldwide are supposed to acquire, process, refine and develop knowledge and skills which they will, in turn, put to use in their respective societies. Even if the percentage of the general population which attends university varies from country to country, students generally represent, at least in the Majority World, a fraction of their countries' demographics, with the added pressure attached to such privileges. This could be interpreted in overtly strategic terms and move missiologists to adopt approaches aiming at "capturing" the "power potential" of such population to advance the Gospel. As some scholars have argued, it could even be a "backdoor revenge" against the secularizing forces witnessed in the West.[839] This is at least the line of argument proposed by Neill, who sets the challenge in clear terms:

> If the Church is ever again to penetrate this alienated world and to claim it in the name of Christ, its only resources are in its convinced and converted laymen. There are vast areas, geographical and spiritual, which the ordained minister can hardly penetrate; the laymen are already there and are there every day. What happens to society in the future will largely depend on the use that they make of their opportunities, of their effectiveness as Christian witnesses in a new and as yet imperfectly charted ocean of being.[840]

Very early in the history of IFES, Johnson highlighted the importance of letting students think by themselves, lest their intellectual capacities and their integrity as students be despised:

> However orthodox his church upbringing, and however faithful in doctrinal instruction his minister may be, there comes a time in the late adolescence of an intellectually active student when *he becomes aware of the urge to express his faith in ways appropriate to his age and training. He wants freely to discuss, to pray, and to enter into active evangelistic service in the company of others of his own age-group*. It is almost always for the good of his church, as well as himself, that he should do so. For only in this way can the faith take deep root in, and be transmitted in an influential form to, the next generation.[841]

Yet, frequent warning calls were also issued that "the temptation within student groups can be to see Christianity solely as a set of intellectual propositions, rather than as a way of life based on the personal knowledge of God's love for us in Christ."[842] Commenting on recent field research in a group

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[838] "Assumed" in the sense that 1. Not all students are equally expected to be critical of what is taught and 2. Not all students take this vocation seriously, either out of intellectual abilities or other contingencies. The widely used concept in missiological circles of *people groups* could also be used here. Lutz argues students might be one of the least "reached" people groups on earth. See his Lutz, *College Ministry in a Post-Christian Culture*.

[839] See the summary of Wuthnow's thinking in Flett, *Apostolicity*, 160.

[840] Neill, 'Introduction', 22.

[841] Johnson, *Brief History*, 102–3, italics mine.

[842] Dransfield and Merritt, "One-Another", 37.

the description of which squares closely with that of an IFES group, Bryant recounts the deliberate engagement with the content of the Christian faith students aspired to. They

> claimed to value intellectual rigor in the search for truth and answers. Clearly, the university culture, with the high premium it placed on intellectualism, pressed upon the Christian organization. To be taken seriously "in the marketplace of ideas," it was vital that they embrace academically valid means of truth-seeking, and many students were committed to such means in their search.[843]

Intellectually, the university's environment puts a primer on reflection and discovery, as well as on free enquiry. A robust doctrine of Creation means firstly that God still loves the world and the humans who inhabit it; and consequently, that students are on safe ground when they study the world. They should enjoy the freedom to explore how their faith relates to their academic disciplines and to life on campus in the same way as all theology essentially needs contextualization. Christians can *mediate* God to the university by bringing a Christian perspective to the whole academic enterprise. As students, they can *mediate the World* back to God in prayer and to the church, bringing the questions asked by the university to the church for the missiological deepening of the latter's calling.[844] Framing the question within the discussion about the *priesthood of all believers* then opens new doors, for it considers the possibility for Christians to be individually and collectively responsible for their theological development *coram Deo*. This certainly fits the ethics of higher education. What happens within IFES is, ultimately, *student theologizing* rippling across the fellowship through writings, conferences, and the increased weight of promising student leaders becoming voices within the fellowship and outside of it. In other words, "To speak of Jesus Christ in another cultural milieu is to open that message to the range of questions, resources and idioms found in that culture."[845] Missiology, sociology and theology meet as the "campus priests" which students are, listen to the voices of the campus and feed them back for the church which in turns needs to reflect upon these new challenges theologically.

The need for an articulation between professed theological knowledge broadly conceived on the one hand and lived, emotional piety, on the other hand, shows the breadth of concerns that a student group might need to address. Bryant's analysis postulates that

> students need reassurance that their struggles are justified and a legitimate part of their developmental process. So often these personal battles are waged alone, divorced from daily routines, classes, and work schedules. For fear of being misunderstood or stigmatized, students might attempt to conceal their troubled feelings – a practice that might overwhelm them even more. Regrettably, the pain of struggling might be amplified in environments that either refuse to acknowledge the existence of struggles or that call for premature and unsatisfactory resolutions to struggling for the sake of establishing commitment to one's faith tradition.[846]

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[843] Bryant, 'Evangelicals', 14.

[844] Ward inscribes this process of renewal of practical theology in participation in the mission of God, see Pete Ward, *Participation and Mediation: A Practical Theology for the Liquid Church* (London: SCM, 2008), 102–3.

[845] Flett, *Apostolicity*, 261.

[846] Alyssa Bryant and Helen Astin, 'The Correlates of Spiritual Struggle during the College Years', *The Journal of Higher Education* 79, no. 1 (2008): 23–24.

If Bryant's suggestions are correct, it then means that there is a great potential for student ministries to be creators of "space" where people can explore life and faith in a safe place. It is indeed a firm conviction of IFES that equipping students for mission is relevant everywhere because the mission of God is universal, contextual difficulties notwithstanding.

4.1.2 Mediation to the Church

> The university is a continuing unevangelized field, a continuing Christian kindergarten.[847]

If students are, amongst other things, characterized by their intellectual engagement with the world, the university context presents a specific challenge to some Christian students, especially in Evangelicalism. One of the first challenges is that university studies question preconceptions and long-held ideas about how the world functions, some disciplines challenge hermeneutical traditions, etc. In the early days of IFES, this tension was essentially perceived as a threat. In the clear-cut categories characteristic of his style, Woods warned in 1970 that

> many Evangelicals, particularly graduates, in an effort to find acceptance in the current sociological-scientific society, *will continue to compromise* their biblical Christianity. This *erosion* of supernatural biblical foundations, particularly as applied to the reality of space-time events as recorded in Scripture, *will result in a loss of spiritual power and effectiveness*, and ultimately in *the loss of Christian faith itself*. On the other hand, God's consecrated minority, though small, will continue in unswerving loyalty to Christ and to His infallible Word.[848]

Woods's angst about a watering down of biblical convictions is presented with logic and clarity: in the beginning is "biblical Christianity," the tenets of which run against the academic grain, which entices those who want to succeed in giving in to materialistic approaches, which in turn make faithful witness impossible. Woods's understanding of IFES is that of a minority that needs to strengthen a minority in its own ranks. On all accounts, this minority was sometimes rather weak, as several accounts note,[849] but the idea, close to Woods's heart, of a "consecrated minority" influencing its environment, is reminiscent of priestly language.

Woods and Williams were not alone in highlighting the tensions experienced by Christian students attending universities. Niringye pleas that

> conversion cannot be assigned simply to the receptor cultures. Since authentic Christian mission originates in God's mission, Jesus's invitation to follow him to another culture bids us to re-examine our own perspectives, repent and believe the good news of the kingdom; it is an invitation to a journey of conversion, being transformed by God's grace and being drawn into fellowship with others whom he is drawing to himself through us.[850]

Suppose the above remarks by Niringye are taken seriously. In that case, students need to consider scientific developments for their implications on how the Christian faith is understood. Weary of

[847] Woods, 'Student Work - Strategy and Tactics', 13.
[848] Woods, 'Perspectives and Priorities in the 1970's', 2, italics mine.
[849] Williams, *Holy Spy*, 52–53.
[850] Niringiye, *The Church*, 143.

watering down doctrine in the face of a "liberalism" that was more interested in science, IFES circles have not yet put significant energy into dialogue with scientific developments.[851] The idea that the university is at the core a place potentially dangerous for the faith is a narrative plot often found in the testimony of IFES students, who tell about significant conflicts of loyalty between their academic vocation and their ecclesial involvement. This said, missiologically speaking, not only is "the university" in need of conversion, but the "messengers" also need to be reshaped by the encounter. Hence, "campus ministry is an expression of the church's special desire to be present to all who are involved in higher education and to further the dialogue between the church and the academic community."[852] This is not, however, how mission has traditionally been understood in Evangelical circles. In the very specific case of the United States, which cannot be extrapolated directly to the rest of the world, but which is nevertheless influential especially given their output in printed and other media formats, Bielo provides an astute, if not particularly charitable, critique of the relationship of Evangelicals to the university:

> On the one hand, there is a dominant discourse among conservative Evangelicals that the academy is a territory where Christians must tread lightly. It is the breeding ground of "liberalism," "humanism," "secularism," and a variety of other unsightly "isms" that are antagonistic to Christians and to Christianity. The university is where human evolution, existential philosophies, and non-Western epistemologies are used to sweep the legs out from under Christian theology. It is where "tolerance" and "diversity" are "liberal"-speak for the evaporation of moral absolutes. This particular narrative plot includes the overly cerebral, smart-ass professor who intellectually abuses unsuspecting Christian students, forcing them to doubt their faith.[853]

This description applies more to the early years of IFES than to its subsequent years. Yet tensions at the intersection of academic life and Christian commitment remain. As Reimer postulates, "If some of the most religious students are intellectually engaged, pondering the implications of liberal education for their religious views, some softening of orthodoxy is likely."[854]

This "liberalizing effect" is not, however, in any way automatic, in Reimer's analysis. More intellectual engagement is required, that is "the student must still engage these theories intellectually."[855] This represents a significant challenge for a ministry that encourages students to engage their studies with their minds. On the one hand, exposing one's faith to intellectual challenges

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[851] Stackhouse notes in pointed terms for IFES movements that "Many campus staff –and leaders on up the hierarchy of campus organizations – have only an undergraduate degree, and often in a field that prepares them badly for ideological contest and Christian disciple-making (e.g., engineering, natural sciences, commerce, medicine). More recently, more have a master's degree or better in a relevant field. But one wonders why such qualifications are not simply required, the way denominations and congregations require at least one theological degree to do the job. What is this job that requires so little theological training, so little philosophical awareness?" John G. Stackhouse, 'Engaging the University: The Vocation of Campus Ministry', *John G. Stackhouse, Jr.* (blog), 2007, http://www.johnstackhouse.com/engaging-the-university/.

[852] Wonyoung Bong, 'Toward Improving the Effectiveness of Campus Ministry at Universities', *Asia-Africa Journal of Mission and Ministry* 7 (2013): 28.

[853] Bielo, *Words Upon the Word*, 40.

[854] S. Reimer, 'Higher Education and Theological Liberalism: Revisiting the Old Issue', *Sociology of Religion* 71, no. 4 (3 June 2010): 396.

[855] Reimer, 394.

means benefiting from a "stress test" of the faith and emerging with a stronger faith. On the other hand, however, at the same time, a more or less pronounced phenomenon of relativization seems to be taking place concerning certain dogmatic convictions, whether they are inherited from parents or from socialisation within the very IFES group. Yet such encounters do not automatically lead to less theological certainty, as Reimer further notes:

> Active involvement in a campus Christian group preserved traditional beliefs and morals. […] Higher education can expand and diversify social networks, which have been traditionally thought to undermine the religious orthodoxy that is best preserved through network closure.[856]

Within IFES, such value being granted to books and education goes together with the warning that faith and doctrine need nourishment out of a great concern for the sustainability of the student's commitment: "The Evangelical student who fails to be sufficiently tenacious of Evangelical belief and conduct in the University rarely succeeds in being so during the rest of his career."[857]

If this is true, the university represents a challenge to ecclesial leaders. The university can either be seen only as a reservoir of people to be reached with contextual alertness or as displaying characteristics that can be genuinely congenial to the flourishing of the Christian faith and of life together with people of shared unshared convictions. "At its best, the learning that takes place in universities may therefore contribute, in however limited a way, to the task of learning to live together in the world as Christ's body, regardless of whether those involved in it understand their learning in these terms."[858] Similarly, Osei-Mensah calls upon theological imagination and history when he proposes that

> the Christian must rediscover for himself the original concept on which universities were first founded, namely the harmony between the supernatural and the natural. He must realize, moreover, that this harmony has reality only in the Lord who "upholds all things by the word of His power." This is the first step in the integration of study and devotion.[859]

Seriously valuing the life of the mind means appreciating the gift which the reason is and investing in its cultivation, which allows for a more thorough integration. Lutz, who in addition to his insistence on missional training is aware of the challenges the university represents to students, argues for unapologetically intellectual discipleship:

> As people on mission to Higher Ed, we intentionally and rigorously develop the intellect. This means calling students to whole person transformation – mind, body, and spirit – through the gospel, a transformation that begins through the renewing of their minds (Romans 12:2).[860]

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[856] Reimer, 395.
[857] Inter-Varsity Fellowship of Evangelical Unions, ed., *Principles of Co-Operation* (London: IVF, n.d.), 16.
[858] Mike Higton, 'Education and the Virtues', in *The Universities We Need: Theological Perspectives*, ed. Stephen Heap (Milton: Taylor and Francis, 2016), 82.
[859] Gottfried Osei-Mensah, 'Integration Point: Against Dichotomy', *In Touch*, no. 1 (1974).
[860] Lutz, *College Ministry in a Post-Christian Culture*, 703.

Malik urges his readers to take the university seriously out of theological convictions in a similarly pressing tone. It does not suffice to notice the growing student population, but more care should be given to assessing the university from an institutional point of view, that is, from the lens of its impact on societies:

> If the university today dominates the world, if Jesus Christ is Who the church and the Bible proclaim him to be, and if we happen to believe that what the church and the Bible claim about Jesus Christ is the truth then how can we fail not only to raise the question of what Jesus Christ thinks of the university, but to face the equally urgent demand: What can be done? We are dealing with the power that dominates the world; how can we then rest without seeking to ascertain where Jesus Christ stands with respect to this power? The university and Jesus Christ – these are the two inseparable foci of our thought.[861]

Malik's call cannot be answered by the sole encouragement a student ministry gives students to gather for prayer, fellowship and Bible reading, without a *deliberate, consequential and sustainable* commitment to mentoring students into thinking hard about the issues at stake at university. Strikingly, Malik's claim that "to change the university is to change the world," which to this day features prominently on the IFES public relation documents, has concretely been understood to mean that students *as individuals* are to be reached with the Gospel and that they, in turn, will change the university and subsequently the world.[862] The theological premise is that conversion will eventually entice Christian students to change their universities. Yet, the question remains: Is there sufficient deliberate tackling of the bigger academic questions and issues – both from institutional and academic point of view – in the overall training of students that the "change vision" can reasonably be expected to come true one day, even if Christian students remain a marginal community in the academy? Sommerville also calls upon biblical examples to encourage a positive attitude in the engagement of Christians with the university. Speaking primarily to a Western audience, he affirms that "Christians shouldn't need to dominate the secular before they feel safe around it. When St. Paul debated Athenians at Mars Hill, he didn't threaten them. When Jesus' public teaching was through questions, he was assuming he had an ally in the conscience and intelligence of his audience."[863] Taking this reflection to bear upon IFES, in many countries, there is no possibility of "dominating the public sphere" anyway, so Christian students have been used to being the minority for a long time. Yet, as the West disproportionately publishes and diffuses books on culture and Christian life questions, a recapturing of the potential for minorities to meaningfully engage their environment is essential, lest smaller movements think themselves to be limited to survival before they can contribute anything to the university.

So maybe one of the first things that an IFES movement could consider is making sure that in every Bible study, every teaching, every discussion with students, supporters and shareholders of the movement, questions are asked about the university context. Such questioning should occur not only

[861] Malik, *A Christian Critique of the University*, 21.
[862] This view is criticized by Paas who says it is a leftover of Christendom restoration perspectives, see Paas, *Pilgrims*, 66.
[863] C. John Sommerville, *Religious Ideas for Secular Universities* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 61.

from a purely "Christian" point of view, focussing on what is "bad" at university but also on what is positively going on in the university and what the challenges are that people there are encountering (not just Christians). In the IFES training literature, no such deliberate posture can be found, especially in the historical accounts. The logic of "personal spiritual growth which informs personal witness" is always primary, and the university context is mostly seen as a challenge to "remain faithful," more than a place where discoveries are made, exchanges fostered, and fascination nurtured. Alternatively, to put it in Ramachandra's recent summary, "We do not 'take Christ' into the university; it is He who goes ahead of us and leads us there."[864]

This intricate process of missionary mediation occurs on a theological level with the university and informs theology from an intellectual level. Yet what singles IFES out from many other organizations is how widespread it is, hence, though humbly, being a foreshadow of the eschatological gathering of all nations and languages under the lordship of Christ.

4.2 International Mediation

The broad spectrum of peoples, cultures, denominational specificities, languages and many more represented in IFES, showcase a unique foretaste of the multi-ethnic community of the people of God. They are a *display-people* to the campus – as Israel and the Church were called to be amongst the nations. As such, they are a channel for broadening perspectives (ecclesial, intellectual, doctrinal) of the church. IFES member movements serve each other by sharing in the community their contextual understanding of the Bible and, more broadly, of Christian life and doctrine.

However, yet another difficulty has often arisen, closer to the heart of students' intellectual life: critical thinking, especially in cultures where such academic tradition did not have a long history.[865] Rodica Cocar, at the time a student in Romania, remembers:

> After the 1989 revolution it was possible to publish Christian literature inside Romania, but it took time to establish a publishing house. The concept of these Bible studies [Ada Lum's *Jesus, One of Us*] were so completely foreign to normal Romanian thinking because there were no definitive answers, right or wrong. It was said that in Romania you had to be a born-again Christian before you could think independently. The teaching tradition was authoritative and by rote throughout society including the Church. But student groups who saw the book were enthusiastic.[866]

This is an interesting cultural mix: a university culture expecting students to think, but not necessarily out of the box – and this can apply both to the context of the lecture hall or the church building. In this case, a book written by a Hawaiian lady, published by an international body,

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[864] Vinoth Ramachandra, 'Christian Witness in the University Integrity, Incarnation, and Dialogue in Today's Universities', *World and Word*, November 2017, https://en.ifesjournal.org/christian-witness-in-the-university-6377e32e7bbf.

[865] The issue of the cultural embeddedness of the very idea of "critical thinking" cannot be discussed here. Suffice to say that despite being widespread in the globalized academic world, it cannot be assumed to be the only way of approaching research. Assuming the superiority of the (Western) critical thinking tradition would amount to an unethical diminishment of the achievements of the universities of the Antiquity for example.

[866] Williams, *Holy Spy*, 154.

encourages Eastern European students to think by themselves, thereby challenging their church leaders and the culture of their own land.[867] This global character of Christianity redraws ecclesial maps, and indeed, lay leadership might be a reason for Christianity's continuous appeal to large sways of population in the Majority World. Akinade astutely observes that

> *the anti-structural character of the non-Western phase of world Christianity* plays itself out in characteristics such as charismatic renewal, grassroots revival, massive exorcism, vibrant house churches, *robust indigenization efforts, and effective lay leadership*. Churches from the Third World are vigorously defining Christianity on their own terms.[868]

Kinoti similarly notes the importance of the global ministry of John Stott for the rise of indigenous Christian leaders in Africa:

> It was fashionable at the time for college students to dismiss Christianity either on intellectual grounds or as a white man's religion. John Stott's missions to African universities and his writings matched intellectual and spiritual needs of many. They helped to raise an educated class of African Christian leaders and professionals who in turn influenced, and continue to influence, younger people.[869]

Such testimonies run counter to other narratives of intellectual oppression by Western leaders. It is arguable that because of the growing globalization of universities, some of the challenges encountered by Western university students would correspond to issues raised by students in the Majority World. Similarly, in some situations, the participatory structure of groups like IFES appealed to students otherwise alienated from Christianity or opposed it downright. Given the fact that IFES operates within the context of an institution foreign to most non-Western contexts – the university, which already propagates modes of thinking which are foreign to the Majority World – it is arguable that the added export of Western methodologies for reaching students might still work, as the example of student-led Bible study tends to indicate. Conversely, an imported theology might still be detrimental to developing an integrated faith, whereby Christian doctrines are considered foreign to the Majority World, as are some academic methodologies – non-transcendental materialism being one example.

Moreover, the interdenominational character of IFES seems to have played a significant role in broadening ecclesial, theological and intellectual horizons, essentially through the encounter with other Christians and their other way of conceiving faith, the world and life in general. Volf also argues that the importance of communal exploration of the Christian truth – what we have suggested in this work to be an aspect of mutual priesthood – amounts to an eschatological foretaste:

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[867] Brede Kristensen and Ada Lum, *Jesus One of Us: 52 Evangelistic Bible Studies Compiled into 8 Series*, International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (Nottingham, England: IVP, 1976).

[868] Akintunde E. Akinade, 'Introduction', in *A New Day: Essays on World Christianity in Honor of Lamin Sanneh*, ed. Akintunde E. Akinade, First printing edition (New York: Peter Lang Publishing Inc., 2010), 5, emphasis mine.

[869] George K. Kinoti, 'Contribution towards Submission for the Templeton Prize' (University of Nairobi, 1996); quoted in Dudley-Smith, *Stott II*, 110.

> By opening up to one another both diachronically and synchronically, local churches should enrich one another, thereby increasingly becoming catholic churches. In this way, they will also increasingly correspond to the catholicity of the triune God, who has already constituted them as catholic churches, because they are anticipations of the eschatological gathering of the entire people of God.[870]

Here, Christians mediate God to other Christians, a movement corresponding to another crucial aspect of the *priesthood of all believers*. This *mediation* of God is derivative of Christ's unique priestly work into which Christians are drawn by being included in a larger group than themselves: the Church.

5 Participation and Membership in the Missional Community

"Parachurch" organizations like IFES are mostly structurally *independent* from organized congregations, yet essentially *ecclesiological* for they are the outworking on university grounds of the *mission of the Church* to bless its environment and to proclaim the Gospel. Students are, furthermore, *members* of the Church universal as well as of local congregations. Their priestly work of mediation is done at the outskirts of the formally recognizable church. This presupposes a *missional ecclesiology,* which does not limit the Church to what is immediately identified as such.

There are two levels to this *global community:* the limited community of IFES and the broader community of the Church universal and its local instantiations. The local Church, of which students are encouraged to be members, nourishes students, staff, and faculty associated with IFES and allows them to experience a wider expression of the body of Christ.

IFES's theologically motivated and regularly reaffirmed commitment to the necessary indigenous appropriation of the Christian faith – congruent with the idea of *immediacy* – undermines the idea that Christian mission was solely a colonization process that left no agency to local actors.[871] On the contrary, the very nature of the IFES public – students – implies agency on their part. This "local appropriation of the gospel" – notably not of Christian structures – is at the core of the IFES discourse, insisting that "workers serving in pioneer areas or with younger movements should do all they can to hand over full responsibility and leadership to national leaders."[872]

The above explorations have shown the articulation between the way IFES has understood itself as a missionary organization and the notion of *apostolicity*. God's mission draws in individuals who organize themselves to witness to their immediate environment or to foreign lands. *Apostolicity* as "sent-ness" frames the whole pioneering enterprise characteristic of IFES, despite its structural ties to the logic of empire. *Apostolicity* so understood relativizes ecclesial structures and is congruent with the *missional ecclesiology* outlined above. The spread of IFES also witnesses to the contextual adaptability of the Christian message, despite the tensions associated with the idea that a "deposit of the faith" needs

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[870] Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 213. See also Pope Paul VI, 'Ad Gentes', para. 9.

[871] Flett refutes such frequent accounts as too narrow, see Flett, *Apostolicity*, 182–83.

[872] Chua, 'Staff Letter 9', September 1973, 1.

to be passed on to whomever believes. Yet, this chapter has also highlighted the necessity for careful consideration of the conditions for the faith's local appropriation. This local appropriation is the consequent of the *priesthood of all believers* in that because individuals, wherever they live, can *immediately* relate to God, they are called to *mediate* him to their environment. However, what was not originally foreseen by the IFES founders was that in the encounter with new realities, the way the Gospel is understood would be broadened and nourish "back" the *membership* of the fellowship, including its previously "sending centres." This does not occur without tensions but lays the foundation for better awareness of how Christians can relate to an environment in which they are a minority.

I have noticed in the history section how many church leaders have opposed IFES ministry on the ground that it was too dangerous for theologically untrained students to meet on their own, study the Bible, and encourage each other to share their faith without direct supervision from trained specialists. Allen counters by appealing to the metaphor of the *body:*

> If absence of tongues was used as an argument to forbid the body to express itself, if absence of hand was used as an argument to forbid the body to touch and feel, then we should get the position which those try to force upon us who use the absence of ordained ministry to forbid the priesthood of the body to express itself. When they do that, the specialized ministry does war against the universal common priesthood of Christians.[873]

Furthermore, I have advanced the argument earlier that all the core activities students engage in can be linked to the different dimensions of priestly service. Obviously, in some contexts, theological sidetracks can be taken by students left "on their own." However, the reality is that many students are left on their own anyway: either because no Church leader takes an interest in them as a specific public, or because the support or oversight provided is irrelevant insofar as none of the significant campus life issues is known to the ministers. Discipleship then runs the risk of being disconnected from Christian students and seekers' lives and spiritual struggles, thereby missing its target and possibly reduced to promoting a form of moral conformism deprived of intrinsic motivation, soon to be shed aside. In this respect, any theology of student ministry needs to answer what Christian students are to do as they find themselves on the "foreign missionary frontline" which university campuses are often today.

Student ministry is crucial. Yet, it does not represent all of God's mission and certainly, not the entirety of the Church's mission either. As Stackhouse notes,

> Parachurch groups devoted to particular tasks and drawing on particular kinds of people can concentrate resources powerfully on important needs or difficult problems. But such groups can also foster a tunnel vision that sees the future of Christian morality, the fate of the country, or even the success of the gospel itself in terms of the success of their one particular cause.[874]

[873] Allen, *Priesthood of the Laity*, 1797.
[874] Stackhouse, *Evangelical Landscapes*, 34.

Therefore, it is helpful to remind students of the broader scope of the *missio Dei* and encourage them to avoid such a "tunnel vision," which, if too strongly present, could undermine their full integration into the larger ministry of the local church upon completion of their studies. This is one of the areas where church leaders can sensitively walk alongside students who do not always have an "overarching framework to set things in order, to determine the relative importance of things, and to sort it all out."[875] It can be argued that there is a solid case to make for Christian students to necessarily join a student group on campus, be it IFES-linked or not. As IFES has argued throughout its history, students should be involved in local congregations insofar as possible. Yet, students often struggle to connect to local churches during their studies because of increased discrepancies in their new realities and their church's horizons. This can lead to a tendency to withdraw either to a student group or, worse, to renounce any community involvement.

The intellectual status of students and their newly acquired skills and knowledge also represent a pastoral challenge: how are they to wisely deal with a newly acquired power? In many contexts, the addition of the opposite pairs *church-parachurch*, *academically trained-untrained*, *experienced-unexperienced*, *ordained-lay*, *young-old* makes cooperation and mutual understanding difficult, albeit not impossible, and many IFES leaders have gone to great lengths to encourage good communication between all parties. Pointing to a way forward, Debanné suggests that

> ideally, of course, church members should themselves become the channel of this communication. Such communication can be established by students in both directions: they will wisely bring the doctrinal and moral concern of their church to the inter-church work and, in return, they will bring back new issues which they have discerned as relevant to their own church life.[876]

This requires skilful communication and mutual understanding, yet if the logic of mutual trust between church leaders who see the importance and non-threatening nature of the parachurch for their own congregations trumps the logic of fear, an immense potential for partnership in mission is opened.

Hence, Church and student work can benefit from a positive dynamic of exchanges: just as

> pastoral work receives from theology and depends on it, in the order of the awakening of ideas, of the problems posed, of the shocks which lead to an enrichment of thought, pastoral work can contribute much to theology. Most of the renewals that have taken place in the Church are due to the shaking of the militants of the apostolic and missionary front.[877]

Such examples illustrate how student experiences have been beneficial to the local church because students were allowed to operate on their own terms, thereby allowing God to bless others through their ministry as laypeople. What Van Aarde says of the missional church hence fully applies to IFES ministry: "The laity and their task of the priesthood of believers is to participate in God's glocal

[875] Stackhouse, 35.
[876] Debanné, 'Démystifier', 43.
[877] Congar and Varillon, *Sacerdoce et laïcat dans l'église*, 9.

dimension of the *missio Dei* by participating and fulfilling the Great Commission by going next door."[878]

6 Partial Synthesis

All the above support a missiology of student ministry which highly values the ability of individual Christian students and communities of Christian students to faithfully discern what God does in the world and how His mission unfolds in the University context. Taking the calling to the life of the mind inherent to student life seriously is the logical outworking of the belief that because all Christians have direct, *immediate*, access to God, they can discern how to act in the world faithfully. It also supports a high view of the contributions of all quarters of the Church universal to the understanding of Christian doctrine, because God speaks to all of his children in an equally valid manner. It also supports a serious *missiology of the university* as a unique field of ministry requiring careful consideration of its culture and inhabitants. Lastly, talking of a *priesthood of all students* highlights the necessity of equipping and supporting *laypeople* for the mission of the Church wherever they find themselves. This is also the foundation of a *missional ecclesiology,* thereby legitimizing a ministry on campus which is the contextual incarnation of the mission of the Church and not anything *besides* it or potentially secondary. Missionality has stronger creedal character than organizational aspects of a Christian community.[879] A missional Christian student group is closer to being a faithful church than a local church without a missionary orientation.

IFES has neither invented religious voluntarism, nor mission to the university. However, the fellowship has contributed to channelling a specific strand of Christian convictions – Evangelicalism – to a rising population of future influential leaders: students.

The work of IFES, despite being done mostly outside of the walls of formal church structures, cannot be understood as either anti-ecclesial or a-ecclesial. Many of the marks of the Church can be found in IFES groups. Many ecclesial concerns – notably the question of theological faithfulness – can be found in these groups that, though they have a sense of missionary urgency, do not give in to expediency at the detriment of thoughtful reasoning. By not being institutionally linked to ecclesial traditions, a parachurch organization can put safeguards in place to prevent theological atomization and heretical developments, notably by ensuring its theological core convictions to be solidly rooted in theology and practice.

The best example of this intense ecclesial concern is the wealth of theological writings from IFES staff or people very closely connected to IFES and whose publications by IFES movements and

[878] Van Aarde, 'Missional Church', 5.

[879] Flett agrees with Hoekendijk that "the church is the church of this apostolic God only when it lets itself be used in God's missionary movement. Its apostolicity (in its doctrine as in its church order) must prove itself in the apostolate." Flett, *Apostolicity*, 208.

speaking on stage at conferences attest to their recognized relevance to the work of student mission. These writings show a deep concern for the Church but in coherence with their involvement within the network of an international organization, focus more on the universal dimension of the *invisible* Church than on issues of local Church polity. This focus on the geographical and cultural diversity of the Church was missiologically farsighted. Theological premises, watered by a strong ethos of indigeneity could grow on the soil of globalization and one of its far-reaching consequences: a lessening of the importance of denominational particularisms to the benefit of *glocal* thinking.

Sociologically respectful of students as "leaders-in-development," the priesthood of all believers hence provides an ecclesiastically respectful, though challenging framework to understand the Church's mission in context:

> The missional church movement makes a distinction in terms of function and office; it places the emphasis on the function of the ordained ministry instead of the office. The missional church specifically addresses lines of hierarchical distinction between the ordained ministry and laity in order to promote a dynamic functional church structure. It consciously and selectively chooses neutral and inclusive language which empowers the believers for their task and calling in the world.[880]

Therefore, it seems reasonable to propose that the *priesthood of all believers*, as an "implicitly confessed" doctrine practised throughout the work of IFES has paved the way to a missional understanding of the Church. Such vision highlights the importance of valuing the contribution of parachurch organizations like IFES to World Christianity and to leave behind the obsolete idea that the parachurch and the Church are competitors.

[880] Van Aarde, 'Missional Church', 6.

Appendices

These appendices provide additional details on some aspects of the history and theology of IFES which I could not include for reasons of space in the main body of the dissertation.

1 They were not alone: The WSCF and the early years of IFES.

This appendix provides more details about the relationship of IFES and the WSCF, essentially covering the 1950s.

If the official confrontation with SCM circles could remain broadly speaking, marginal to the British context at the beginning of the twentieth century, the rapidly globalizing post-war era would prove to be a very different context to minister in. The local SCM branches affiliated with the World's Student Christian Federation found a new impetus with the Ecumenical momentum that was to culminate in the 1948 foundation of the World Council of Churches. The immediate after-war period saw new IFES national movements being officially structured and, on several occasions, these movements were founded in direct opposition to local WSCF groups, which led to tensions and discussions. The main question asked was whether it was conceivable for Christian witness on campus to be divided at the very moment when Churches seemed to come together.

Three important fracture lines emerge from a careful reading of the WSCF archival sources on IFES. These lines are somehow similar to the 1910/19 SCM-CICCU story but are articulated against the backdrop of the ministry of the two organizations on the global scene. In what follows, the main *theological*, *missiological* and *ecclesiological* divergences shall be presented in some details, because they will allow a better understanding of how IFES's theology was perceived by the other major actor of student ministry at that time. And if the *priesthood of all believers* is never mentioned as an underlying point of contention, it nevertheless hovers over much of the discussions.

A word of context first. The WSCF circles did not start looking into IFES when the latter was officially founded in 1947. Internal discussion protocols show that WSCF were worried about the prospect of IFES's emergence on a global scale, having witnessed the interwar conferences sponsored by the British IVF.[881] Faced with the imminent official launch of IFES scheduled for August 1947, the Executive Committee of the WSCF commissioned its General Secretary, Scott Robert Mackie, to draft a position paper titled "The Relationships of National Student Christian Movements and the W.S.C.F. to the Inter-Varsity Fellowship of Evangelical Unions."[882] This paper, containing the General Secretary's personal assessment of IFES, some excerpts of correspondence and of WSCF national

[881] Robert Mackie affirms that he "was assured personally by an I.V.F. leader in 1936 that there was no intention of forming a world organisation." Robert C. Mackie, 'The Relationships of National Student Christian Movements and the W.S.C.F. to the Inter-Varsity Fellowship of Evangelical Unions', Private document for use within the W.S.C.F. and not official pronouncement. (Geneva: World Student Christian Federation, September 1946), WSCF Archive 213.16.39/2.

[882] Mackie.

movement's reports on their relationship with IFES movements was subsequently refined and amended for almost ten years. Confronted with the rapid growth of IFES worldwide, the WSCF attempted at organizing a joint consultation in the 1950s, but all attempts remained unfruitful because of IFES's Executive Committee advising its General Secretary to turn down such invitations. The situation must have been considered as serious enough, however, that the WSCF convened a global consultation on IFES in March 1956 in Switzerland, with the view of preparing an official position paper to be distributed to the WSCF after its General Committee convened in the summer of the same year.[883]

A "Symposium for the use of Student Christian Movements and their leaders"[884] was eventually made available to WSCF circles in 1957. This document is amongst the last stored in the WSCF archive in the IFES files.[885] Whilst "This consultation was unable to formulate recommendations for practical action, but did the fruitful work in several commissions which tried especially to define the differences between IVF and SCM and to review the SCM position a program in that light."[886] This last symposium and the documents produced in preparation for the consultation are serious documents that show the earnestness with which the WSCF leadership aimed to understand IFES and its position over almost twenty years. These preparatory and final documents will be the basis of our analysis.[887]

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[883] Stacey Woods was, however, consulted about the appropriateness of inviting a certain speaker to the consultation. Philippe Maury to Rev. Sverre Magelssen, 14 February 1956, WSCF Archive 213.14.76/2. No reply from Magelssen could be found and his name is not on the attendance list. It is however remarkable that he had been an insider of IFES, being on its Executive Committee. In 1955, "resignation from the Executive Committee was accepted with regret in view of the fact that he was no longer General Secretary of the Norges Kristelige Studentlag but was not General Secretary of the Norges Kristelige Ungdomsforbund (Y.M.C.A. of Norway)." 'Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee of the IFES' (De Witte Hei, Huis Ter Heide, The Netherlands, 19.4 1955), 1, IFES e-archives.

[884] World's Student Christian Federation, 'The Relationships of the World's Student Federation and Student Christian Movements With the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students and Inter-Varsity Fellowships', Symposium for the use of Student Christian Movements and their leaders (Geneva: World Student Christian Federation, 1957), WSCF Archive 211.16.39/1.

[885] In addition to the internal documents (minutes, correspondence, national reports, summary of discussions, IFES publications), the WSCF archive boxes on IFES also file several academic papers examining the differences of the two movements, notably Verna Claire Volz, 'The InterVarsity Christian Fellowship and the Lacks in the Student Christian Movement Program Which Its Rise Reveals.' (Unpublished master essay commissioned by the Program Commission of the National Intercollegiate Christian Council (YMCA), New York, Union Theological Summary, 1945), (WSCF Archive 213.14.66/1); Ruth E. Shinn, 'The International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (Inter-Varsity). Its Role in the Ecumenical Life of Christian Student Movements' (Unpublished bachelor thesis, Yale Divinity School, 1955), (WSCF Archive 213.16.39/2); David Foster Williams, 'A Comparison of the Work of the Student Christian Movement and the Inter-Varsity Fellowship as Each Is Found in Latin America' (unpublished master thesis, New-York, The Biblical Seminary in New-York, 1959), (WSCF Archive 213.16.39/1).

[886] World's Student Christian Federation, 'WSCF Symposium for Use of SCM Movements and Their Leaders', 3.

[887] The present work is to my knowledge the first to make use of the WSCF archival sources to study IFES. Consequent with the observation that no significant difference is made in the WSCF reports between "SCM" and "WSCF", we have used SCM/WSCF and IVF/IFES interchangeably, despite the fact that strictly speaking, the "IVF" groups analysed in the documents referred mostly to British groups affiliated or soon to be affiliated with IFES, in addition to the fact that IFES member groups in North America for example where rather called IVCF. No mention is ever made of other names like "GBU" for France or "GBEU" for Switzerland, despite the fact that they were in existence, founding members of IFES and also regularly in contact and conflict with local WSCF-linked local groups.

1.1.1 Theological Particularisms

> One of the main contributions of the I.V.F. to the University is a definite witness to a particular dogma. He who accepts it is a Christian; he who does not do so, is not. Facts or ideas, which do not conform to this teaching are regarded as false, or are kept in another compartment of the mind.[888]

WSCF papers, either in informal notes or official statements, contend that the main problem with IFES theology is its "particularity," meaning that it was not inclusive enough, either to members of other churches, or not enough up to date. Exemplary in this regard is the difficulty encountered by WSCF to make sense of IFES's theology, which they considered to be the heritage of a bygone conflict. Hence the difficulty encountered in the categories to use in delimiting the differences:

> *Although it is simply foolish to dub the I.V.F position "fundamentalist*, there are certain characteristics, which, when put together produce a strangely rigid position. I confess that any definition still escapes me.[889] The I.V.F. would assert that they take no preconceptions to the Bible and add nothing to it. They are particularly keen on textual study, and the leaders are certainly not afraid of engaging in radical reflections. But everyone else, be it Karl Barth, or C. H. Dodd, who deals faithfully with the Bible, but does not speak of it, or understand it, exactly as the I.V.F. leaders do, is tinged with 'liberalism.' It is no good pointing out that in flogging "liberalism" in Federation circles, they are largely flogging a dead horse; it is no good pointing out that no one goes to the Bible without any preconceptions and adds nothing to it. A past controversy has become frozen, and cannot be dissolved.[890]

The relative anti-theological stance of the general IFES leadership appears to have exasperated WSCF people who would have liked to "move on," but the relationship of each movement to theological history was to be an enduring and serious matter of disagreement. On the one side was the WSCF's weariness of strong doctrinal statements out of necessity to remain conversant with the language of the time. On the other, IFES's concern to cling to what was considered to be the "deposit of the faith." Whilst WSCF circles affirmed that "while the SCM has grown in theology as the churches have largely, the IVCF's position has changed little since the end of the century";[891] IFES leaders were prompt to affirm that theirs was the orthodox stand:

> We would urge you to ignore the view so frequently put forward between the Wars that a strong doctrinal position necessarily leads to the reverse of unity. Church history does not lend its support to such a view, except that there has been a pseudo-unity in times of sterility. As a matter of practical politics, our impression is that the Roman Church has gained a great deal in recent years by asserting its dogma strongly. We sincerely believe that a reunion of Christendom is impossible apart form a strong doctrinal

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[888] Mackie, 'Relationship SCM-IVF 1946', 8.

[889] In a subsequent version of the memorandum, Mackie would write that "From Finland comes a good definition of the I.V.F. approach as 'biblical revivalist Christianity.' Robert C. Mackie, 'The Relationships of National Student Christian Movements and the WSCF to the Inter-Varsity Fellowship of Evangelical Unions and the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students. Memorandum 2', Memorandum (Geneva: World Student Christian Federation, August 1947), 2, WSCF Archive 213.16.39/2.

[890] Mackie, 4, italics mine. This word of linguistic caution does not seem to either have trickled down to the basis of the movement. In August of 1957, the IFES Executive noted that "After considerable discussion concerning the religious situation around the world and the identification of the IFES with an erroneous definition of Fundamentalism and Separatism, *it was agreed that the IFES must take the position that it was a separatist student movement in the present world situation and not apologize for this fact. To be conservative and biblical in its ecclesiastical thinking.* It was also agreed that an informative, positive statement regarding the IFES, its doctrinal position and emphasis, with special emphasis on definitions, would be of help to young pioneer student movements or groups which are under pressure from the SCM." 'Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee of the IFES' (Branksome Hall, Toronto, Canada, 8-3.9 1956), 3, IFES e-archives, italics mine.

[891] Volz, 'IVCF and Lacks in SCM Program', 37.

> position which in the very nature of things will need to be as congruous as possible in all essentials with that prescribed by our Lord and the Apostles. Without the reassertion and reacceptance of a Biblical Theology, the completion of the ecumenical task, even if it were possible, would be ineffective or even dangerous.[892]

Given the normally strong aversion of Johnson to Catholic theology, it is interesting to see him appeal to Catholicism to support his views on the importance of dogma in his organization. Furthermore, the appeal to "Church history" is a frequently reoccurring pattern in IFES histories that is, strangely enough, never substantiated. Thus, one is left to speculate whether an implicit reference is made to the strength of the Reformers' conviction or to whomever else may have loomed large in IFES people's horizon.

Whereas IFES people affirm that their doctrinal basis – to which we shall turn in more details below – is "just" a contemporary rewriting of some of the most fundamental truths, WSCF actors counter that IFES leaders have added to commonly held views, particular views connected with their respective theological taste. Strictly speaking, the WSCF analysis is correct: from its adopted version in 1947 to this day,[893] the IFES Constitution reads in its introduction of the Doctrinal Basis, that "The Doctrinal Basis of the Fellowship shall be the fundamental truths of Christianity, including [follow the eleven points of the Doctrinal Basis.]"[894] As the earlier history of the SCM-IVF Cambridge controversy has shown, the doctrine of the atonement was a contentious point.[895] What is very interesting, however, is that even if the British IVF was possibly the most influential in shaping IFES, the doctrinal basis of the world organization introduced a clause on the Church, which even if quite minimalist in scope, would respond to a reproach voiced in 1943 by Mackie to Johnson:

> were we to expand it I doubt if we would expand it as you have done, since we do not believe that your statement is fully Biblical either in its emphasis or in its phraseology. We would instance its failure even to mention the Church, and its enunciation of a particular theory of the Atonement. If there is to be a doctrinal basis, let it be a good one.[896]

The positivist stance towards doctrine that was characteristic of WSCF people is, furthermore, evident from the contention that IFES people's attachment to their Doctrinal Basis was to be attributed to a lack of maturity: "I wonder how many of your old members who are now in the

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[892] Douglas Johnson to Greer, 22 April 1943, 2, WSCF Archive 213.13.94/7.

[893] And the same formula was already in the 1935 constitution of the International Conference of Evangelical Students, '1935 Conference Constitution'.

[894] 'IFES Constitution 1947'.

[895] At the 1956 meeting, this point was discussed again and the conclusion of the discussion was that "IVF does not have an adequate doctrine of the atonement. It is legalistic. There is a legal element in justification, but the personal living union with Christ in all aspects overcomes the legalism; and that there is a strong holiness train in IVF at points, and emphasis on holy living which cannot be dismissed merely as a working out of religiosity." Peter Kreyssig, 'The Reality of the New Life in Terms of Conversion, Regeneration, and Sanctification', Summary of address given at the 1956 WSCF Ecumenical Consultation (Céligny, 1956), 2, WSCF Archive 213.16.39/2.

[896] Robert C. Mackie to Douglas Johnson, 'Draft Letter Enclosed in Confidential Memorandum on the Relationships of the WSCF and IVF Britain', April 1943, 5–6, WSCF Archive 213.16.94.

Christian ministry can accept your present Basis without mental reservations. Do you consider it to be impossible of improvement?"[897]

So whilst the reply to the last question was negative in the 1940s as the founding IFES was still unfinished, it turned out to be rather positive later on, as the Doctrinal basis has not been significantly amended since IFES's foundation meeting.[898]

Coherent with the refusal to engage in the ecumenical encounter, IFES's membership policy would be more restrictive than that of the WSCF. The reasons were not only pragmatic, however, but rather theological. In an articulate analysis worth quoting at length, Robert Mackie frames the differences thus:

> Acceptance of a variety of interpretations of Christian truth is one of the essence of ecumenicity. Here the formulation of the names of the two international bodies expresses a fundamental difference between them. The I.F.E.S. applies the world the word evangelical to the students were its members, whereas the W.S.C.F. applies the word Christian to the community into his students are welcomed. This is broadly true also on the national scale. This difference means that the membership of the national fellowships in I.F.E.S. is restricted to an evangelical definition, whereas the national movements within the W.S.C.F. all, for the most part, open to all students seriously desire to participate in the life of a Christian fellowship.[899]

Nothing is surprising in this quote: the same logic at work in refusing the ecumenical movement on the basis of a diverging ecclesiology, theologically motivated, in the general ecclesial world would prevent unity on the student world. The logic is impeccable but correspondingly weak were then the prospects of more mutual understanding. What is not mentioned, however, and gives the impression that they were sectarian is that IFES groups were always encouraged to be open to whomever wanted to attend their meetings; as the logical consequence of a missionary group by nature. It was – and still is for most cases – the leadership positions that were restricted to those who would sign the doctrinal basis and agree with IVF's aims and purposes, which should be clear by now, much stricter than those of the SCM. Before we turn to the question of the ecumenical movement, however, it is important to note that sociological factors were at play: WSCF authors regularly pretended that the theology of IFES was essentially the result of their minority status, of lesser academic credentials and of a lack of intellectual integrity. The embattlement rhetoric found in IFES documents amply verifies the first thesis, whilst the two other dimensions were overstated mainly for the sake of differentiation. In any case, such attitudes did not make diplomacy easier.

[897] Mackie to Johnson, 5–6.
[898] Except for a 2007 amendment taking on a more inclusive language.
[899] Mackie, 'Memorandum 2 on WSCF-IFES Relationships', 4.

1.1.2 Ecumenical Diplomacy: IFES Refusal of the Ecumenical Movement

The very essence of the ecumenical movement was to bring Churches closer to each other, fostering mutual understanding and encouraging mutual recognition.[900] This is why the appearance of IFES on a world scale could not but be a problem to the ecumenical circles: it seemed to be yet another split of the already very diverse Christian world if indeed "the division between the Intervarsity and SCM is no less a division in the life of the Church and division between particular denominations."[901] The reason for the "split" or for the appearance of a new movement was apparently the cause of some soul-searching in the WSCF:

> We must first of all acknowledge that the growth of a parallel Christian organization among students, and it spread to country after country, must be to some extended judgement upon the Student Christian Movements affiliated to the World's Student Christian Federation. If there is a division in the Christian witness in the universities, we share in the responsibility of that division. If another presentation of Christian truth has had greater appeal, there must have been something defective in ours. If another fellowship seems more compelling to students, then hours must lack certain essential features.[902]

Whereas the question is not at the forefront yet, a missiological motive is definitely present. Beyond the reality of divided church ministers or student workers lurks the question of the appeal of each movement to its main public: the student population. And the rapid growth of IFES would continue to be a major source of concern in the SCM circles.

In fact, in close to every discussion paper, letter, minute or other document mentioning the existence of IFES at the same time of WSCF movements, the same argument comes to the front: division for witness should not be. Whereas IFES people probably would have agreed that divided witness was not welcomed, agreement on the solution could not be easily reached because of the roots of the division: whilst WSCF understands the Church to be inclusive of all people confessing to be Christian, IFES people affirm the necessity of theological agreement and even more, theological purity, for common witness. One sees the puzzlement in Maury's reporting that

> I was always impressed by the fear shown by IFES members that heresy in some sort would enter into their midst, or, broadly speaking, into the life of the church. Each time I discussed with them what the dangers of ecumenism are, I got the answer that in the ecumenical movement there are people with huge faith they cannot agree. This I think they will say about the Federation also.[903]
> Maury further concedes that "there are in the Federation people with whose faith I myself do not agree, and whom I consider as heretics,"[904] but it does not really concern him, since his understanding of the

[900] Space does not permit to offer even a cursory history of Ecumenism. For the time frame of this work, see John Briggs, Mercy Amba Oduyoye, and Georges Tsetsis, eds., *A History of the Ecumenical Movement. 1968-2000*, vol. 3, 3 vols (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1986).

[901] 'Report of the Commission on the Student Christian Community in the University', Working groups of the 1956 WSCF Ecumenical Consultation (Céligny, 1956), 1, WSCF Archive 213.16.39/2.

[902] Mackie, 'Relationship SCM-IVF 1946', 4.

[903] Philippe Maury to South African Student Christian Association, 'Document IV and Additional Notes of the 1957 WSCF Symposium', December 1954, 5, WSCF Archive 211.16.39/1.

[904] Maury to South African Student Christian Association, 5.

> Church does not rest on theological agreement.[905] This very strongly ecclesiological divergence to which we shall soon turn in more details, hindered any possibility of a merger of the two movements, much to the dismay of the WSCF General Secretary who concludes that the I.V.F. is against the ecumenical movement as at present known. It believes it is wrong that that it must be opposed whether secretly or openly. The I.V.F. believes that that we cannot achieve the measure of understanding we have achieved, without compromise of faith. For example, the I.V.F. is anti-sacerdotal and will have no truck with 'Catholic" views or practices. Consequently, any constructive relationships between Protestants and Orthodox, still less Protestants and Roman Catholics, are a fundamental betrayal of the evangelical faith. Indeed within Anglicanism and Lutheranism there may be the same betrayal; and anything that is High Church is contrary to the Gospel.[906]

The very evangelical character of IFES could not then be easily set aside for cooperation: for IFES to renounce to its theological distinctiveness would have undermined its very foundation. One could even analyse the conflict between the WSCF and IFES as a proxy war between the WCC and the WEA, even if the latter is almost never mentioned in the documentation.[907] Two views of what it means to be "Church" and therefore, two approaches to student ministry. It is to a deeper analysis of the ecclesiological arguments advanced by the WSCF that I turn.

1.1.3 WSCF and IFES and Their Relationships to Church Authority

> As a matter of fact, I am rather convinced personally that the basic difference between the IFES and the Federation lies rather in our conception of an attitude towards the Church.[908]

On the ecclesiological front, two main arguments are put forward by the WSCF: the first is the fact that that the Church is the community, called by God, to which all who call themselves Christians, belong; the second, that whilst the IFES affirms not to be a church, its disregard for established ecclesiastical authorities coupled with its promulgation of a statement of faith practically amounts to operating like a new church, or a least a denomination, this second point being an unpardonable sin in the views of the ecumenical WSCF. Maury summarizes the situation thus:

> Our Christian unity with one another is the result not of theological agreement, nor even of mutual love, but of the eternal love of God for us. If we fail in preaching the gospel of Salvation, or fails in living that gospel in personal, social, and racial relations, we oppose the unity which God has founded in Jesus Christ, but we do not nullify it. The Church of Jesus Christ is one, not as in a more achievement of Christians, but as the fullness of him that filleth all in all. Men have divided the church and so have torn apart and distorted the truth of God, but the truth remains in the church, which is still recognizable by faith through the existing churches.[909]

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[905] And indeed, this tolerance of heresy within the WSCF was a line in the sand to IFES people. As Boyd summarizes, "The SCM was in effect being regarded as a heretical body, which could be approached only in proclamation of the gospel, not by sharing in Bible study."Boyd, *SCM*, 85.

[906] Mackie, 'Memorandum 2 on WSCF-IFES Relationships', 5.

[907] Lane Scruggs, 'Evangelicalism and Ecumenism: The World Evangelical Alliance and Church Unity', *Fides et Historia* 49, no. 1 (2017): 85–103.

[908] Maury to South African Student Christian Association, 'Document IV and Additional Notes of the 1957 WSCF Symposium', December 1954, 3.

[909] Robert C. Mackie, 'Statement on the Relationship of the Federation with I.F.E.S.', Official position paper, 1957 Symposium for the Use of Student Christian Movements and Their Leaders (Geneva: World Student Christian Federation, 1949), 5, WSCF Archive 213.16.39/1.

Maury's analysis blends together soteriological, missiological and ecclesiological arguments in a case to which IFES would reply that their understanding of mission and Church differ. Maury understands IFES well, however, if we consider Johnson's argumentative contention that

> our definition of the 'ecclesia' takes the New Testament form, that is, the fellowship of all true believers. In the long run, we are sure that the friends of the ecumenical union have everything to gain and nothing of value to lose by adhering thoroughly to a New Testament definition of the Church.[910]

The evident consequence of this understanding of the Church as an assembly of "true believers"[911] led IFES, as we have seen above, to very early develop its doctrinal basis as a way of defining not only its ministry but also who was to be "in" and who was better to be kept out. Thus, the inclusiveness of the WSCF rends cooperation unlikely, as Woods had intimated to Maury shortly before the WSCF consultation. In a rare moment of apparently distancing himself the EC, Woods is reported saying that

> the thing which made cooperation or unification impossible at the present time was the attitude held by a number of IFES members on the conception of the Church and of the Christian community, namely community based on theological agreement, while in the Ecumenical Movement it is based mostly on common recognition that God in Jesus Christ is creative of the Church.[912]

From what can be read from other sources directly penned from Woods, this really looks like a tactical manoeuvre from his side. It might, however, hint at the fact that his own approach was possibly more pragmatic than that of other IFES Executive members.[913]

The idea of the church as a community based on theological agreement cannot properly be understood for IFES without considering its very Protestant ethos. Individuals can arrive to theological convictions as a community, but if the membership question is considered, it seems logical to conclude that a given individual needs to have reached his or her conclusion prior to joining IFES. This theological persuasion can, of course, be the fruit of a life in a Church community theologically close to IFES, but it seems improbable to understand it without a certain degree of individualism. This "p*riesthood of the believer*" allows the student to be "fit for membership." Almost of the WSCF actors who were active in contact with IFES leaders on senior level were Protestant, some having grown up in Evangelical households; this would have rendered them prone to a common idea among Roman Catholics that Protestants are irremediably individualistic. Yet it is exactly the same argument

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[910] Johnson to Greer, 22 April 1943, 3.

[911] Point J of the doctrinal basis affirms that IFES believes in "The One Holy Universal Church which is the Body of Christ and to which all true believers belong." 'IFES Constitution 1947', 2.

[912] Philippe Maury, 'Memorandum on IFES. Report on a Meeting with Stacey Woods' (Chicago, 21 December 1955), 1, WSCF Archive 213.16.39.

[913] Maury further reports that "Stacey Woods on his side told me that while he personally would be really concerned in achieving this sort of rapprochement and even unity he could not in the present circumstances do any thing except very slowly and with great caution, in view of the divisions which exist within I.F.E.S. itself, between what we might call the open and rigid elements. While it seems that the American group for instance would be much more open to ecumenical contacts (….) on the contrary, the British and the Norwegian and Dutch movements represent at the present time the most rigid groups in I.F.E.S." Maury, 1. Emphasis in the original.

that WSCF would make against IFES: that its theology was too individualistic, even liberal as the following rather ironic excerpt from Maury's long letter shows:

> At various times when I have had discussion with IFES leaders and members I have been impressed both by a certain lack of concern on their part for the visible reality of the church I mean our historic churches and by what *I might call, at the risk of shocking some of my IFES friends, a very liberal conception of the Church.* On the first point, *I always had a feeling that IFES placed its emphasis more on the importance of individual faith, individual obedience, individual piety, that on the participation in the community of the Church. Even more, I was surprised by the lack of concern for the various signs of the life of the Church.* I am thinking, for instance, of the historic confessions of faith of the Church, of the visible authorities of the Churches, and of the life of local congregations. (In some cases it goes as far as a certain lack of concern for sacramental life, but I know that this is not universal.) To be specific, *I would strongly criticize IFES on two separate issues: in many cases it does not really feel responsible for bringing its members into active participation in the life of the Church*; And in the second place, *by calling upon its members to subscribe to a doctrinal statement in the form of a confession of faith, it really substitutes itself or the church, and even behaves as if it were a new denomination or confession*. I think at this point there is definitely a considerable difference between the Federation and IFES.[914]

It is indeed ironic to deem IFES's position *liberal* in the face of IFES's people constant contention that their very emergence had been necessary because of theological liberalism. Besides the sacramental question easily explained by the large number of low-Church elements within IFES, the question of the students' and graduates' membership in churches was indeed a matter of constant concern for IFES.[915] As a young graduate would write a few decades later, "Evangelical teaching on how the body or Christ is manifested through its individual members can hardly be faulted. But something else needs emphasis. Every Christian graduate must see the concern expressed in Scripture for the individual local church."[916] What is striking, however, is that more and more articles appear on the topic of student integration to local churches in the later years of IFES and not so much in the time contemporary to the WSCF consultations. This does not mean, however, that IFES writing did not demonstrate, early on, a regular concern for encouraging students to be part of local communities:

> The Christian group is not a church, lacking among other things the maturity of true elders and the means of practising the ordinances; nor does it witness directly to 'society at large.' The student, as a member of 'society at large,' should be a member of a local church and his membership of the Christian group should not be regarded as a substitute.[917]

The second charge in Maury's aforementioned letter is much more substantial ecclesiologically, however, than the reference to individualism: "*By calling upon its members to subscribe to a doctrinal statement*

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[914] Maury to South African Student Christian Association, 'Document IV and Additional Notes of the 1957 WSCF Symposium', December 1954, 4. Italics mine.

[915] Which does not mean that it was always easy for SCM students either. Tatlow tells the story of the foundation – of which he assumed the chairmanship – of "The Auxiliary of the Student Movement of Great Britain and Ireland" in 1912, with two aims: "To unite in a fellowship of intercession and to give former members of the student Christian movement. To assist members to pass into active service in the Christian Church." Tatlow, *The Story of the SCM*, 728. Bruce analyses this creation as an implicit acknowledgment that the churches were to "narrow" to accommodate the young graduates. Bruce, 'SCM and IVF', 267.

[916] Swee-Eng Aw, 'But When I Left College I Couldn't Fit into a Church', *In Touch*, no. 1 (1984): 3.

[917] Johnston, 'A Biblical Philosophy of Student Witness', 8.

in the form of a confession of faith, it really substitutes itself or the church."[918] To the eyes of the WSCF General Secretary, it was evident that the doctrinal basis of IFES was in fact establishing a new church. In the same vein and in unequivocal terms, the "Commission on Truth and Doctrine" of the 1956 consultation poses that "the formulation and acceptance of doctrine is the task of the churches."[919] Equally clear had been the reported response of a SCM delegation to the first North American IVCF missionary convention in 1946[920] to a local staff worker's case that the doctrinal basis was simply a contemporary outworking of the Reformers' doctrine:

> Our reaction is that even if these points can be found in the doctrinal statements of the churches, a student group is not the body to formalize and apply the rules particularly when the most authoritative courts of the churches named were not consulted and would not agree to the process.[921]

The ditch could hardly be deeper: on one side is a student movement that relies on Churches do define doctrines and is happy "to bear humbly the burden of Christian disunity";[922] on the other, another movement that considers necessary to fix in writing its core beliefs to ensure a satisfying common ground for ministry.[923] The doctrinal statement is once again the field of a running battle between IFES and the WSCF:

> The reason why the Federation does not hold any detailed doctrinal basis and others not ask its member to subscribe to a personal statement of faith is our conviction that the confession of faith is properly one of the marks of the Church, and we do not wish or members to confess their faith except within the fellowship of their particular church in which they I've been baptized and received.[924]

What is at stake here is a question of non-negotiables. For IFES as well as for the WSCF, witness is the priority. For the latter, however, the unity of Christians on campus will be the most effective argument for others – who cannot beforehand be classified in Christian/non-Christian categories – to consider the Christian faith. For IFES, the most effective argument will be the *compelling content of the Faith* (doctrine) that will convince non-Christians to consider the Christian faith. From there ensue ecclesiological convictions: unity with the actual, local Churches to witness and submission to their

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[918] Maury to South African Student Christian Association, 'Document IV and Additional Notes of the 1957 WSCF Symposium', December 1954, 4. Italics mine.

[919] 'Report of the Commission on Truth and Doctrine', Working groups of the 1956 WSCF Ecumenical Consultation (Céligny, 1956), 1, WSCF Archive 213.16.39/2.

[920] Later: the Urbana conventions.

[921] Hilda Benson, Rev. Candy Douglas, and Rev. Gerald Hutchison, 'Extracts from a Report on the Conference for Missionary Advance, Toronto, 1946' (Toronto: World Student Christian Federation, January 1947), 11, WSCF Archive 213.16.39/2.

[922] Mackie, 'Statement on the Relationship of the Federation with I.F.E.S.', 9.

[923] One aspect overseen by the WSCF analysts, however, is that IFES requires national movements applying membership to submit recommendation letters from local pastors to ensure that these new movements are known of the Christian people in the country. This requirement demonstrates respect for the local church communities.

[924] Maury to South African Student Christian Association, 'Document IV and Additional Notes of the 1957 WSCF Symposium', December 1954, 4–5. Even if most of the documents tend to give the impression of a very clear relationship between the WSCF and the Churches, it was noted at the 1956 consultation that the issue remained complex: "Because the SCM's present understanding of its relation to the church is not entirely satisfactory, we ask a continuing clarification of this question. One place where this might be done would be in connection with the revision of the objects of the WSCF constitution." 'Report of the Commission on the Student Christian Community in the University', 1.

authority versus unity of doctrine across local churches, gathering "all true believers" for witness.[925] Eventually, the ecclesiological question also becomes a question of power and authority:[926] To the freer spirit of IFES people answers the more clerically minded WSCF advocates.[927] In an attempt to settle the question, the WSCF official statement is unequivocal:

> In the Federation we seek to be loyal to the teaching and traditions of our own churches, knowing that there is a truth of God which they partially represent. We do not seek to build up a sect with the Creed of its own.[928]

The charge of organizing a sect is violent and reflects the power struggles at work in the conflict between IFES and the WSCF. Whilst the documents of the later seldom mention their connections to the WCC, SCM groups were mainly linked to established, mainline, churches, even in the Majority World where they often inherited the former colonial structures. Comes IFES unto the scene, this cannot but represent a challenge to the leaders. As Stackhouse aptly summarizes, there is a closer connection between established churches and culture than with "sectarian" or "separatist" movements:

> A 'church' is a denomination that enjoys statues in the culture, participates in the culture, and indeed manifest something of proprietorial interest in the culture. It includes many whose allegiances only nominal and typically comprises a variety of views and practices (remnant of the 'territorial church' idea) as part of his stature as a broadly accepted an accepting the nomination. The 'sect', by contrast, enjoys no status in the culture but rather consciously separates itself from it from a period it is made up only of 'believers', only of those who consciously join in and to maintain its intellectual and behavioural discipline.[929]

Conversely, against the reliance on established Church authorities to delimit doctrine, Woods has a more direct approach that evidently betrays his own Brethren origins. Instead of appealing to historical tradition, he appeals to the history of "the common man":

> Through the ages God the Holy Spirit has given sincere men of God a common understanding concerning all vital and essential truth. From the early days of the church to this hour, God has given a common understanding, a common interpretation, a common conviction concerning all fundamental matters of Christian faith and practice. This interpretation is not a personal subjective judgement, but it has that measure of objective authority which comes from the common voice of men of God through

[925] "The Federation sees evangelism inescapable bound to ecumenicity because the scandalous division of the church denies its message of redemption airy and reconciliation to the non-Christian world. The Fellowship of Evangelical students sees in ecumenism a confused and dangerous diversion from the task of a clear witness to Jesus Christ." Shinn, 'The International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (Inter-Varsity). Its Role in the Ecumenical Life of Christian Student Movements', 31.

[926] Talking about the American context, a senior US WSCF official had a similar analysis: ""On a student generation which may be characterized, if I may generalize, by a lack of conviction, commitment and community, this effort has proved to be very appealing to many students. I react to the growth of I.V.F. as a judgement on much organized, i.e. ecclesiastically dominated or sponsored, student work." Roger Blanchard, 'Concerns of Proposed Ecumenical Consultation', around 1955, 54, WSCF Archive 213.16.39/2.

[927] The relationship of IFES theology, even if very implicit, to J. N. Darby's understanding of the apostasy of the Church should not be overseen. Given the number of influential Brethren people in IFES' early senior leadership, it is hardly conceivable that this would not have been somewhat important.

[928] Mackie, 'Statement on the Relationship of the Federation with I.F.E.S.', 9.

[929] John G. Stackhouse, *Canadian Evangelicalism in the Twentieth Century: An Introduction to Its Character* (Toronto ; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 13.

> the ages. Wherever the Bible is held to be the authoritative word of God, and wherever there has been a humble dependence upon the light and guidance of the Holy Spirit through that word, true Christian doctrine has emerged, and God the Holy Spirit has the sled sincere Christians to a common understanding of his mind and will.[930]

The idea of "sincere men" to whom God has revealed himself throughout history is very important to Wood: there is a community, but this is really an "imagined community"[931] of the faithful, a "Church of all true believers" and not an institution. It is a fascinating blend of individualism and community which the first IFES General Secretary presents. Writing in the periodical of the American IVCF, the tone is quite populistic,[932] yet not simplistic: at the core of his plea is a profound conviction that God reveals himself to individuals and that the Church comes subsequently.[933] Moreover, this is strongly resented by WSCF circles as the following analysis of this quote by Shinn shows. For her, Woods:

> does not define in any historic terms which are the men throughout the ages to have held these truths, the doctrinal truth held by those fragments of the church with whom Woods and IFES agree. It would seem that Woods has begun with the Protestant emphasis on freedom to read the scriptures under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.[934]

Here we find a combination of the charges of individualism combined with that of theological particularism. The idea of having people read the Bible for themselves and not rely on clerical supervision seems to be a stumbling block in Shinn's eyes. And hence, whereas Woods and his colleagues saw themselves as the heirs of orthodox theology, they are accused of being the representatives of only "those fragments of the church." The logical consequence, for Shinn, is theological ostracism:

> Then he has given to his insights (another is common with his) a sole validity and authority – a right to cast others aside as not Christian – as arbitrary as the authority a high churchman claims on historic grounds for his doctrine. To take a crucial example, Woods would claim as a common understanding, as the only understanding given sincere men of God through the ages, the substitutionary doctrine of the atonement.[935]

There is nothing new in this affirmation from a WSCF person that the substitutionary doctrine of the atonement is considered too marginal in theology to be made a litmus test of Christian fellowship. However, what is rare is to see a hint at what the theological alternative was held unto by the WSCF leaders. Directly under this quote above, Shinn refers to Gustav Aulen's influential "Christus

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930 C. Stacey Woods, *What Is Biblical Christianity ?*, IVCF USA, n.d.; quoted in without further bibliographical indications in Shinn, 'The International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (Inter-Varsity). Its Role in the Ecumenical Life of Christian Student Movements', 14 emphasis in Shinn's original.

931 In reference to Anderson's seminal work Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).

932 For an illuminating discussion on the connections between American culture and theology, see Nathan O. Hatch, 'Evangelicalism as a Democratic Movement', in *Evangelicalism and Modern America*, ed. George M. Marsden (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 71–82.

933 Woods was a graduate of Dallas Theological Seminary. His personal dispensationalism may have surfaced or at least been understood by some of his conversation partners.

934 Shinn, 'The International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (Inter-Varsity). Its Role in the Ecumenical Life of Christian Student Movements', 15.

935 Shinn, 15.

Victor"[936] book, pointing towards the preferred model of atonement in WSCF circles.[937] There is, however, no real theological discussion: IFES's view on the atonement is deemed individualistic – in line with Aulen's argument – and therefore incompatible with the missiological concerns of the day.[938]

Woods was well aware of the criticism raised at IFES position and engaged with it in clear terms. His position, however, is much less concerned about local expressions of Church life than with the theological soundness of his folds. One year after the WSCF consultation, Woods writes that

> in the face of the criticism that the evangelical union is independent or is unrelated to the Church, the evangelical union should assert its true oneness with the historic Church of Jesus Christ in university evangelism, *a oneness which is no mere externality* but which is inherent in the life and biblical witness of the evangelical union. In like manner those churches which truly witness to that 'faith once for all delivered to the saints', could most helpfully assert their spiritual unity with the evangelical unions in universities around the world.[939]

Here as well, the language is clear-cut. There is either theological unity with "the historic Church of Jesus Christ" or oneness "which is mere externality." Whereas WSCF people see theological diversity as an asset, Woods and his colleagues see it as a threat, quoting Jude 3, a New Testament verse often found in IFES documents. The concern for preventing heresy within IFES was puzzling WSCF people like Maury, who would counter that "the Church is the body of Christ brought together by his redemptive action. Of course there is heresy and unbelief in the church."[940]

1.1.4 Engaging the Student World: Missiological Differences

During the 1956 consultation, one last serious point of disagreement between the WSCF and IFES emerged: the missiological question of the relationship between student groups and the world. But before examining the lines of separation in more details and lest the reader be left wondering if SCM movements were the proponent of some "secular theology" solely interested in "the world" and IFES, in "pietistic" approaches to evangelism,[941] it is essential to underline that at least until the mid-1950s,

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[936] Gustaf Aulén, *[Den Kristna Försoningstanken.] Christus Victor. An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of the Atonement ... Authorised Translation*, trans. A. G Hebert (S.P.C.K.: London, 1931).

[937] In this, coherent with the more general concern of the WSCF and WCC milieus for political theology and for the fight against structural injustices.

[938] This does not mean that Woods was oblivious to Christus Victor theology, as the following quote shows. He does not, however, mention structural sin, even if it could possibly have been subsumed under "the flesh and the devil" in Woods' mind: "At Calvary, Christ, the last Adam, Christus Victor, as well as putting away sin by the sacrifice of himself and dying as our substitute, dealt with the cosmic issue of sin. He became victor over the world, the flesh and the devil, and by right of moral and spiritual conquest legally defeated Satan. And so this world once more became God's." Woods, *Some Ways*, 33.

[939] C. Stacey Woods, 'Evangelical Unions and the Church', *IFES Journal* 10, no. 3 (1957): 5. Italics mine.

[940] Maury to South African Student Christian Association, 'Document IV and Additional Notes of the 1957 WSCF Symposium', December 1954, 5.

[941] Even if archival evidence does not support it, this perspective seems nevertheless to have been very strong. How else should the inclusion of the following remarks in a WSCF report of a consultation about IFES? "The 'religious' tries hard to dissociate himself from sin, and may find that he disassociates himself from sinners as well; his view of religion is personal or individualistic and requires the purity of religious life which would not be possible for the Christian who works in politics, etc. The 'mundane' follows Jesus Christ, who took upon himself the sins of the world, even into situations where one might not be able to escape becoming guilty. The 'religious' puts great emphasis upon working in areas where his purity can be preserved, such as 'personal evangelism." Kreyssig, 'The Reality of the New Life', 2.

both movements had very clear sense of their calling to witness – do mission – on campus. In a statement which all IFES leaders would have heartedly signed, the Commission on "Student Community in the University" affirms that "Christian fellowship cannot exist for itself. God gives it to bear witness in the world to his Salvation of the world. Fellowship and mission are inseparable. Without mission, fellowship ceases to be Christian."[942] The same is through for a rather rare consideration on the necessity of parachurch organization, again penned from Maury to his South African addressees:

> The only justification for the existence of movements which keep together Christian students or school boys and girls come out apart from other members of the church, the reason why there is a need for student Christian movements apart from local congregations arises, to my mind, only from the need form for particular instrument to evangelize universities and schools.[943]

As we have seen above, the WSCF considers IFES's theology and practice to be too otherworldly. This analysis seems to stem from IFES's concern for doctrinal purity, expressed in its insistence on doctrinal agreement and non-cooperation policies. Consequently, the WSCF prides itself of engaging the student world in a much more thorough way. It is as if clarity on doctrine and engagement with the world were incompatible:

> The IVF stresses purity of life and of doctrine in order for evangelism to be effective. The Federation tends to stress fluency in the world's language in talking with the students in his world; and seeks to use this language with honesty and integrity. Federation discipline is one of love (identification) and integrity. Actually, the real difference is one of emphasis.[944]

However, the early leaders of IFES definitely understood the necessity of contextual understanding, with more reservations as to the potential of social activism.

Corresponding with its inclusiveness, the WSCF theology presumes salvation to be a potentially very broad, if not a communal process. Adversely, IFES movements, coherent with Evangelical theology's stronger focus on individual piety, tend to target individual students rather than the wider university community. Very briefly put in the words in one WSCF analyst, "The fundamentalist group makes the demands in doctrine and discipline but raises no questions about the society of which they are part."[945] In the same vein, John Deschner, later moderator of the WCC's "Faith and Order" commission, submits that,

> The IVF addresses itself to the student himself, as an individual, as a descendant of Adam.[946] The Federation tries to address itself to the students in a concrete situation, to speak to his problems and the

[942] 'Report of the Commission on the Student Christian Community in the University', 1.
[943] Maury to South African Student Christian Association, 'Document IV and Additional Notes of the 1957 WSCF Symposium', December 1954, 8.
[944] John Deschner, 'Evangelism', Summary of adress given at the 1956 WSCF Ecumenical Consultation (Céligny, 1956), 2, WSCF Archive 213.16.39/2.
[945] Volz, 'IVCF and Lacks in SCM Program', 19–20.
[946] Here the underlying assumption is again the debate on the personal (substitutionary) versus the more communal (Christus Victor) doctrine of the atonement.

> form which his discipleship should take in the University. The difference is in method rather than principle.[947]

This difference in method has, however, far-reaching missiological implications. Either a student group considers itself integral part of a student community and its members therefore have to commit to the sometimes arduous task of understanding the terrain of their witness very carefully in order to relevantly reach it; or they consider university life to be rather accidental and at least in part, immaterial to the way the Christian message is lived and convened. Thus, the WSCF Commission on Evangelism reports in 1956 that

> the whole SCM life and program have to be seen in the light of their concrete setting within the total University community. God has called the SCM to make its Christian witness relevant and challenging to all students and teachers, and to the special responsibilities of the total Christian community in the University.[948]

This statement and the overall tone of the report imply that this was a major difference between the WSCF and IFES and it is striking to find very few such articulate positioning on the topic of witness and the university community in contemporary IFES documents. The 1970s would see much more of this concern emerge and been advocated for, interestingly, once the SCM movements had significantly lost in influence.[949] The WSCF takes great pain to underline the necessity of "speaking a Christian voice in the university community." Exemplary in this respect is the following excerpt of the same report, which, even without providing many concrete details, nevertheless shows a remarkably contextualized approach, addressing not only students but also teachers and research:

> *The Gospel must be so proclaimed in this setting that it may lead toward the full commitments of persons, making them Christian students and Christian teachers – Christians who find, in their common academic life and daily work of teaching, study, research, a vocation to which God has called them. The task of the student Christian community should not, therefore, big conceived in isolation from academic work, but as having an integral relation to it*. It is not concerned with evangelism plus thinking out intellectual implications, but with evangelism of persons in and through their intellectual life, as well as through the emotional and other aspects of their lives spirit this demands forms of Christian witness wherein the Lord of Truth can speak his word of judgement, redemption, and illumination in the University community's pursuit of truth, challenging persons to full commitment and Christian vocation there. *Christian witness, concretely made in the University setting, should serve both to renew and sustained intellectual ferment which is essential to the rational character of the University.*[950]

The concern and care for the university as an institution of higher education is striking and rarely found in IFES documents of the same period. Interest in the university is almost always subsumed to the need of reaching its population in a friendly manner, but the approach is still very much one

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[947] Deschner, 'Evangelism', 1.
[948] 'Report of the Commission on Evangelism', Working groups of the 1956 WSCF Ecumenical Consultation (Céligny, 1956), 2, WSCF Archive 213.16.39/2.
[949] Preston, 'The Collapse of the SCM'; Lehtonen, *Story of a Storm*.
[950] 'Report of the Commission on Evangelism', 3. Italics mine.

of "proclamation." To this, the WSCF – either in implicit rejection of IVF's "mission weeks" or as a general observation, adds that

> we believe that the direct proclamation of the gospel, as stated above, is an essential activity of the Federation. It is done in worship services, through University admissions, through Bible study, and through any other form of witness to which the Federation maybe called. (…) This being said, *we would insist, on the other hand, that in our secularised universities many students will never be reached by so-called direct evangelism periods we have to live among them simply as men among men, convinced that the new life that Christ has started in us should make us not less, but more fully human, sharing in the interests and problems of our fellow students*.[951]

This concern for the problems of students on campuses, broadly speaking a socio-political concern, should have programmatic implications as Maury contends, giving a rough ride to IFES groups:

> In most cases, the program of an IVF group will give much less attention to political and social questions that of an SCM in similar situations. One could say that IVF often tends to take a "non-political" stand, which SCM will criticize as "de facto conservative" and as "pietistic." (…) Unless I am completely wrong, I would think that one of the major differences between IVF and SCM lies in their different understanding of evangelism in the world. While the in the Federation we have much emphasized the evangelistic significance of our "presence" in the world, in IFES evangelism often amounts to a call to get away from the world. While in the WSCF we have emphasized the place of political and social action in evangelism, IVF members look at political and social questions with a conscious or implicit suspicion, as temptations and threats to Christian purity.[952]

Here again, the rebuke is severe: not to commit to social activism would mean to support the status quo. Apart from the fact that it was not true in many social questions as the sole example of Stacey Woods's stand on racial integration, a very unpopular position in the time of his tenure in IVCF USA,[953] it was indeed standard policy not to get involved in political debates. David Adeney, with his multicontinental ministry experience, explains that

> *The IFES does not allow itself to become entangled in the social and political problems of the day. It is inspired by one passion "to preach Christ." It does, however, recognize that its members must be aware of the problems in the university and society in which they live.* They are called to be "in the world, but not of the world," and their Christian witness will involve them in opposition to that which is evil and practical sympathy and compassion for those in need around them. They cannot isolate themselves from the sin and suffering of their fellow men. Their emphasis upon fellowship with the Risen Lord and determination to know nothing save Christ and Him crucified should deepen their love for those to whom they are sent to serve in the name of the Lord Jesus.[954]

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[951] 'Report of the Commission on Evangelism', 2. Italics mine.

[952] Maury to South African Student Christian Association, 'Document IV and Additional Notes of the 1957 WSCF Symposium', December 1954, 11. This strong judgement over IFES had, however, been somewhat mitigated in the discussion following the report of the 1956 Commission on Evangelism, who concluded that "It was pointed out that the IVF, as seen in its publications, probably has more interest in culture than might be expected." Deschner, 'Evangelism', 3.

[953] MacLeod, *Woods*, 112–14. In an intriguing report, however, the WSCF General Secretary offered a rather positive assessment of Stacey Wood's sensitiveness for social issues: "I found him most open and most stimulating and challenging in many ways. I was particularly impressed by his openness, something very new for me in IVF, to political questions. The way in which he spoke about the social and political revolution of our time, the attitude he took concerning the sectarian offensive of extremists of I.C.C.C and other such groups and the dangers they represent in Asia with the identification they call for between Christianity and anti-communism, was something very interesting and encouraging." Maury, 'Memorandum on IFES. Report on a Meeting with Stacey Woods', 2.

[954] Adeney, 'Student Work in Southeast Asia', 9, italics mine.

Adeney, having served in Britain, the US, and China, could not be insensitive to the necessities of cautiousness in political matters.[955] Nevertheless, the accusation of quietism was a frequent one that Woods had probably heard voiced life several times.[956] Having retired, he would have later some more time to reflect upon the question, referring to the same Bible passage as Adeney to provide a socio-theological analysis:

> A frequent mistake of *some sincere but insecure evangelical Christians* is to exaggerate the doctrine of the Christian's separations from the world. They mistakenly interpret Christ's prayer in John 17:16: "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." They fail to see that the application of this prayer is found in verses 15 and 18 of that same chapter. Christ prayed that his own may be kept from the evil of this world, but they are sent out by Christ into the world in the same manner and under the same conditions and with the same ministry as the Lord himself had been sent by God the Father."[957]

Furthermore, it is clear from the list of experts convened to the 1956 consultation and other documents that the WSCF's engagement with IFES practice and vision was almost entirely confined to the realities of North America and the British Isles. It is therefore noticeable that in his history of the American movement, written after he retired from IFES leadership, Stacey Woods would affirm in rather unequivocal, and for that matter, even more concrete language that the WSCF report above that

> *Nothing is more tragic than when either a student or a member of the faculty fails to play a full part in the life of the college or university but lives in a Christian ghetto and has social and personal participation only with the local InterVarsity chapter and/or a local church. Christian students and faculty are a genuine part of the university community with all the privileges, opportunities and responsibilities that the university provides*. For a student to fail to participate in the life of the university is to receive but a truncated education at best. (…) For effective campus witness and "friendship" evangelism, a Christian student in addition to fully and actively participating in the local Inter-Varsity chapter should be active in at least one other college society. He should seek a position on the staff of the campus newspaper or in student government. Here he or she may exert an influence for Christ as well as making friends with those who may in the end attend some evangelistic Bible study group. Such a position also can be of enormous assistance in arranging for public meetings in the university where the gospel can be presented or an apologetic lecture delivered. Various social clubs and athletic clubs provide a natural contact between Christians and non-Christians without any compromise in life or witness.[958]

In light of this lengthy passage, it is thus quite clear that the line of demarcation between the WSCF and IFES was not so much one of principles than one of prioritization. Given the relatively strong influence of (pre)millenarism in IFES circles – a theological aspect to which we shall come back[959] – the necessity to preach the Gospel was seen to be more urgent in light of Christ's imminent return than any far-reaching social engagement. Looking back to what has been examined so far, we can

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[955] He had himself to leave China after the communist takeover. See Adeney, *China: Christian Students Face the Revolution*, and Carolyn Armitage, *Reaching for the Goal: The Life Story of David Adeney, Ordinary Man, Extraordinary Vision* (Wheaton (USA) : OMF Book, 1993).

[956] And indeed the motive of "nothing but Christ crucified" would serve as a common argument for prioritizing evangelism over social justice engagement.

[957] Woods, *The Growth*, 64. Italics mine.

[958] Woods, 65. Italics mine.

[959] We should not forget that the period contemporary to the debates examined in this chapter was a the complex beginning of the Cold War, a period of intense geo-strategical tensions likely to fuel apocalyptically-minded imaginations.

hence suggest that the situation was much more nuanced than Maury would have liked us to believe in his summary:

> I would say that we are here divided on a very important issue command that of the relation between the church and the world. (…) I am even sure that there is among WSCF members much disagreement on such matters. But it seems to me that we agree at least recognizing that we simply cannot evade the issue commanded the world is really the place of our obedience, as well as the object of God's love comma and that we are therefore called to love it (even if it means to struggle against it) and never do escape from it come out now to call access to such an evasion.[960]

[960] Maury to South African Student Christian Association, 'Document IV and Additional Notes of the 1957 WSCF Symposium', December 1954, 11. Even if the WSCF appears absolutely certain of the missiological superiority of its approach, it does not mean that they see it as being without innate dangers as well. Volz early, but almost prophetic warning, points towards a potential lack of interest for the church from the part of students and other church members endeavouring into social activism: "If we are really critical of our liberal Christianity we see that students and others often are turning to secular social or political groups, from the motivation gained in their church experience and background. They see the church only as it is so often seen obviously, a compromise society against the decadent order from which they wish to revolt. They could understand the Christianity which followed Christ, but do not see the church as anything weird near that." Volz, 'IVCF and Lacks in SCM Program', 19–20.

2 Two Speeches That Changed Evangelicalism

This appendix provides an analysis of the addresses given by Escobar and Padilla during the 1974 Lausanne Congress. As these speeches represent a key moment during which IFES people influenced the wider Evangelical world, they are worth closer examination.

Given the fact that the draft they had submitted to the delegates in advance generated no less than "something between 1500 and 2000 responses"[961] each, their final format delivered can be assessed as the result of a thorough dialogical experiment, since both speakers could already take some affirmations and reservations of their audience into consideration. Padilla's paper argued that the world was God's chosen sphere of actions and that love for one's neighbour's compels Christian to not only see the world as evil but also to love but it also went further in denouncing an American captivity of Evangelicalism in rather strong terms: "We have equated 'Americanism' with Christianity to the extent that that we are tempted to believe that people in other cultures must adopt American institutional patterns when they are converted."[962] Further highlighting his insistence on contextualization was his other contention that "it is not surprising that at least in Latin America today the evangelist often has to face innumerable prejudices that reflect the identification of Americanism with the Gospel in the minds of his listeners." [963]

In Stott's analysis, Escobar's paper caused even more stir, putting "the cat amongst the pigeons."[964] In Stanley's summary, Escobar

> argued that 'the heart which has been made free with the freedom of Christ cannot be indifferent to the human longings for deliverance from economic, political, or social oppression,' and suggested that many of the countries which had succumbed to a violent revolution conducted on Marxist principles were those where Christianity had allowed itself to be identified with the interests of the ruling class.[965]

This was not only not "pulling no punches"[966] but also challenging a certain missionary pragmatism that favoured methods and urgency at the expense of missiology.[967] In Chapman's analysis,

> Many Evangelicals bred on activism saw the sort of patience required to work through disagreements as a distraction from the life-and-death task at hand. For such, Padilla's and Escobar's calls for reflection and reorientation could seem a distraction at best, and much worse at worst. Activists wanted the practical professors from Fuller, not these theologians from the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students, to define the new field of evangelical missiology.[968]

The kind of theology proposed by Padilla and Escobar was the logical outworking of their ministry: The nature of student work is fertile ground to develop theological thinking about culture, trends, and

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[961] Chua, 'Staff Letter 15', October 1974, 1.
[962] C. René Padilla, 'Evangelism and the World', in *Let the Earth Hear His Voice*, ed. J. D. Douglas (Minneapolis: World Wide Publications, 1975), 125.
[963] Padilla, 125.
[964] Stott, 'The Significance of Lausanne', 289.
[965] Stanley, "'Lausanne 1974'", 542.
[966] Dudley-Smith, *Stott II*, 211.
[967] Chapman, 'Evangelical International Relations in the Post-Colonial World', 360.
[968] Chapman, 36.

evolving worldviews. Given the tendency for new forms of thinking and behaviour to develop first on university campuses before reaching wider society. Therefore, in the evangelical world, IFES people were uniquely placed to develop the interdisciplinary approach characteristic of missiological endeavours. This was not seen as without risks, however: Exemplary of the relative unease with which the GS noted the newly acquired theological exposure of IFES people, are Chua's next words of caution in the staff letter already quoted:

> Much as we are grateful for this exposure, it has inherent dangers. We must guard against pride and also the temptation to spread ourselves thinly because of the demands that others will be making on our staff and our literature departments to participate at conferences, seminars etc. (…) Now René and Samuel have presented two provocative papers on the social implications of the gospel. These gained the attention of many Christians. We must be careful that we match deeds with our words; otherwise we shall be labelled as empty talkers and theorists.[969]

Similarly, strong pushback was also expressed from within the ranks of IFES, with Barclay, IVF-UK GS and Chairman of the IFES board, "warning" Padilla of the "effects" of his paper.[970] In turns out that some of the congress's participants were not yet satisfied with its main output, *the Lausanne Covenant*[971] and gathered as an *ad hoc* group on "Radical Discipleship."[972] Strangely enough for a member of the planning committee, Chua appreciatingly notes that these

> young and radical theologians […] were exchanging information and sharing plans on how they could cooperate and serve side by side in fulfilling the missionary mandate. Had these people simply stuck to the regimented program they would have gained something, but not as much as they were able to gain by meeting with like-minded participants.[973]

Thus, the congress represents a turning point in the global history of Evangelicalism and, arguably, IFES has played a very significant role in it: on one hand, because of prominent speakers, and because of Stott's decisive influence. The rising star of conservative Evangelicalism

> had taken up the concerns of those who spoke for Evangelicals in the majority world and interpreted them sympathetically to those, in the United States in particular, who were fearful that the new radical Evangelicalism was simply a reincarnation of the old 'social gospel' which they believed had led inexorably to spiritual bankruptcy in the WCC.[974]

Another indirect influence of IFES was Michael Cassidy. He had become a Christian through the ministry of the CICCU and later founded *African Enterprise*. His plenary address entitled *Evangelism of College and University Students* was an extraordinary plea for a holistic engagement with the university

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[969] Chua, 'Staff Letter 15', October 1974, 1–2.
[970] Kirkpatrick, *A Gospel for the Poor*, 28.
[971] Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, 'The Lausanne Covenant'.
[972] Their report is printed in J. D. Douglas, ed., 'Theology and Implications of Radical Discipleship', in *Let the Earth Hear His Voice* (Minneapolis: World Wide Publications, 1975), 1294–96.
[973] Chua, *Getting Through*, 133–34.
[974] Stanley, "'Lausanne 1974'", 547. The fact that significant influence of Padilla and Escobar found its way into the Lausanne Covenant has also a lot to do with their personal friendship with John Stott, whom they had taken on a lecturing tour of their region a few weeks before the congress. "Their tour included a visit to 'hardline communist' political prisoners in southern Chile, who had been 'interrogated under torture' by the military regime." Kirkpatrick, 'Integral Mission', 354. Information confirmed in Escobar, *Interview*..

context, tracing the contours of a missiological approach to campus ministry. As one quote eloquently shows, Cassidy had gone way beyond the common CICCU approach to evangelism[975] and was laying out missional ecclesiological views:

> The vision, I believe, which must be caught is that of the Total Body of believers (students and staff) reaching the total campus with comprehensive penetration at every level of the institution. Christians should not be a ghetto group, but a militant band of infiltrators, witnesses, and caring agents. Not only will they remind the campus of the true and full purpose of education as a search for truth, but they will seek both to evangelize individuals and to convert the structures of the university. The vision of full Christian involvement in sport, student politics, student government, residence life, the campus newspaper, the cultural activities of the university should be held high.[976]

[975] This is confirmed by the trajectory of his ministry and advocacy for justice in South Africa. See David Goodhew, 'Cassidy, Michael', in *Biographical Dictionary of Evangelicals*, ed. Timothy Larsen, David Bebbington, and Mark A. Noll (Leicester: IVP, 2003).

[976] Michael Cassidy, 'Evangelization amongst College and University Students', in *Let the Earth Hear His Voice*, ed. J. D. Douglas (Minneapolis: World Wide Publications, 1975), 756.

3 Bibliology in the Doctrinal Basis

This appendix provides more details about the official IFES stance on the Bible. Given the important role Scripture play in the activities of the fellowship, it offers the reader in-depth insights into bibliology and hermeneutics.

> C: The divine inspiration and entire trustworthiness of Holy Scripture, as originally given, and its supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct.

Possibly no clause in the DB has been more praised and criticized for either providing a solid anchoring or narrowing people's mind, depending on the views expressed by the commentators. This clause is fundamental for understanding IFES, its Doctrinal Basis as a whole, and the underlying assumptions about the Bible held in IFES circles. More than being merely one of the tenets of the IFES identity, the IFES position on the Bible was held by its founders to be an existential matter. In the words of the first General Secretary,

> The heart of this doctrinal position of the I.F.E.S. and its member movements is their conviction with regard to the inspiration, authority and entire trustworthiness of the Bible. *Should our views concerning Holy Scripture ever change, then we should have lost an essential raison d'être for the existence of our national evangelical unions and their particular ministry.*[977]

When IFES was founded in 1947, no argument could have been made on the sole necessity of reaching students with means that Churches would not have had, for in many countries, the SCM was still alive and well. The consistent narrative of IFES, directly taken over from the British IVF's own story but consistent with the own experience of most IFES founders was that defence of an evangelical stand on Scripture had rendered the foundation of another movement necessary: what is more, it had made separation unavoidable. To quote Woods again, commenting on 2 John 7:7-11, "The command to separate specifically has to do with those who deny that Jesus Christ is the incarnate Son of God, but this principle also applies to those who hold other heretical views which affect essential Christian doctrine."[978]

3.1.1 Inspiration

Providing a full account of evangelical doctrines of inspiration would by far outgrow the present work. In order to keep it within measures, we will focus on IFES's own understanding of inspiration to map out the terrain.

Right from the organization's foundation, the pioneers were aware that whilst Evangelicals could agree on inspiration, they would not on the exact terms of this doctrine. In the words of the first IFES president, "The I.F.E.S. proclaims the inspiration of the Scriptures, but no special theory of how this

[977] C. Stacey Woods, 'Biblical Principles for Unity and Separation', *IFES Journal* 20, no. 3 (1967): 4, emphasis mine.
[978] Woods, 3.

inspiration actually took place through the prophets and the apostles. Differences exist concerning this question amongst conservative evangelical Christians."[979]

The doctrine of inspiration derives from the idea that there is a direct link between the trustworthiness of the Bible and the nature of God: "If Scripture has its origin in God, then a true view of 'inspiration' of necessity includes a belief that what God has 'breathed out' partakes of His trustworthiness. It has the infallibility of God Himself speaking."[980]

Scholars disagree on the extent of the cultural captivity of the idea of plenary verbal inspiration to scientific visions and methodologies owning more to Enlightenment concepts than to Christian tradition. However, they usually agree that it is the American Princeton theologian B. B. Warfield, whose "great legacy was the elevation of plenary verbal inspiration resulting in inerrancy to the primary position in the doctrine of Scripture."[981]

3.1.2 Dictation?

One of the commonly raised objections to evangelical views of biblical inspiration is the idea that they believe in some sort of "mechanical dictation," thereby forgetting the human dimensions of Scripture. Interestingly, IFES writers constantly emphasize the fact that they do not believe in such a mechanical process. As Hammond adamantly specifies,

> On the other hand, any theory which regards the process of inspiration as being one of mechanical dictation to a blank mind, i.e. in which it is suggested that the human writer was no more than the passive amanuensis, does violence to the internal evidence of the Bible as a whole.[982]

This concession to the humanity of Scripture which best explains the specification that the Bible is inspired *as originally given.*[983] This concession allows for a certain degree of textual criticism without committing the fellowship to any crucible of translations, but it is notable that this part of the clause does not play a forefront role in the writing on hermeneutics in the IFES papers.

Yet consistent with the notion of a *given original* is the idea that the Bible is not only a "religious" book, but essentially the record of God's speaking in history, which must be passed on to future generations. In Woods's words,

> This is a message which is objective truth. God has spoken to us in His acts in history as well as propositionally. This word of God has been inscripturated in the Bible. It is this message unchanged, unadulterated, that we are to guard and to proclaim. We may neither alter it, add to it, nor subtract from

[979] Wisløff, 'The Doctrinal Position of the IFES', 3.

[980] Hammond, *Evangelical Belief*, 20.

[981] Holmes, 'Evangelical Doctrines of Scripture in Transatlantic Perspective', 42.

[982] Hammond, *Evangelical Belief*, 19.

[983] For an illuminating overview of the strengths and weaknesses of this recourse to autographs, see John J. Brogan, 'Can I Have Your Autograph?', in *Evangelicals & Scripture : Tradition, Authority and Hermeneutics*, by Dennis L. Okholm, Laura C. Miguélez, and Vincent Bacote (Downers Grove: IVP, 2004), 93–111.

> it. We may not embellish it with our personal notions and reactions. We may only interpret it according to the normal rational canons of hermeneutics.[984]

Woods argues here that whatever circumstances, whatever translations, the Bible's essentials could not have been changed. This approach does not leave much room open for cultural and historical circumstances, however. Hammond, for example, acknowledges that "the Bible has been subject to, much the same contingencies as have confronted all literature coming down from ancient times."[985] Nevertheless, he goes on with a brief explanation of how "linguistic scholarship"[986] establishes reliable editions. What Hammond wants to arrive at in his brief explanations, however, is a standard evangelical statement of the reliability of scriptural texts, which he explains as follows:

> A considerable amount of data has accumulated during the past hundred years from archaeological, linguistic and historical studies, which have compelled biblical scholars to become more conservative in their attitude to the text of the Bible and its historical value. It is a justifiable inference that the preservation and transmission of the documents have been such that we have today an accurate record of the original writings of the Old and New Testaments.[987]

So in contradistinction to ecumenical circles how were rather inclined to infer from their historicization of the biblical texts based on so-called historical-critical methodologies, Hammond sees IVF's tradition of direct recourse to biblical texts vindicated by the results of scientific enquiry.

3.1.3 Science

That an organization working essentially with members of the academic community would insist on the authority of its ancient text could not but raise some questions about tradition, enquiry, and epistemology generally. What are the students to do about the affirmations of the Bible relating especially to the natural world and its study carried with the tools of academic disciplines?

The story of the 1910 CICCU has already shown that the idea of "free enquiry" was very important to SCM leaders and that IVF appeared to them as submitting to a rule foreign to academia. However, in the context of the late 1968s, the questions rose again from within IFES this time, and not from the outside. Outgoing General Secretary Woods reports soon after the 1971 General Committee, summarizing the conclusions of the *ad hoc* task force on the DB that

> we were asked whether "entire trustworthiness" applies to chronology, history, geography, etc. This is a more complex question than it might seem to be and no comprehensive answer has been possible in the time available. We would, however, state that in the practice of interpretation, difficulties often arise

[984] Woods, 'Medium', 8.

[985] Hammond, *Evangelical Belief*, 27.

[986] Hammond, 27.

[987] Hammond, 28. Later in the booklet, Hammond adds that "In view of recent findings, critical scholarship has become more conservative and textual scholars (as in the latest official translations) have been able to benefit from recent discovery to elucidate a number of the points in the text of Scripture which were obscure to earlier students." Hammond, 59.

> from the inappropriate imposition of modern scientific and scholarly conventions. On the other hand, we would stress that no a priori limitations should be set to the authority of the Bible.[988]

The tension is palpable here: The Executive had almost been cornered by the GC, and was in need of an opt-out. The appeal to time limitations seems to have been very handy: In fact, it is rather surprising that such a "weak" response would be given since there was nothing new as such in the question. The organization's leadership could have dealt more thoroughly with this thorny issue much earlier and had done so to a certain degree: The IFES Theological Secretary had written a few months earlier that

> we must recognize, for example, that the concept of Infallibility does not exclude allegory, parable, metaphor, or other literary devices, but that it does exclude deliberate misleading (e.g. the idea that Jesus accommodated Himself to His disciples' limited and erroneous knowledge in attributing the Law to Moses, etc.).[989]

So whilst there was agreement on the necessity of tackling a certain type of kenotic theology, the IFES leadership preferred to consider the variety of opinions within the evangelical fold, and not unimportantly amongst the donors, an attitude of prudence became here a matter of expediency. The subcommittee hence reported that the DB "states clearly and adequately what needs to be stated," that its interpretation allows for a certain freedom of personal conscience and that "the words 'entire trustworthiness' have a broader and richer meaning than infallibility and inerrancy." The statement goes on to say that tensions between the entire trustworthiness and questions of chronology, science, etc. "often arise from the inappropriate imposition of modern, scientific and scholarly conventions."[990] The report of this subcommittee was "acknowledged by acclamation."[991]

The question was treated in roughly the same somewhat superficial manner in the DB commentary issued after the 1971 GC:

> The authority of Scripture applies to the whole of created reality including arts, science, politics. However Scripture does not set out to teach science, for example, yet it teaches how science or any human skill should be learned and applied ('faith and conduct') for the good of man and to the glory of God.[992]

Some years later, Bob Horn, General Secretary of UCCF would, in his considerations on the DB – reviewed by many senior IFES people – answer the charge that a DB is not compatible with the freedom of academic enquiry that "academic inquiry is not opposed to definite conclusions, provided that they are well grounded."[993] The recurring motive is that the Bible is sure and solid ground. Since

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[988] C. Stacey Woods, 'The IFES Doctrinal Basis', *IFES Journal* 25, no. 3 (1971): 11.

[989] Harold O. J. Brown, 'The Inspiration and Authority of Scripture', *IFES Journal* 23, no. 2 (1970): 23. Note that there is no notion of "infallibility in the IFES DB contrary to that of the US and British movements.

[990] 'GC 1971 Minutes', 20.

[991] 'GC 1971 Minutes', 20.

[992] Bürki, *Essentials*, 29.

[993] Robert M. Horn, *Ultimate Realities: Finding the Heart of Evangelical Belief* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity, 1999), 85.

academic knowledge is not only about freedom but about reaching conclusions about the nature of reality, the DB can be understood as nothing else than the result of a well-grounded enquiry.

3.1.4 Trustworthiness

Time and over again, the question of what "trustworthiness" means comes back in the deliberations, articles, defences of the DB and controversies. As we have seen before, the term was understood to allow more room in understanding than the term "infallible." This difference between the IVF DB and the IFES DB is noticeable, because it stresses the relational aspect of the Bible's teachings and their adequacy for life and not only the declaratory nature of its doctrines. Bürki underlines this in clear wording, stating that

> All Scripture is entirely trustworthy because God is trustworthy. 'Trustworthiness' is a more comprehensive word than 'infallibility'[994] and it emphasizes that biblical truth is not an abstract notion but a reality to be trusted in because God is truth. One cannot know, therefore, the truth of the word of God without trust, ie, without personal commitment to God and His divine will expressed in human words.[995]

This a hermeneutic which is consistent with soteriology: The Bible cannot be properly apprehended *outside* of a personal relationship with God, hence the emphasis on trust – a more pietistic category – than on "infallibility," a more scientific-rationalist category.[996] This is, of course, somewhat at odds with the academic culture which stresses the careful, distant and objective apprehension of "facts" over against subjective relation to what is studied. The theological rubber hits the academic road, but the difference in methodology can be explained pneumatologically: the natural scientist's object of study does not "speak" to the researcher in the same way as the Holy Spirit speaks to the reader of Scripture. This tension between distant, ethically loose approach to the text and a pious, devotional reading is hence a possible explanation of some cognitive dissonance for students hard-pressed to conform to academic methodologies on one side, and to ecclesiological habits and standards on the other side.

This tension between objectivity and subjectivity has been a recurring conundrum of writing emanating from people close to or working with IFES. Although neither infallibility nor inerrancy were officially hailed in IFES literature, the idea is present in the background. Hammond, commenting the IVF DB which has the word "infallible" insists that it is a marker between what could

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[994] Note that the current version of the UCCF DB, in contradistinction to Hammond's early commentary, develops the clause which now reads: "The Bible, as originally given, is the inspired and infallible Word of God. It is the supreme authority in all matters of belief and behaviour." 'UCCF Doctrinal Basis'.

[995] Bürki, *Essentials*, 28.

[996] Holmes' somewhat pointed summary is that "North American Evangelicalism, with a broad commitment to inerrancy, views the Bible primarily as a collection of facts to be believed; British Evangelicalism, stressing instead authority, views the Bible primarily as a collection of rules to be obeyed."Holmes, 'Evangelical Doctrines of Scripture in Transatlantic Perspective', 53.

anachronistically be labelled an "existential" reading of the text, and a proper recognition of the *whole* authority of Scripture:

> The chief purpose for which the Bible has been given to man is to guide him 'in all matters of faith and conduct'. Therefore, some suggest, 'the Bible is infallible only in what it is intended to teach'. Such a view, however, is by no means so cogent as it might at first seem. First, it provides an uncertain and very subjective criterion. Who, for example, is to determine what, in fact, are the limits of what the Bible 'intends' to teach?[997]

This work postulates that the *priesthood of all believers* provide a helpful theological framework to understand the IFES' relation to hermeneutics, leadership and mission, for it assumes each believer's possibility of individual access to God, hence the insistence on *trustworthiness*. What the quotation above shows, however, is the lurking tension in this respect: Who decides, ultimately, what the Bible says? It seems better to affirm the *supreme authority* of the text without explaining how a specific tradition of interpretation – essentially the DB in this case – plays the role of a *norma normata* of biblical interpretation.

The debate was not limited to trustworthiness as the previously quoted summary of the 1971 task force reported. Looming large in the room was the possibility of the word "inerrancy" better describing the status of the Bible. Much of a point of contention especially in the United States, "Inerrancy at its most basic is merely the confession that the Bible is without factual errors in those things it affirms."[998] The question in the background is, of course, whether for an international organization of such ethnocultural diversity as IFES, real consensus can be reached on what the Bible affirms. Whereas the word was never taken over into official IFES doctrine the idea that trusting the biblical text was not a rationalistic epistemological *faux pas*, but rather purely in-line with historical practice within Christianity is well summarized by Holmes, who submits that

> there seems little doubt that it has been a generally held position within the Christian churches down the ages. It is not very difficult to find explicit affirmations that the Bible makes no errors from across the history of the church; even where no explicit affirmation can be found, however, there seems good reason to suppose that, if asked the question, the vast majority of Christian denominations and theologians prior to the rise of higher criticism would have affirmed inerrancy, as would conservatives of every stripe, not just Evangelical, more recently.[999]

Here again, the adoption of higher criticism by "liberal factions" is considered as a kind of "hermeneutical original sin" of the late nineteenth century and IFES has taken on the role of the defender of the faith that others have abandoned.[1000]

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[997] Hammond, *Evangelical Belief*, 55.

[998] Holmes, 'Evangelical Doctrines of Scripture in Transatlantic Perspective', 41. For more on the history, development, and debates around inerrancy, see amongst other Dennis L. Okholm, Laura C. Miguélez, and Vincent Bacote, *Evangelicals & Scripture : Tradition, Authority and Hermeneutics* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 2004).

[999] Holmes, 'Evangelical Doctrines of Scripture in Transatlantic Perspective', 41.

[1000] It is probably with these safeguarding intentions in mind that Woods' later words should be read. In his draft for an IFES history, he uses the term infallible as well as he comes back to the question of scientific knowledge: "the raison

3.1.5 Authority

Very closely linked to the idea of trustworthiness is the notion of Scripture's authority, which emanates firstly from the concept of a dual nature to Scripture. In other words, in very similar fashion as the Chalcedon creed affirms the dual nature of the incarnate Christ, the DB builds on the idea of the dual nature of the written word: "The Bible is both divine and human; this amazing confession of faith is analogous to the confession of Jesus Christ as the living word of God in human flesh!"[1001]

Since Christians confess to following Christ, believing in him has the logical conclusion for the IFES writers, that the believer has to submit to Scripture, because of Christ's direct involvement in their inspiration:

> "He has so inspired the Holy Scriptures that they are self-authenticating and they themselves give clear and explicit indications of their unique origin; and He enlightens the understanding of believers to understand the message and recognize the authority of the Bible, as being in truth the Word of God."[1002]

The notion of "self-authentification" is very congenial to traditional evangelical hermeneutics and has evident missiological consequences. A local student group can assume the Bible's authority and invite others to read it, trusting that they do not necessarily need to make a strong theoretical case for scriptural authority: congruent with the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers is the free access to the supreme source of authority that anyone, eventually, would recognize.

The whole framework of the DB implies confidence in scriptural authority, but this is not solely a bibliological concept. It springs out of a clear theological conviction that the sovereign – and therefore authoritative – "The God of Truth cannot and does not deceive."[1003] If the Bible is his word, it must be authoritative. Brown concedes that this confession is allegedly not a matter of salvation, for "It is a fairly generally recognized principle that no Christian must confess a particular doctrine about the Scripture in order to be saved. Neither the Bible nor the Creeds presupposes this."[1004] Brown nevertheless goes on to affirm the importance of a "proper" understanding of what the Bible is:

> But it is important that one have a firm confidence in the reliability of the Bible in order to understand the content of saving faith, and it is essential for one who wishes to teach the faith whether he be a theology professor, a pastor, a Sunday-school teacher, or any other Christian who accepts a responsibility for the spiritual welfare of others.[1005]

Similarly, non-Evangelicals might well ask *which* Bible is to be considered authoritative. In order to prevent deuterocanonical books from being considered authoritative, Hammond specifies that "the

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d'être of the IFES, both in its antecedents and present conviction, is that the Bible is and forever shall be, God's infallible Word, entirely trustworthy in all its parts. This is true not only in matters of faith, morals, ethics and conduct but also when properly understood in all its references to space/time-events, to persons, history and geography." Woods, 'IFES History Draft', chap. 2, p.13.

[1001] Bürki, *Essentials*, 28.

[1002] Hammond, *Evangelical Belief*, 27.

[1003] Brown, 'The Inspiration and Authority of Scripture', 23.

[1004] Brown, 21.

[1005] Brown, 21.

books known as the Apocrypha, which is incorporated in the Roman Catholic Canon, are excluded."[1006]

This said, there is a certain degree of self-referentiality in the DB's appeal to Scripture as authority: many other Christian traditions would agree with IFES that Scripture is authoritative. The question is rather *what kind* of authority is envisaged, or *how it functions* in a given context. In this case, it seems that the DB affirms the Bible's authority and *frames the way it should be read.* Collange somewhat ironically asks whether such an attitude does not come very close to that of "traditional Catholicism and its presentation of the truth of the letter of dogma and doctrine as 'papal infallibility.'"[1007]

Similarly, what Willaime has observed in the case of French Reformed Churches applies well to the case of IFES, thus blurring somehow the boundaries between Church and parachurch:

> The authority is in the Bible, but read and interpreted through the Church's Confession of Faith. […] This text [the Confession of Faith] has a secondary authority to the Bible, but, since it defines what the centre of the biblical message is and how the Bible is to be read, it takes a central place in the regulation of the Church's faith.[1008]

Willaime further concludes that a confession of faith functions like a tradition, for "Alongside the Bible, there is a traditional legitimacy manifested in reference to the apostolic witness and the Confessions of Faith of the Reformation."[1009] This is what Holmes very astutely also observes

> 'Supreme authority' sounds, rhetorically, like it is a strengthening, but in fact its logical status is potentially weaker than a simple claim to 'authority,' in that it implies the existence of other, real but subordinate, authorities. If the Bible is 'the authority,' then no other appeal is permissible; if it is 'the supreme authority,' then I may believe in the real, albeit subordinate, authority of other documents – the ecumenical creeds, perhaps.[1010]

Bürki is also aware of this complex relationship to traditions. The concern of IFES seems to have been more properly a question of theological method than one of ecclesiastical policies:

> The supreme authority of Scripture means that God's Word is not without tradition but above it.[1011] It is not against reason but reason is not to be its arbitrator. It is not outside the church but over her, not without knowledge of transhuman manifestations but beyond their judgement.[1012]

Proclaiming scriptural authority should go beyond theological affirmation to have ethical consequences. As we shall note below, the idea of focussing on essentials led the early IFES leaders

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[1006] Hammond, *Evangelical Belief*, 15.

[1007] Collange, 'Les confessions de foi «évangéliques»', 34. It is stricking to note that the French translation of Bürki's commentary also has the French original translation of the DB, which has "son autorité *seul* est souveraine…" Hans Bürki, *Fonder sa foi*, Points de repère (Lausanne: Presses Bibliques Universitaires, 1978), 25, emphasis mine. It is the context of a stronger catholic presence that most French-speaking movements have for a long time used their own translation, in order to encourage Catholics aspiring to adhere to their movements to step out of the RCC.

[1008] Willaime, 'La formule d'adhésion, la déclaration de foi...', 292.

[1009] Willaime, 292.

[1010] Holmes, 'Evangelical Doctrines of Scripture in Transatlantic Perspective', 51.

[1011] Bürki asks in the footnote: "What is the place of Scripture over and against the traditions of man? Mark 7:6-9, 13; Galatians 1:6-10."Bürki, *Essentials*, 30.

[1012] Bürki, 29.

to concentrate on the premises of faithful Christian actions rather than on the practical outworking of such belief. Holmes notes that this does not go without dangers, however:

> The same may be said of the addition concerning 'faith and practice': the rhetorical effect is again strengthening, but the logical effect is to raise the possibility that there are matters not pertaining to 'faith and practice' (or 'faith and conduct') in which the Scriptures in fact have no authority – matters of science or history, perhaps. Such analysis makes the statements difficult to analyse, of course: did writers adding 'supreme' to 'authority' think they were strengthening, or grasp that they were weakening, the claim? What of those who agreed to accept the revised documents?[1013]

3.1.6 Pneumatological Prerequisites

Finally, the IFES hermeneutic decisively has pneumatological underpinnings. Congruent with Clause I of the basis and its affirmation that the Holy Spirit lives within the believer, the DB's assumption is that the Bible cannot be recognized to be authoritative, neither be properly understood, without the Holy Spirit. What could appear like a tautology is properly understood as a theological statement against the perceived rationalism of liberal theology. IFES people were constantly demarking themselves from a theology that would either be done *etsi Deus non daretur* or which would take pride in affirming only what could be rationally understood by modern people. Hence the insistence on the necessity of a transcendent active presence in the mind and heart of the believer who reads the biblical text. This is remarkable, for it also implies that reading the Bible does not presuppose any theological degree. In Hammond's words, the Bible "was designed to remain a book of universal acceptance and of equal value to all ages and all peoples in various stages of education. In the providence of God it is in a form in which its basic meaning may be grasped by all types of men."[1014]

This elevates the Bible to another realm than any other text and hence some potential tensions in hermeneutical practice: it is easier to agree on common methodologies to study classical historical texts, for example, in university context and reach some scholarly consensus. However, what is remarkable is the insistence on the fact that the Bible is accessible to whomever wants to read it.

As we have noted above, all DB's official commentators insist that the clauses of the DB are derived inductively from the Bible, but not in unmediated fashion. In line with the traditional evangelical understanding of hermeneutics, the Bible cannot be appropriately understood apart from the internal illumination of the Holy Spirit. Thus, there is a complex interrelation between the believer's faith, his or her relationship to God and Scripture. But the DB then mediates a shared understanding of what is understood to be the core of biblical truth:

> The conviction that the Bible is the written Word of God is wrought in the believer by the Holy Spirit. This inward testimony of the Holy Spirit is not something which acts independently of Scripture. It is

[1013] Holmes, 'Evangelical Doctrines of Scripture in Transatlantic Perspective', 51.
[1014] Hammond, *Evangelical Belief*, 56.

> given in order to witness to Scripture and to authenticate it as the medium of the divine revelation to man. Concerning the actual process of inspiration, the Bible makes only one other general statement.[1015]

Forecasting later soteriological considerations, we should note here that stressing the necessity of spiritual illumination presupposes a particular approach to human reasoning, namely one which is constantly marked by references to human limitations caused by sin:

> we are made aware that unenlightened human reason and emotion alone cannot comprehend God's revelation. Every type of knowledge can easily lead to pride. He who thinks that he knows something, does not know how to know.[1016]

Depending on the reader's perspective, this is either a dim view of what humans are capable of, or rather a way of highlighting the power of the Christian Gospel. There is no doubt that in the IFES view, the latter is the case and is rather an incentive for mission than a despairing premise.

[1015] Hammond, 18. Reference is made to 2 Peter 1:21.
[1016] Bürki, *Essentials*, 18.

4 About The Impossibility of Being Church: The Question of Sacraments

> How shall we understand the spreading parachurch organizations? Some are designed to supplement and assist churches. While other's appear to be churches in all but name.[1017]

Being firmly anchored in Evangelicalism, the theological self-understanding of IFES has traditionally put less weight upon sacramental theology. As Protestantism usually acknowledges Baptism and Eucharist/Communion, it is on their practice that the few debates carried out in IFES circles focus. Traditionally most IFES groups have celebrated the sacraments only exceptionally, even if they are an important part of ecclesial life. It is one of the strongest ecclesiological arguments allowing differentiating a Christian Union from a Church. Illustrative of this understanding of the exceptional case is Woods's anecdote of a student camp in 1949:

> A problem arose when the Islamic student who had confessed Christ asked for baptism. We told him that this should be done in a church, but his reply was, "I don't know any church, I've never been in a Christian church." *So, after some consultation and prayer we broke every rule of interdenominational student work by having a public baptism* in the sea conducted by M. Gaston Racine, a much beloved speaker. Quite a crowd of the public gathered around as the young man stood in the sea, gave his testimony and then was baptised in the name of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.[1018]

These "rules of interdenominational student work" are nowhere formalized. Yet, the fact that Woods alludes to such a concept shows his understanding of the respective tasks of local Churches and student groups. This topic was discussed at length in the Lausanne Movement and the aforementioned LOP 23. This *summa* of evangelical thinking on parachurch quotes from an unpublished paper by holiness preacher Paul Rees. He argues for the importance of the *notae ecclesiae* in the discussion around parachurch organizations, which for him are different from denominations: "Denominations at least owe their existence, and are answerable, to assemblies of believers among whom may be found the *notae* of church reality."[1019] These *notae* go back to Calvin affirming that "wherever we see the Word of God sincerely preached and heard, wherever we see the sacraments administered according to the institution of Christ, there we cannot have any doubt that the Church of God has some existence."[1020] Here, the parachurch seems to be found wanting.

Clowney also elaborates on this "biblical and spiritual understanding of the Church's attributes"[1021] which have consequences for the definition of a student group:

> The limitation of the parachurch group is that it lacks some of the marks of the church. It needs denominations because it does not provide the ordered structure of office, worship, sacrament and discipline that a denominational church offers. Because such groups are not churches, they do not dismiss members to churches or receive them from churches, and rightly find no difficulty in recruiting members of denominational churches.[1022]

[1017] Edmund P. Clowney, *The Church* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 100.
[1018] Woods, 'IFES History Draft', 13 italics mine.
[1019] Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, 'Cooperating', Appendix A, §2.
[1020] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Ford Lewis McNeill, The Library of Christian Classics (Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), bk. IV, 1.9.
[1021] Clowney, *The Church*, 101.
[1022] Clowney, 107.

It is fascinating that *not being a Church* could be seen as "missiological advantage". A student group can provisionally dispense with issues of Church discipline and questions of denominational loyalties so hard to understand to outsiders. A local student group cannot be a Church for these authors because it does not celebrate the sacraments. Whether the "Word is rightly preached" in student meetings, the situation varies significantly between more participatory cultures and more hierarchical ones.

In any case, IFES leaders were not oblivious to these questions. Hammond's early *theological treaty* written for IFES-like groups briefly comments on the *notae* after the creedal framework of *unity, sanctity catholicity* and *apostolicity*. These characteristics arguably can be found in each student group. Hammond indeed poses that "the true Church of Christ is to be found everywhere where he and the Holy Spirit are enthroned in men's hearts. Hence the true church is the whole congregation of Christian people dispersed throughout the whole world."[1023] The student group is no substitute for involvement in a local Church, as Hammond hastens to caution that "students, however, particularly those who are in residential universities, need to be even more on their guard against the neglect of Holy Communion than of public worship in general".[1024]

One of the earliest explanations of IFES's relationship to the sacraments[1025] is indeed found in the context of describing the marks of a true Church. In a passage worth quoting at length, Johnson offers his definitely "low-Church" understanding of the sacrament and takes the opportunity to explain ecclesial differences[1026]:

> With all orthodox Christians they would set great value on the possession of a true Christian ministry; and fulfil the functions of a servant of Christ. But they must take their stand on the Reformers' insistence that (whatever mechanical aids are employed for the preservation of due order) *the successors of the apostles are clearly defined in the New Testament in relation to their beliefs and character*. They are described in Scripture as those who faithfully proclaim the Word of God,[1027] and administer the two sacraments according to Christ's holy ordinance. There must, similarly, be no compromise with any of the administration of the Lord's supper which includes the idea of a repeated sacrifice (except that of "the sacrifice of praise"), *or of a priestly sacerdotal or mediatorial function to be performed by the minister*. The Bible, again, is quite unequivocal at this point. Christ, by His death on the cross, has "made there (by His one oblation of Himself once offered) a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world; and did institute, and in His holy Gospel command us to continue, a perpetual memory of that His precious death, until His coming again".[1028] The corollary of this is that Christians no longer need any other atoning sacrifice, and since their great High Priest has been appointed the sole Mediator between God and man, Christians have no need of any other mediatorial priesthood. To re-introduce any such thought into the Church of God is an unnecessary misunderstanding. More seriously, it must be regarded as an affront to the all-sufficient Mediator and sole Priest at God's right hand.[1029]

[1023] Hammond, *In Understanding*, 1960, 163–14.
[1024] Hammond, 182.
[1025] In most Evangelical circles, the Lord's Supper and Baptism would usually rather be called "ordinances" than sacraments. For theological clarity "sacrament" will be used throughout.
[1026] It is worth underlying that this passage is integral part of the first official IFES history commissioned and approved by the Executive. It can therefore be considered authoritative.
[1027] Quoting 1 Timothy 2
[1028] Quoting 1 Timothy 2 :5 and Hebrews 6:19-9:38
[1029] Johnson, *Brief History*, 104–5, italics mine.

This development shows how congenial to the theologizing of early IFES leaders the idea of a non-mediated relationship to God was. This was theological and ecclesiological, notably connected with a strong emphasis on the substitutionary dimension of the atonement. These views of the early IFES leadership could not be expected to be fully shared by any leader of any national movement, given the numerous traditions represented. Given the lack of unity on specific topics like the sacraments, should leaders rather keep their personal opinions quiet or voice them? Did unity require silence, or should enlightened differences be voiced? Illustrative of this kind of tension is the following recollection of Indian IFES board member Enoch talking about his early years in UESI:

> we had to work out our policy on sorts of issues. One of these was our stand as an interdenominational movement, on doctrines on which Evangelicals differ, such as baptism. There was a suggestion that we should not talk about baptism in E.U. meetings, except to Hindu converts, and even when asked individually we should refuse to state our views unless students be carried away by a senior's opinion. I had difficulty accepting this and refused to agree to it. I felt that every-individual must have the liberty to express his own convictions when occasion demands, provided he does not try to get converts to his own point of view.[1030]

So whereas in national movements, sacramental questions could be addressed contextually following the local leader's sensitivities,[1031] especially the question of Communion was raised for IFES conferences, for arguably in the context of a growing ecumenical sensitivity, international conferences had seen an aspiration to celebrate Communion. The mandate to the Executive to examine the question came from the Scandinavian delegations. After long discussions spanning over several years, the Committee adopted the following guidelines, which are the last such policy to date:

(i) It must not be taken for granted that Communion Services are suitable for all international conferences of IFES
(ii) Where participants of conferences tend to identify the Communion Service as a church function, it might be better not to hold such services.
(iii) Member movements do not have to follow the pattern and practice of Communion Services held at IFES international conferences as this might conflict with the consciences of some conference members.
(iv) At international conferences, careful announcements must be made concerning the nature of the service and the possibility of abstaining must also be stated.[1032]

In more recent years, acknowledging "ecumenical developments", some movements have officially opened the way for local student groups to celebrate the Lord's Supper. Exemplary of this are the German SMD guidelines which stipulates that "At events there is a basic rule that the Lord's Supper should be instituted by theologians or the SMD leadership if possible. [...] The purpose of this rule is

[1030] H. Enoch, *Following the Master* (Mumbai, India: GLS Pub., 1977), 75.
[1031] Escobar's vivid depiction of the contrasting situations within the fellowship is worth quoting: "For instance, the idea of having the Lord's Supper or Communion after an evangelical student camp in some European countries, can raise the tremendous debates about ministry and sacraments that have divided Christians since the Reformation. On the other hand in Africa or Latin America it is the most natural thing for Lutheran, Baptist, Pentecostal and Christian and Missionary Alliance students to have Communion as an expression of their evangelical experience in a camp. Again the solemn and beautiful experience of the Lord's Supper at the Urbana missionary convention of the IVCF in the USA would be unthinkable, in that kind of inter-denominational situation, for some European Evangelicals." Escobar, 'Our Evangelical Heritage. Major Paper Presented at the 1983 General Committee', 5.
[1032] 'Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee of the IFES' (Oak Hill College, London, England, 20.9 1976), IFES e-archives.

to ensure that the Lord's Supper is administered by people who are theologically and 'liturgically' trained."[1033]

When local groups can celebrate Communion, the requirements that celebration preferably be led by somebody theologically trained is ecclesiologically diplomatic. However, it does not take full consideration of what the priesthood of all believers means. Muthiah boldly asserts that

> Ordination must no longer be held as a requirement for those who would administer the Lord's supper. Since 1) all believers are gifted by the Spirit; 2) all charisms are of one nature; and 3) all believers should be ordained, no particular charism or office uniquely qualifies a person to administer the bread and the wine. It might be wise for a community to draw upon individuals who are mature in their faith and who embody the fruit of the Spirit to lead the community in the breaking of the bread and the drinking of the wine. But such selection would be based on embodied faith rather than on charisms or office.[1034]

Lastly, Debanné argues that from a biblical theological perspective – notably from 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4 – the NT describes "inter-church ministries" (apostles and prophets) that reach beyond the walls of the local Church. He concludes that "even if, according to the NT, the marks and organization of the Church (with sacraments, teaching and discipline) are centred in the local Church, there is no passage stating that they would be 'limited' in a strict sense."[1035]

[1033] Gernot Spies and Achim Schowalter, 'Der Hochschul-SMD-Leitfaden zur Feier des Abendmahls in SMD-Gruppen', n.d.
[1034] Muthiah, *Priesthood of All Believers*, sec. 1927.
[1035] Debanné, 'Démystifier', 32.

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